

**BRITISH WORLD WAR TWO FILMS 1945-65 :
CATHARSIS OR NATIONAL REGENERATION?**

by

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Abstract

Major differences in British Second World War films produced in wartime 1939-45 (idealising the 'People's War') and post-war versions produced between 1945-65 (promoting the return of elite masculinity) suggest a degree of cultural re-conditioning concerning the memory of war, by Britain's middle-class film-makers attuned to national and international concerns. Therefore, the focus and main aim of this thesis is to identify and examine previously ignored or inadequately scrutinized themes within the post-war genre to explain how, and why, film-makers redefined the Second World War and its myths, tapping deeply into the national psyche, stimulating and satisfying a voracious, continuing, British appetite. In examining the genre, and as established by historians such as John O'Connor, Pierre Sorlin and Jeffrey Richards, this thesis employs contextual analysis, using feature film as a primary historical documentary source. This involves close reading of the films in their historical and political context and the social situation which produced them - backed-up by empirical data, analysing what film-makers were saying at textual and sub-textual levels, and exploring structure, meaning and iconography as conveyed by script, image, acting and direction. The production, content and reception of these films have been evaluated and attention directed towards dialogue and language. In support of this, a wide variety of sources have been scrutinized: articles; fan magazines; novels; biographies; autobiographies; memoirs, film histories and wider historical and political works. The BFI Library and Special Collections Archive have been extensively mined with particular emphasis on press and campaign books and cinema ephemera. Newspapers and journals such as the *Times*, the *New Statesman*, the *Daily Mirror* and the *Daily Worker* have provided a range of perspectives.

A sense of British ownership of this war pervades the genre. Accordingly, this thesis identifies four over-arching themes through which to explore it: the fusion of class, masculinity and national identity; women and femininity; reconciliation with the enemy; and the process of personal and national redemption and regeneration through the war experience. The study's fundamental originality rests in its approach. In offering a "political" (in its widest sense) reading of the films and an untried level of detailed analysis, it presents the genre's first full conceptualisation, challenging criticisms and assumptions that the genre was either a nostalgic replay of the Second World War, a recruitment vehicle or a catharsis. Several key findings have emerged from this thesis: Elite masculinity was used, not to devalue the 'People's War', but as exemplar of national identity, regeneration and British leadership. Recognizable through his metamorphosis from literature's well-loved pre-1914 imperialist hero, the officer hero was now a democratised master of the technology provided by Britain's brilliant, unthreatening scientists. Through them, Britain's unrivalled experience as a world leader was promoted at a time of international tensions and challenges to national supremacy. This study offers the first in-depth analysis of the prisoner-of-war sub-genre, and recognizes film-makers' efforts to ensure that serving homosexuals were also credited with fighting the Second World War. Crucially, far from being airbrushed from the genre, women were very definitely present and active in war films post-1945. Previously unsuspected balances, continuities and cross-overs between the 1939-45 films and of those of 1945-65 have been identified. Received wisdom that, with Cold War political

pragmatism, the genre offered only revisionist depictions of Germany is also challenged. Evidence of film-makers' Janus-faced ambivalence towards German brutality and collective guilt has emerged and, whilst the Italians were redeemed, Japanese barbarism was vehemently expressed. Through its exploration of war's dysfunctional residue, this thesis has shown that combat dysfunction acted as 'heroic reinforcement', yet another way to praise, whilst allowing modest fallibility. Further insights into reactions to war were provided by depictions of malingerers, revellers and those redeemed by war. British cinema offered a rare level of social comment with the homecoming legacy, as dysfunction embraced disaffected officers, crime and the failure of the 'New Jerusalem'— although it offered little on failed repatriation. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, film-makers also showed that middle-class hegemony, always pragmatic, was elastic enough to offer critiques of officer elite heroics with the decline of deference, and to be more open in its depictions of women. These findings demonstrate that as a collection of primary documents, the genre's films reveal much about contemporaneous issues. Significantly, although its target audience was British youth, it reached global audiences.

Esther M. O'Neill

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and a great believer in the cinema.**

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INTRODUCTION

'You should not become a film-maker unless you have something to say'. (Parker, 1998)¹

'The suggestion that Britain was losing her power in the world was sufficient to arouse screams and diatribes from many quarters, including the military; and the public have grasped at any works that attempt to refute this allegation. Our war cinema, with its constant harking back to the "good old days", its nostalgia for the days when "Britain was Great", has seemingly fulfilled a much-needed desire'. (Gilliat, 1957/58)²

The on-going national obsession with World War Two, especially the fight against Nazi Germany, appears to be a peculiarly British experience remarked upon both at home and abroad.³ America shares this interest, but to a lesser degree, largely because of its investment in the Pacific war. Since the late 1980s, film-makers in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Italy, France and Germany have "discovered" the war, but the British perpetually define themselves by it.⁴ British fascination is partly explained by the fact that Britain was the only great power to have fought the war from beginning to end, and was the only major combatant to launch key offensives in all main theatres of war - even standing "alone" in the early years.⁵ Final victory, achieved at considerable social, economic and political cost, was the nation's last great innings of the First XI before America and Russia emerged as the Superpowers. Therefore, the enormous cultural resonance of the Second World War, as enshrined by one of its foremost disseminators, the post-war British war film, is an inviting area of study 1945-65. In this respect a "political" (in its wider connotation) reading of these texts, charting previously unexplored territory, reveals much to historians about post-war cinematic cultural conditioning, contemporary myths, ambitions, hopes and fears, thereby adding to our understanding of the phenomenon that World War Two has become and the uses to which it can be put. Even during the war years dam buster Guy Gibson recognized the power of cinema: 'Yes, the decent people of this world would have to remember

war. Movies and radio records should remind this and future generations of what happened between 1936 and 1942'.⁶ Portrayed on screen as a just war, its imagery retains considerable cultural currency both nationally and internationally. In 1999, *The Sun* responded sharply and emotively to German criticism of this British obsession:

Britain is proud of its conduct in the war - which resulted in the freeing of the world, including the concentration camps. Those of us too young to fight are proud of our fathers and grandfathers who did fight. And we will tell our children and grandchildren of their heroism and sacrifice. The reason? These names: Dachau, Belsen, Auschwitz, Buchenwald. There are many more. Names that are carved in blood on the history of the 20th Century. They were the Nazi death camps where millions of men, women and children were butchered. The world must never forget what one shocked correspondent [Richard Dimbleby] described as "that greatest of all exhibitions of man's inhumanity to man".⁷

There is certainly a strong feeling of British *ownership* of the Second World War, which is manifested in many ways (even on the football field).

World War Two became a significant subject for post-war British cinema. As *New Statesman* film critic William Whitebait acidly queried in 1958: 'Do you love the war film? Someone must. Their salvos return again and again'.⁸ Additionally, mass market publishers (for both adults and children), radio and television, frequently capitalise on the war which reflects the nation's 'finest hour'. British terrestrial television channels entered the Millennium still fighting, and winning the Second World War with re-showings of 1950s British feature films on the subject, and countless new documentaries (complete with spin-off books) such as Channel 4's *Colditz* series (2000).⁹ A large part of Channel 5's television scheduling covers this war. Satellite television regularly features old war films, and a flourishing video and DVD market exists. Popular war novels such as *The Cruel Sea* can still be found on British school curricula, whilst *The Dam Busters* and others are regularly re-issued. Comics and computer games equally keep this war active.¹⁰ Salford's Imperial War Museum North, opened by the Queen in 2002, covers World War Two extensively.

Record-breaking attendances and thriving sales of war-related materials, confirm its on-going cultural significance. Each anniversary heralds an avalanche of documentaries, articles and re-showings of the films. The sixtieth anniversaries of D-Day and the liberation of Auschwitz received saturation television and media coverage.¹¹

Clearly, this cultural “offensive” on World War Two has tapped deeply into the national psyche. During the post-war period middle-class elites with the means of expression and self-expression, linked by background, education and vision, nurtured the Second World War by providing much of the initial stimulus: memoirs, novels, articles, radio talks, lectures and television programmes, which formed the cultural and media-wide basis of post-1945 Britain’s cinematic representations of the war. So, those in a position to articulate or write their stories were complemented by those able to screen them. Influential film-maker Michael Balcon set the criteria for remembering the war in his article, ‘Let British Films Be Ambassadors to the World’ (1945).¹² In response to anti-British German propaganda, he sought ‘a place of recognition among nations who have too long been presented with the debit side of our account’.¹³ In doing so, film-makers fashioned, stimulated, reflected, and satisfied a voracious public appetite for World War Two. Balcon summed-up their position:

We were middle-class people brought up with middle-class backgrounds and rather conventional educations. Though we were radical in our points of view, we did not want to tear down institutions ... We were people of the immediate post-war generation, and we voted Labour for the first time after the war; this was our mild revolution ... Of course, we wanted to look for a more just society in the terms of that we knew ... we were going through a mildly euphoric period then; believing in ourselves and having some sense of ... national pride.¹⁴

Whilst not positing a locker-room conspiracy this thesis argues that, at a major turning point in British history, film-makers favoured limited social engineering and cultural re-conditioning, revising the memory of war as new political situations, trends and

ideas superseded the 'People's War'. Balcon's key phrases 'we did not want to tear down institutions' and 'a more just society in the terms of what we knew', indicate an emphasis on a "re-tuned" status quo. Moreover, we would expect to see a cultural legacy of this nature - justifying, remembering, coming-to-terms with and reworking this war - in its immediate aftermath, but would not expect it to last over 60 years. This enabled successive British Prime Ministers, American Presidents, politicians and pundits - of whatever persuasion and without the need to clarify their references - to draw freely and selectively on potent British cinematic imagery, with its cultural, media-wide support system, for their late twentieth and twenty-first century wars, or proposed wars, because this imagery has transcended time and national boundaries.

Consequently, this thesis aims to introduce and scrutinize themes which have either been ignored or inadequately examined in earlier studies, in the belief that these particular war films are an important vehicle of expression and dissemination of the mythic war experience. Although presenting a specific, idealised view, myths contain truths. Middle-class hopes, fears and disappointments also inhabit post-1945 war films. Following the enormous outpouring of war-related literature, officers' memoirs broadened perceptions of the war experience and also created new myths surrounding the prisoner-of-war, the maverick and Combined Operations.¹⁵ Initially, these myths were phased in skilfully, in tandem with those acceptable myths of 1939-45 which had become firmly entrenched in, and sustained by, the public's consensual memory. So, my purpose is threefold: Firstly, to examine British World War Two films made between 1945-65, identifying unexplored areas, seeking to show how war films were used for purposes other than telling stories, or for box office success. Secondly, to explore the historical context in which these films were produced. Thirdly, to analyse

the themes, ideas and attitudes these films promoted by focusing on several important elements: the fusion of class, masculinity and national identity; women and femininity; reconciliation with the enemy; and the process of personal and national redemption and regeneration through the war experience. Offering what is essentially a “political” reading and a full contextual analysis, this thesis will trace how cinematic images brought into play during the war, were largely superseded in peacetime. The importance of middle-class notions of national identity and imagery, as constructed at that time, cannot be over-stated (despite being briefly challenged in the late 1950s and early 1960s). These instructive films should not be lightly dismissed.

World War Two revitalised British film production, created a new “realism” and a “national” cinema. Highly praised, key British war films made between 1939-45 such as *In Which We Serve* (1942), *Millions Like Us* (1943) and *The Way Ahead* (1944), offered crucially emotive and widely-recognized iconographic images of communities and common folk: the dome of St Paul’s soaring above the fires of the Blitz; people united and sheltering underground; and the constantly imitated flight crew of *Target for Tonight* (1941). Post-1945 versions delivered an equally compelling, internationally understood iconography, now featuring mainly elites and in-groups. Cinematic images of: the wartime flight deck; the command post; the bridge; the operations room; the submarine; the POW camp; the desert patrol - and the very British officers who manned them - endure. British stars of these films have an iconography so forceful that their names evoke the Second World War. John Mills, Jack Hawkins and Dirk Bogarde, for example, became icons to both genders. This war has its own, instantly identifiable, popular music. On representations of war, Sorlin writes:

Frankness and discretion are two systems of signs used to describe the same event. Films can reveal what is meant to be understood through euphemism, but only if we determine what is intended to be passed over in silence, that “real” war which is the quest of every historian and every cameraman.¹⁶

What is ‘meant to be passed over in silence’ reveals much in these films, applying not only to the war (and the impossibility or inadvisability of absolute realism), but to acceptance of its myths and the genre’s involvement with current issues. Contemporaneous audiences understood that. This study aims to break that ‘silence’ by searching out what the cinematic war story was saying to the post-war world, what Basinger calls ‘these shifting messages’ which ‘indicate what audiences of a particular era learned or wanted’ or, I would add, “needed”.¹⁷ Re-activation of the Dunkirk myth in Balcon’s *Dunkirk* (1958) was a salve to national pride after the 1956 Suez debacle. His archive reveals that he wrote this screen credit, insisting upon its use: ‘This was Dunkirk. True men, false hopes were torn to shreds here, but a nation was made whole’.¹⁸ Even so, as audiences revelled in the wartime accomplishments of British elites, international politics “demanded” a revised image for Germany. Officially, only the Nazis were bad. British cinema, as this study will show, was ambiguous on representations of Germany (and Italy), but remained resolutely anti-Japanese.

In 1946, politician Enoch Powell observed that the ‘life of nations is lived largely in the imagination’.¹⁹ Consequently, creating, establishing, and expressing a nation’s ‘corporate imagination’ is fundamental to its understanding of the ‘picture of its own nature, its past and future, and its place among other nations in the world, which it carries in its imagination. The manner of this imagining is nearly all historical’.²⁰ Quoting Plato’s *The Republic*, historian Nairn tells us that the ‘form of such imagining is myth’; that the politician’s task is to ‘offer his people good myths

and to save them from harmful myths'.²¹ Is this part of what post-war British cinema - with its informal, but powerful Establishment links - was attempting to do, whilst reminding the world of Britain's greatness as the Empire began to erode? I would argue that cinema was uniquely placed to do so, being enormously popular, reaching enthusiastic, heterogeneous and habitual audiences. Until the end of the 1940s, references to inclusiveness - 'we are all in it together' and the 'community at war' - can be found. During the 1950s, the myths favoured by film-makers to establish and express the nation's 'corporate imagination' began to centre on leadership, a war of elite masculinity and in-groups, with subtle links to imperialism and class distinctions.

Film-makers shrewdly retained Churchillian rhetoric. Snippets of his celebrated wartime speeches inhabit these films. Churchill personified both the last great imperialist, and the age of the common man in the Second World War, successfully bridging the two. Vitaly, as leader *extraordinaire*, he embodied the abiding myths of Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain, Britain standing alone and our 'finest hour'. Significantly, he paid generous tribute to the role of the people. To ensure the success of these World War Two myths historian Calder suggests that:

A consensual memory of 1940 was, in fact, an important basis for the political consensus which was achieved after the war ... myths must be consensual, they contain truths, they do not deny, are selective, and become facts from the past.²²

Agreeing with French philosopher Barthes, Calder continues:

Myth has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification and making contingency appear normal ... myth establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves'.²³

Conceptualisation therefore, is crucial in reaching not only audiences' consciousness, but beyond this, into the realms of the unconscious, the implicit understood and to the point which 'confirmed and reinforced existing ideas and attitudes'.²⁴

By the mid-1950s, a strident body of critics turned against the war film, and the mass paperback book market (including popular school editions), which preceded the genre. Because these contemporaneous critics and film historians, motivated by competing agendas and a variety of perspectives, held such strong views, their comments have tended to shape the ensuing historiography of post-war British Second World War films. This explains why they were ignored for so long. In the process, what war films had to say between 1945-65, their popularity with cinema audiences and, surprisingly, as my research has discovered, some critical acclaim, became subsumed beneath this well-orchestrated legacy of derision. Resultant academic neglect effectively denied us access to a significant, informative and lasting genre of British film (and later, television) output. Journalist David Walker's appraisal in the *News Chronicle* was emblematic, and highlighted media-wide involvement:

How long is the last war going to last? At sea, on land and in the air it ended in 1945. In books, the cinema and television there has not yet been a VE-Day or a VJ-Day ... In the book world there has been a great barrage of generals to round off the adventures ... TV addicts ... have been back in North Africa, fighting across Normandy and enmeshed in the cold fog of the Ardennes. We have seen the fire service at work in the Blitz. At sea, on land and in the air the retrospective war continues ... a strange mixture of good and evil and a tangle of cross purposes.²⁵

Critiques from William Whitebait of *The New Statesman*, and Leslie Mallory of the *News Chronicle* - detailed in Chapter One - strongly opposed the views of prominent critics such as the *Sunday Times*' Dilys Powell. She had enjoyed 1940s' war films, 'the admirable democratic principles, the reticent characterization, the new solidarity of background, the group-heroes', but warned they must evolve.²⁶ Of the 1950s' war films her comment, 'such an adventure', on *Ice Cold in Alex*, is characteristic.²⁷ Whitebait cynically saw them as 'illusionary mirrors ... [made by] ... counterfeiters of war'.²⁸ It was not until the 1980s, that revisionist historians began to re-claim post-war British

cinema. Interestingly, the Falklands War led to a 1983 British Film Institute Summer School and a collection of essays on World War Two films, amidst concerns that, during the Falklands conflict, the right wing appropriated the myths of the Second World War.²⁹ Nevertheless, any such commandeering, or attempted commandeering, must necessarily compete with cinema's firmly established war genre, its myths, truths, distortions and privileged position deep within the national psyche.

However, it was *A Mirror for England* (1970), Raymond Durnat's seminal work on British cinema that provided the initial inspiration for this thesis.³⁰ Four later articles revealed a serious gap in our knowledge of this largely unexplored post-war British genre: Nicholas Pronay, 'The British Post-bellum Cinema : A Survey of the films relating to WWII made in Britain between 1945 and 1960' (1988);³¹ Neil Rattigan, 'The Last Gasp of the Middle Class : British War Films in the 1950s' (1994);³² John Ramsden, 'Refocussing the "People's War" : British War Films of the 1950s' (1998);³³ and James Chapman, 'Our Finest Hour revisited : The Second World War in British Feature Films Since 1945' (1998).³⁴ Major works on British cinema by historians such as Curran and Porter, Barr, Higson and Street, are not concerned with the genre.³⁵ Roy Armes was one of a handful of historians for whom the films symbolize a nostalgia for a 'nation's cosy retreat into a never, never land'.³⁶ Specialist works by Richards,³⁷ Murphy,³⁸ MacKenzie,³⁹ and Connelly⁴⁰, for example, do not offer a full contextual analysis of these films. Spicer, looking at the 1950s' spate of the more nationally inclusive service and war comedies, concludes that they provided 'a necessary alternative to the official myth.'⁴¹ This limited selection from the Literature

Review reinforces the impression that a sizeable gap in our knowledge exists. At this point, it would be worthwhile to establish the parameters of a Second World War film.

Definition

What is a war film? Must it be set entirely during wartime, or begin or end in war? Gifford defines it broadly as 'a dramatic story in a wartime setting or reconstruction of a wartime incident'.⁴² Pronay's list of post-war British Second World War films contains a mixture of narrow, as in *The Dam Busters*, set entirely in the war, and wide definitions, as in *They Made Me A Fugitive*, on post-war crime. He lists the comedies, but not *Passport to Pimlico*, a popular film fitting the wider definition because events emanate from the post-war discovery of a German World War Two bomb.⁴³ American film historian Jeanine Basinger identifies a basic set of conventions through which to define a combat-only film, realism is aimed for, they are episodic and there is a vital mission or objective to be achieved. A hero leads a group or team of men which gels together. Their humanity is frequently established by children, animals, mascots or a love of nature. The help of the military is recognized on screen and military technology is foregrounded. Periods of action, inaction, tragedy, and group conflict feature strongly. Resolution and a learning process form the climax. These basic conventions can be added to, or subtracted from.⁴⁴ Once established, Basinger claims, 'the combat film pieces can be put together as a propaganda machine or as an anti-propaganda machine'.⁴⁵ Clearly therefore, war films are a significantly useful political, ideological, social and cultural tool. Their themes should be probed.

Whilst Basinger's definition of a combat film informs many aspects of post-war British World War Two films, I suggest that the Second World War film, in its wider connotation looks beyond a wartime battle, mission, action or event, extending to its impact and aftermath. Films covering key events or central acts which are not only a part, or consequence of the war, but could not have occurred otherwise, should be included. One such post-war film *Libel*, concerns a court case wherein it was claimed that a war-traumatised aristocrat, and former prisoner-of-war, was an imposter. So a war film may examine what happens when the war returns to haunt the protagonists whose actions have been affected by the war; or depict the results of peacetime disillusion. *Tunes of Glory*, for example, set within the military, but staged outside the war, may be included, if one or more of the main characters has experienced the war and been shaped by it. Therefore, I will use my wider definition enabling important films with serious associations to World War Two, to come under the umbrella of war, including: *Frieda*; *The League of Gentlemen*; *The Ship That Died of Shame*; *Private's Progress*; *Circle of Danger*, *Reach for the Sky* and *Room at the Top*. Despite the breadth of his definition, Gifford has not catalogued these as war films.

Statistics

Post-war British film production was dominated by the genres of war, crime and comedy (Appendix 1). They are not unrelated in the context of their time and national needs. All three themes meet in films such as *The League of Gentlemen* and *Private's Progress*. War and crime concern national stability in differing ways. The celebrated British sense of humour - a national characteristic and lubricant of society, highly visible in many war films - was particularly important during Austerity and in

the 1950s. Quite specifically, all three genres promoted desired models of behaviour. Intriguingly, an examination of the figures covering the wider definition of British Second World War films 1945-1965, shows that they constituted a consistent and considerable part of British film production. Out of a total of 2444 films produced, 161 or 6.59% were war films. What is particularly striking is that during the 1950s, war films flourished. Out of a total of 1251 films released in that decade, 92 (7.3%) covered the Second World War - a key year being 1958 with 21 (16.0%) war films out of a production total of 131 films. In comparison, the peak war years of 1942 and 1943, predictably saw the production of 19 out of 54 (35.0%) and 20 out of 60 (33.3%) war films. During the war, one would expect a great interest in war films for entertainment, propaganda and morale. What is surprising is the enduring popularity of the genre throughout the post-war period, and even today.

Audiences

An unequivocally crucial factor in any assessment is that film-making is principally profit motivated. British war films were profitable. Once the challenge of television accelerated in the mid-1950s, financial considerations became more pressing. Figures for television licences jumped from 343,882 in 1950, to 4,503,766 in 1955 and, by 1960, reached 10,469,753. Cinema admissions over the same period reduced considerably from 1,396 million in 1950, to 1,182 million in 1955, and 501 million in 1960 (Appendix 2). Britain's post-1945 Second World War films, generally admired by the Americans, were certainly dollar earners. Many of them achieved popularity with home, and global, audiences - evidenced by the performances of the major war films and the lure of the stars. Top box-office films of 1953, 1955 and 1956

were *The Cruel Sea*, *The Dam Busters* and *Reach for the Sky*. In 1957-58 *The Bridge on the River Kwai* became Britain's biggest international hit, second at the box-office and, in 1958, the top money-maker in the USA. *Sink the Bismarck* continued this success in 1960, as the top box-office film in Britain. Financial considerations aside, post-1945 British Second World War feature films were instructive, leaving a lasting impression of a good war, British masculinity, national achievements and myths. As a youth, major American film director Steven Spielberg, was so impressed with them that he went on to make the internationally successful film *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) and the popular TV series *Band of Brothers* (2001), whilst also planning other World War Two films.⁴⁶

Importantly, the target audience for war films was principally male from mid-teens to mid-twenties, part of the emergent and lucrative youth culture, and the group most recently steeped in, or familiar with and receptive to, war stories, adventure and imperial heroism. It was the group most likely to be conscripted, required to fight in the Korean War, or quell nationalist urges within the Empire and Commonwealth. This group was the least likely to be aware of the brutality of the Second World War, but would have had knowledge of it from their parents.⁴⁷ Film-makers' press books and publicity distribution packs reinforced this, constantly advocating the involvement of schools, education departments, military recruitment agencies and the war's heroes - local and national. In 1946, 69% of 16-19 year olds attended the cinema at least once a week; in 1950, the figure was 60%.⁴⁸ Attendances by 16-24 year olds almost doubled between 1946 and 1960.⁴⁹ Intriguingly, a vital increase in attendances by the target audience during the genre's highpoint in the politically and militarily dangerous 1950s is clearly discernible. This indicates the popularity of the genre, and tacit acceptance of

its changing content. As the target audience embraced World War Two officer heroes, it was supplemented by Service and ex-service personnel, women, a sizeable middle-class element, and a considerable international audience.

Therefore, the essential significance of these statistics to this study is not only the genre's vigour and durability, but that film-makers knew their audiences and the messages that cinema could successfully reflect or impose, implicitly and explicitly. For Britain's middle classes, the brand of national unity essential to the 'People's War' had become redundant, having made 'contingency appear normal'.⁵⁰ Cold War realities may also have impacted on toning-down the 'People's War', historian Howard states,

... war is now seen as being a matter for governments and not for peoples: an affair of mutual destruction inflicted at remote distances by technological specialists operating according to the arcane calculations of strategic analysts. Popular participation is considered neither necessary or desirable.⁵¹

Additionally, some thought that the idea of the 'New Jerusalem' had gone too far. Others believed it had been betrayed. In a challenging period, national regeneration was promoted alongside a much-coveted, continuing, world role for Britain. This featured re-alignment of Commonwealth and Empire and a re-designation of western-style democracy. Reconstruction of nation and family was considered by government, the Church, social commentators and film-makers to depend upon reassertion of gender roles. So, the time-honoured leadership of elite British masculinity was on the "political" agenda. Consequently, the adventurous public school, pre-1914 imperialist hero was subtly re-invented. Practically everything reflected in Britain's post-1945 war cinema flows from him in some way. Contemporaneous re-releases, and re-makes, of well-liked imperialist films such as *The Four Feathers* (1939) and *The Drum* (1938),

reinforced his – and Britain’s – position as experienced, natural leaders.⁵² Significantly, Britain’s film-makers were competing with Hollywood’s vast global market as America assumed Superpower status. This explains the ambiguous British attitude towards the USA in British war films 1945-1965, and the need to express understated British excellence.

Paradoxically, mid-1950s’ British critics’ concerns that American films were too aggressive and violent for British audiences, existed alongside the view that British understatement was equally dangerous.⁵³ Nevertheless, doubts on the crucial significance of World War Two films to peacetime national myths and imagery should be dispelled by the furious row which broke out between Britain and America on the USA’s apparent cinematic take-over of World War Two, resulting in the withdrawal of *Objective Burma* (1945) after one week, following British audiences’ disapproval. In 1955, questions arose in Parliament about Hollywood’s ‘tampering’ with, and ‘gross distortion’ of, the version of *The Dam Busters* shown in the USA – this amounted to a few seconds of extra footage. *The Great Escape* (1968) was similarly censured. In 2000 and 2001, major disagreements engulfed the film *U571* which implied that America had obtained the first German Enigma code-breaking machine, and the proposed Hollywood re-make of British cinema’s *Colditz* (using American actors and characters).⁵⁴ Yet, audiences clearly accepted some distortions with the all-encompassing return of the British officer class, whilst vigorously rejecting others. This is borne out by historian Reeves’ research into film propaganda in official and entertainment feature films on the First and Second World Wars:

Audiences constructed their own meanings in the films that they saw ... those that were positively received were, almost always those that confirmed and reinforced existing ideas and attitudes - films that set out to challenge and change those ideas and attitudes proved almost

entirely unsuccessful. Cinema audiences exercised considerable discrimination, both in the films that they chose to see and in the meanings that they constructed in the films that they did see. They had grown up with the cinema, they understood its codes and conventions (at least as well as the propagandists who sought to exploit its power), and they were never merely the passive recipients of ideas handed down to them from the silver screen ... the aspirations, beliefs and ideologies of the ordinary men, women and children who made up the cinema audience proved to be very much more resistant to manipulation than so many of those who governed them had naively assumed.⁵⁵

Because of their consciousness, discrimination and aspirations, this study proposes that large sectors of audiences (including the target audience), weaned on the 'pleasure culture of war'⁵⁶ through imperialist-inspired literature and films, were capable of making the cultural connection between post-1945 elites and familiar, romantic pre-1914 popular heroes. Since many post-war cinematic heroes emanated from best-selling "true" stories written by veterans, they represented a national ideal. Britain's World War Two genre 1945-65, through visual dexterity, characterisation and stereotyping, espoused a set of values - duty, service, patriotism, heroism, fairness and leadership - expounded by the middle classes and associated with a public school education. The successful dissemination of these values can be judged by the popular emergent comedies parodying what had become, or were becoming, clearly ingrained national and international images.

Changing Context

Although this thesis is dealing specifically with British Second World War films in the post-war era, it is crucial to note that this was not a homogenous period. There were shifts within British society, particularly in the late 1950s and early 1960s, that one would expect a western-style democracy to tolerate and accommodate, especially when faced with new directions and changes in the old world order occasioned by the loss of empire, the Cold War and the ignominious Suez debacle. Indeed, British cinema was skilfully dealing with two agendas. It demonstrated that

middle-class hegemony was both conservative and pragmatic, capable of pulling in two directions and willing enough to deal with controversial and sensitive issues - for example homosexuality, brought to national prominence by the appointment of the Wolfenden Committee⁵⁷ - alongside other challenges to the status quo. Underlining the whole process - and implicit within the middle-class mindset - was the firm belief that “adjustments” to the established order would not dramatically alter the structure of society despite the fact that it was becoming more meritocratic. Therefore, before covering the themes of this thesis, I want to briefly deal with these shifts. This seems an appropriate place to do so.

Key political, social and cultural changes included new attitudes to deference (including patriotism, the nation state, respect for the national flag and war); and political protests (such as the CND movement). In addition, fresh thinking on gender and feminism; more open attitudes to sex; and the rise of the new youth culture suggested the emergence of a youth-led, counter-culture that included drugs and music.⁵⁸ Marwick, in *The Sixties* (1998), a wide-ranging discussion of these changes, concludes that the ‘minor and rather insignificant movements in the fifties became major and highly significant ones in the sixties’.⁵⁹ Here, however, as an indication of the way these shifts were accommodated, I will deal with the main, over-arching, social and cultural issue, the decline of deference, as demonstrated by the increasing lampooning of imperial heroes, officers, the Second World War and, in fact, all the major British institutions.

Much of this, which reflected post-Suez discontent, was articulated by the seminal stage revue *Beyond the Fringe* (1960-62) – which comprised of satirical

sketches and musical pieces that dissected current events with razor-sharp wit. In doing so, it has been suggested that it,

... effectively represented the views and disappointments of the first generation of British people to grow up after World War II and gave voice to a sense of loss of national purpose with the end of the British Empire.⁶⁰

Yet, as Kenneth Tynan high-handedly reminded 'aspiring prole satirists', 'the tone, background and terms of reference of *Beyond the Fringe* ... are entirely middle class',⁶¹ as opposed to 'the emergent cohort of working-class, lower-middle-class and provincial writers in Britain from the late fifties onwards'.⁶² On the other hand, the latter group were central to the brief, but influential and highly critical anti-deference movement represented by British New Wave cinema. Even so, and owing a great deal to the irreverent Cambridge *Footlights* and *Oxford Revue* which preceded it in the late 1950s, writers of *Beyond the Fringe* satirised what they saw as the futile bravery and pomposity of the officer class in the Second World War as featured in literature, much more visibly in British cinema's war genre, and even on television:

Squadron Leader: I want you to take up a crate Perkins.

Flight Officer Perkins: Sah!

Squadron Leader: Fly over to Jerry. Take a shufti.

Perkins: Sah!

Squadron Leader: And don't come back.

Perkins: Sah!

Squadron Leader: You are going to lay down your life, Perkins.

Perkins: Sah!

Squadron Leader: We need a futile gesture at this stage. It will raise the whole tone of the war.

Perkins: Goodbye Sah! – Or is it *au revoir*?

Squadron Leader: No, Perkins.⁶³

A storm of protest ensued. Veterans were particularly angry, having fought in the war, they knew its horrors, had witnessed courageous acts and seen their comrades die. They now felt that their sacrifices were being devalued. At the Brighton Theatre Royal in May 1961, the sketch entitled *The Aftermyth of War*, almost completely emptied the theatre because it 'mocked such 1950s' Second World War films as *The Dam Busters* and *Reach for the Sky* ... and, in doing so, laughed at all the *clichés* about war itself'.⁶⁴

Lack of deference and the rise of satire continued, exemplified by the popular BBC television programme *That Was the Week That Was* (TW3 – 1962-63), which again ensured that all major British institutions were parodied unmercifully.⁶⁵ However, independent documentary film producer, broadcaster and journalist Robert Rowland appears to suggest a certain ambiguity by explaining that at the BBC's Lime Grove Studios, the home of TW3:

The capacity to surprise, to be original, to break new ground was vital – but all in the context of feeling part of a great institution based on Reithian principles of fairness, tolerance, balance and improvement. Respect was tempered by irreverence.⁶⁶

From a middle-class background, David Frost, leading the satirical TW3 team commented that they,

... did not come to TW3 with a specific agenda or political programme. We were not further examples of what the newspapers called “the angry young men”. We were the Exasperated Young Men – exasperated by Britain's recurring failures, by hypocrisy and the shabbiness of its politics ... There was no danger of running short of material.⁶⁷

Frost claimed that their aims were dual:

First to break open what he calls the “*cordon sanitaire*” of sanctimony that, in 1962 still surrounded public figures; and second, to treat the television audience as mature adults with independent minds and not just *hoi polloi* who accepted orders from officialdom.⁶⁸

For journalist and author Malcolm Bradbury, and his peers, the show had ‘an important effect in changing views of – and deference towards – politicians and institutions generally’.⁶⁹ Interestingly, Harold MacMillan, Tory Prime Minister from 1957 to 1963 - and a frequent target of satirists - pragmatically understood that it was ‘better to be ridiculed than ignored’.⁷⁰ TW3 may be said to have ‘brought the divisions of British society to the surface’⁷¹ but, in advance of this, British cinema played a major role in disseminating media-wide critiques of both British imperialist and Second World War heroes, and national institutions, through war and non-war films.

Vitaly, despite vigorously promoting British leadership in the war genre, filmmakers embraced, responded to, and even led some of these critiques. This provided a safe forum where issues could be aired and/or resolved. In her examination of loss of imperial power, its cultural significance post-1939, and changing attitudes towards heroic masculinity, in *Englishness and Empire* (2005), Webster observes of the imperialist hero that:

The high-minded hero and his codes of duty and honour also became the target of considerable levity across a range of media, including film, radio and television. In the *Goon Show* – a radio comedy that ran in various series from June 1952 to January 1960 – Major Denis Bloodnock (Peter Sellers) an ex-India army man, late of the ‘Third Disgusting Fusiliers’, is corrupt, cowardly, seedy, and impoverished, prone to embezzlement and fraud, making off with regimental funds’.⁷²

This was mirrored in films such as *Carlton-Browne of the FO* (1959) which, she points out, depicted the imperial figure – sent out to handle the granting of independence to Gallardia, a remote island under British “protection” – as ‘hugely incompetent’, and the British representative, who had been inadvertently ignored, was an illustration of ‘decrepit, doddering, enfeebled masculinity’.⁷³ In the much later film comedy *Carry on Up the Khybur* (1968), the Imperial Governor and his Lady – Sir Sidney Ruff-Diamond (Sidney James) and Lady Ruff-Diamond (Joan Sims) – were vulgar, and lacked the ‘appropriate upper-class credentials as imperial officials’.⁷⁴ Yet, despite this, there is ambiguity, and in one of cinema’s most memorable scenes Sir Sidney and Lady Ruff-Diamond and their officials carried on polite dinner conversation to a background of tasteful music as the Residence was under continual bombardment from insurrectionists. This demonstration of British phlegm ended with Ruff-Diamond calmly taking personal charge and successfully defeating the enemy. Even *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1958), a serious film, was ambivalent, being critical of heroic values such as duty, patriotism and honour and also upholding them.⁷⁵ Colonel Nicholson (Alec Guinness), its central character, is open to a number of readings. He

has been criticised as outmoded for having 'an imperial world view and a history of service in the empire' and, post Suez, as having 'helped to undermine the credibility of the national greatness which the officer hero incarnated'.⁷⁶ The film has also been read as anti-war, and 'through the conventions of the imperial and war genres as an exciting adventure, and a tribute to British heroism.'⁷⁷

Harper and Porter's *British Cinema of the 1950s : The Decline of Deference* (2003) focuses on the British film industry at a time of great change within that industry. There was much government intervention, many financial restraints and a marked rise of dominant non-creative personalities such as John Davis. This occurred as the power and influence of the "old guard" of film-makers such as Balcon and Korda, lessened. Pressure from, or involvement with, Hollywood meant that British film-makers sometimes worked, under collaborative conditions, with the Americans. Harper and Porter also highlighted the increasing importance of screenwriters, cameramen and producer/director teams. Of the latter, John and Roy Boulting and Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat - two of the best teams - provided some of the most memorable comedy critiques.⁷⁸ Commenting on this, Harper and Porter reveal that:

When artistic maturity coincides with laxness in the administrative hierarchy, innovations will usually occur. The enhanced creativity of the Boultings and Launder and Gilliat flowered in the managerial vacuum at British Lion. Both teams experimented with a new type of comedy that combined sexual cynicism with a degree of jaundice about existing class structures. They were all films which mocked deference and the old certainties.⁷⁹

All of this coincided with, and reflected, a society in flux, differing audience tastes (and even audiences) and both supply and demand pressure on censorship issues. Apart from the sizeable comedy and parody war sub-genre in which incompetence, criminality, lack of deference and motivation frequently flourished alongside maintenance of the status quo, cinema dealt with society's shifts in a number of

significant films. Moreover, it is worthy of note that the Boulting brothers' comedy *Private's Progress* (1956), a prime example of cross-class greed and lack of deference 'based on the premise that all power corrupts, that hierarchies encourage a ruthless, pragmatic self-interest, and that a self-deluding venality is coiled at the heart of British culture'⁸⁰, was released in the same year as the hagiographic *Reach for the Sky*, the story of RAF officer pilot hero Douglas Bader, ranking just below it at the box office. *Private's Progress* is further distinguished by enjoying a re-release in 1957 which Harper and Porter attribute to the impact of the Suez crisis which was 'crucial in changing people's attitude toward military authority'.⁸¹ Despite the efforts of younger film-makers - such as Tony Richardson - to push the boundaries, Harper and Porter point out that:

The British film establishment insisted that if the working class wanted to improve its lot, it would have to remain respectful to its social betters. Reith, Rank, Davis, and Balcon all thought that social progress had to come from a benevolent moral order which required due deference from the workers. Only at ABPC did a different class arrangement obtain. There, the Scots cultural outsider Robert Clark allowed his *émigré* scenarios editor, Frederick Gottfurt, to nurture his sly and subtle critiques of the British middle classes.⁸²

This is particularly interesting, since Robert Clark also produced ABPC's *The Dam Busters* (1955), a lasting paean to middle-class endeavour.

In the serious war genre, two of the best critiques of heroic elite masculinity and the class system can be found in the controversial and successful New Wave film *Room at the Top* (1959), adapted from working-class John Braine's novel and directed by Jack Clayton; and *Tunes of Glory* (1960), which was adapted from upper-middle class James Kennaway's novel and directed by Ronald Neame.⁸³ Set in 1947 and the mid-1950s respectively, both films took a bleak view of lack of deference and its consequences.⁸⁴ The 'youthful male protagonists' of New Wave films 'produce a very different version of masculine identity ... [they] ... are marked by an aggressive

heterosexuality and individuality that offers a modernized version of Northern masculinity, and they are in quest of heterosexual adventures', Webster observes.⁸⁵ Joe Lampton (Laurence Harvey), the working-class anti-hero in *Room at the Top* exemplifies this. The 'New Jerusalem' had clearly failed, vast wealth and the elites' misuse of power and privilege in the northern city of Warnley were strongly contrasted with working-class Dufton's continuing class inequalities, excessive poverty, bomb damage and general drabness.⁸⁶ In a particularly telling scene Joe, born in Dufton, contrasted Warnley's clean river in which children swam, with Dufton's dangerously polluted canals and unhealthy environment. A former Sergeant and POW, Joe challenged his class position, officer heroics and contemporary sexual *mores* as he focussed his ambitions on Warnley society; his bitterness towards the officer-class, particularly Cambridge educated ex-officer Jack Wales (John Prestbrook), an over-confident, over-privileged, arrogant snob; and his sexual appetites on a millionaire mill-owner's virginal daughter and a worldly, married French woman.⁸⁷ Warnley's manipulative elites did not display a social conscience. On the other hand, Joe's ambitions and the way he achieved them were selfish, amoral and ultimately unsatisfactory, since they left him dissatisfied and without class membership. Harper and Porter confirm that:

The popularity of both *Room at the Top* (1959) and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960) showed that it was possible to construct films which carefully ensured that although their heroes succeeded in challenging the old deferential values, they were not entirely happy with the outcome ... The success of both films lay in their ability to construct dramas in which the structures of feeling simultaneously – and ambiguously – appealed to both young working-class males and to the older, more conservative, middle-class couples in the audience.⁸⁸

Room at the Top 'set the precedent for the [Film Censorship] Board's attitude to the winds of change that were blowing into British cinema from the theatre, the novel, and elsewhere'.⁸⁹ Although ground-breaking in its honesty, sexual freedom and realism, in the final analysis, *Room at the Top* (discussed further in Chapter 6) appears to advocate

maintenance of the status quo or, at least, the need for a certain level of personal integrity that the main protagonists clearly lacked.

Taking place entirely within a proud Scottish - and enclosed - regimental setting, *Tunes of Glory* (also discussed in Chapter 6) put gentlemanly Lt. Colonel Basil Barrow (John Mills), a traditional careerist from a successful military background, in direct opposition to acting Lt. Colonel Jock Sinclair (Alec Guinness) a coarse, loudmouthed braggart who rose through the ranks. Their battle of wills - and Sinclair's smirking lack of deference - resulted in tragedy because Barrow, a physically and psychologically damaged ex-Japanese POW, could not sustain his traditional authority in the face of Sinclair's deliberately disrespectful, disruptive behaviour and divisive tactics. Moreover, in the novel Jock is portrayed as the hero, if somewhat fallible. In the film - which was also scripted by Kennaway - he becomes 'more of an egocentric monster'.⁹⁰ For Murphy the story develops into a 'fascinating study of conflict and survival centered upon a war hero who is 'ill-adjusted to the needs of peacetime society and resentful of an unjust class system'.⁹¹ Furthermore, the film ends ambiguously since a third character, Major Charles Scott (Dennis Price), who pragmatically and self-servingly operated on both sides, assumed control of the regiment. Film-makers clearly engaged with gritty social realism and class versus meritocracy in both *Room at the Top* and *Tunes of Glory*. Following the angry young man film *Look Back in Anger* (1958), based on John Osborne's play, Joe Lampton and Jock Sinclair presaged the attitudes of cinema's most famous angry young man, factory worker Arthur Seaton (Albert Finney), in the seminal non-war film *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1961). Arthur's two most telling utterances: 'All I want is a good time. The rest is

propaganda', and 'don't let the bastards grind you down' encapsulated the developing mood of an era for many cinema-goers.

Films of the calibre of *Sea of Sand* (1958) and *The Cruel Sea* (1953) respectively questioned the heroic officer and the nature of war, whilst *The Camp on Blood Island* (1958) highlighted its sheer barbarity. *The Ship That Died of Shame* (1955) remains the archetypal criticism of the failure of the New Jerusalem and contains a stinging critique of the failings of the officer class, in the person of Major Fordyce (Roland Culver) who, tired of working for 'the plebs', may have been fighting on the 'wrong side'.⁹² *Very Important Person* (1961) could question and parody the heroics of the *The Colditz Story* (1954), the film that spawned an industry, as well as setting the mythical benchmark for POWs in Europe. Questioning, or mocking, everything from women's sexuality, homosexuality, the home front and war, to British leadership and heroism, *The Long and the Short and the Tall* (1961), is a very bitter indictment of these things. However, with the restoration of British leadership, heroic deaths and the prospect of ending with a Japanese atrocity, ambiguity is again present. Film-makers, Harper and Porter argue,

... had to reassure audiences that the familiar emotional landscapes were still there, but they also had to provide them with an image of new possibilities. Their task was both to neutralize anxiety and also to stimulate the audience's imagination. This dual function was in acute tension in 1950s British cinema.⁹³

The war genre appears to confirm this. A safe distance from the event, a new, dramatically different style of war film emerged, in which heroics could be questioned, portrayals of women could be more open and where much could be parodied or questioned.⁹⁴ Yet, it is worth noting that both the satire of the late 1950s and early 1960s, and the New Wave were relatively short-lived, although clearly important.⁹⁵ Having acknowledged here both that film-makers dealt with the decline of deference

and the lack of homogeneity within the war genre, and that this should be borne in mind, this thesis has identified elite masculinity's democratic leadership skills and experience as film-makers' key message, and will contend that this continued throughout the period under review.

Themes

The key aspects of the originality of this thesis lie in the fact that it offers a "political" interpretation of British post-1945 World War Two films produced at a time of great flux. Thus far, no project has attempted to approach the subject in this way. Beyond lamenting the ending of the cinematic 'People's War', and the disappearance of women post-1945, there has been no conspicuous effort to identify this genre's numerous themes or to trace issues in depth. Suggestions that the popularity of these films symbolizes a moratorium, a fear of World War III, or excessive nostalgia, are only partially accepted. This project challenges Pronay's theory that they embody a national catharsis (an almost apologetic working out of a nation's actions), arguing that national regeneration is at the heart of the genre. For the purposes of this study, the term 'national regeneration' has been identified as a key theme running through the prolific number of British Second World War films made between 1945-65. Although it is recognized that national, class and gender issues were undoubtedly very important aspects of national regeneration and identity within the post-1945 genre, I will argue that film-makers' chief concern was the favourable presentation of Britain on the international stage. Central to this was the notion that British leadership, always consensual - and even natural - was the result of generations of unparalleled leadership experience, heavily influenced by the public schools. Such leadership was equal to the

contemporaneous challenges of a changing post-war world since, pragmatic by nature, it could evolve and adapt to new circumstances without losing its essential stability and its newly-stated - and constantly reiterated - democratic ideals. Moreover, following a perceived reduction in status due to Japan's easy victory in Singapore during the war, the 1947 loss of India and its aftermath, the Cold War and the emergence of America and Russia as Superpowers, the continuing importance of British leadership could not be stressed too much. Additionally, prescient new alliances in Europe also fuelled a need to portray the best that Britain could offer. Therefore, post-1945 and for these reasons, national identity as exemplified by the officer class can be seen as regenerative, both for national needs and, more specifically, to maintain international reputation and respect.

Furthermore, it marked a shift in gender roles as the wartime representation of a feminised national identity - the 'Mother Country', Britannia, women's involvement in the war, child-rearing and as something worth fighting for - was masculinised and largely superseded by the subtle blending of heroic British elite masculinity and leadership qualities. These heroes, with roots in the public school and Britain's imperialist heritage, were modernised, democratised and technologically innovative. This suggests a major departure from the inclusive, class-unity redolent in the rhetoric and imagery that was used in the 'People's War' films made during the war, and highlights a move towards an almost exclusive war of newly revitalised elite masculinity as exemplars of national identity. Post-war class divisions, not resolved by the war, and present in the perceived failure of the 'New Jerusalem', meant that on the national stage, middle-class hegemony had reasserted itself. This study argues that this

had little to do with Rattigan's espousal of vengeful and bitter middle-class recriminations.⁹⁶ It was much more firmly rooted in a pragmatically "revised" status quo that had national interests on the world stage as well as national regeneration at its heart.

Essentially, in the cinematic war genre post-1945, national regeneration operating at national and international levels through elite masculinity, culturally reinforced the British class system yet allowed room for manoeuvre and, to an extent, put gender issues on the agenda. By crucially laying a serious claim to a "deserved" and continuing leading role in global politics - and despite the satire of the late 1950s and early 1960s - film-makers showed that Britain was still a major nation, and a very necessary player on the international scene.

Accordingly, this study will analyse the ways in which Britain's film-makers took the moral high ground reflecting and promoting national prestige and leadership, essential ingredients in Britain's post-war recovery, by investigating several major themes. The first theme in Chapter Two, class and the return of officer elites, will trace how film-makers recapitulated class and gender positions by reclaiming and redefining national identity and masculinity through a range of elite types. Extending this, and since discussion of the whole sub-genre of prisoner-of-war (POW) films remains an untapped source, this study breaks new ground in Chapter Three, by scrutinizing the agenda of the cinematic war as experienced by officer elites in captivity as prisoners of the Germans, the Italians and the Japanese. Further, my second theme women and femininity in Chapter Four, adds another new dimension with its interpretation of

resultant changes, similarities and continuities in perceptions and expectations of women. British pragmatism post-1945 towards two former enemies, and condemnation of a third, along with continuities from 1939-45 are explored in the third theme in Chapter Five - what these films were really saying and why? The fourth theme, in Chapter Six, concerns war's dysfunctional residue and how it was accommodated and made safe in a sub-genre not previously subjected to analysis as a whole. From these and other standpoints - including the language used - this study challenges the assumption that war films have little or nothing to say. Instead, by identifying perceptibly political and socially aware messages, this work aims to fill the gap in our understanding of the genre highlighted by Chapman and Ramsden and through my research.

Too important to go un-remarked, other fundamental, interwoven themes serve as background. Britain was marketed as the democratic saviour of the world, non-aggressive and non-militaristic (unless provoked). National characteristics were celebrated. Europe was reminded of her indebtedness. Conflicts between career and conscripted officers confirmed that, in Britain, they could learn from each other without contamination. Respect for America - Britain's major ally - was tempered by anti-American bias. This was evident in cutting remarks made by British officers and by initially unflattering representations of the American military (against a changed global power structure and social jealousies). Contributions from the white Dominions and the Commonwealth (against the backdrop of loss of Empire), from Scotland and Wales (against worries of nationalist sympathies) and from the Resistance (because much of their work - and leadership - was engineered by Britain) were freely

acknowledged. However, Indian and African involvement went unsung (because of those who fought, or sympathised, with the enemy; and Indian Independence). British cinema treated the Italians as a joke in *Danger Within*. The film was refused distribution there.⁹⁷ However, *Conspiracy of Hearts* offered a positive depiction. During periods of Anglo-Irish hostility, the Irish could be depicted as traitors, a prime example being *The Man Who Never Was* featuring a pro-Nazi Irish spy and an anti-British Irish cell. Yet, *Cockleshell Heroes* celebrated the Irishman (nicknamed IRA) who volunteered to fight for Britain. Although received wisdom was that these films are bland and emotionless, important issues of sexuality, deep emotions and self control were gently probed, usually through the masculine ideal. Officers essentially provided a marketable counter-image to Hollywood's promotion of US heroes and its effete depictions of British masculinity. By offsetting British screen images of the 1940s' melodramatic anti-hero, the spiv, the homosexual, the parodies, the emergent youth culture and later, the working class anti-hero, officer elites set new standards whilst awakening old, and trusted, memories.

Methodology

Within the past 25-30 years, the study of feature films has achieved credibility amongst historians as evidence of contemporaneous issues, be it social change or the reflection and promotion of ideas and tendencies. Films are valued for the information they yield, for what is assumed or tacitly understood. Moreover, the way this information can be interpreted, and who or what holds centre stage, provides further crucial insights. Cinema's propaganda value has long been recognised. But any study of feature films as an historical source must be conscious of its values and limitations.

Films are a collaborative effort, providing a unique record of contemporaneous issues, yet are always going to be an interpretation, what someone wants to steer us towards by appealing to our senses of sight and hearing, enlisting both our understanding and emotions. So, the 'paper trail' must be followed.⁹⁸ (Thomas Cripps suggested that the documentation surrounding a film forms the 'paper trail'. It should be examined in conjunction with a film, or wrong conclusions may be drawn). 'With each newly examined moving-image document the scholar is challenged to test the credibility, reliability, and authenticity of the film itself ... with the same rigor as that brought to bear on any ancient manuscript', Cripps advises.⁹⁹ Therefore, the methodology adopted will be that established by historians such as John O'Connor, Pierre Sorlin and Jeffrey Richards - using feature film as an historical documentary source. Three questions must be asked: What influences were at work in shaping the film? What is the connection between the medium and the message? Who saw the film and how might it have influenced them?¹⁰⁰ So we must be concerned with production, content and reception. In essence this involves close reading of the films in their historical and political context and the social situation which produced them; analysing what the film-makers were saying at textual and sub-textual levels, and exploring structure, meaning and iconography as conveyed by script, image, acting, direction and music. Finally, this study will consider how this genre was received by examining audience reaction. Production histories will be dealt with and the relationship between film-makers, the Establishment and the military ascertained. Equally, the iconography of actors and their representation as particular national types - for example John Mills (labelled the 'quintessential Englishman')¹⁰¹ - will be considered. Such a methodology differs from the theoretically-based cultural studies perspective, but is more appropriate for a contextual study employing feature films as a main historical documentary source.

So my approach attempts to shed new light on the cultural conditioning identified in the texts by using a “political” interpretation of the films. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that disciplines can overlap and reinforce each other.

Representing the interplay of propaganda, politics, powerful personalities and profit, British World War Two feature films 1945-65 would sustain such a project. Emerging from the shadows of the new atomic age where old rules and certainties collided with four minute warnings during a time of major international and domestic change, these films delivered definitive, evocative “political” messages. Cinema audiences however, as Reeves stresses, sift, sort and make sense of what they see and hear, in the context of their own experiences and cultures.¹⁰² Whilst individual experiences differed widely, audiences - with over five years of their lives dominated by World War Two - would have felt an awareness of events denied to us simply because we did not take part. Closely studying the texts of these films in their historical context should bring us nearer to that awareness, and to the underlying tensions, inclusions, exclusions, acceptances and distortions implicit in both this film genre and audiences’ post-war acquiescence. Significantly, although frequently based on true events, and despite a stated aim of realism, these films were selective and economical with the truth. This is because myths must necessarily ignore the unpalatable, which is why Bomber Command - apart from the dam busters’ precision raid - was never accorded the recognition given to the other services. Interestingly, immediately following this raid, the Germans captured a bouncing bomb intact, but the bomb’s details were not made public by the British government until 1953.

Government records are subject to the Official Secrets Act for many years after an event, and may never be fully revealed.

Sources

This thesis will draw upon a wide variety of sources, using the films themselves as primary documentation backed-up by contemporaneous criticism, reviews, press cuttings, novels, biographies, autobiographies, memoirs and film histories. The BFI Special Collections Archive (including papers by Ealing Studios' Michael Balcon) contains a wealth of information, correspondence, cinema ephemera (such as programmes, film premiere details, souvenirs, press books, and news-cuttings archives, much of it previously unused. Articles from newspapers and journals, reflecting a range of perspectives, such as *The Times*, *The New Statesman*, *The Daily Mirror*, *The News Chronicle* and *The Daily Worker* will be examined, as will government records if applicable. Military involvement (apart from screen acknowledgements) is also a useful avenue to explore and Balcon's archive contains revealing correspondence with the military.¹⁰³ The role of music in the representation and recognition of Britain and the British at war presents a further vital ingredient (the impressive *Dam Busters' March* is hummed on football terraces today, such was its impact). Fan magazines provide an *entree* into another area, the iconography and influence of the stars. The stars' position as national role models was particularly important, extending far beyond film performances into many areas of life.¹⁰⁴ Use of these sources, with close textual analysis - including examination of the language - should make it possible to uncover the depth of the cultural conditioning and re-conditioning perceptible in Britain's post-war World War Two films, thereby offering a new perspective. Certainly, British

cinema, following a period of transitional films, did re-define national identity and myths. This study is concerned with how it was done. Today the myths of both periods remain firmly established.

Chapter Content

Chapter One is a literature review, showing that existing scholarship on British Second World War films has focused almost exclusively on highly-praised war-time production. Major works on British cinema have, until recently, ignored or skimmed over post-1945 versions. This chapter also details several major contemporaneous critical perspectives, that help to explain the foundations upon which the historiography was built. Recent incursions into the genre by historians such as MacKenzie, Murphy, Chibnall, Spicer, Geraghty, Rattigan, Paris, Connelly and Webster, show that a small, but growing area of scholarship exists, and that war films are beginning to interest historians.¹⁰⁵ However, these major works have not offered a thematic analysis of the 1945-65 films such as the one outlined here.

Chapters Two and Three will illustrate the first theme, the return of middle-class elites (officers and scientists), from the perspectives of freedom and captivity. British cinema's class and gender based depictions were part of the social, cultural, economic and political counter-attack by the middle classes amidst fears of loss of status identified by historians Addison, Childs and McKibbin.¹⁰⁶ Of interest, is the linear progression of the ex-public school, pre-1914 imperialist-type hero and his metamorphosis into the extremely professional, democratic Second World War officer hero.¹⁰⁷ Modern yet familiar, he seamlessly continued a nationally recognized literary and cinematic tradition, except for the 'People's War' period 1940-45.¹⁰⁸ National

prestige and regeneration, therefore, are at the heart of this project. With the pragmatism that defines British democracy, this hero embodied a usable past, a praiseworthy present, and promised exemplary future leadership for, and from, a nation whose imperialist history was under international scrutiny. So, this study further argues that in the era of that most potent re-statement of class barriers, the 1953 British Coronation, the right wing “secured” extensive, if not totally exclusive, cinematic appropriation of World War Two, as film-makers and their establishment contacts rediscovered and redefined this “just” war, distorting the war story as they did so. They also reflected ideas prevalent within contemporaneous society.

Chapter Two initially focuses on *The Dam Busters* (1955), concerning a precision bombing mission into the heart of Germany. The raid became a vital part of Churchill’s propaganda effort and later, of film-maker’s mythologized war. A fine example of scientific achievement, courage and daring, it told the story of leader and organisation man *par excellence*, Guy Gibson, who secretly carried his Boy Scout badge on the raid. The film portrayed the heroism, and *esprit de corps*, of allegedly elite, hand-picked officers with clear links to the Commonwealth and the Dominions.¹⁰⁹ Accorded immediate legendary status, their story was distorted, and never fully revealed on screen. Masculinity was enhanced by their technological mastery and facilitated by unparalleled scientific skill. The portrayal of Barnes Wallis, family man and scientist, the inventor of the bouncing bomb, was endearing, unusually taking up one-third of screen time. Like the bickering scientists in *School for Secrets* (1942 & 1946) he represented the cinematic birth of the boffin/scientist who, with a new reassuring image, worked alongside the military. The film explored many agendas, including a celebration of Bomber Command’s precision bombing campaign, as a

response to critics of area bombing. Interestingly, British cinema widened and reinforced its messages using other officer exemplars. So, in contrast, this chapter also examines the role of exciting mavericks, men who bent, tested or circumvented the rules. Frequently upper-class, these officers could be embroiled in ill-thought out *Boys' Own*-type adventures as well as their more successful covert or "dirty" war. Here, *Sea of Sand* (1958) is the key film.¹¹⁰

Chapter Three scrutinizes the different cinematic war experienced by the captured officer elites living with the enemy, in enemy territory. This popular prisoner-of-war sub-genre was motivated around the public school ethos and glorified consensual British leadership. *The Colditz Story* (1954), my key film on the POW experience, concentrates on escape, revealing nothing of the process of initial capture and interrogation, yet is regarded as being definitive. Differing perceptions of incarceration by the Germans (an adventurous public school wheeze) or the Japanese (hell on earth), will be discussed. Most of these films concerned the war against Germany and featured selective myths. The Colditz myth glamorised incarceration in the West. One film similarly dealt with the Italians. Supporting films are: *The Wooden Horse* (1950); *Danger Within* (1959); *Albert RN* (1953); *The Password is Courage* (1962) and *Very Important Person* (1961). A noteworthy handful of POW films with more dramatic agendas tackled the Far East war. In these, film-makers treated British officers sympathetically when they behaved ruthlessly, depicting this as being out of character and because of unremitting provocation. Marketed as anti-war films, which ensured that the violence and atrocities passed censorship and reached the public, they were anti-Japanese. Japan was a huge market for cinema, and strategically important in terms of Communist China, but this bitterness still remains.¹¹¹ My key film will be *The*

Camp on Blood Island (1958). This is supported by: *Yesterday's Enemy* (1959); *The Long and the Short and the Tall* (1961); *The Wind Cannot Read* (1958) and *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1958). The sub-genre largely air brushed the working classes out of the prison camp. Significantly, POW films hinted at homosexuality, a sensitive issue during the 1950s' homosexual witch-hunts. Where homosexuality was subtly implied, this was normally compensated for in terms of extra strong leadership and courage.¹¹² Therefore, being homosexual did not automatically portend cowardice. Moreover, the overt effeteness of *Danger Within* and *Very Important Person* closely followed this model. Homosexuality was also implied in films like *Circle of Danger* (1951) and *The League of Gentlemen* (1960). Nonetheless, war films in general signified a close bonding between men not possible in peacetime.

Chapter Four focuses on the second theme, women and femininity. My key film is *The Cruel Sea* (1953). Post-1945, war films positively re-affirming elite British masculinity set both officialdom's, and society's, preferred gender parameters. Resumption of family life was perceived as being under threat - as a casualty of war - on both sides of the Atlantic.¹¹³ Film-makers gradually changed their wartime images of women, channelling them towards the home as considerable gender polarisation took place, marriage being seen as the ultimate prize. Some women welcomed this. For others, war had provided new freedoms. Non-war films, peppered with subtleties suggesting that a woman's place was in the home, supported the inferences of war films. Simultaneously, women were needed in the workforce. Therefore, few post-1945 government films attempted to promote domesticity.¹¹⁴ In wartime the nation was depicted as united, national identity resided in the feminine, in the patriotic song *Rule Britannia*, Britain as the Mother Country and in images of women actively

involved in the war, or child-rearing - something worth fighting for. Attesting to the fluidity of the post-war genre, the cinematic shift in national identity was delineated by class division, and now resided in the masculine, defined by the blending of dynamic elite masculinity and leadership qualities.¹¹⁵ This phenomenon will be explored through a new interpretation of the role of women in films made after 1945.

Received wisdom usually suggests that after 1945, women were written out of war films however, this thesis argues for a previously unexplored balance and continuity between films made during 1939-45 and 1945-65 versions. In both periods, through the wartime attributes of *Mrs Miniver* (1942) and the guts and efficiency of the *Gentle Sex* (1943), to the bravery of Odette and other gutsy women, and the unsavoury perception of British women as 'groundsheets for foreign soldiers', depictions ranged from guts to sluts.¹¹⁶ These interpretations will be traced highlighting continuities from war to post-war. Rather than neglecting women and war, post-1945 films reflected the concerns of contemporaneous society and offered very positive depictions. So, I will argue that post-1945, there was significantly more female involvement than has been acknowledged, and examine a number of war films from both periods including: *School for Secrets* (1946); *2000 Women* (1944); *A Town Like Alice* (1956) and *Sink the Bismarck* (1960).¹¹⁷

Chapter Five develops the third theme, the depiction of the enemy. Research indicates unexpected continuities between wartime and post-war films. Whilst there are revisionist depictions of Germans, considerable ambiguities are also evident. Representations of Germany worsened in the 1939-45 war films until the Vansittart

Credo decreeing collective German guilt became the norm, despite vigorous opposition from influential people such as Victor Gollancz.¹¹⁸ Officially, after 1945, this damning image of Germany was politically unacceptable to the Allies. Issues surrounding Germany's Cold War strategic value, denazification, German people's acceptance of defeat, their improved morale, repatriation and eventual re-armament, required that the fight was now between good and evil, exonerating many Germans whilst criminalizing the Nazis. Pre-war, Germany had enjoyed political, social and cultural exchanges with Britain. Physical similarities facilitated re-assimilation. In this context, Murphy speaks of the 'light' (acceptable), and 'dark' (unacceptable), faces of Germany.¹¹⁹ *Frieda* (1947) was the first film to create a forum addressing issues surrounding individual or collective German guilt. Nevertheless, masters of ambivalence, filmmakers ensured that German brutality, culpability and compliance were also screened. Of particular interest are films such as *The One That Got Away* (1957); *Sink the Bismarck* (1960) and the POW sub-genre. Unfavourable depictions of the Italians in the POW film *Danger Within* (1959) deeply offended them, but their reputation was restored in *Conspiracy of Hearts* (1960). Significantly, in the few films concerning the Far East war, as Chapter 3 will show, Japan - culturally and physically different - retained an inhuman image. Moreover, those favourable, but understated, depictions of the British covered by my other chapters "invited" comparison by implying censure of the Axis.

Chapter Six discusses the fourth theme, 'war's dysfunctional residue'. Filmmakers largely translated this into personal and national redemption and regeneration, channelling it into the combat, civilian and demobilization experiences of men who personalised war. Films such as *Ice Cold in Alex* (1958) dealt with combat dysfunction

or disaffection. This became what I have termed 'heroic reinforcement'. Officers consistently displayed exemplary courage and elite values alongside their fallibilities. Malingerers and those who revelled in war widened the combat dysfunction equation. Perceived wartime dysfunction also affected civilian consciences. Furthermore, as depicted in films such as *The Small Back Room* (1949), civilian odysseys frequently progressed towards personal and national redemption and regeneration. Additionally, whilst Balcon's *The Captive Heart* (1946) idealised POWs' homecoming, *Tunes of Glory* (1960) covered problematic, or tragic, repatriation and, along with *Room at the Top* (1959) bravely dealt with challenges to traditional class hierarchies and the decline of deference. A major sub-genre of films headed by *The League of Gentlemen* (1960) covered the 'homecoming legacy' and crime. They mirrored contemporary fears of national decline, highlighting dysfunctional aspects of demobilization for men whose war had been a self-fulfilling personal challenge. For them peace was the harbinger of anti-climax and decline, a grudge-laden descent into forgotten-men territory. Such films reflected the view that the endemic wartime spirit of national pride and unity, and the impetus of the promised 'New Jerusalem', had been lost or carelessly discarded.¹²⁰ Clearly the dysfunctional residue sub-genre faced serious issues, served the purpose of working through problems, contained their excesses and made them safe. Other films to be discussed include: *The Rake's Progress* (1945); *They Made Me A Fugitive* (1947); *Cockleshell Heroes* (1955) and *The Ship That Died of Shame* (1955).

Ultimately, this exploration of post-war British World War Two films is rooted in the belief that this interpretation has a useful place in our understanding of British cinema's response to the pre-occupations of the period. This response re-shaped

audiences' memory of the war through which Britain defines itself, yet contains sufficient truth to underpin the films' mythical status and gain acceptance.

¹ Parker, Alan, 'Ken Loach - Director', *The Southbank Show*, ITV, 1998.

² Gilliat, John, 'Westfront', *Sight and Sound*, Vol. 27, No.3, Winter 1957/58, p 127.

³ *The Sun*, 17 February, 1999, 'Why We Will Not Forget the War Herr Naumann', claimed that Britain was proud of its role in freeing the world, editorial. Television documentaries *The Hundred Years' War* (2000), and *Don't Mention the War* (2000), show how, through football internationals with Germany, the British are steeped in World War Two. A *Daily Express* article on the 5 June, 1999 painted a picture of a section of youth who knew little or nothing about the Second World War; also *The Times* 18 January, 2001 reported a survey which found that sixth-form and college students had little knowledge of World War Two. However, on Armistice Day, 2000, youth was being encouraged to take part in Remembrance Day, to visit holocaust museums and to more fully understand the sacrifices made, since the ranks of the survivors were thinning with each year.

⁴ *The Downfall* (2005) is Germany's most recent, and controversial offering. This film is regarded by some people, including historian Sebag Montefiore, as being part of Germany's new Nazi-lite movement. Although this is a small group, membership includes an outspoken professor from Berlin University and a number of television documentarists.

⁵ Madgwick, P.J., et al, *Britain Since 1945* (London, 1982), p 259.

⁶ Gibson, Guy, *Enemy Coast Ahead* (London (1946) 2001), p 255. Gibson's book was published three years after his untimely death in 1943.

⁷ 'Why We Will Not Forget the War Herr Naumann', *The Sun*. This exchange emanated from British tabloid press coverage of the 1996 European Football Cup, held in Britain.

⁸ Whitebait, William, 'Rumours of War', *New Statesman*, 22 March, 1958, p 375.

⁹ Television documentaries and series such as: *Goodnight Mr Tom* (1998); *The Gathering Storm* (2002); *Band of Brothers* (2002 and 2003); *Island at War* (2004); *Foyles' War* (2003 and 2004); *POW* (2003) and *The Conspiracy* (2003), often spawn popular spin-off books.

¹⁰ ITV advertised a new issue of WWI and WWII soldiers from the Osprey's *Men at War* series, from Christmas 2000.

¹¹ 2005 was the sixtieth anniversary of the relief of Auschwitz and the ending of the Second World War in Europe. Saturation coverage by television and the media included a re-enactment of D-Day, a series on the upgrading of Auschwitz to eliminate the Jews, and the planning and execution of the final solution. Survivors were interviewed extensively. The strength of feeling on this subject was apparent when Prince Harry's blunder in wearing a Nazi uniform to a party in January, 2005, reverberated around the world just before the anniversary.

¹² Balcon, Michael, set the criteria with, 'Let British Films Be Ambassadors to the World', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 1945, p 135, to combat anti-British German propaganda. He wanted Britain to be portrayed as a leader in social reform, a defender of injustices, a champion of civil liberties, an exploring adventurer and trader, as the home of great industry and craftwork, and a mighty power who stood alone against a terrible aggressor.

¹³ Balcon, *ibid*, p 135.

¹⁴ Ellis, John, 'Made in Ealing', *Screen*, 1975, Vol. 16, Spring, p 119.

¹⁵ See Connelly, Mark, *We Can Take It* (Harlow, 2004), which contains a chapter on this subject.

¹⁶ Sorlin, Pierre, 'War and Cinema : interpreting the relationship', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 1994, p 365.

¹⁷ Basinger, Jeanine, *The World War Two Combat Film : Anatomy of a Genre* (Columbia University, New York), 1986, p 16.

¹⁸ A poem by C.D. Lewis (Poet Laureat and Balcon's son-in-law), specially written for Balcon's *Dunkirk*, 1958. Michael Balcon's Archive, Special Collections Unit, BFI, London.

¹⁹ Nairn, Tom, *The Break-up of Britain, Crisis and Neo-nationalism* (Verso (1981) 1997), reporting Enoch Powell's speech delivered at Trinity College, Dublin, p 266.

²⁰ Nairn, *ibid*, p 266.

- ²¹ Nairn, *ibid*, p 266 .
- ²² Calder, Angus, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London (1991) 1995), p 46, Preface and pp 1-19.
- ²³ Calder, *ibid*, citing the work of philosopher Roland Barthes who was a key intellectual figure in post-war France, and author of works such as *Mythologies* (1957), pp 2-3.
- ²⁴ Reeves, Nicholas, *The Power of Film Propaganda : Myth or Reality* (London, 1999), pp 240-241.
- ²⁵ Walker, David, 'Honestly, aren't you worried by our enduring taste for war?', *News Chronicle*, 25 February, 1960, p 18.
- ²⁶ Cook, Christopher, (Ed.), *The Dilys Powell Film Reader* (Oxford, 1991), pp 112-13 – Powell's critique written in February 1947.
- ²⁷ Powell, Dilys, *The Sunday Times*, 29 June, 1958, p 28.
- ²⁸ Whitebait, *The New Statesman*, 5 April, 1958, p 432.
- ²⁹ Medhurst, Andrew, *National Fictions*, Hurd, Geoff (Ed.), (London, 1984), p 35.
- ³⁰ Durnat, Raymond, *A Mirror for England* (Faber & Faber, 1970), p 6.
- ³¹ Pronay, Nicholas, 'The British Post-bellum Cinema : A Survey of the films relating to WW II made in Britain between 1945 and 1960', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and TV*, Vol. 8, No.1, 1988. He counted 85 Second World War Films, pp 39-54.
- ³² Rattigan, Neil, 'The Last Gasp of the Middle Class : British War Films in the 1950s' in *Re-Viewing British Cinema, 1900-1992* (New York, 1994), Wheeler Winston Dixon (Ed.), p 19.
- ³³ Ramsden, John, 'Refocussing the "People's War" : British War Films of the 1950s', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 33, No. 1, pp 35-63.
- ³⁴ Chapman, James, 'Our Finest Hour Revisited : The Second World War in British Feature Films Since 1945', *Journal of Popular of Cinema*, 1998. First Issue Jan/Feb, pp 63-75.
- ³⁵ Curran, James and Porter, Vincent, *British Cinema History* (London, 1983). Barr, Charles, *90 Years of British Cinema* (London (1986) 1992). Higson, Andrew, *Waving the Flag : Constructing a National Cinema in Britain* (London, 1995). Street, Sarah, *British National Cinema* (London, 1997).
- ³⁶ Arnes, Roy, *A Critical History of the British Cinema* (London, 1978), p 7.
- ³⁷ Richards, Jeffrey, *Films & British National Identity : From Dickens to Dad's Army* (Manchester, 1997), p 23.
- ³⁸ Murphy, Robert, *British Cinema and the Second World War* (London, 2000), p 248.
- ³⁹ MacKenzie, S.P., *British War Films 1939-45 : The Cinema and the Services* (London, 2001).
- ⁴⁰ Connelly, Mark, *We Can Take It!*
- ⁴¹ Spicer, Andrew, paper given at the University of Central Lancashire's Conference on National Identity, 2000. Space does not permit analysis of the comedy sub-genre, that promoted audiences' acceptance of the dominance of officer elites post-1945.
- ⁴² Gifford, Dennis, *The British Film Catalogue 1895-1970* (Trowbridge, 1973), Introduction.
- ⁴³ Pronay, Nicholas, 'The British Post-bellum Cinema', pp 39-54.
- ⁴⁴ Basinger, *The World War Two Combat Film*, Introduction.
- ⁴⁵ Basinger, *ibid*, p16.
- ⁴⁶ Spielberg, Steven, in a television interview, *D-Day*, BBC2 1998, concerning his Second World War film *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), commented that he had always regarded British World War Two films as exceptional because Britain did them so well and realistically. He was particularly impressed with *The Dam Busters*.
- ⁴⁷ Murphy, *British Cinema and the Second World War*, argues that the generation gap was bridged by World War Two films, p 184.
- ⁴⁸ Box, K, *The Cinema and the Public, Social Survey*, NS.106 (1946) p 3, and Wilkins, *Adolescent in Britain*, p 97.
- ⁴⁹ *The Cinema and the Public : An Enquiry into Cinema Going Habits and Expenditure, (The Social Survey NS 106 (1946), p 7.*
- ⁵⁰ Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz*, Preface and pp 1-19.
- ⁵¹ Hennessey, Peter, *The Secret State : Whitehall and the Cold War* (London, (2002) 2003), p 2, quoting Howard, Michael, 'Empires, Nations and Wars', the Yigal Allon Memorial Lecture, 1982, reproduced in Howard, Michael, *The Lessons of History* (OUP, 1991), p 47.
- ⁵² It is interesting that in 2002, an American remake of *The Four Feathers* was released in the middle of the crisis over Iraq and international terrorism.
- ⁵³ Durnat, *A Mirror for England*, p 84.

⁵⁴ *The Dam Busters* film evoked outrage when the Americans inserted a US Flying Fortress sequence in their version of the film. The summer of 2000 saw rows on the American version of the capture of the German Enigma machines and a proposed American *Colditz* remake. All of which seemed to belittle Britain's involvement and achievements. Even *Saving Private Ryan*, featuring American D-Day landings, was criticised, but it was dealing with the "American" beaches. The latest row concerns actor Tom Cruise who, until his sacking by his studio in August 2006, was scheduled to re-fight the Battle of Britain.

⁵⁵ Reeves, Nicholas, *The Power of Film Propaganda*, pp 240-241.

⁵⁶ Paris, Michael, *Warrior Nation : Images of War & British Youth from 1950 to the present* (London, 2000), p 223.

⁵⁷ The Burgess and Maclean spy scandal and their subsequent defection to Russia brought homosexuality amongst Britain's Cambridge-educated elites to national and international prominence in the early 1950s.

⁵⁸ Post-1945 films such as *Seven Days to Noon*, *Petticoat Pirates*, the *St Trinians* cycle and the *The Tommy Steele Story* for example, are concerned respectively with the Bomb, gender and the youth culture. This thesis has identified the Second World War POW sub-genre (and some of the other war films) as being concerned with homosexuality (discussed in Chapter 3). Portrayals of women could be more open in the post-1945 war genre too. Their sexuality was seen problematic and, since the divorce and illegitimate birth rates soared during this period, film-makers could make bold, uncomplimentary statements such those as in *The Long and the Short and the Tall*. The failure of the New Jerusalem was exemplified in films such as *The Ship That Died of Shame* and *The Long and the Short and the Tall*.

⁵⁹ Marwick, Arthur, *The Sixties* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1998), p 7.

⁶⁰ Internet site *Beyond the Fringe*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beyond_the_Fringe.

⁶¹ Webster, *Englishness and Empire, 1939-65* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2005), p 195.

⁶² Marwick, *The Sixties*, p 117.

⁶³ Internet site *Beyond the Fringe*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beyond_the_Fringe.

⁶⁴ Carpenter, Humphrey, *That Was Satire, That Was : The Satire Boom of the Sixties* (Victor Gollancz, London, 2000), p 213.

⁶⁵ This was followed by, for example: *The Frost Report* (1966-67) and *Spitting Image* (1984-96).

⁶⁶ Rowland, Robert, 'Panorama in the Sixties', in Aldgate, Anthony, Chapman, James & Marwick, Arthur (Eds.), *Windows on the Sixties : Exploring Key Texts of Media and Culture* (I.B.Tauris, London, 2000), p156.

⁶⁷ Carpenter, *That Was Satire, That Was*, pp 214-215. It is interesting that this comment is not too far from Michael Balcon's post-war assertion that film-makers, after voting for a Labour Government in 1945, 'had had their mild revolution ... they did not want to tear down institutions', See Ellis, John, 'Made in Ealing', *Screen*, 1975, Vol. 16, Spring, pp 119.

⁶⁸ Carpenter, *ibid*, p 215.

⁶⁹ Carpenter, *ibid*, p 243.

⁷⁰ Internet site <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/583651>. This site tells us that the less tolerant Edward Heath, Tory Prime Minister from 1970 to 1974, blamed TW3 for 'the death of deference' as Britain was brought to a standstill by his government's clash with the miners. Keith Waterhouse, quoted in Carpenter, *That Was Satire, That Was*, p 243 also remembered that Edward Heath blamed TW3 for what he called 'the death of deference'.

⁷¹ Internet site <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/F/htmlF/frostdavid/frostdavid.htm>.

⁷² Webster, Wendy, *Englishness and Empire*, p 194, quoting Milligan, Spike, *The Goon Show Scripts* (London, Woburn Press, 1972), pp 105 and 185.

⁷³ Webster, *Englishness and Empire*, p 194.

⁷⁴ Webster, *ibid*, p 195.

⁷⁵ Here I am thinking of the American character Shears who heavily disapproves of the values upheld by British officers, yet, in the final analysis, behaves like one by selflessly giving his life to save the mission.

⁷⁶ Webster, *Englishness and Empire*, p 196, quoting Spicer, Andrew, *Typical Men : The Representation of Masculinity in Popular British Cinema* (I.B.Tauris, London, 2001), p 43.

⁷⁷ Webster, *Englishness and Empire*, p 196. This thesis, taking a difference stance, will concentrate on the importance of the shifting positions regarding war and its "rules" as embodied by each officer.

- ⁷⁸ The Boultings famously parodied the British legal system in the non-war film *Brothers in Law* (1957), and academia in *Lucky Jim* (1957). Launder and Gilliat, through the *The Belles of St Trinians* (1954), *Blue Murder at St Trinians* (1957) and *The Great St Trinian's Train Robbery* (1967), showed what could happen when females broke society's gender-based rules and expectations for women.
- ⁷⁹ Harper, Sue & Porter, Vincent, *British Cinema of the 1950s : The Decline of Deference* (Oxford University Press, London, 2003), p 107.
- ⁸⁰ Harper & Porter, *ibid*, p 107.
- ⁸¹ Harper & Porter, *ibid*, p 262.
- ⁸² Harper & Porter, *ibid*, p 167.
- ⁸³ *Room at the Top* and *Tunes of Glory* fit the wider definition of war films, since the events portrayed began in, or were the result of, the Second World War.
- ⁸⁴ Although the novel was set in 1947 and there is clearly much bomb damage in Dufton, the film version of *Room at the Top* is loose in its post-war time-scale, for example, Susan dresses very much in the fashions of the mid-1950s.
- ⁸⁵ Webster, *Englishness and Empire*, p 204. British New Wave films include *Look Back in Anger*, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* and *Room at the Top*.
- ⁸⁶ The town was named as Warley in the book and is thought to be modelled on Bradford, Marwick, *The Sixties*, p 121.
- ⁸⁷ It is worth noting that Alice, as the woman who was greatly experienced and did not regret her past, was both an actress and French. Cinema, in war films, usually portrayed actresses as being of loose morals, and Continental women were portrayed as more sexually knowing and passionate.
- ⁸⁸ Harper & Porter, *British Cinema of the Fifties*, p 263.
- ⁸⁹ Harper & Porter, *ibid*, p 239.
- ⁹⁰ Murphy, Robert, *The Criterion Collection : Tunes of Glory*, Internet site <http://www.criterionco.com/asp/release.asp?id=225&reid=342§ion=essay>, p 2.
- ⁹¹ Murphy, *ibid*, p 2.
- ⁹² Quotes from a conversation between Fordyce and Haskins in the film, both were officers and both involved in serious crime and irredeemable.
- ⁹³ Harper & Porter, *British Cinema of the Fifties*, pp 267-268
- ⁹⁴ The Second World War genre under discussion had a great deal to say about women's sexuality and was very clear about "good/appropriate" versus "bad/inappropriate" female behaviour.
- ⁹⁵ Satire has a long history in Britain and can be found on television screens today in such impressionist programmes as *The Rory Bremner Show*. It can be argued that satire is as much a national institution as those that it mocks.
- ⁹⁶ Rattigan, Neill, 'The Last Gasp of the Middle Classes : British War Films in the 1950s', in Dixon, Wheeler Winston (Ed.), *Reviewing British Cinema, 1900-1992 : Essays & Interviews* (State University of New York Press, New York, 1994).
- ⁹⁷ See my chapter on Prisoners of War.
- ⁹⁸ O'Connor, John E., *Image as Artefact : The Historical Analysis of Films and TV* (Florida, 1990), and Thomas Cripps' Chapter 'The Moving Image as Social History : Stalking the Paper Trail'; and Richards, Jeffrey, *The Best of British* (Oxford, 1983) for a discussion on this.
- ⁹⁹ Cripps, 'The Moving Image as Social History', *ibid*, p 151.
- ¹⁰⁰ Cripps, *ibid*, p 10.
- ¹⁰¹ *British War Films*, C4 TV, 1999.
- ¹⁰² Reeves, *The Power of Film Propaganda*, pp 240-241.
- ¹⁰³ I read correspondence on military involvement with film-makers at the BFI when researching Michael Balcon's Archive in 2000. See also, MacKenzie, S.P., *British War Films 1939-45 : The Cinema and the Services* (London, 2001).
- ¹⁰⁴ Stars were used in advertising which often misled, making claims that were economical with the truth, they wrote, or ghosted, articles offering advice on almost every subject, many of which they were not qualified to advise on. Fan magazines, such as *Picturegoer*, wrote of them in reverential terms
- ¹⁰⁵ See MacKenzie, S.P., *British War Films 1939-45 – The Cinema and the Services* (London, 2001); Murphy, Robert, *British Cinema and the Second World War* (London, 2000); Chibnall, S., *J Lee Thompson* (Manchester, 2000); Spicer, Andrew, *Typical Men : The Representation of Masculinity in Popular British Cinema* (London, 2001); Geraghty, Christine, *British Cinema : Gender, Genre and the*

New Look (London, 2000); Rattigan, Neil, 'Last Gasp of the Middle Classes', in Winston Wheeler-Dixon, *Re-Viewing British Cinema 1900-1992: Essays & Interviews* (New York, 1994); Paris, Michael, *Warrior Nation – Images of War I Popular Culture, 1850-2000* (Manchester, 2000); Connelly, Mark, *We Can Take It: Britain and the Memory of the Second World War* (Harlow, 2004) and Webster, Wendy, *Englishness and Empire 1939-1965* (Oxford, 2005).

¹⁰⁶ Addison, Paul, *Now the War is Over: A History Social History of Britain 1945-51* (London, (1985) 1995). Addison argues that increasing bitterness amongst the middle classes towards the Labour Government, led to 'Few protests against the introduction of peacetime conscription, or the decision to fight in the Korean War. Capital punishment remained, as did corporal punishment in schools. There was no relaxation of the laws relating to censorship or sexual behaviour. The traditional division of roles between the sexes was more or less taken for granted and racial discrimination freely practised against West Indian immigrants. Within industry, the gulf between management and shop floor remained almost as great as ever', p xi. McKibbin, Ross, *Classes & Cultures England 1918-1951* (Oxford, 1991), saw hostility from the middle classes towards the more affluent working classes, at this point he claims, the middle classes re-grouped, p 65.

¹⁰⁷ Doe, Bob, 'The Battle of Britain', *Finest Hour*, BBC1 TV, 2000. Modest Bob was nearly turned down by the RAF because of his working-class background and lack of education. His crew painted his 'plane with Swastikas to denote each hit. When he got five, he said that he felt like Biggles. Five hits made him an ace.

¹⁰⁸ Paris, *Warrior Nation*, pp 222-261.

¹⁰⁹ See Paris, Michael, 'The RAF on Screen 1940-42' *History Today*, Vol. 40, August 1990, on Bomber Command's operations and the bomber crew as a metaphor for democracy, pp 39-46.

¹¹⁰ Some early SAS missions were amateurish compared to today's sophisticated operations. *Ice Cold in Alex* is one film that indicated a covert desert patrol of British officers passing themselves off as Arabs. For actual maverick or Commando operations, see *Combined Operations, 1940-42* (MOI, London, 1943). The genre's press and campaign books highlight the adventurous nature and importance of combined operations, and these were stressed in schools and educational establishments. This was particularly well expressed in the press campaign book for *They Who Dare*.

¹¹¹ *Pearl Harbor* and *Burma*, C4-TV, 2001. These television documentaries on Burma depict men and women still seriously traumatised by their experiences, and go a long way to explaining earlier cinematic depictions of the Japanese.

¹¹² Jivani, Alkarim, *It's Not Unusual: A History of Lesbian and Gay Britain in the Twentieth Century*, (London, 1997), pp 89-149. Jivani details how medals earned by homosexuals were later demanded back by the Army Medal Office, or were never awarded. Author, Rupert Croft-Cooke refused to return his medals (these included the 1939-45 Star, the Burma Star, the Defence Medal and the War Medal) he left the country in disgust.

¹¹³ Jivani, *ibid*, discusses the strains and dislocations of war, demobilisation and the different expectations and roles outside the home for newly independent women.

¹¹⁴ During the war, hundreds of official films targeted women for the war effort, as well as feature films such as *Millions Like Us*.

¹¹⁵ In the Cold War, with threats of Defence cuts and Service mergers, assistance from the Military to film-makers rested on showcasing masculine military excellence. The Michael Balcon Archives contain correspondence on the extent of military involvement in relation to the important film *Dunkirk* (1958). Assistance could be anything from the supply of men, advisors, equipment, locations, information and contacts to the help of foreign governments.

¹¹⁶ In *The Long and the Short and the Tall*, Lawrence Harvey's despicable character describes women thus, and sings a vulgar and debasing song which labels mothers and sisters as tarts.

¹¹⁷ However, it was increasingly left to television to restore women to World War Two prominence with series like *Tenko* during the 1970s. In recent years, cinema has returned to the subject with films of the calibre of *Enigma*; *Paradise Road* and *Wish Me Luck*.

¹¹⁸ Vansittart, Robert was permanent undersecretary of state for foreign affairs. He advocated "hard peace" for Germany. Gollanz, Victor, *Shall Our Children Live or Die? : A Reply to Lord Vansittart on the German Problem* (London, 1942), advocated re-education not hatred, believing that imperialism and capitalism also led to World War Two.

¹¹⁹ Murphy, *British Cinema and the Second World War*, pp 182-183.

¹²⁰ Turner, Barry & Rennell, Tony, *When Daddy Came Home : How Family Life Changed Forever in 1945* (London, 1995). They chart some of the disruptive effects of settling back into peacetime routine - the authorities being largely unprepared to deal with such problems, all chapters.

Chapter 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

'War was seldom absent for more than two or three months from British screens during the last period when cinema was still the principal medium of communication and attitude formation in Britain.' (Pronay, 1988)¹

Academic attention has focused most heavily on British cinema's acclaimed 1939-45 Second World War films as part of its perceived "golden age". Until recently, little has been published on war films made after 1945 beyond listing and categorising. In 1983, a British Film Institute Summer School held at Stirling University invited historians and 'people involved in film and television education' to debate 'National Fictions : struggles over the meaning of World War Two'. This was prompted by the Falklands' War, and was a step towards awakening interest in the genre.² Since then, the approach to the Millennium has encouraged historians to reflect widely on the twentieth century, and on Britain's post-1945 Second World War films. Articles by historians Pronay (1985), Rattigan (1994), Chapman (1998) and Ramsden (1998), have been supplemented by a number of more specialised literary works from historians such as Richards (1997), Murphy (2000), Paris (2000), MacKenzie (2001), Connelly (2004), Webster (2005) and Ramsden (2006), which dealt with the period more thoroughly.³ This scholarship has revealed the need for a detailed thematic analysis. Therefore, this work, and that of the following critics and historians, has paved the way for this study.

Earlier, although some contemporaneous critics looked positively - but briefly - at the genre, the views of extreme and dismissive mid-1950s' film critics became

paramount, having been given far too much credence. Strident, sectional and self-interested, their opinions reverberate down the decades. These critiques are responsible for the legacy of derision that has relegated post-1945 war films to the scrapheap of British cinema history. They go a long way towards explaining lack of academic interest since then. They do not explain audiences' continued interest. The skewed vision and jaded palates of contemporaneous critics such as William Whitebait of *The New Statesman* and Leslie Mallory of the *News Chronicle* have, therefore, left a sizeable gap in our knowledge and understanding of film-maker's motivations and contemporaneous issues. This study seeks to address this omission. Such an exploration would throw light on what historian Barr tellingly calls the 'cultural laceration'⁴ of a vital part of post-war British cinema. These criticisms should not go unchallenged or unexplained.

Other contemporaneous film critics, thinking differently, wanted a more just society than the one being portrayed on screen. Therefore, Murphy rightly urges us not to judge all critics of this genre too harshly. Their perspective was one of caring:

It is easy to be sneeringly condescending (as they tended to be themselves) towards the critics who have bequeathed us such a meagre heritage of approved films. But their espousal of realism and the abhorrence of sensationalism was inextricably bound up with the decency and generosity which made people want a new and fairer society.⁵

He quotes Geoff Brown's comments on *The Penguin Film Review* 'which enshrined many prejudices':

The *Review* was dominated by the earnest enthusiasms of the evangelists and educationalists - the kind of people who had worked in the war with Civil Defence groups, the Army Bureau of Current Affairs or similar organisations, helping to stimulate discussion about every aspect of modern society which would emerge at the end of the fighting.⁶

Cinema is one of the most authoritative disseminators of ideas, and part of the idealism implicit in the *Penguin Film Review* - in fact, its 'chief propelling force' - was a firm belief that it 'had the power not only to provide art and entertainment; it could also buttress civilization and democracy after the knocks it received at the hands of Hitler and his allies'.⁷ Nevertheless, in this 'concern to improve public taste' Murphy stresses, 'much of what was most interesting and exciting in British cinema was pushed out into the cold',⁸ Post-1945 war films fit this description.

The first writings on these films were critical reviews and articles, so the literature review begins with two of the most damaging, but instructive, critiques. These crucial articles, from Whitebait and Mallory, are worth quoting in their entirety. They are meaningful to this study because they signify the strength of certain critical misgivings about war films. A long, apoplectic attack on what he saw as a British addiction to 'dreadfully dull', self-delusory, unrealistic war films, was launched by Whitebait in the left-wing *New Statesman* (1958):

It is both tedious and disquieting, our addiction to war films. Not many days ago in Leicester Square ... I happened to look up through the trees at the cinemas beyond; one by one boasted war films; to the north *The Safecracker* (crook does his bit, croaks), to the east *The Silent Enemy* (with Crabb in the Underwater Ballet), to the south *Carve Her Name With Pride* (from Woolworth's to the Resistance). Since then, *The Safecracker* has been relieved by *Dunkirk*, with *The Bridge on the River Kwai* on its flank. And elsewhere, down the Haymarket and on the circuits, there were similar concentrations and replacements. A dozen years after World War Two, we find ourselves in the really quite desperate situation of being, not sick of war, but hideously in love with it. Not actively fighting, we aren't at peace. The H-bomb looms ahead, and we daren't look at it; so we creep back to the lacerating comfort of "last time". No old general preparing to lose the next war could dream more disastrously. And I think that war films, nearly all of which hark back, emotionally as well as factually, contribute more than any other source to this daydream; because if the horror of war strikes the eye more than in any other way, so does its glossing-over lull fears and angers, and creates an imaginary present in which we can go on enjoying our finest hours. That is the price paid for victory.

So while we "adventure" at Suez, in the cinemas we are still trashing Rommel - and discovering that he was a gentleman! - sweeping the Atlantic of submarines, sending the few to scatter Goering's many. The more we lose face in the world's counsels, the grander, in our excessively modest way, we swell in this illusionary mirror held up by the screen. It is less a spur to morale than a salve to wounded pride; and as art or entertainment, dreadfully dull.

British films have their own special reason for wanting to hark back to one time when for them the subject, film-maker, and audience were at one. The war here brought film-making alive as never before or since. No wonder there is this stampede to return. And it takes a cheap advantage, since there's no easier way of feeling emotion or stimulating real people than in a war situation where the overriding emotion is there already, and every man a potential hero or skunk.

This is one sort of context in which, week after week, and recently day by day, a critic has confronted the present deluge. They aren't good, most of these films, and they aren't quite bad. They suffice. It is deemed enough that an event should have been great, a hero unearthed; all that remains is to trade on patriotism, and blackmail with decency and restraint. Let entertainment smooth away what belongs in more awkward or perilous regions. Our film-makers are, I am sorry to say, past masters at this, counterfeiterers of the war film without offence. They have so induced and inured us, and done so miserably in other directions, that many filmgoers even come to prefer such uniform films, which they feel at least won't let them down. So they go on building up a legend (when it comes to the point again, we'll muddle through) blinding us to current realities and prospects, and mingling reminiscence and recruiting with sheer deception. Guns and music. Never go to one of these things to find out what happened; the idea of violence will shock more in a Clouzot thriller about lunatic school-teachers.⁹

Although extreme, these views attest to the volume of war films, and their focused agendas. During my research, it has become apparent that critics and film-makers held a variety of competing political agendas. It is also clear, that film-makers did not show a nationally inclusive war (apart from a handful of films in the early post-war period), but repeatedly favoured a sanitised, elite, exclusive version.

Mallory's article in the *News Chronicle* (1958) was indicative of a radical liberal political agenda. He offered a condescending and misogynist view:

The most baffling attribute of the British picture goer is his capacity for enjoying widescreen war fables which he knows to be sacrilegious pantomimes of the conflict he personally lived through ... studio after studio is clambering on the battlewagon with chunks of pseudo-reportage which are being hawked to audiences as "true hero" tales. Air war, as Pinewood sees it, is Wing-Commander Kenneth More soaring through the blue with merry quip and jest. Meanwhile, "The Last Enemy" has never been filmed because relays of hatchet-men have been unable to prettify the truth and the terror of real air war out of it. Sea war is Larry Harvey, as Commander Crabb, jousting mythically with handsome Italian frogmen in his latest underwater opera. Land war? No doubt you've read Paul Dehn's two-fisted criticism of the liberties taken with the Violette Szabo story in "Carve Her Name with Pride"

Or maybe you've seen the current box-office blockbuster "The Bridge on the River Kwai". Here the Japanese camp commandant - in the book a venomous, sadistic Son of Heaven - has been smoothed down into a curt disciplinarian no more villainous than a Borstal superintendent. Immoderate truths about Siamese railways can't be allowed to offend a high-ranking film market like Japan, which has a tremendous number of cinemas. When the veterans of the 14th Army protested over the way their former captors have been whitewashed

in this picture nobody took any notice. As far as thousands of British adolescents, particularly the girls, are concerned the 14th Army can yell its head off. They have seen *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. And since seeing is believing these days, now they know what the Burma Camps were like. Not quite as comfortable as Butlin's. Thanks to More and Harvey and Virginia MacKenna, today's teenagers have a clear idea of what war is.¹⁰

Political considerations aside, Mallory's qualms about the reality of cinema's war have some validity. Yet, books and other information on this war proliferated. Despite contemporaneous critics' concerns about youth and 'historic truths', the truth, as much as it could be without a Freedom of Information Act, was accessible. Additionally, Britain's secrecy rules applied to much Second World War material. Moreover, the technology used by Hollywood director Steven Spielberg to inject realism in *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) had not been invented.¹¹

From the 1970s, British cinema began to interest film historians, although the post-1945 Second World War genre was largely ignored. Exceptions to the rule, such as Jeavon (1974), Arnes (1978), Manvell (1974) and left-wing film-maker Lindsay Anderson (1974), were dismissive. Jeavon and Arnes see the genre as being merely nostalgic, which only partially explains its proliferation.¹² Manvell is typical of the realists, dismissing the genre as little more than action films. For Anderson, these films were attempts to 'evade the complex uncertainties of the present, and the challenge of the future.'¹³ Until the 1980s, academics generally remained indifferent to the genre. Major works on British cinema such as Curran & Porter (1973), Perry (1985) Murphy (1989, 1997), Landy (1991), Barr (1993 and 1994), Higson (1996) and Street (1997), whilst drawing attention to Britain's cinematic cultural heritage, have not usually been actively concerned with post-1945 war films. The Falklands War provided the catalyst for change. *National Fictions* (1984), a collection of essays, emanated from 1983 BFI Summer School, and film theorists' concerns that, during the

Falklands War, the right wing had appropriated patriotism, the myths of Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain and the Blitz. Yet, out of such a large and varied genre, only six British post-war films were covered, far too few to undertake thematic analysis of the type proposed here.¹⁴ Medhurst, discussing their reputed lack of emotion, claims they are ‘films about repression, rather than hopelessly repressed films’.¹⁵ On this point, I would argue that they are films about self-control because ‘repression’ suggests outside force. This is a crucial distinction, it indicates the individual choices one would expect to have in a democracy. Sociologists have identified this “deferred gratification” as a middle-class concept. In the context of these films, this means prioritising and making the right choices in the national interest.

In *National Fictions*, Gledhill and Swanson suggest that women, the embodiment of national identity in films made during the war, were marginalised later, as men questioned their masculinity.¹⁶ Geraghty, in the same publication concludes that during the 1940s, depictions of masculinity were ‘unproblematic’ for a ‘united’ nation. They became so in the 1950s when gender issues were compounded with the move towards elite officers’ individuality, iconic status and technical mastery, which was supported by scientists. This enabled officers to fight on behalf of the nation, not with it, and ‘put a strain on the way in which men were represented in post-war films’.¹⁷ It also negatively confined them to the ‘public sphere’ of war:

The men in war films prove themselves to be men by being in control ... the price of such control is the repression of emotion and the fear of impotence which hangs over their relationships with women.¹⁸

Geraghty (2000) remains sympathetic to the masculinity in crisis and gender separation view in her chapter on 1950’s war films, describing depictions of officers

as moving from 'a representative group of individuals with whom the audience can identify, to an elite group whom the audience is invited to admire'.¹⁹ For her:

In the 1950s, the genre offered a way of representing male actions and feelings in a military context which would have been more familiar, for good or ill, to many in the audience. Instead of trying to place the issue of gender differences in the domestic context of love and family, the genre allows for masculinity to be expressed largely without the feminine balance.²⁰

Gledhill, Swanson and Geraghty's findings are also based on a more limited number of films than this thesis covers, and are areas that I will challenge by arguing in Chapter 4 for a surprising inclusion and continuity in depictions of women in World War Two films from the 1939-45 to 1945-65 periods, resulting in a previously unexplored, strong, feminine presence and balance. I will also argue that, in this genre, the crisis of masculinity was stimulated less by gender issues and more by national pride and regeneration; all of which was resolved through the exemplary leadership demonstrated by elites.

Barr's influential work *Ealing Studios* (1993), does not offer an analysis of Ealing's significant body of post-1945 war films, but notes a certain trajectory.²¹ *The Captive Heart* 'creates a little piece of England', *Frieda* does too, but 'all kinds of conflict seem to be seething just below the rational humanist surface'. *Passport to Pimlico* 'was released when it was unthinkable that wartime inspiration and unity ... would ever fade', but *Whiskey Galore's* greedy, selfish message was 'to make it and keep it'.²² *Liberal Directions : Basil Dearden & Post-war British Film Culture* (1997) by Burton *et al*, revisits the work of just one Ealing director, Basil Dearden, responsible for three of the most memorable war films. Richards reveals that in Dearden's work the 'sense of community, shared values, structure and order' continued into the immediate post-war period with *The Captive Heart* (1946) and

Frieda (1947) but 'changed dramatically as British society was irrevocably transformed during the later 1950s'.²³ *The Ship That Died of Shame* (1955) 'a powerful psychological drama of the post-war failure to re-adjust,' reflected this change.²⁴ This indicates an instructive genre awaiting full textual analysis such as that envisaged by this study. Like Spicer (1997), and Murphy (2000), Richards (1997) emphasises the enormous influence of major post-war stars such as John Mills, Anna Neagle, Jack Hawkins, Jack Warner and Dirk Bogarde who, particularly in war films, incarnated Britain at its best. Mills and Neagle especially, were exemplars of the establishment view - reflected in his eventual Knighthood and her creation as a Dame of the British Empire.²⁵ An article by Marcia Landy covers one post-war World War Two film, the irreverent comedy *Private's Progress* (2000), suggesting that it was:

An almost point-for-point response to the rhetoric of a nation rising to meet a threat to its integrity. Time after time, the film invokes another perspective on the existence of national solidarity. Where the wartime rhetoric formerly stressed the notion of sacrifice, this film repeatedly portrays how the existence of "bounders" is the rule, not the exception.²⁶

This film will be discussed within the dysfunction sub-genre in Chapter 6.

Originally, five pieces of work stimulated my interest in war films, by confirming that a large gap in our knowledge of the post-1945 genre existed, and could be filled fruitfully: Raymond Durnat's seminal book *A Mirror for England* (1970); an article by Nicholas Pronay 'The British Post-bellum Cinema: a Survey of the films relating to World War Two made in Britain between 1945 and 1960' (1985); Neil Rattigan's essay 'The Last Gasp of the Middle-Class : British War Films of the 1950s' (1994); John Ramsden's article 'Refocussing the "People's War"' (1998); and James Chapman's article 'Our Finest Hour Revisited : The Second World War in British Feature Films Since 1945' (1998). Durnat, credited with re-awakening

historians' awareness of British cinema, labels the genre 'nostalgic', naturally following a pause for reflection,²⁷ but this is only part of a much larger story. He also argues that:

Initially, war films retained the no-heroinics stiff upper lip feel of wartime films. Until about 1955, British film critics were at one with industry and public in admiring this tone ... From the mid 1950s came a tendency to object to the very qualities so admired a few years earlier. This was understandable, but equally so was the public's clinging to a tone which, after all, hadn't become altogether untrue through repetition.²⁸

Durgnat and Pronay usefully place the films in numerous, but similar, categories ranging from 'bright battle-painting epics' to films which 'regretted the passing of wartime unity, comradeship and moral purpose'.²⁹ Nevertheless, Pronay disdains nostalgia, claiming that the genre represents a national catharsis that 'helped to lay the ghosts of war', and was cinema's 'last service' before it was overtaken by television:

They did their job in the scheme of things, the job which fiction film, in particular, could be expected to do for the people of the culture of which it formed a part. They allowed the people in the audience to re-live their experiences, the fears, guilt and dilemmas of their own particular war; and to catharsise psychological sores still festering. In the last period of the brief 'age of the cinema' when the habitual weekly visit to 'the pictures' now, instead of church, gave people the opportunity of a weekly spiritual/emotional experience to help them cope with their lives, in that last period before television relegated film to just one of many diversions for a minority, the British cinema had rendered in a workmanlike fashion, its last service. It helped lay the ghosts of war.³⁰

This study also refutes nostalgia, and will argue from a very different perspective than that of Pronay, by suggesting that national regeneration was at the centre of the post-war genre's representations. Cinema audiences continued their post-1945 love affair with World War Two until the 1970s when the genre faded. From the mid-1950s however, television actively and consistently promoted these films through constant re-showings and advertising - it did not sound their death knell. Additionally, television has become a prolific producer of its own films, dramas and documentaries on the subject, thereby domesticating World War Two. It is most frequently, and conspicuously, being re-fought on many channels, in the television corners of our

homes.³¹ So, there is a certain irony in Basil Fawltly's manic admonition: 'Don't mention the war'.³² Whilst television dramatisations of the war began in the 1970s British television, taking its cue from British cinema's vast repertoire, has spent many decades doing the opposite, most frequently, on the war against Germany.

In a bitter polemic on the middle classes, Rattigan states that 1950s war films drew on Britain's wartime myth whilst 'subtracting the very thing that had formed the basis of the myth-creating films of the 1940s - the people', once this was achieved,

... the dominant classes of Britain could fight the war ... the way they had wanted to ... without making concessions to the "sensitivity" of the lower orders simply to ensure that they would turn out for the match. The powerful myth of the war could be used as the very tool by which it was simultaneously and fundamentally "rewritten".³³

Rattigan is advocating middle-class revenge, rather than attempts at national regeneration, and he ignores audiences' fondness for the war genre. Looking at the popular, mass-produced literature on which many British post-war Second World War films were based, Ramsden underlines the disparity in our knowledge of the genre, but regards the films as little more than vehicles of recruitment.³⁴ Referring to the 1960s' TV comedies, he suggests that they re-interpreted the war experience in such a 'cosily reassuring way that ... it was safe material even for comedians on TV'.³⁵ But this discounts the popularity of cinema's war and service films over the same period. Chapman comments on the 'great gap in our knowledge' of the genre, identifying three main schools of film criticism - realists, empiricists and theorists - active since the 1970s, but indifferent to the war films of 1945-65. Like Durgnat, he suggests that the genre, as a perpetuator of national myths and masculinity, is the 'British equivalent of the Western'.³⁶ Durngat, Pronay, Rattigan, Ramsden and Chapman do not undertake major analysis, but stress that the gap in our knowledge exists. Nor do they

make the connection between the pre-1914 imperialist hero and his World War Two counterpart, which this study sees as a crucial factor in using elite masculinity as a vehicle for national regeneration. MacKenzie in *British War Films 1939-45 : The Cinema and the Services* (2001), makes the connection between the military and film-makers, but again dismisses the post-1945 films, without thematic analysis, as vehicles of recruitment. In *Colditz the Myth : The Real Story of POW Life in Nazi Germany* (2005), he argues that the film, *The Colditz Story*, spawned a lucrative, ongoing Colditz and POW industry based largely on an extremely distorted and self-promoting myth. Beyond this, he does not offer detailed comment on POW films. Paris (2000), in his comprehensive examination of juvenile literature from 1850, and what he terms 'the pleasure culture of war', noted the cultural importance and self-perpetuating nature of these films:

Post-war British films thus established the Second World War firmly in the war-as-adventure mould with gutsy, patriotic officers taking the major responsibility for victory; and in doing so they created an image that would be emulated in other forms of popular culture ... In the boys' story papers, Second World War stories had all but disappeared by 1946 ... the popularity of war films convinced publishers that interest in the subject was increasing.³⁷

Given that the target cinema audience was youth, this indicates a vital, all-encompassing, focussed trajectory of exemplary masculinity.

Part One of Harper's *Women in British Cinema : Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know* (2000) identifies change in film narratives, commenting that: 'Female stereotypes were quite rigorously constructed in the 1950s, and room to manoeuvre was minimal',³⁸ but she does not analyse the war films. However, she is instructive on film-makers' in-fighting citing, for example, the struggle between Michael Balcon and John Davis, Head of Rank, who clashed over Balcon's determination to continue

making Second World War films. Balcon was motivated by pride in Britain's elite masculinity, Davis by foreign box-office takings arguing that,

... they are not acceptable in a very large number of countries which form part of our basic markets. The reason is obvious. Either a defeated people do not wish to be reminded of the victor, or an occupied people do not wish to be reminded of the horrors of occupation.³⁹

Despite this, and the fact that attitudes to deference changed in some later war films, the genre mushroomed at this time, as this thesis will show. Linking innovation in portrayals of women to the film industry's state of flux at this time, Harper tells us that:

Under certain industrial conditions, they will emerge as a variation of the Monstrous-Feminine; under others, they will be resolute and doughty. Sometimes they are just required to simper and be grateful. It is now clear that, for innovative images of women to emerge, a degree of industrial chaos is necessary. In the 1930s, as a consequence of the 1927 Cinematograph Films Act, the entrepreneurialism of the British film industry permitted some film-makers and scriptwriters to take real risks with their female subject matter. It was the 1950s, when the big three distributors (Rank, ABPC, British Lion) were so complex and unwieldy that there were many textual gaps through which iconoclasts could wriggle.⁴⁰

This thesis will argue that, in the Second World War genre post-1945, women were depicted as giving a very positive contribution to the cinematic war. Undoubtedly, 'a degree of industrial chaos' will account for some of these favourable depictions, but certainly not all. Crucially, a balance, continuity and two-way flow exists between the films of the 1939-45 and the post-1945 films that includes both positive and negative imagery. Therefore, apart from sexual stereotypes to which both film periods subscribe, women were presented in a number of interesting and exciting ways despite the fact that Harper has identified a certain diffidence exhibited by some film-makers during the industry's in-fighting. Part Two examines the role of women in the film process, such as directors, producers, scriptwriters, costume designers and editors. Harper and Porter's *British Cinema of the 1950s : The Decline of Deference* (2003), is a thorough examination of an eventful decade in the life of British cinema. They describe it as a period of great flux that included: government intervention; power

struggles within the industry itself; American involvement and the emergence and dominance of non-artistic people such as John Davis, a somewhat divisive figure. With the eventual lessening of power of the older generation of film-makers and the decline of deference, Harper and Porter argue, younger film-makers could bring their critiques of officer elites, and society, to the screen. In the Second World War genre, this enabled such films as *Private's Progress*, *The Ship That Died of Shame*, *Room at the Top* and *Tunes of Glory* to be made.

Connelly in *We Can Take It : Britain and the Memory of the Second World War* (2004), examines a range of cultural imagery and artefacts and argues that, since 'much of the national memory of the war is rooted in reality', the war's myths contain truths. The cinematic war genre is crucial to the public's consensual memory and still captivates youth. He locates this national memory 'further back in the British past',⁴¹ and uses 'memory and myth' to 'describe the desire of humans to ascertain who and what they are'.⁴² The Second World War, and its cultural representation is very much part of this. Webster, in her study *Englishness and Empire 1939-1965* (2005), offers a 'novel thematic focus on empire and Englishness in the post-1945 period'. She observes that the 'developing cult of Churchill in the 1950s', which reached its apogee at his funeral in 1965, had significantly contributed to 'the eclipse of the 'People's War' and the shift to an exclusive image, focusing on elite white martial masculinity – making a great leader the personification of national greatness'.⁴³ This cult also 'demonstrated continuing investment in the Second World War as a symbol of national greatness'.⁴⁴ As a national hero, Churchill had 'led the nation to one of the most overwhelming victories in history', in a story that displayed 'all the key elements of a romance of manliness'.⁴⁵ Second World War imagery 'took over the territory

which empire imagery vacated' the 1950s war film 'bore more resemblance to the pre-war empire genre than the post-war empire film'.⁴⁶ This image 'enlarged and dignified ideas of Britishness and associated national strength with white British masculinity to offer a heroic and masculine narrative of national destiny'.⁴⁷ Webster compellingly sees the removal of women from the post-1945 Second World War narrative and their arrival in the post-1945 empire film as symptomatic of this.

The imperial connection in the celebration of Second World War British masculinity is one of the main tenets of this project, which sees elite leadership as nationally and internationally regenerative. By taking that which was good from the imperialist heroes of boys' literature and markedly updating it, film-makers promoted recognition and continuity of Britain's elite ideals. Post-1945, these cinematic heroes were necessarily more democratic, they were saving the world from Nazi enslavement – global freedoms were the key. Elite heroes, therefore, were not colonizing, civilising, or patronising. Their new frontiers centred round technology. Vitally, they were natural leaders by consent and played an essential role in persuading audiences that British leadership experience and democratic ideals were still needed, particularly so when Communism was becoming more established in the real world as Cold War differences deepened and colonial unrest began to escalate. Moreover, these cinematic heroes enabled British audiences to make the crucial connection to their familiar heroes of imperialist literature, as described by Paris.⁴⁸ Since many of these films included Churchill's quotations, he was, as Webster's examination showed, inexorably bound-up in Empire and the Second World War, connecting with the British people like no other leader has managed to do. However, whilst post-war empire films offered a home for British women - and even the war genre depicted

Virginia MacKenna in *A town Like Alice* emigrating to Australia for a new post-1945 life - this study maintains that women's presence in the war genre was very much more marked than received wisdom allows. Ramsden's *Don't Mention the War: The British and the Germans since 1890* (2006), focuses mainly on the relationship between Britain and Germany. He comments that cinematic depictions of Germans gradually moved during the 1950s from anonymity towards a kind of convergence.

This leads us back to *British Cinema and the Second World War* (2000), Robert Murphy's wide-ranging survey of British World War Two films 1939 to the 1990s. Murphy shows changes over time from the 'People's War', through the class based post-war films, to the glossy, high adventure war films from the late 1960s. He indicates the genre's importance, observing that all the major film directors in Britain handled at least one war film after 1945, and that their hands were tied by a 'reliance on real people and real events, or on novels or plays based on real people and real events'.⁴⁹ On the difficulties of categorising, Murphy comments that it is 'possible to group together three tendencies, focusing them around the most prolific directors of war films in the 1950s: Jack Lee, Ralph Thomas and Lewis Gilbert'.⁵⁰ Jack Lee moved 'directly from wartime documentary' films, so was heavily influenced by the documentary tradition and can be likened to Philip Leacock, Charles Frend, Ken Annakin and Bob Compton. The films of Ralph Thomas 'share a number of characteristics with Powell and Pressburger', such as likeable German characters, and an 'untroubled view of heroism'; whilst the group 'centring round Lewis Gilbert, represent the mainstream', although one 'that is less class bound and formulaic'.⁵¹ Stressing that 'one of the factors that makes for the appearance of uniformity in 1950s

war films is their domination by a regular corps of actors such as Jack Hawkins and John Mills';⁵² Murphy praised the films' high mindedness:

It is to the credit of British cinema (and of the society it grew out of) that so few of the films made in the key period between 1945 and 1960 were exploitative and xenophobic, and how many of them are enlightening, honourable and moving.⁵³

Nonetheless, whilst this is partially true, these films also contained extensive and insidious propaganda and promoted focused agendas. It is these often subtle areas that I wish to explore. When a new youth culture emerged in the 1950s, Murphy suggests that war films bridged the generation gap, representing a time when most of the population had a shared experience of war and pride in their achievements. For him, it was 'the myths around Britain's achievements in the Second World War, rather than a celebration of war' that 'attracted audiences'.⁵⁴ On class, Murphy argues:

But if 50s' war films are skewed towards the middle class, their emphasis on courage and personal heroism meant that issues around class tended to be submerged. The concentration on active service and the use of actors like Jack Hawkins and Kenneth More, whose gritty or breezy professionalism was less alienating than the clipped superiority of Clive Brook or Noel Coward, steered the films away from the dangerous waters of class, making them acceptable to working class men and boys.⁵⁵

This study contends that it was the updating of the adventurous pre-1914 imperialist hero and his crucial metamorphosis into his democratic, courageous World War Two alter ego that captured audiences, and is the key to the class issue. Moreover, as his leadership qualities gained audiences' admiration, the key to acceptance amongst all classes was recognition and familiarity. Murphy concludes that the most striking thing to come out of 1950s' war films is the success of 'a wide spectrum' of films and 'a very low rate of failure'.⁵⁶ This is exactly why the genre should be closely examined. It had much to say, said it successfully to large audiences over a considerable period of time, and in numerous interesting ways.

Conclusions

Following this survey of existing literature, it is clear that there is room for a project such as the one proposed. Consequently, Chapters 2 to 6 will proceed along the paths outlined, offering new thematic approaches whilst, at the same time, accepting some of the statements made by historians and challenging others. Therefore, notions of moratoriums, nostalgia, curiosity, self-delusion and fears of another World War, can be regarded as only partially valid reasons for the genre's success and longevity. Cinematic celebrations of World War Two, I suggest, can be understood as a powerful reminder of the capabilities that might have to be tapped into again to re-dress the disequilibrium of the Cold War years and Commonwealth upheavals. 'The masochistic satisfaction ... of taking it', posited by Rattigan, clearly cannot be the reason for the popularity of these films. Many of them are more concerned with actively taking the war to the enemy - from the perspectives of freedom, captivity and, surprisingly, both genders. Neither should we arbitrarily label them negatively as films about repression, since they can be read more fruitfully as films about self-control, something to be admired. And, although recruitment remains a valid issue, it is one of many agendas requiring exploration. Pronay's contention that the films allowed audiences to 're-live their experiences ... and to catharsise psychological sores still festering', is strongly disputed by this project. Equally, it is difficult to accept his view that 'after a decade ... the worst memories re-surface to be faced again through the creative power of art until they gradually fade'. This is manifestly untenable, since neither cinema, nor television, have allowed these memories to fade. Additionally, audiences cannot be said to be re-living their own particular experiences. More usually, between 1945-65, they were presented with a

sanitised screen version of a war of elites. A further paradox remains, if cinema was guilty of painting war in romantic and nostalgic terms, as Pronay claims, how could the 'worst memories re-surface'? Quite visibly, the middle classes were re-asserting themselves, and there was some bitterness about their apparently reduced post-war status, but film-makers' predominant thrust was that of national regeneration through the masculine ideal of a new, but excitingly familiar hero. Mindful of this, and using the themes and agendas anticipated, Chapter 2 will examine the return of the officer class as organisation man and as maverick.

¹ Proney, Nicholas, 'The British Post-bellum Cinema', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1988, p 39.

² For a full discussion of the Falklands connection, Mrs Thatcher's appropriation of Churchillian rhetoric and leadership, whilst leaving the people out of the 'People's War', see Connelly, Mike, *We Can Take It! Britain and the Memory of the Second World War* (Harlow, 2004), pp 271-280.

³ Pronay, 'The British Post-bellum Cinema'; Chapman, James, *The British at War* (1998) and 'Our Finest Hour Revisited: The Second World War in British Feature Films Since 1945', *Journal of Popular Cinema* (1998), First Issue Jan-Feb; MacKenzie, S.P., *British War Films 1939-45: The Cinema and the Services* (London, 2001); Murphy, Robert, *British Cinema and the Second World War* (London, 2000); Paris, Michael, *Warrior Nation: Images of War in British Popular Culture, 1850-2000* (London, 2000); Ramsden, John, 'Refocusing the "People's War": British War Films of the 1950s', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 33 No. 1 (1998); Rattigan, Neil, 'Last Gasp of the Middle Classes' in Wheeler-Dixon, Winston, *Re-Viewing British Cinema, 1900-1992* (New York, 1994); Richards, Jeffrey, *Films and British National Identity: From Dickens to Dad's Army* (Manchester, 1997); Connelly, Mark, *We Can Take It: Britain and the Memory of the Second World War* (Harlow, 2004); Webster, W., *Englishness and Empire 1939-1965* (Oxford, 2005) and Ramsden, John, *Don't Mention the War: The British and the Germans since 1890* (London, 2006).

⁴ Barr, Charles, *Ealing Studios* (Studio Vista (1977) 1993), p 7.

⁵ Murphy, Robert, *Realism and Tinsel: Britain, 1939-48* (London, 1989), p 97.

⁶ Brown, Geoff., *Sight and Sound*, Autumn 1978, quoted in Robert Murphy (London, 1989), pp 97-98.

⁷ Brown, Geoff., 'Which Way to the Way Ahead', *Sight and Sound*, Vol. 47, No. 4, Autumn 1978, p 243.

⁸ Murphy, *Realism and Tinsel*, p 98.

⁹ Whitebait, William, *New Statesman*, 5 April 1958 p 432.

¹⁰ Mallory, Leslie, *News Chronicle*, 13 March 1958.

¹¹ Spielberg, Steven, Interview, *D-Day*, BBC2 TV, 1998. He comments that 1970's television coverage of the Vietnam War paved the cinematic way for war's full horrors to be shown.

¹² Manvell, Roger, *Films and the Second World War* (London, 1974), is mainly concerned with films made during the war and covers American, Russian, Japanese, German and Italian cinema. But he remarks on post-1945 versions that, with the passing of years 'antagonisms ... became relaxed into a form of mutual respect'. Jeavon, Clyde, *A Pictorial History of War Films* (London, 1974), lightly covers the subject from the Boer War, but he defines the films as vehicles of nostalgia. Arnes, Roy, *A Critical History of the British Cinema*, (London, 1979), favours the nostalgia explanation. Curran, James and Porter, Vincent, *British Cinema History* (London, 1983), virtually disregard 1950s war films.

Perry, George, *The Great British Picture show* (London, (1974) 1985), covers 1939-45 films, dismissing the post-war genre. Murphy, Robert, *Realism & Tinsel: Cinema and Society in Britain, 1939-48* (London, 1989), discovers richness in 1940s genres but ends in 1948. Landy, Marcia, *British Genres Cinema and Society 1920-60* (1991), looks at war films between 1939-45 yet is more interested in the rest of British genre cinema – but she notes a crisis of masculinity in the later period. Barr, Charles, *Ealing Studios* (Studio Vista (1977) 1993), comments briefly on, but does not analyse, Ealing's war films post-1945 and his *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema* (London, (1986) 1994), again virtually disregards war films. Paris, Mike, *From Wright Brothers to Top Gun – Aviation, Nationalism and Popular Cinema* (Manchester, 1995) laments the lack of post-war British films supporting Britain's technological achievements in the air, this is because the screen was dominated by World War Two instead he says. Higson, Andrew, *Waving the Flag* (London, 1995) and *Rethinking British Cinema* (London, 1996), are major works that do not contain essays on war films. Whilst Street. Sarah, *British National Cinema* (London, 1997), merely notes that these films privileged the middle classes and focused on males. Murphy, Robert (Ed.), *The British Cinema Book* (London, 1997), devotes a few lines to post-war versions. In this book, Spicer's essay sees male stars as important to audiences' choice of film because of their 'typicality'. Richards, Jeffrey, *Films and British National Identity: From Dickens to Dad's Army* (Manchester, 1997), comments that British cinema's films did not 'suggest radical revolution or classlessness', so the return of the officer class was understandable at that time. Chapman, James, *The British at War* (London, 1998) is concerned with films made during the war. Chibnall, Steve and Murphy, Robert (Eds.), *British Crime Cinema* (London, 1999), focuses on the wider context of British cinema's prolific and popular post-war onslaught on crime and punishment and, when they discuss films such as *The Made Me A Fugitive*, it is in the context of crime. Chibnall's extensive biography of film director *J Lee Thompson* (Manchester, 2000), mentions *Ice Cold in Alex*, which he sees as transitional, moving from war heroics to more 'original critiques', but he is concerned mainly with production details. Spicer, Andrew, *Typical Men* (London, 2001), views the service and war comedies as a necessary alternative to the official myth. There is a chapter on 'Damaged Men' that refers to the war, but does not analyse the genre.

¹³ Anderson, Lindsay, quoted in Jeavon, *A Pictorial History of War Films*, p 188.

¹⁴ Hurd, Geoff (Ed.), *National Fictions: World War II in British Film & Television* (BFI Publishing, London, 1984).

¹⁵ Medhurst, Andrew, '1950s War Films', Hurd. (Ed.), *ibid*, pp 36-38, looks at the films' sexuality, referring to pilots' orgasmic cries when the dams burst in *The Dam Busters*, p 38.

¹⁶ Gledhill, Christine and Swanson, Gillian, 'Gender and Sexuality in Second World War Films', Hurd. (Ed.), *ibid*, pp 56-62.

¹⁷ Geraghty, Christine, 'Masculinity', Hurd, (Ed.) *ibid*, pp 63-67.

¹⁸ Geraghty, *ibid*, pp 63-67.

¹⁹ Geraghty, Christine, *British Cinema in the Fifties: Gender, Genre and the 'New Look'* (London, 2000), p 187.

²⁰ Geraghty, *ibid*, p 178.

²¹ Barr, *Ealing Studios*, pp 112-113 referring to: *The Captive Heart; Frieda; Against the Wind; Passport to Pimlico; Whiskey Galore; The Cruel Sea; The Divided Heart; The Ship That Died of Shame and Dunkirk*.

²² Barr, *Ealing Studios*, p 112-113.

²³ Richards, Jeffrey, in Burton. Alan, O'Sullivan. Tim, and Wells. Paul (Eds.), *Liberal Directions: Basil Dearden and Post-war British Film Culture* (Trowbridge, 1997), pp 10,14, 15, 20.

²⁴ Richards, *ibid*, pp 20, 21, 33.

²⁵ Richards, *Films and British National Identity*, pp 130-132, argues that 'Gainsborough's vicarious alternative was provided by Margaret Lockwood and James Mason; whilst spivs and juvenile delinquent films presented others'.

²⁶ Landy, Marcia, 'Nation and Imagination in *Privates Progress*' in *The Family Way: the Boulting Brothers and British Post-war Film Culture* (Trowbridge, 2000), p 178.

²⁷ Durgnat, *A Mirror for England* (Faber & Faber, 1970), p 6.

²⁸ Durgnat, *ibid*, p 84.

²⁹ Durgnat, *ibid*, pp 84 & 95.

³⁰ Pronay, Nicholas, 'The British Cinema: A survey of the films relating to World War Two made in Britain between 1945 and 1960', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol. 8. No. 1, 1985, pp 40, 51.

- ³¹ It is regularly fought on the football field when England plays Germany. The 1996 European Football Championship resulted in tabloid headlines about Nazis, and England and German fans trade insults on that basis. *Escape to Victory*, featured a propagandistic football match between POWs and the Germans, bringing these two aspects together in 1987.
- ³² Fawcett, Basil, 'The Germans', *Fawlty Towers*, BBC2 television comedy, Series 1, Episode 6, 1975. Confronted with German guests, Basil exhorted staff not to mention the war, but he constantly did so.
- ³³ Rattigan, 'Last Gasp of the Middle Classes', p 150.
- ³⁴ Ramsden, 'Refocusing the "People's War"', pp 35-63.
- ³⁵ Ramsden, *ibid*, pp 35-63.
- ³⁶ Chapman, 'Our Finest Hour Revisited', offers 3 main schools of film criticism: Realists – Roger Manvell, Paul Rotha and Basil Wright (documentarists during war); empiricists – Nicholas Pronay, Jeffrey Richards, Anthony Aldgate, Sue Harper and Philip Taylor (using official documents, primary sources, production details, critical and audience reactions; and film theorists – Christine Gledhill, Andy Medhurst, Andrew Higson and Annette Kuhn who pay court to 'modes of textual address in film propaganda' and were influenced by Steven Neale's essay in *Screen* (1997). The British western reference is on p 34. Weight, Richard, *Patriots: National Identity in Britain 1940-2000* (Basingstoke, 2000), favours the western argument and notes that they 'mimicked colonial epics in style', pp 345-7.
- ³⁷ Paris, *Warrior Nation*, p 250.
- ³⁸ Harper, Sue, *Women in British Cinema: Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know* (Continuum, London, 2000), p 97.
- ³⁹ Harper, *ibid*, p 92, quoting from H/138, exchange of letters between Davis and Balcon, 18 October, 1955, Balcon Collection, BFI library.
- ⁴⁰ Harper, *Women in British Cinema*, p 233.
- ⁴¹ Connelly, Mark, *We Can Take It* (Harlow, 2004), cover.
- ⁴² Connelly, *ibid*, p 2.
- ⁴³ Webster, *Englishness and Empire 1939-1965*, p 191 and back cover.
- ⁴⁴ Webster, *ibid*, p 182, cites John Ramsden's *Man of the Century: Winston Churchill and his Legend Since 1945* (London, 2003), as useful in discussing both the cult and Churchill's personal contribution.
- ⁴⁵ Webster, *ibid*, p 182.
- ⁴⁶ Webster, *ibid*, p 58.
- ⁴⁷ Webster, *ibid*, p 91.
- ⁴⁸ Paris, *Warrior Nation*, throughout.
- ⁴⁹ Murphy, *British Cinema and the Second World War*, p 206.
- ⁵⁰ Murphy, *ibid*, pp 205-207.
- ⁵¹ Murphy, *ibid*, pp 205-207.
- ⁵² Murphy, *ibid*, p 207.
- ⁵³ Murphy, *ibid*, pp 235-236.
- ⁵⁴ Murphy, *ibid*, p 234.
- ⁵⁵ Murphy, *ibid*, p 205.
- ⁵⁶ Murphy, *ibid*, p 233.

Chapter 2

SELLING BRITAIN TO THE WORLD

The Dam Busters – Myths, Masculinity & Manipulation

‘War in our time has come to mean a struggle in which millions of ordinary men fight and die heroically without being singled out for honour or glory. But, just now and again, perhaps once in a generation, there comes an achievement that captures the imagination of a country.’ (Clark, 1955)¹

‘It should be possible to keep this danger in everyone’s mind so that we can never be caught on the wrong foot again . . . We British are apt to consider ourselves the yardstick upon which everything else should be based. We must not delude ourselves. We have plenty to learn . . . We want to see our country remain as great as it is today – forever. It all depends on the people, their commonsense and their memory’. (Gibson, 1946)²

Major differences between British cinema’s 1939-45 ‘People’s War’ films and post-war versions of the Second World War are indicative of a degree of cultural re-conditioning. Gradual social change and the failure to establish the ‘New Jerusalem’, led to the re-emergence of traditional elites in leadership roles, and a rejuvenated middle-class agenda that film-makers clearly reflected and supported. Therefore, during the 1950s, the ‘People’s War’ was largely overtaken by the war of officer elites as film-makers cinematically dissolved national unity into “acceptable” class - and, to a lesser extent, gender - divisions, transforming the war of the common man back into a war of elite masculinity. These elites became national exemplars. The social and political milieu in which these changes occurred was extraordinary. It was an age of ambiguity, in which Murphy suggests that ‘conflicting legacies of altruism and violence; community spirit and individual enterprise; lawlessness and integrity, fought for prominence’.³ World War Two left Britain victorious but exhausted. Unlike the rest of Europe, all the major institutions of control and authority - especially the monarchy - had emerged practically unscathed and in place. The Empire was also intact, but on the slippery slope. Vitality, perceptions of British

invincibility were dented by the fall of Singapore in 1942 and Indian independence in 1947. Strengthened by World War Two, the US economy dominated post-war Europe as America and Russia became Superpowers. Britain strove to maintain a major international role and elected a Labour Government in 1945, which undertook a varied political programme. Despite living up to the wartime promise of a 'New Jerusalem' by implementing the Welfare State, its tenure was defined by 'Austerity'. The Labour Party became the target of 'increasing bitterness' as the middle-classes re-articulated their political and social presence.⁴ This was reinforced by a 'heavy attack on anything socialist in the media ... and long before 1950, there had grown up in that class a real detestation of Labour'.⁵ This led to:

Few protests against the introduction of peacetime conscription, or the decision to fight in the Korean War. Capital punishment remained, as did corporal punishment in schools. There was no relaxation of the laws relating to censorship or sexual behaviour. The traditional division of roles between the sexes was more or less taken for granted, and racial discrimination freely practised against West Indian immigrants. Within industry, the gulf between management and shop floor remained almost as great as ever.⁶

Conservative governments returned in the elections of 1951 and 1954, were defined by affluence and consumerism.⁷ Globally, British prestige was enhanced by the Festival of Britain in 1951 (masterminded by the Labour Government), and the 1953 conquest of Everest. The 1953 Coronation, arguably the defining moment of the decade, re-emphasized class hierarchy and traditions, marking a return to national pride in British leadership. An adventurous belief in the future emerged as the spirit of the New Elizabethans gained momentum. Churchill tapped into these emotions, subtly linking them to imperialism: 'You will understand the pride with which someone who was brought up in the high summer of Victorian England says, once again, "God Save the Queen"'.⁸ Cultural supremacy enjoyed by the middle classes in literature, theatre, films, television and the arts, enabled their beliefs in duty,

patriotism, teamwork and democratic leadership qualities, to be foregrounded.⁹ Michael Balcon's strategy was to portray Britain as a caring, industrious, democratic and natural world leader.¹⁰ In this climate of change, Britain's middle-class filmmakers could take advantage of existing, informal, public school, establishment and military connections to aid the prolific production of World War Two films 1945-65 such as *The Battle of the River Plate* (1956), *Dunkirk* (1958) and *The Dam Busters* (1955). Government and military assistance, without which much of the genre could not have been made, was generously given (Appendix 3).¹¹

War films were produced under Labour and Tory post-war governments. Initially, 42 Second World War films were made between 1945-51, many praising European Resistance (Appendix 1).¹² Some, such as *Landfall* (1953) and *The Captive Heart* (1946), re-told the story of the 'People's War'. Due to stock shortages, they were supplemented by the re-release of critically acclaimed 1939-45 'People's War' films such as *In Which We Serve* (1942), and by a number of imperialist films including *The Four Feathers* (1939).¹³ But, the volume and change of emphasis of the genre escalated during the 1950s, coinciding with Churchill's renewed 1951-55 premiership which highlighted his pre-war values, links to the common man's war, and his role as arbiter of the future.¹⁴ Six war films were made in 1950, ten in 1953 and, by 1958, the number had risen to 21. Production of war films in the 1940s totalled 105, in the 1950s it was 92, whilst in the 1960s, it was still as high as 60 (Appendix 1). Despite growing critical unease, 1945-65 war films were popular with audiences who had shared experience of war or conscription. They acted as a bridge within families, assisted male bonding, and countered the emergent generation gap as the children who played in the rubble of war embraced 1950s' youth culture.¹⁵ This

new youth culture, perceived as threatening, had its own thriving teenage market. The literature of war was part of this.¹⁶ This age-group became the target audience for the genre, with its agenda of national regeneration through war.

Frequently based on true events, and demonstrating exceptional personal heroism, the genre was a fertile proving ground for the creation, appropriation and perpetuation of national myths and legends. Dominated by the emergence of the elite middle (and occasionally upper) class, ex-public school officer working in conjunction with the expertise of the boffin/scientist, this new cinematic World War Two hero was reassuringly familiar due to subtle, but decipherable, links to his pre-1914 imperialist forerunner. Mastering the latest technology of war and destruction with consummate professionalism, he restored the hero to his pre-First World War status, crucially ensuring his continuity whilst returning the middle classes to their pre-1939 pre-eminence.¹⁷ Individuality and heroism were not diminished by technology or teamwork as Geraghty suggests.¹⁸ Control of the new technology which could destroy him in horrific ways became part of the new hero's masculinity. Man, machine (and scientist) performed heroically together, adding to the nation's technological skills and aiding national regeneration through war. Much of this was reflected in the Associated British Picture Corporation's flagship film *The Dam Busters* (1955), directed by Michael Anderson. Arguably the most famous British Second World War film - with its most celebrated hero - it recapitulated the official story of the 1943 RAF raid on the Ruhr dams, and is discussed next. Following this, and providing a dynamic contrast with 'by-the-book' missions, maverick officer elites will be examined. Mavericks did things their way. In fact, the Collins Dictionary

defines a maverick as 'a person of independent views', an 'unbranded range animal'.

Sea of Sand (1959) will be the key film here.

The Raid - 1943

The attack on the dams (code-named 'Operation Chastise') was made possible through a combination of scientific dedication and courageous flying. Moreover, the work of Air Staff, the Special Operations Executive, Combined Operations, and the expertise of 'organisations throughout the length and breadth of Britain' proved to be invaluable.¹⁹ As early as 1938, Air Staff had discussed the need to target the strategically important Ruhr dams in the event of war, but required special weapons capability. Boffin/scientist Dr. Barnes Wallis's invention of the bouncing bomb provided the right weapon at a crucial point in the conduct of the war.²⁰ Initially described by Bomber Command's Air Chief Marshal, Sir Arthur Harris, as 'tripe of the wildest description',²¹ the idea won Churchill's approval. To embark on the mission 617 Squadron was formed, featuring personnel of varied experience and ability. This team, many of whom were unknown to their leader, the much decorated Squadron Leader Guy Gibson, undertook rigorous low flying training. Organisation man *par excellence*, Gibson was described by Sir Arthur Harris in terms that read like a public school charter:

His natural aptitude for leadership, his outstanding skill and his extraordinary valour marked him early for command; for great attempts and great achievements. His personal contribution towards victory was beyond doubt unsurpassed. In every facet of his character, he was a thoroughbred. He was not only admired, but loved by all who knew him.²²

Historian Max Hastings sees Gibson as:

One kind of legendary Bomber Command CO. Not a cerebral man, he represented the apogee of the pre-war English public schoolboy, the perpetual school captain of unshakeable courage and dedication to duty, impatient of those who could not meet his standards.²³

To his RAF superior Air Vice Marshal, Sir Ralph Cochrane, he epitomised 'the kind of boy who would have been head prefect in any school'.²⁴ Gibson, says Sweetman

'fully justified his reputation as a strict disciplinarian' and, by April, 'respect for authority ... was firmly established'.²⁵ Until the pre-raid briefing, only a select few knew the targets. Post-raid, to further heighten the raid's success, they were claimed to be the Moehne and Eder dams. Undeniably courageous, the actual raid mounted on the Moehne, Eder, Sorpe and three other dams did not put the German war machine out of action for long, despite predictions and expectations.²⁶ 'If the Sorpe had been destroyed instead of the Moehne, Ruhr production would have suffered the heaviest possible blow', claimed Albert Speer, Hitler's Armaments Minister, charged with rebuilding the dams.²⁷ Constructed differently, the Sorpe, which had to be approached and attacked in an alternative way, was not breached, and received scant mention at the time, or in the film.

Weeks before the raid, and not referred to in the film, the priority of the targets was questioned in reports and memos, that were the subject of disputes and debates, not only at the time, but on release of official papers 30 years later:

Destruction of the Sorpe Dam, which with the Moehne supplied 75% of the Ruhr's water, would "produce a paralysing effect upon the industrial activity in the Ruhr and would result in a still further lowering of moral". With reference to the Eder "destruction of this dam would be speculative, [and] economic effects would be problematical". No important industrial complex would be denied water ... "From the economic standpoint, therefore, this dam cannot be considered as a first-class objective".²⁸

Evidence suggests that Reconnaissance wrongly predicted minimal flak, a dam was mistakenly attacked, and there were navigation problems. 617 Squadron were not the only ones flying that night, several operations were under way, some of them diversionary.²⁹ Nonetheless, natural post-raid euphoria, and statements such as that issued by Sir Archibald Sinclair, Secretary of State for Air, who informed the War Cabinet of an 'outstanding attack ... to destroy the Moehne and Eder dams',³⁰ have clouded issues and given birth to the legend. The raid certainly fulfilled the

politician's task to 'offer his people good myths and to save them from harmful myths', and this is understandable given the course of the war at that time.³¹ Yet the BBC announcement of the raid on May 17, used almost verbatim in the film, mentioned the Sorpe:

A force of Lancasters of Bomber Command, led by Wing Commander Guy Gibson, DSO, DFC, attacked with mines, the dams of the Moehne and Sorpe reservoirs. These controlled two thirds of the water storage capacity of the Ruhr basin. The Eder Dam, which controls the head waters of the Weser and Fulda Valleys and operates several power stations, was also breached. ... Reconnaissance later established that the Moehne Dam had been breached over a 100 yards and that the power station below had been swept away ... The attacks were pressed home from a very low level, with determination and coolness in the face of fierce resistance. 8 of the Lancasters are missing.³²

Barthes states that 'myth has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification and making contingency appear normal ... things appear to mean something by themselves'.³³ This is a convincing explanation as to why the official version (and the film) concentrated on the Moehne and Eder dams, ignoring other inaccuracies. Moreover, the raid did succeed, if not exactly as planned.

News of the successful raid on the night of 16/17 May, 1943, was immediately telephoned to Premier Winston Churchill and Sir Charles Portal, in Washington for a Joint Chief of Staffs Meeting.³⁴ Two days later Churchill received loud applause referring to the raid in his 50-minute US Congress speech:

You have just read of the destruction of the great dams which feed the canals and provide power to the enemy's munitions works. This was a gallant operation, costing 8 out of the 19 Lancaster bombers employed, but it will play a very far-reaching part in reducing the German munitions output.

Vital for Britain, the raid was instrumental in persuading the Americans to prioritise the European war, and helped to convince Stalin that Britain was serious about defeating Hitler. Normally reticent and secretive, the Air Ministry quickly released photographs of the broken dams to the press. Front pages of the world's newspapers were filled with details of the raid which, they claimed, resulted in 'enormous damage

to, and dislocation of, Germany's war industry'. 'The RAF has secured another triumph. With unexampled daring skill and ingenuity ... [it has] ... delivered the most devastating single blow dealt from the air', enthused the *New York Times*.³⁵ 'No man-made defence can stand in their way', bragged the *Daily Mail*.³⁶ Newsreels, an important contributor to the propaganda effort, continued the homage. Overnight, the air crews acquired mythical status, becoming world-wide celebrities, and meeting the King and Queen. The mission became instantly known as:

The day they set the world alight by punching a hole right at the enemy's heart, and were within a whisker of tearing it out. A legend, yes, whenever World War Two is thought of, talked of, or read about, the name "The Dam Busters", and their story, will always be in the foreground.³⁷

617 Squadron undertook promotional tours of American and Canadian cities.³⁸

Gibson received a VC. The Squadron was decorated *en masse* by the Queen, and accorded the rare privilege of taking precedence at their Buckingham Palace Investiture.³⁹ On the eve of their American tour, Churchill, mindful of his own agenda, and Gibson's iconic status, invited him to Chequers revealing that:

As I knew how much the President liked meeting young, heroic figures, I had also invited Wing-Commander Gibson, fresh from leading the attack which had destroyed the Moehne and Eder Dams . . . Half [of 617 Squadron] were lost, but Gibson had stayed to the end, circling under fierce fire over the target to direct his squadron. He now wore a remarkable set of decorations – the Victoria Cross, a Distinguished Service Order and bar, and a Distinguished Flying Cross and bar – but no other ribbons. This was unique.⁴⁰

During Gibson's visit, Hollywood mooted a film of the raid.⁴¹ Fortunately, given the strength of feelings aroused in Britain by such actions, this never materialised.

Since losses of 10% per mission were the norm, and eight of the nineteen Lancasters, and 53 of the 133 men did not return from the raid, a 2001 television programme questioned why a raid which was so costly in terms of men and bombers, yet did not achieve much, was so hyped - at the time and in the 1955 film - when the authorities knew the true story?⁴² However, in 1943 the propaganda impact and

morale boosting value of the raid was colossal. RAF prestige was at issue - they had been criticised for high losses and poor results.⁴³ By 1955, the myth was firmly entrenched in the national psyche, and the greatest perceived global threat resided in Communism. Sections of the middle classes feared the greatest threat to British prestige was loss of international influence (despite the Coronation's world-wide impact) and the greatest domestic threat was national decline. For the military, threats emanated from the Korean War, the Cold War, nuclear weapons, defence cuts and mergers. Against this background, the notion of national regeneration through war can be construed as a vital part of British cinema's representation of World War Two, at a time when few questioned the familiar heroic qualities that had made the Empire great. The dam busters' legend contained all the right elements. 'It has no age barrier', historian Alan Cooper tells us, 'young and old alike are captivated by this one unique operation'.⁴⁴

The Film – *The Dam Busters* (1955)

The Dam Busters was made by Associated British Picture Corporation with unparalleled Air Ministry and RAF assistance. It was inspired by Gibson's officially sanctioned book *Enemy Coast Ahead*, published posthumously, and World War Two pilot Paul Brickhill's *Boys' Own* account of the raid in his best-selling book *The Dam Busters*, published in 1954. Production Director, Robert Clark bought the rights to Brickhill's book and had an 'unprecedented' £250,000 British film budget.⁴⁵ Two years meticulous preparation and research followed. Michael Redgrave met Dr Barnes Wallis, and Richard Todd totally immersed himself in the life of Guy Gibson. Made in black and white, the film has a documentary feel. Since authenticity was ABPC's stated aim, use of RAF Scampton (617 Squadron's wartime base) was

granted. Gibson's batman was on hand and Group Captain J. H. Whitworth (Gibson's Commander) acted as advisor. Remarkably, five Lancaster bombers with pilots, instructors and technicians were loaned, and hours of rare, top-secret RAF film of the raid and its aftermath - including captured German war footage - were made available. Prior to filming, Gibson's father, other relatives of deceased 617 Squadron members and survivors, received scripts.⁴⁶

Like the raid, the film enjoyed unprecedented media exposure and a rapturous press. It recycled valuable wartime myths and propaganda for peacetime use. But, by ignoring or playing down the reality and rationale of the raid on the Ruhr dams, the errors and appallingly high British losses, the film gave a distorted picture. Despite Robert Clark's insistence that 'what you see, simply happened', he strictly adhered to the official line.⁴⁷ (In 1955, many of the raid's records were subject to the Official Secrets Act).⁴⁸ Moreover, at the premiere, Clark condescendingly told Wallis that he had 'over-simplified the film' for 'uninstructed audiences'.⁴⁹ However, *The Dam Busters'* press book identified a major aspect of the film's motivation as being that of national regeneration. There is also a response to critics of war films:

It is only now, some 10 years after the war that we are really in a position to be able to assess, calmly and without emotional prejudices distorting our judgement, some of the great moments of the conflict from the point of view of the heights to which human character was elevated, the heroic stature to which ordinarily little men grew. It is entirely unjust to this or, indeed many other films which are concerned with wartime situations to complain that we have had enough of war, indeed we have, and if this film were nothing but a lauding of the arts of destruction, then it would merit only rejection. But it happens to be the fact that hardship, danger and the hazards and risks of war do seem to bring out of human nature, of whatever national complexion it be, qualities that are admirable and which we could wish were more often involved in times of peace.

The Times recognized the regenerative appeal of the World War Two film:

There are many explanations for the unabating popularity of the war film. Perhaps it really does offer compensation of a sort for the quiet uniformity of modern living, or perhaps the last war has left a taste for blood, which cannot be forgotten. But certainly, one of the main reasons must be that with its tensions, its uncertainties, and its spectacle, fighting provides the film-maker with one of the richest subjects he can hope for. And danger can reveal so much more of human personality than love.⁵⁰

But *The Dam Busters* had other agendas. By endorsing elite masculinity as enshrined in 617 Squadron, the film defined desirable national standards such as leadership qualities, *esprit de corps*, democratic ideals, scientific skill, technical expertise, patriotism, duty, determination and a high order of courage. It also acknowledged Commonwealth involvement, commended Bomber Command's precision bombing of strategic military targets, and boosted the RAF.

Heroes and Boffins

Brickhill's book sealed the partnership of heroes and boffins, by quoting an Air Marshal's opinion of 617 Squadron:

They were worth ten other squadrons. No that isn't quite so ... ten other squadrons couldn't have done what they did, and then of course you've got to consider that inventor chap and the freak weapons he gave them. I suppose 617 was the most effective unit of its size the British ever had.⁵¹

Commonly associated with evil regimes and master criminals planning world domination or destruction, the pre-war cinematic scientist was often surrounded by strange laboratory paraphernalia. Working in menacing environments he was portrayed as misguided, unstable, malevolent or insane. During the war, claims historian Spicer, he was either a 'mystical idealist' or an 'absent-minded professor' and afterwards 'a pawn to governments and military and a figure of public distrust'.⁵² However, in post-war British World War Two films, this study suggests, the British scientist (in reality, operating in the frightening new atomic age) was significantly portrayed as a lovable boffin, a trustworthy father figure and necessary adjunct to the war effort.⁵³ The boffin attained this sobriquet and initial heroic status in 1946, when the RAF claimed him, releasing a 1942 training film *School for Secrets*. An on-screen credit explained his origins:

The RAF has gained a reputation during the last few years, not only of being a brilliant warlike organisation, but also of inventing a new language. Among the lesser known words which appeared in the welter of “prangs”, “scrambles” and “wizards”, was the word “boffin”, meaning scientist. Once upon a time a Puffin, a bird with a mournful cry, got crossed with a Baffin, an obsolete service aircraft. Their offspring was a Boffin. This bird bursts with weird and sometimes inopportune ideas, but possesses staggering inventiveness. Its ideas, like its eggs, are conical and unbreakable. You push the unwanted ones away and they just roll back.

This romantic description could have introduced *The Dam Busters*, a film that gave equal prominence to officers and boffins. Inclusion reached new heights when, at the tense pre-raid breakfast, Gibson (Richard Todd) welcomed Wallis (Michael Redgrave) into the group of flyers as one of them. Notably, in the tension of the Operations Room at the raid’s zenith, Chief of Bomber Command, Arthur Harris (Basil Sydney), affirmed Wallis’s value, claiming ‘this is your night as well as theirs’. Central to the hero, to industry, military hierarchy and the Establishment, but bane of bureaucrats, the boffin now worked in unthreatening surroundings.

We first encounter Wallis in his garden, involving his children and doctor in his research, which centred on nothing more sinister than a table, a bowl of water, a catapult and marbles. Later, as he industriously monopolised the Teddington naval training tank, a harassed official pleaded to Ministry observers ‘could you find him a quiet duck pond – somewhere where he won’t be a nuisance?’ Still later, Wallis was paddling in the sea, feeling with his toes to recover pieces of a trial bomb following a failed practice drop. ‘Sometimes’ he told a fascinated Gibson ‘he got cockles’ instead. Oblivious to everything that came between him and his passion for scientific problem solving, Wallis was dedicated to his latest creation, the bouncing bomb. ‘Here is the most endearing “boffin” I have met in a film. A man with a bomb in his bonnet ... but what a man, what a bomb and what an actor’, enthused the *Star*.⁵⁴ For historian Edgerton, Wallis was ‘a lonely boffin-ahead-of-his-time, parading his gentleness and bumbling Englishness’.⁵⁵ Conspicuously responding to military

aggression of unprecedented vigour, Wallis's purpose was to create a balance and shorten the war. *The Dam Busters* quickly established this. Witnessing a major air-raid, Wallis and his doctor wondered how much Britain could stand. Championing pin-point accuracy, Wallis's rationale (and by implication, Britain's) was to fight cleanly, with a 'bullet through the heart'. He outlined the enormous difficulties implicit in destroying Germany's 'great arsenal of war factories'. 'Impossible' said his doctor, giving the first hint of greatness to come. This is indicative of Edgerton's view of England as 'a nation which is attacked, not a nation which attacks'.⁵⁶ The film credited Wallis as the originator of the idea for the raid in 1942, drawing an angry response from Air Marshal R. Saundby (Retired):

The fundamental misconception on which the book is based – that Dr Wallis “hatched” the idea of destroying the Ruhr dams – still remains in the film ... the idea was worked out by the air Staff in 1938 ... Dr Wallis invented the weapon ... but he did not originate the idea.⁵⁷

But Wallis's enthusiasm, unassuming dedication and constant battles with officialdom were undoubted. A frustrated Wallis told Vickers' test pilot Mutt Summers that at times he had 'felt like a pedlar trying to sell clockwork toys', but would never give up.⁵⁸ However, a happy Wallis after the final successful trial told those officials that he got his idea for his bomb from another great British hero, Nelson, who 'dismissed the French fleet with a Yorker'. At the Air Ministry, Wallis's modest charm when he requested the use of a scarce resource - a Wellington bomber - to carry out tests, summed-up the man, and the new screen scientist:

Official: They are worth their weight in gold, what possible argument could I put forward?

Wallis: Well, if you told them I designed it, do you think that might help?

The next scene showed Wallis and Summers, in the Wellington, testing the bomb.

Counter-balancing the new, unthreatening boffin, Gibson and his ilk represented uncomplicated heroes, men for whom the war was polarised between

good versus evil. We first encounter Gibson as the bomber he was piloting swept out of the dawn sky returning from the last sortie before leave. The sun cast a glow over his face. He climbed down to earth from the cockpit, jokingly making plans to party with his crew and greeted his dog affectionately. This established him as a man apart, a special leader who inspired love, respect and team *esprit*. Summoned to HQ, his exceptional status was highlighted when his Chief, Sir Ralph Cochrane (Ernest Clark) congratulated him on his DSO and bar. 'How do you feel about putting off your leave?' Cochrane asked. Officers frequently made this sacrifice in war films. Harris and Cochrane had chosen Gibson to form an elite squadron from the 'cream' of the RAF for a special, secret mission. 'All squadrons will have to be prepared to give some of their most experienced men', Cochrane explained. Gibson's exhausted crew volunteered *en masse*. Later, he wrote in terms reminiscent of Biggles fans: 'These were the aces of Bomber Command'.⁵⁹ But the unit, although marketed and screened as such, Sweetman argues, did not entirely consist of the cream of the crop.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, '617 Squadron was seen as a symbol of Bomber Command's efficiency and, through its mixture of crews from different countries, of Allied co-operation'.⁶¹ In war films the bomber crew was an analogy for democracy.⁶²

At RAF Scampton for team selection, Gibson and Group Captain Whitworth (Derek Farr) were told that files 'for everyone that matters' were held there. In homage to the Commonwealth, two Australians, Les Knight and Mickey Martin were selected first. Martin 'knows pretty well everything there is to know about low flying', claimed Gibson, having met him when Martin was 'collecting his DFC'. Asking for Les Munro, Gibson said 'I know this New Zealander, I'd like to have him', and the American Joe McCarthy 'he's great'. 'Oh, the glorious blonde' said

Whitworth adding to the glamour 'he used to be a Coney Island beach guard' - all remarkable men. But there was no doubt about their main inspiration, or their public school backgrounds and qualities. 'Must not forget the British' said Whitworth of Bill Astell, David Maltby with Hoppy Hopgood, Dave Shannon and Burpee from Gibson's old squadron. Gibson's choice of Flight Commanders - Henry Mawdsley and Dinghy Young - earned an appreciative whistle from Whitworth:

I know Young well, taught him to fly in the Oxford University Air Squadron, he was a rowing blue. Henry Mawdsley is a damn good athlete too. He's a miler ... Yes, you could not have picked two better chaps ... We shan't be popular with the other squadron commanders if we start squeezing chaps like these from them.

Hastings lists the public school attributes at Bomber Command's disposal:

It is important to stress the extraordinarily high calibre of the human material that came to Bomber Command. The majority had matriculated and would have been at university, or working in one of the professions, if it were not for the RAF ... they had been captured by the vision of flying.⁶³

He confirms that the 'decisive factor in the morale of a bomber crew, like that of all fighting men, is leadership', another public school quality.⁶⁴ *The Dam Busters* elevated leadership to a higher plain. This is re-stated at the squadron's formation party in the film, where awed waiters gasped 'Eleven DFCs already and three bars', and 'here comes Gibson, he's done 173 sorties'. During the initial briefing, Gibson recapitulated the officers' distinctiveness, impressing the need for secrecy and intensive training. His "star" team readily accepted his authority. British leadership depended not on force, but on consent and mutual respect. Gibson stressed:

It is unusual for a crowd like you to be formed into a squadron ... you are going to be talked about ... Discipline is going to be essential, so is security ... rumours are flying about already, but your job is to keep your mouths shut. Everything depends on secrecy in a show like this.

The British lead by example. Gibson undertook the same training and rigours as his team: '*We* will practice low flying day and night, until *we* can do it with our eyes shut'. Although the target was top secret he claimed:

If it comes off, it will have results that will do quite a bit to shorten this war ... If we surprise them, we will play hell with them. If they are ready for us, the hell is going to come from the other side.

Several times the Moehne and Eder dams were named as the most vital targets. Cochrane told Gibson 'the Moehne is the most important ... it will bring the Ruhr steel works to a standstill, and do much damage besides'. Gibson made a similar claim to his team on the eve of the raid. Wallis aimed to 'hit the enemy harder, and more destructively than any small force' had ever achieved, but did not envisage the loss of life.

As Wallis perfected the bomb, Gibson and his team doggedly prepared. Both sides overcame difficulties. For Wallis it was doubtful officials, bomb casing, spin, release and height. For Gibson it was height – originally 150-ft. but dropped to 60-ft – speed 240 mph, a reliable bomb sight, communications and pinpoint accuracy. There would be one bomb per 'plane. During this time, team *esprit* and free exchange of ideas were firmly established as problems were worked on. The film wrongly credited Gibson with solving the height and speed dilemma when, viewing a line of chorus girls, his attention turned to the twin spotlights trained on the star. Placing two spotlights underneath the 'plane to converge at the right speed and height solved the problem. This idea was first used in the First World War.⁶⁵ Scientists at Farnborough solved the bomb sight issue.⁶⁶ British scientific expertise was promoted strongly when all the 'planes were fitted with the invaluable new radio telephone device to solve communications difficulties. Gibson and Wallis entered into a father/son relationship marked by mutual reinforcement and deep respect. Gibson was awe-struck when asking Wallis about the bomb: 'Did you think of this all by yourself. I think it's terrific'. Whilst Wallis already knew the answer when, after the height was dropped to 60 ft, he asked: 'Do you think you can fly to these limits?' At the final,

successful testing, the pair wished on the new moon. 'It is our moon' said Gibson, establishing links between the two men, the celestial, the scientific, the technical expertise and the rightness of the British cause. Conspicuously lacking in operational status, members of 617 Squadron were mockingly labelled 'armchair pilots'. Encouraging squadron *esprit*, Gibson solved this, in the time-honoured public-school way, by advising a 'riot'. This entailed vigorous de-bagging, in which he joined. Arthur Harris encapsulated their rationale in Gibson's book:

Remember that these crews, shining youth on the threshold of life, lived under intolerable strain ... faced with the virtual certainty of death, probably in one of its least pleasant forms ... if on occasion the anticipation of an event, or celebration of a success and unexpected survival called for a party, for the letting off of steam in an atmosphere of eat, drink and be merry, for the next time we shall certainly die, who ... will dare to criticize?⁶⁷

Gibson was extracted from the *melee* by Cochrane: 'You'll do the job tomorrow night'. The moon was right, the dams were full, training was complete and the bombs were ready. Cochrane re-capitulated British leadership qualities: 'You have done a fine job with this team. I could not have asked for a better one. Good luck'. Eye-contact symbolized dangers acknowledged but unspoken. This understatement contrasted with films featuring German ranting, and imagery such as the American Colonel's bestial order in *Objective Burma* (1945) to: 'Give your men some raw meat, we're going in'. The film repeatedly reinforced their uniqueness, claiming that 617 Squadron would be the only ones flying on the night of the raid. At the pre-raid briefing, Cochrane justified Bomber Command's past performance, praised their present skills and re-stated the calibre of the unit: 'Bomber Command has been delivering the bludgeon blow on Hitler, you have been selected to give the rapier thrust which will shorten the war if it is successful'.⁶⁸

The film's climactic raid was a model of understated leadership, teamwork and infinite courage, as they flew resolutely towards unexpectedly heavy flak. 'My

goodness, they are aggressive' observed Gibson. Circling and criss-crossing the Moehne Dam under his assertive direction, they made their runs. Feelings and emotions behind Gibson's calm command to 'get ready to pull me out of my seat if I am hit', remained unspoken in the film. His book powerfully expressed them, showing just how much self-control was involved in completing the mission:

We were being dragged along at four miles a minute, almost against our will, towards the things we were going to destroy. I think at that moment, we did not want to go. I thought to myself, in another minute we shall all be dead – so what? ... This is terrible ... this feeling of fear, if it is fear.⁶⁹

Having completed his run, Gibson selflessly called to the next man: 'I'll cover you to draw the flak', ordering others, who did not hesitate, to follow his lead. The fourth attack by Young succeeded. Although the film allowed a little excited chatter (the reality was strong language), Gibson's book offered a *Boys' Own* account:

We were getting pretty excited by now. I screamed like a schoolboy over the radio telephone "Wizard show Melvyn. I think it will go on the next one" ... Then we all began to scream and act like madman over the radio telephone.⁷⁰

'You've had your look', Gibson told his excited team when the water spout rose from the crumbling dam 'now scam'. Those without bombs went home. Gibson led the rest to the next target. The film built-up tension as they reached the Eder, where numerous dummy and actual runs preceded Knight's breaching with the last bomb. By ignoring, or minimising, navigation and approach problems, the film captivated audiences. A very minor reference to attacks on any other dams came from Cochrane. 'McCarthy is going on to the Sorpe alone', he commented matter-of-factly.

For a film reputed to be totally emotionless, *The Dam Busters* manipulated audiences' feelings in several ways, particularly with its specially written theme music *The Dam Busters' March* which could invoke sorrow, despair, humour, joy, tension, excitement and pride according to what was on screen. Geraghty

underestimated the power of war films to imply masculine emotions, or to stir those of audiences:

The necessity of denying fear seems to involve a denial of other feelings, including love and sexual attraction ... Unable to admit to feelings, the heroes of the war films can scarcely articulate emotion, let alone act on it, and what pleasure they have seems to come from their skill with, and control over machines.⁷¹

Equally, Medhurst's sexual metaphor as the dams burst is questionable:

The pilots' orgasmic cries of "Its gone ... my God ... its gone". ... I think it is not without significance that a film that has so single-mindedly closed down, repressed all less dramatic sexual avenues, offers such an almost parodic explosion of satisfaction as its climax.⁷²

Certainly, it is no secret that air crews were sexually charged after a raid, or that homosexuality was prevalent in the RAF as well as the other Services.⁷³ However, due to intense training, and the need for secrecy, all leave was cancelled for weeks before the raid, providing little opportunity; and Wallis's caring, close family set the film's tone.

Barely concealed emotions were evident at the pre-raid breakfast when Gibson was asked: 'Can I have your egg if you don't come back', and in his breezy response: 'Only if I can have yours'. They were present in Gibson's face as his devoted dog was killed during the final briefing, and in his request that Nigger be buried beneath his office window 'at midnight, just about the time we are going in to do the job'. The sadness behind the camera's silent panning to Nigger's scratch marks on the door of his office as Gibson found his collar and lead on his desk was palpable. Throughout the raid, tensions in the Operations Room reached fever pitch, ending in a relieved, triumphal dance executed by Harris, Cochrane, Whitworth and Wallis. Subtlety and empathy were the keys, finely expressed in body language, music and camerawork. The slow post-raid panning of officers' empty rooms was sadly juxtaposed with their individual pre-raid preparations, as the camera lingered in the rooms of those who would not be returning. And, in highlighting the sashes of

rowing blues and cups for sporting excellence, the camera emphasized both the stature of these men and a discreet sense of loss. Empty tables in the breakfast room served a similar purpose. On hearing of the enormous losses, a devastated Wallis exclaimed: 'All those fellows lost. If I'd known ... I would never have started'. Gibson consoled him, explaining that only two 'planes went down in the actual attack and, in homage to the calibre of those on the mission:

You must not think of it that way. If all those fellows had known from the beginning that they would not be coming back, they would have gone for it just the same.⁷⁴

The film ended on a positive, rather than sad or triumphal, note by putting Gibson centre screen, on a lone walk towards the dawn sun. This gave him a special glow, and marked his leadership.⁷⁵ He would personally write to the bereaved families, but the film's clear message was that their sacrifices were not in vain, and that British leadership was unmatched.

Marketing and Reception of *The Dam Busters*

'War', claims writer Rod Prince is 'ordinary behaviour concentrated and distorted'. A film-makers's 'attitude towards it is a fairly reliable guide to his attitude towards the world'.⁷⁶ The cinematic dam busters' legend, says much about the mindset of film-makers who, in re-creating the official story, compounded its distortions. This could lead us to question the shallowness and motivation of war movies in general, and their promotion and marketing. But, the courageous raid did happen, the legend began immediately in 1943, cinema enshrined it, ensuring the dam busters a place in the mindset of generations. However, leaving financial interests, recruitment messages, nostalgia, partial truths, jealousies and disappointments aside, we are left with what appeared to be a strong, selective desire to project Britain and its elites in exemplary fashion, in much the way that Balcon suggested. A prestigious

production, *The Dam Busters* enjoyed two Royal Premieres. Senior RAF personnel and other dignitaries were present, alongside survivors of the raid. Princess Margaret attended the first premiere which was held on the 16 May, the twelfth Anniversary of the raid. (The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester attended on the May, 17). Models of the dams were on display, with reconnaissance photographs and detailed scientific explanations. Star Richard Todd (like Gibson in 1943) did promotional tours in Britain and America.

For *The Dam Busters'* general release film-makers excelled themselves. Incredibly detailed marketing and publicity packages for distributors, showmen and press were provided. The packs offered wide-ranging advice to elicit the involvement of readers of film magazines and reviews, potential audiences, and communities. Numerous posters featured Richard Todd, in Gibson's heroic image, towering above the clouds. There were suggestions to contact RAF Recruitment Offices at local, regional and area levels. Strategies for staging spectacular openings with foyers draped in flags and photographs, featuring local inventors, dignitaries, RAF personnel, and a survivor of 617 Squadron (with local connections if possible) were outlined. So were plans for pre-premiere marches, with bands and flags. Promotional involvement with local bookshops was also advocated. Local Air Corps were encouraged to award the Gibson Cup, and offer prizes for various competitions related to the film, including the best essays on pets (linking with Gibson's love of his dog). A special note in the package was particularly enlightening:

Do not ignore the importance of this film to schools and children. It is, in itself, a piece of history; a pictorial record of a most important incident in Second World War. Contact education authorities and suggest a visit by an RAF Recruiting Officer to talk about the Dam Busters' raid and then lead them to a talk about life in the RAF.⁷⁷

However, it was 'a piece of history' promoting many agendas. Moreover, in what was intended as a subtle appeal and example to youth, the press package significantly discussed Gibson's visits to scout groups in wartime, where he revealed that he always flew with his scout badge. This underpinned the continuity of the imperialist connection, set standards and offered an adventurous, familiar (and masculine) way forward.⁷⁸ Interestingly, Gibson had another imperialist connection - he was born in Simla, India in 1918. Wallis was described as 'an Empire man through and through'.⁷⁹ Gibson's father's letter to Robert Clark was included in the press package.⁸⁰ Reinforcing themes of youth, national pride and regeneration, the letter stated:

The film has recorded for all time a story showing what grit, tenacity of purpose and downright courage can accomplish – a story which will provide inspiration for the youth of Britain for many years to come.⁸¹

Recruitment certainly would have benefited from the film, its publicity machine, and the award to Director, Michael Anderson in 1955, of the prestigious Air Public Relations Association's C. P. Robertson Memorial Trophy for 'the best interpretation of the RAF, to the public, by any medium'.⁸² Bomber Command's controversial image was boosted at home and abroad. Its Chief, Arthur Harris, a divisive figure, had his reputation enhanced by the film.⁸³ In Europe especially, resentment to British bombing raids still existed and arguments raged in Britain on the merits of area, as opposed to strategic, bombing. Legitimate strategic bombing with pinpoint accuracy, as pioneered by the dam busters' night raid, offered an infinitely more acceptable image. 'As far as Bomber Command are concerned', Cooper claims, 'it is parallel with the interest in ... [Fighter Command's] ... the Battle of Britain'.⁸⁴ Robert Clark's press release was unambiguous:

This film is a record, or rather a recreation of that raid, and is a tribute to not only those who took part, but also to the whole of Bomber Command itself which paid so heavily in blood for the vital part it played in winning the war.⁸⁵

Historian Hastings highlighted the raid's propaganda value, eulogizing 617 Squadron as the men who 'carried out the greatest precision bombing feat of the war'.⁸⁶

Churchill underlined the importance attached to the dedicated scientific and flying skills required for bombing with pinpoint accuracy:

A special type of mine had been invented for the dams' destruction, but it had to be dropped at night from a height of no more than sixty feet. After months of continuous and concentrated practice, sixteen Lancasters of 617 Squadron of the Royal Air Force attacked on the night of May 16.⁸⁷

Establishment input surfaced in the furore surrounding the edited American version of *The Dam Busters*. They had inserted a two-second shot of an American Flying Fortress, with RAF roundels, to 'give the film a bit more tension' for the US market.⁸⁸ Richard Todd, on his promotional tour of the USA, confirmed this.⁸⁹ Newspapers received letters condemning another American attempt to steal British glory. *The Times* thundered that American audiences had 'had their morale uplifted and perhaps the box office enriched, by the suggestion that the United States had something to do with the blowing up of the Moehne Dam'.⁹⁰ Responding to public dismay at Hollywood's actions, Labour MP Stephen Swingle complained in the House of Commons that there was 'a good deal of indignant comment in this country', and demanded that action be taken.⁹¹ Parliament urged an 'official protest' at Hollywood's 'gross distortion' of the facts.⁹² ABC removed the offending footage claiming that it was 'a storm in a teacup'.⁹³ Arthur Adeles, Managing Director of Warner Brothers apologised, telling *The Times*, that 'nothing whatever was intended to detract from the glorious achievements of the RAF, or to suggest that any Americans took part in the operations'.⁹⁴ ABPC's Robert Clark, mindful of dollar earnings, argued that the Americans were trying to 'put the film over', and 'should not

be discouraged by unwarranted criticism'.⁹⁵ He gave a copy of the 'doctored' US version of the film to the Air Ministry for examination.⁹⁶ Air Under-Secretary George Wood concluded, in a written Commons' reply, that absolutely no blame attached to the Americans.⁹⁷ Swingler remained dissatisfied, but the vast US market potential was protected.

As further evidence of the film's importance, the press book was twice the size of that of any other war film. Britain's press, many of whom were critical of war films from the mid-1950s, wholeheartedly embraced *The Dam Busters*, even more than they had they applauded *The Way to the Stars* (1945) and *The Cruel Sea* (1953). It was an 'endearing portrait of a hero of our times. British? Well, of course', and 'if all war films were as fine as this, fewer critics would be lamenting that the entire genre has become something of a bore', stated Jimpson Harmen in the *Evening News*.⁹⁸ The *Evening News* also claimed the film as a role model epitomising the 'quiet courage and the calm, determined enthusiasm which enabled the country to pull itself out of the direst straits of its long history'.⁹⁹ Ronald Walker, Air Correspondent of the *News Chronicle*, enthused:

Here are the air crews as they lived and died during the war, gaily hiding their fears, out of which stemmed the courage that no-one who did not live with them, ever appreciated. The interpretations are uncanny.¹⁰⁰

Some newspapers ran extensive serialisations backed-up by drawings, outline plans, explanations of the theory, development and use of the bouncing bomb, models of the dams and scenes from the film. Underlining the scientific importance of the raid, Wallis was interviewed, along with his colleagues. 'Excuse me while I rave', the *Daily Mirror* trumpeted.¹⁰¹ Globally successful, especially in Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, the film did less well in America, but still earned a substantial dollar return.¹⁰² Hollywood's Daryl Zanuck, a powerful producer/director, told

Richard Todd that the film should have emphasized that it was a true story - the Americans would have done, had it been a US operation.¹⁰³ Alan Brien of the *Evening Standard* provided a rare dissenting British voice observing 'if there is a great film to be made about these men, *The Dam Busters* is not it'.¹⁰⁴ *The Daily Worker* predictably warned, 'the film treats war as adventure and, far worse, justifies the indiscriminate massacre of civilians'.¹⁰⁵ Having intelligently anticipated the latter criticism, film-makers were well prepared, the press package was able to 'set the record straight' by promoting scientific skill, precision bombing and legitimate targets, but underplaying the many deaths, claiming that:

This magnificent film is concerned not so much with the appalling fact of the destruction of the Ruhr dams, and the terrifying loss of life which must have been one of the consequences for the enemy, as with the equally formidable concentration of effort on the part of British scientists and airmen who were primarily concerned to deal that enemy a blow which would cripple his war potential and bring the war to a speedier conclusion.¹⁰⁶

To reinforce this observation, Gibson senior's letter to Clark stated: 'Guy was never happy about the carnage caused that night'.¹⁰⁷ But, Guy had a personal agenda. Recounting the raid in *Enemy Coast Ahead* he felt 'glad ... this was the heart of Germany ... which had unleashed so much misery'.¹⁰⁸ His book revealed his contradictory response during their return from the raid, as:

Someone callously said, "If you can't burn 'em, drown 'em". But we had not tried to do this; we had merely destroyed a legitimate industrial objective so as to hinder the Ruhr Valley output of war munitions. The fact that they might drown had not occurred to us. We hoped the dam wardens would warn those living below in time, *even if they were Germans*. No-one likes mass slaughter and we did not like being the authors of it. Besides, it brought us in line with Himler and his boys.¹⁰⁹

Yet he had answered 'Go ahead' when Trevor Roper asked if Spam (their navigator) could indicate 'when a village is coming up', he wanted to drop spare incendiaries.¹¹⁰ Connelly quotes Gibson's remorseless speech at the Sheffield Wings for Victory celebration: 'It is said that the British can take it. We can also give it and we are engaged in blasting the middle out of Germany'.¹¹¹

The *Daily Telegraph* identified the appeal of the dams' raid:

Thousands of their comrades, I suppose, were as heroic and selfless as Guy Gibson and the band he led on the night of May 16, 1943. Few men in history are remembered for a feat so imaginative, so spectacular and so entirely suited to re-telling on the screen.¹¹²

Connelly argues that, in comparison, the poor box-office performance of the Bomber Command film *Appointment in London* (1953) was due to its harsh realities, superstitions, 'rituals and routines'. Written by a colleague of Gibson's, pilot John Woolridge, it was much appreciated by fliers. Its fictional hero, Wing Commander Tim Mason (Dirk Bogarde): 'Tense, often tired, desperately in need of genuine relaxation and a touch cold-hearted because that was the only way to survive ... a man on the verge of cracking-up', bore a striking resemblance to the real Gibson whose medical officer, on the day of the dams raid, deemed him 'not in a fit condition to lead a major operation'.¹¹³ Mason's pre-raid briefing suggested 'a straightforward saturation attack by Bomber Command', targeting Peenemunde. Clearly not the crucial image of 'pinpoint accuracy' stressed by cinema's Gibson and favoured by film-makers, officials and public alike.¹¹⁴ In paying homage to the dam busters' raid, film-makers chose the ideal vehicle to promote national regeneration through war. This film may not tell the whole truth, but it perpetuated not only the myth, and a just war, but the updated imperialist hero. By locating national leadership in elite masculinity, the film set high standards of behaviour and patriotism at a time of international upheavals and national decline. Re-stating the ideals perceived to have made the Empire great captured the interest of the nation's youth. Bomber Command clearly benefited. It is difficult to know whether pressure from above influenced him, but Gibson claimed in *Enemy Coast Ahead*, that the answer to war was 'a strong, powerful, strategic bomber force'.¹¹⁵

Undoubtedly, war films were more than nostalgic trips or recruitment vehicles. When analysed and contextualised, they have much more to say.¹¹⁶ Moreover, they say it in different ways. Gibson, technocrat and organisation man *par-excellence*, was one kind of officer, but there were others. Seemingly amateurish, disinterested in hierarchy or bureaucracy, lacking or losing equipment, frequently in disguise or 'fancy dress', and always operating by the seat-of-the-pants, mavericks were regularly involved in half-baked *Boys' Own*-inspired japes. These upper and middle-class officers were another breed. Yet they were generally successful and, despite any failings, frequently surprised us.

'Less and Less like the Rules'¹¹⁷

'Independent' and 'unbranded', a maverick can be described as 'One that refuses to abide by the dictates of, or resists adherence to, a group; a dissenter'.¹¹⁸ Mavericks were perfectly suited to irregular, innovative missions. They operated in grey areas - bending, testing or disregarding the rules. For some, a barbaric enemy left no choice but to respond in kind, as discussed in Chapter 3. Durgnat describes Britain's *raison d'être* as: 'War is war'.¹¹⁹ An American non-war film, *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1952), explained elite British *rationale* in a conversation between 'evil' Prince Rupert of Hentzau (James Mason) and 'good' Rudolf Rassendyll/King Rudolf V (Stuart Grainger):

Rupert: You are a product of the English public school system. You would not use my methods of fighting.

Rudolf: We will, when we are forced to.

My research suggests that what made British officers exceptional was cinematic conscience. Un-British actions required that courage and honour be inseparable from conscience. Actions were justified by extreme enemy provocation, betrayal, or serious risks to mission and men. So, for officers in POW films, on covert missions

or on maverick adventures, whilst killing in cold blood was abhorrent, it happened by direct order, or force of circumstance, but never gratuitously. A *Biggles* fan recalled the dreadful reality and motivation of fighting-men in World War Two Burma:

No question of heroics, mock heroics or chivalry, in the sense one read about prior to the war with Biggles. We were totally committed to killing as many Japanese as possible ... we knew from bitter experience there had been atrocities'.¹²⁰

This mirrored the justification in the eastern POW film *The Camp on Blood Island* (1958). However, in *Orders to Kill* (1958), Major Kimball (John Crawford), an American, casually asked: 'Who've we got in Paris we can spare for a murder?' And was chastised: 'That's not the way we work'. Nevertheless, a British professor (James Robertson Justice), in his capacity as a Naval Commander, trained a Canadian bomber pilot to kill a French traitor, explaining:

As we grow more civilized, so does our method of killing ... Killing a man is not a game ... When we were still savages, we thought little of killing a man with our bare hands – we do now. You could almost measure our sense of guilt with a range-finder. I have got to stop civilized men from thinking about killing a man with their bare hands ... if they thought about it, they might not do it.

So, the conscience-led, civilised British (and the Dominions) must learn this deadly art. Yet, the film side-stepped the question of how the professor gained his knowledge. Sholto Lewis (Marius Goring), in *Circle of Danger* (1951), explained to American Douglas Clay (Ray Milland) why the Commando leader, Major McCarran (Hugh Sinclair), had executed Clay's overly-zealous brother. He had endangered a crucial mission and the lives of twelve 'better' men:

We hadn't finished the job ... when this ego-bound young fool runs the risk of waking every German in Brittany ... trying to get himself a high-ranking prisoner ... Hamish ordered him back twice, he went on deliberately ... It was the mission or him ... if you think Hamish liked the job, you are a bigger fool than I think. He is what the book means when it says "an officer and a gentleman".¹²¹

Clay, a distinguished war hero, reassured McCarran: 'If I had been in your shoes, I would have done the same'. Sholto articulated the notion of 'Service' which plainly involved conscience:

You and I take the Oath of Service and we forget it as soon as it is out of our mouths – not Hamish. Have you ever heard of a man crucifying himself? That is what he did. I know because I helped him write his report ... after it had been sent from our War Office to Eisenhower and back. They sent for him, told him he had done the right thing; then they told him that it had never happened.

Janus-faced official approval for McCarran's action could hardly have been higher.

Wherever mavericks operated they clashed with organisation men and traditionalists. This resulted in mutually beneficial learning experiences between the military and non-military mindset. *Sea of Sand* (1958) epitomised this. An on-screen credit declared: 'They were hand-picked volunteers. Their methods were unorthodox, but the results they achieved were out of all proportion to the small number of men involved.' Given a desert assignment, mine expert, traditionalist and professional soldier, Captain Williams (John Gregson) was told by his Commanding Officer, whose officers used first names and dressed casually: 'You won't find us terribly regulated'. This presaged conflict with maverick Captain Cotton (Michael Craig) - an architect - and his team of 'pirates' during a perilous long-range desert patrol behind enemy lines, to blow-up one of Rommel's fuel depots prior to El Alamein. Typically anti-bureaucratic and individualist, Cotton ran a dependable team of regulars, conscripts and professionals, which included working-class regular malcontent, Trooper Brody (Richard Attenborough). Cotton and Williams immediately clashed:

Cotton: According to the rules, nobody should be able to operate here, that's why it works out so well. Our war's got to be less and less like the rules.

Williams: Rules are the result of past experience.

Encountering Germans, they lost essential water and petrol. As Cotton re-planned to obtain more from their Road Watch team, they argued again:

Williams: It's a bit late.

Cotton: Yes, if you mean I haven't written down a lot of bumph about objective, intentions and method.

Cotton's mission required adaptability and initiative. He mirrored Major Warden's (Jack Hawkins) thoughts in *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1958): 'Always expect the

unexpected'. At this point, Cotton disdainfully viewed Williams as 'a professional soldier who would use his last drop of water to blanco his belt' and would make 'a great Staff wallah'. Patronizingly Williams acknowledged that he had 'encountered wild men at El Alamein'. A team briefing preceded another disagreement:

Cotton: (Angrily) - All we have to do is cross 400 miles of desert and arrive on the dot. Nice, simple, direct orders from Staff and the brass hats.

Williams: (Stiffly) - It's Staff's job to simplify.

For Cotton's men, 'Staff' had never been at the sharp end.

Following another German attack, six dead guardsmen were respectfully buried. An instructive exchange exposed their differences as Cotton angrily mourned his comrades, whilst Williams disinterestedly thought only of the mission:

Cotton: These were good men. We've been together a long time.

Williams: That's going to make the job twice as hard.

Cotton: That's the way to look at it.

Brodie, who continually mocked the Guards' honourable ethos, now paid tribute, 'but they bloody-well win wars'. A breakthrough occurred between the officers when Williams bantered with an enemy patrol, and in perfect German, jokingly referred to Rommel:

Cotton: (Admiringly) - That had me sweating. Where did you learn to speak German?

Williams: (With irony) - At the Staff College.

This, too, earned Brody's respect. 'Here, Sir, let me do that', he offered as Williams struggled with a wrench. Earlier, Cotton had admonished Williams for not helping when a wheel was stuck. 'All hands, even officers', must muck-in. At the minefield, Williams worked with Cpl. Matheson (Barry Foster), an anxious, but efficient young man for whom - showing his human side - he became a father figure.

Crucially the raid revealed that the German fuel dump masked a huge build-up of tanks and crack Panzer divisions. To complete their mission, Cotton's team

indulged in cold-blooded killing and hand-to-hand combat. Hunted by German forces, they lost everything, finally facing a 40-mile trek. Despite volunteers willing to stay with the injured and dying Blanco, Cotton reacted as Williams would, according to Group Staff procedure. Realising their chances were minimal, he insisted they all leave, thus increasing the possibility of getting their information back to base. Weakened by his injury, Cotton later ordered them to continue without him. Spotting British and German patrols on a collision course Williams, behaved like a maverick, sacrificing himself. He ran towards the Germans firing his machine-gun. This ensured his death, alerted the British and saved Cotton's team. Previously, Williams and Cotton had drawn closer when discussing marriage. Happily married with a son, Williams was content. Bitter that his marriage was a 'war casualty like so many', Cotton believed the cause was 'male lonely hearts on hand from Warsaw, Montreal or Chicago - even the house next door'.¹²² The man with 'everything to live for' - as Cotton now saw Williams - died. Cotton's de-briefing revealed a changed man, whose softer emotions, blunted by war, resurfaced. Each cog in the war machine, however individual, remote or tragic, was shown to be important:

CO: We are just about on the deadline. The biggest deadline of the war, the big push from Alamein tonight.

Cotton: Just another dot on the map. Doesn't seem worth it.

CO: There are dots on maps everywhere, they all add up. One day we'll know the answer. Phil Williams wasn't alone out there.

Cotton: He never had a chance.

CO: No, but he gave you one, and the rest of us.

Cotton: I suppose that is the answer.

This mission succeeded because elements of buccaneering and traditional soldiering merged. More importantly from the perspective of class, Brody - who grew in stature throughout the mission - embraced the values of elite leadership.

There was a steady stream of mavericks in the genre. To ensure success after a disastrous dress-rehearsal for his secret mission, and although entrenched in polarised positions, conscripted maverick Major Stringer (Mel Ferrar) enlisted the aid of traditional, careerist Captain Thompson (Trevor Howard) in *The Cockleshell Heroes* (1955). However, it was Commando secret agent Major Patrick Leigh-Fermor (Dirk Bogarde), immortalized in the film *Ill Met by Moonlight* (1957), who romanticised and encapsulated the maverick. Larger-than-life, and unable to fit the conventional mould, he was the opposite of Gibson, and the despair of his housemaster who wrote: 'He is a mixture of sophistication and recklessness'.¹²³ Max Hastings noted that Leigh-Fermor:

Lived one of the great picaresque lives of the 20th Century. He left a minor public school under heavy clouds with no money and a penchant for wandering ... he sustained a lotus existence in eastern Europe and the Balkans, by charm begging and Byronic good looks.¹²⁴

Adventurous and dressed as a pirate, Leigh-Fermor revelled in role-playing and living like a Cretan partisan. Yet, his purpose was serious, his leadership strong, and his mission was successful. Additionally, he worked with conventional military sources to get his captured German general to Egypt. Buccaneering traits also surfaced in Otto's taunt to Lt. Graham (Bogarde) in *They Who Dare* (1954) where, during another maverick and Combined Operations' mission, he was sketched as a pirate and told: 'I was detailed ... you chose brigandage'.¹²⁵ Graham's individualism however, endangered this mission. Combined Operations Command was proud of its record, allowing the Ministry of Information to publish *Combined Operations 1940-42*, which stressed the importance of 'working well together and meticulous planning', but expected 'individualism' to be 'used for the common good'.¹²⁶ It detailed missions such as the raid on St. Nazaire which featured in *The Gift Horse* (1952). The adventurous nature of Combined Operations' missions was rammed home in the films' press books which heavily targeted schools and educational

establishments. *Ill Met by Moonlight*, *The Gift Horse* and *The Cockleshell Heroes* are discussed more fully in Chapters 5 and 6.

Mavericks could embody the adventurousness and glamour of pirates, whilst circumventing the very rules they also obeyed. These films highlighted the maverick's individuality and ability to work within a team. As fictional characters, or when based on real people, officers occasionally undertook impetuous individual maverick acts. Dining with the Admiral amidst tight security during fleet exercises, and anxious to get on with the job - a midget-submarine attempt on the German battleship the *Tirpitz* - Commander Frazer (John Mills) in *Above Us the Waves* (1955) proved his team's readiness by audaciously having the Admiral's ship limpet-mined. Wing Commander Tim Mason (Dirk Bogarde) defied authority to attain 90 sorties and raise his Station's damaged morale in *Appointment in London* (1953). 'Tiger' Small (Jack Hawkins) in *Angels One Five* (1952), out of commission after an accident, elbowed a gunner aside and manned a field-gun during a fierce attack, and then flew in the Battle of Britain. By disobeying instructions and deliberately flying off course, reconnaissance photographer Captain Ross (Alec Guinness), recklessly endangered himself and an invaluable 'plane, but located a crucial Italian/German supply route in *The Malta Story* (1953), prior to a major enemy attack. The most ghoulish flouting of the rules occurred in *The Man Who Never Was* (1956). Commander Montagu (Clifton Webb) suggested that Naval Intelligence use a 'doctored' corpse to fool the Nazis regarding the invasion of Sicily, discussed in Chapter 5. He was "scolded":

Never in 30 years of intelligence have I heard anything like it. It's the most outrageous, disgusting, preposterous, not to say barbaric, idea ... but work out the details and be on hand at the War Cabinet offices at 4.30 tomorrow afternoon.

When Commander Crabbe (Lawrence Harvey) in *Silent Enemy* (1958) breached the rules to outwit Italian divers operating from neutral Portugal, his superior was also

Janus-faced. Superiors admired mavericks whilst issuing admonitions. Douglas Bader's (Kenneth More) Chief explained in *Reach for the Sky* (1956): 'Regulations are written for the obedience of fools and the guidance of wise men'. This left room for manoeuvre, initiative and conscience, traits which the robotic enemy lacked, but which melded with Britain's projected democratic pragmatism, as demonstrated by mavericks.

Here, we have seen the importance that post-war cinema ascribed to the exemplary, conventional national war hero as represented by Guy Gibson. Much respect was also accorded to maverick officer heroes, who operated in a less prescribed and rigid way. Chapter 3 will show that officers as POWs were lauded for their escape and survival initiatives. These depictions crucially created an impression of heroic, British elite masculinity as patriotic, courageous, selfless and equal, in the national interest, to any task, especially that of leadership. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, sections of the public, through influential middle-class satirists and working-class literary anti-heroes, questioned heroics, voicing their distrust of elite values and class hierarchy in groundbreaking films such as *Room at the Top*, *Tunes of Glory* and *The Long and the Short and the Tall*. British cinema was pragmatic, sensitive to change and capable of embracing such critiques, yet simultaneously also remaining true to the values of elite masculinity. Vitally, this was because film-makers understood the shifts of society, foregrounding them in various genres and, although comedy was the prime site for such discontents to be played out, the serious war genre, as Chapter 6 will show, was more than confident enough to deal with them.

Conclusions

When making *The Dam Busters*, Director Michael Anderson and Producer Robert Clark aimed to capture 'the imagination of a country'.¹²⁷ They succeeded to the point that their film is widely regarded as the definitive history of the raid and influenced at least two major Hollywood directors.¹²⁸ In November 2005, the rights to Brickhill's book were re-sold and *The Dam Busters* is to be re-made in 2007 with an estimated budget of £21 million – compared to the original 'unprecedented' £250,000 budget. It will use the same evocative music.¹²⁹ As I have shown, the film is selective, follows the official line, and circumvents awkward questions. But it is the war British people want to remember.¹³⁰ Such is the potency of the raid's legend, and the film's authority, questioning it feels unpatriotic. Gibson's heroic myth dominates the period. The haloes of Britain's legendary cinematic heroes and organisation men - such as Douglas Bader in *Reach for the Sky* and Pat Reid in *Colditz*, for example - glow less brightly before Gibson's star. In contrast, deviant mavericks appealed because they were unconventional, but their war, often secret and dirty, was just as valid - if apparently more chaotic. Cinema exposed the dark underbelly of Britain's fight for survival, proving that war produced the right British officer for the right job, ranging from organisation men to 'pirates' and 'wild men'. These men contributed to national regeneration whether operating by-the-book, by the seat-of-the-pants, or on Combined Operations. Unlike Gibson however, few mavericks captured, and remained in, the imagination with such efficacy or longevity, although it is possible to see the origins of SAS, or James Bond-type covert operations, in such men.¹³¹ In offering audiences a variety of heroes, film-makers ensured that cinemagoers did not become bored. And, because officer elites fought

this war in many ways, my next chapter focuses on another challenge for them, that of captivity and living with the enemy.

¹ Clark, Robert, BFI Special Press Release, 1955 on *The Dam Busters*.

² Gibson, Guy, *Enemy Coast Ahead* (London, 1946), p 300-301.

³ Murphy, Robert, *British Cinema and the Second World War* (London, 2000), p 180. Whilst post-war society was marked by social mobility, affluence, full employment, low inflation and high wages this contrasted with internal difficulties such as rising crime, race riots, issues of sexuality, high divorce rates, inter-Service rivalry and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

⁴ Addison, Paul, *Now the War is Over* (London, 1985), p xi. The Labour Government approved the British A-bomb, masterminded the prestigious Festival of Britain, presided over reconstruction and implemented the Welfare State. They also coped with export drives, black markets, domestic shortages and rationing. Population dislocation, the Berlin Airlift, the Korean War, concerns for family life and nationalisation were particularly taxing.

⁵ Blake, Robert, *A History of the Conservatives from Peel to Churchill* (Eyre, 1970) pp 263-4, quoted in David Child, *Britain Since 1945: A Political History* (London, 2001), pp 54-55.

⁶ Addison, Paul, *Now the War is Over*, pp x, xi.

⁷ Labour polled more votes, in both elections, but gained fewer seats.

⁸ Winston Churchill's radio broadcast on the BBC, the day the King died.

⁹ Until the angry young man of working class fame appeared in the late 1950s.

¹⁰ Balcon, Michael, 'Let British Films be Ambassadors to the World', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 1945, p 135. This article mirrored that of Sir Stephen Tallens' 1932 article. The purpose was to portray Britain in its best possible light. In Goebbels' widely seen propaganda film *Gentlemen*, shown during the Second World War, British elites, Churchill and members of the Establishment and public schools had been depicted as worthless, drunken decadent, uncaring schoolboys, with an 'I'm alright Jack' attitude, totally unsuited to leadership or international acclaim.

¹¹ For example, Lord Louis Mountbatten obtained help for Powell and Pressberger's *The Battle of the River Plate* (1965) from the American and New Zealand Navies, the 6th fleet was diverted from military exercises. Noel Coward was an instrumental go-between for many films.

¹² Appendix 1 was compiled from Gifford, Dennis, *The British Film Catalogue 1897-1970* (Redwood Press, Trowbridge, 1973).

¹³ *The Four Feathers* has been made four times – 1915, 1928, 1939 and 1977.

¹⁴ Churchill's importance to the nation even today is reflected in his being chosen as the Briton of the Century in a television poll and debate, 2003. Many popular 'Peoples' War' films were re-released during the period when British and American government were squabbling over quotas, which created shortages of film, whilst film-stocks had been depleted by war.

¹⁵ See Murphy, *British Cinema and the Second World War*, p 180.

¹⁶ See Paris, Michael, *Warrior Nation – Images of War in British Popular Culture, 1850-2000* (London, 2000), for the literature of war. These cultural images were essential in view of the Korean War, the Cold War, Middle East unrest, homosexual spy scandals, new European alignments, the Suez debacle and rising nationalism.

¹⁷ Paris, *ibid*, tells us that Omar Barton suggests that 1WW technology devalues the chivalric military hero. Life and death are now a matter of chance not skill. Therefore the new hero must master technology which can also destroy him, in order to survive as a hero. References throughout.

¹⁸ Geraghty, Christine, *British Cinema in the Fifties: Gender, Genre and the New Look* (London, 2000), p 185.

¹⁹ Sweetman, John, *The Dam Busters Raid* (London, (1982) 1990), p xii.

²⁰ Sweetman, *ibid*, tells us that the Americans were working on something similar, and the bomb was not exclusive to 617 Squadron as the navy were testing their own version – Highball.

²¹ Public Records Office (PRO) ATH/4/2 referred to in Cooper. Alan, *The Men Who Breached the Dams* (London, 1982), p 20-21.

²² Harris, Sir Arthur, in the Foreword to *Enemy Coast Ahead*, Guy Gibson's posthumously published book.

²³ Hastings, Max, *Bomber Command* (London (1979) 1999), p 216.

- ²⁴ Hastings, *ibid*, p 216, conversation with Sir Ralph Cochrane.
- ²⁵ Sweetman, *The Dam Busters Raid*, p 70.
- ²⁶ Speer, Albert, toured the damaged areas and realised that repairs could be effected within months. Had the Mohene and Sorpe been breached together, it could have taken years. *The Myth of the Dam Busters Raid*, History Channel, 2001.
- ²⁷ *Ibid*, *The Myth of the Dam Busters Raid*.
- ²⁸ Sweetman, *The Dam Busters Raid*, p 78-79 – Report from Scientific Advisers to the Ministry of Production, *The Economic and Moral Effects of the Destruction of the Moehne Dam and the Added Effects which will result from Destruction at the same time of the Sorpe and Eder Dams*, March 1943. *The Myth of the Dam Busters' Raid*, History Channel. Wallis based his assumptions for the destruction of the Sorpe on a report on the breaching of the Bradfield dam which had earth banks covering a clay core. Mr O.L. Lawrence of the Ministry of Economic Warfare claimed that the Eder had no connection with the Ruhr, and offered cautionary advice: 'It is not possible to state that a critical shortage of water supplies in the Ruhr would be a certain and inevitable result of the destruction of the Moehne Dam. However, if the Sorpe were simultaneously attacked and destroyed, it would be worth much more than twice the destruction of one'. Because the Sorpe was an unsuitable choice for Wallis's bouncing bomb, last minute re-adjustments to the planned order of the mission were made.
- ²⁹ Sweetman, *ibid*, pp 82-83, there were attacks on Berlin, Kiel, Cologne, Munster and mine laying operations in the Frision Islands, Brest and Norway, with leaflet drops in Orleans, Denmark and special operations in France.
- ³⁰ Sweetman, *ibid*, 82-83.
- ³¹ Nairn, Tom, *The Break-up of Britain, Crisis & Neo-Nationalism* (Verso (1997) 1981), p 266.
- ³² BBC World Service announcement on the 17 May, 1943.
- ³³ Calder, Angus, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London (1991) 1998), pp 2-3.
- ³⁴ Sir Charles Portal sent a letter from Washington, 'in particular, please tell the special Lancaster unit of my intense admiration for their brilliant operation'. Congratulations came in from all over the world, BFI press book.
- ³⁵ *New York Times*, 18 May, 1943.
- ³⁶ *Daily Mail*, 18 May 1943.
- ³⁷ Cooper, *The Men Who Breached the Dams*, p 160.
- ³⁸ The reception of the surviving dam busters can be likened to that accorded to Neil Armstrong and the crew of the Apollo 1969 moon landings.
- ³⁹ Brickhill, Paul, *The Dam Busters* (London, (1951) 1983), p 117.
- ⁴⁰ Churchill, Winston S., *The Second World War* (London (1959) 1989), p 692.
- ⁴¹ PRO ADM1 quoted in MacKenzie, S.P., *British War Films 1939-45 : The Cinema & the Services*, (London, 2001), p 54.
- ⁴² *The Myth of the Dam Busters' Raid*, History Channel, in which Professor Richard Overy comments that 'the idea that the raid could actually cripple Germany industry for good was sheer fantasy'. Other historians questioned the value of the raid and John Sweetman has investigated this, concluding that whilst the truth was not fully told, the raid did have value.
- ⁴³ For an in-depth study of this see Connelly, Mark, *Reaching for the Stars : A New History of Bomber Command in World War II*, (London, 2001).
- ⁴⁴ Cooper, *The Men Who Breached the Dams*, p 160.
- ⁴⁵ Clark, Robert, Special Press Release, 1955, on *The Dam Busters*.
- ⁴⁶ There was a problem with Gibson's estranged chorus-girl wife who claimed that she had not been told of the film. See press releases, BFI Archive.
- ⁴⁷ Clark, Robert, Special Press Release, 1955, on *The Dam Busters*.
- ⁴⁸ The Official Secrets Act was in force, and little documentation was available. Until 1955, even the shape of Wallis's bomb was an official secret, yet the Germans had recovered one intact within two days of the raid. Gibson's book, written in 1943 carefully censors names, conversations and actions for the same reason.
- ⁴⁹ Sweetman, *The Dam Busters Raid*, p x-xiii.
- ⁵⁰ Special Correspondent, 'Going into Action', *The Times Educational Supplement*, 16 November, 1956, p 1345.
- ⁵¹ Brickhill, *The Dam Busters*, p 45.
- ⁵² Spicer, Andrew, *Typical Men : The Representation of Masculinity in Popular British Cinema* (London, 2000), pp 54 & 58.
- ⁵³ Although, *The Small Back Room* - discussed in Chapter 6 - probes the self-serving conflict of interests between scientists, bureaucrats and the military.

- ⁵⁴ *Star*, 25 May, 1955.
- ⁵⁵ Edgerton, David, *England and the Aeroplane : An Essay on a Militant and Technological Nation* (London, 1991), p 61.
- ⁵⁶ Edgerton, *ibid*, p 61.
- ⁵⁷ Air Marshal R. Saundby (Retired), letter to *The New Statesman*, 28 May, 1955, BFI press book.
- ⁵⁸ The film shows Matt Summers as the only test pilot for the bomb, in fact there were several.
- ⁵⁹ Gibson, *Enemy Coast Ahead*, p 241.
- ⁶⁰ Sweetman, *The Dam Busters Raid*, p 98.
- ⁶¹ Sweetman, *ibid*, p 98.
- ⁶² Paris, Michael, 'The RAF on Screen', *History Today*, Vol. 40, August, 1990, pp 39-46.
- ⁶³ Hastings, *Bomber Command*, p 144.
- ⁶⁴ Hastings, *ibid*, p 216.
- ⁶⁵ Cooper, *The Men Who Breached the Dams*, p 47. The idea came from Ben Lockpeiser, Director, Scientific Research, at the Ministry of Aircraft Production.
- ⁶⁶ On the actual raid, some of bomb aimers rigged up their own devices.
- ⁶⁷ Gibson, *Enemy Coast Ahead*, introduction by Sir Arthur Harris.
- ⁶⁸ Cooper, *The Men Who Breached the Dams*, p 68 and film.
- ⁶⁹ Gibson, *Enemy Coast Ahead*, p 272.
- ⁷⁰ Gibson, *ibid* pp 291-292.
- ⁷¹ Geraghty, Christine, 'Masculinity', Hurd. Geoff, (Ed.), *National Fictions : World War II in British Film & Television* (London, 1984), p 66.
- ⁷² Medhurst, Andrew, Hurd. (Ed.), *ibid*, *National Fictions*, p 38.
- ⁷³ Timewatch – *Homosexuality in the Services*, BBC2 TV, 1998.
- ⁷⁴ As Redgrave and Todd re-created this scenario during production of the film, Whitworth, Gibson's batman, RAF personnel and much of the production team were moved to tears, such was the depth of feelings conveyed. Barnes Wallis never actually recovered from those losses and refused to work on other bombs.
- ⁷⁵ Chapter 6 discusses Gibson's career from the raid until his death, which the film carefully ignored.
- ⁷⁶ Prince, Rod, 'A Great Little Country', in *ISIS*, 7 May, 1958, pp 26 and 27.
- ⁷⁷ Special Package to Showmen and Press on *The Dam Busters*, BFI Special Collections Unit.
- ⁷⁸ Special Package to Showmen and Press on *The Dam Busters*, *ibid*.
- ⁷⁹ Television History Channel *The Myth of the Dam Busters*, 2001.
- ⁸⁰ Letter from A. Gibson, father of Guy, to Robert Clark, Production Director of ABC, 2 October, 1954. Gibson senior was 'deeply grateful to Richard Todd for his understanding interpretation'. BFI Special Collections Unit was included in the Special Press package.
- ⁸¹ Letter A.Gibson, Guy's father to Robert Clark of ABC 2 October, 1954, BFI Special Collections Unit.
- ⁸² The Air Public Relations Association was founded in 1947 by members of the Air Ministry Information Division (later RAF Pub), at the instigation of C.P. Robertson, Director of Publications. In 1953 the C.P. Robertson Memorial Trophy was inaugurated, to be awarded annually for the best interpretation of the RAF to the public – to be drawn from arts, literature and all forms of press, publicity and broadcasting services. It became the Air Power Association in 2000, BFI press book.
- ⁸³ Even carpet bombing raids on enemy ground, such as Dresden, were the subject of much heated debate in England. It is notable that Bomber Harris was the only major war figure not to be knighted after the war. In fact, it was many years before he received recognition, and a statue was erected in this country and even this was controversial.
- ⁸⁴ Cooper, *The Men Who Breached the Dams*, p 160.
- ⁸⁵ Clark, Robert, Special Press Release on *The Dam Busters*.
- ⁸⁶ Hastings, *Bomber Command*, p 282-283.
- ⁸⁷ Churchill, Winston S., *The Second World War* (London (1959) 1990), p 692.
- ⁸⁸ Letter to *The Times* from Arthur Adeles, Managing Director of Warner Brothers, 23 November, 1955, press book, Special Collections Unit, BFI. Sequence inserted to 'give the film a bit more tension'.
- ⁸⁹ Todd, Richard, *In Camera* (London, 1989), p 92.
- ⁹⁰ *The Times*, 19 November, 1955, press book. Rows between Britain and America occurred over *Objective Burma*, *The Great Escape* and, more recently over a proposed American re-make of *The Colditz Story* (2000) and their film on the capture of the Enigma machines (2000).
- ⁹¹ *Daily Telegraph*, 21 November, 1955, reporting on labour MP Stephen Swinger's response to George Wood of the Air Ministry, press book.

- ⁹² House of Commons, 16 November, 1955, Stephen Swingler, Labour MP registered his anger about the American changes, and identified 'a good deal of indignant comment in this country', press book for *The Dam Busters*. *Variety*, 23 November, 1955 reported that he tabled a question to the Air Minister on the US insertion of a Flying Fortress for the American run. BFI Special Collections Unit.
- ⁹³ ABC claimed it was 'a storm in a teacup'. Letter to *The Times* from Arthur Adeles, Managing Director of Warner Brothers, 23 November, 1955, press book.
- ⁹⁴ Letter to *The Times* from Arthur Adeles, Managing Director of Warner Brothers, 23 November, 1955, press book, Special Collections Unit, BFI.
- ⁹⁵ Washington Correspondent, *The Times*, 18 November, 1955, press book.
- ⁹⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, 18 November, 1955, press book.
- ⁹⁷ Written reply to the Commons by George Wood, Under Secretary for Air, reported in *The Times*, 6th December, 1955, press book.
- ⁹⁸ Harmen, Jimpson, *Evening News*, 19 May, 1955 and 17 May, 1955.
- ⁹⁹ *Evening News* 17 November, 1955.
- ¹⁰⁰ Walker, Ronald, *News Chronicle*, 17 May, 1955. He personally knew many of 617 Squadron and had much contact with the RAF, p 18.
- ¹⁰¹ Dehn, Paul, *News Chronicle*, 17 May, 1955. Serialised in May, 1955 in the *Evening News* and the *News Chronicle*. Headline of an article in the *Daily Mirror*, by Whitley. Reginald, on 20 May, 1955 read 'Excuse me while I rave'.
- ¹⁰² It was the top British box office film of 1955.
- ¹⁰³ Globally successful, particularly in Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, *The Dam Busters*, whilst earning a substantial dollar return, did less well in America. Daryl Zannuck felt that the film should have made it clear that it was a true story. Richard Todd *In Camera*, Hutchinson, London, 1989, p 92.
- ¹⁰⁴ Brien, Alan, *Evening Standard*, 19 May, 1955.
- ¹⁰⁵ A letter published in the *Daily Worker*, 3 June, 1955.
- ¹⁰⁶ Press book for *The Dam Busters*, BFI Special Collections Unit.
- ¹⁰⁷ Letter A. Gibson to Robert Clark of ABC, 2 October, 1954 in the press book, BFI Special Collections Unit.
- ¹⁰⁸ Gibson, *Enemy Coast Ahead*, pp 292-293.
- ¹⁰⁹ Gibson, *ibid*, pp 297-298.
- ¹¹⁰ Gibson, *ibid*, p 297. He later appears to have promoted pinpoint accuracy, rather than blanket coverage on bombing raids.
- ¹¹¹ Connelly, Mark, *Reaching for the Stars* (London, 2001), p 98, quoting Richard Thomas, *Guy Gibson* (London, 1994), p 80.
- ¹¹² *Daily Telegraph*, 21 May, 1955.
- ¹¹³ Connelly, *ibid*, pp 144-147 notes that these films ignored much, including shocking facts such as VD levels amongst bomber boys, and their real opinions. He discusses Gibson's medical condition on the day of the raid. He was very run down, exhausted and close to cracking-up, p 96.
- ¹¹⁴ Connelly, *ibid*, p 147.
- ¹¹⁵ Gibson, *Enemy Coast Ahead*, pp 297-298. This is an interesting comment, since the nuclear age suggested a different kind of war, and a different kind of military set-up.
- ¹¹⁶ For the 60th Anniversary of the raid, and attesting to the enduring nature of the legend, in April, 2003, C4 television challenged the present-day RAF asking - 'Could they emulate the legendary dam busters' raid', which was 'an audacious example of precision flying?' This was judged over two programmes. It is interesting that this question arose at the time of the 2nd Gulf War, where the emphasis was on strategic bombing, and fascinating that Gibson's role was taken by a woman.
- ¹¹⁷ From a speech by James Robertson Justice in *Orders to Kill*.
- ¹¹⁸ The definitions 'independent' and 'unbranded' are from the Collins Dictionary. The other definition is from Dictionary.com definition.
- ¹¹⁹ Durnat, Raymond, *A Mirror for England* (London, 1970), p 9.
- ¹²⁰ *The World at War* (1973), a much-acclaimed, and continually shown, documentary TV series telling the Allies' story of the Second World War. Episode 14 'Burma'.
- ¹²¹ There is a sense of reprimand to the Americans here. Their gung-ho attitude to war did not fit with Britain's cinematically understated methods. Nor was bragging about war trophies a British trait.
- ¹²² This is a note of censure towards the difficult question of women's wartime infidelities, when parts of the country were filled with foreign, Allied soldiers. See also Chapter 4.
- ¹²³ Quoted in Philhellene's Progress : Patrick Leigh-Fermor by Ben Downing, Internet <http://www.newcriterion.com/archive/19/jan01/downing/htm>.

¹²⁴ Hastings, Max reviewing Leigh-Fermor's *Words of Mercury*, 12 October 2003 in the *Daily Telegraph*. Bogarde's role as Leigh Fermoy, well known ex-public schoolboy hero allowed him to exaggerate chivalry and glamorise piracy in a story based on Fermoy's real-life adventure.

¹²⁵ The association of "piracy" with this mission is justified but it was Combined Operations mission which included absolutely rigorous planning.

¹²⁶ *Combined Operations, 1940-42*, (Prepared for the Combined Operations Command by the Ministry of Information), HMSO, London, pp 71-77 and 12-13.

¹²⁷ Clark, Robert, Special Press Release, 1955 on *The Dam Busters*.

¹²⁸ Spielberg, Steven, claimed that *The Dam Busters* was his favourite British war film, and George Lucas is said to have based the raid on the evil Empire in the first Star Wars film on the dam busters' raid. See Ramsden, John, *The Dam Busters* (London, 2003), for comments on Star Wars.

¹²⁹ Television presenter, former satirist and now establishment figure, David Frost bought the rights in 2005. The film will be directed by Peter Jackson in New Zealand and the UK. More emphasis will be placed on the development of the bomb and Wallis's bureaucratic nightmare. Resistance from RAF top brass will be shown and de-classified wartime material used.

¹³⁰ See Connelly, *Reaching for the Stars*, for further comment on this.

¹³¹ Officers dressed as Arabs were performing covert operations in the desert in *Ice Cold in Alex*, the kind of work which presaged today's SAS. James Bond, fictional British secret agent, was a construct of the Cold War. Author, Ian Fleming was involved with government, MI5 and MI6 during the Second World War.

Chapter 3

THE OFFICER IN CAPTIVITY

'Emerging from the twilight'

(Captive Heart, 1947)¹

'The Germans looked upon the prisoners as "their friends the enemy". It was a curious friendship ... of the kind that springs from respect. (Reid, 1953)²

'The hating has to stop sometime ... Although it is impossible to forget what happened; I am among the few Far East POWs who, by meeting one of my former torturers, has been able to forgive'. (Lomax, 1999)³

Reality

During World War Two thousands of Allied service personnel became enemy prisoners. Most were prisoners-of-war (POWs) for the duration. The Germans held 275,000 British and US military POWs, 199,592 of which were British. Despite the mythic zeal perpetuated by the film *The Colditz Story* (1954), fewer than 100 escapes were achieved by POWs in Europe. Those in Japanese hands numbered 190,000 made-up of British, Commonwealth, Dutch and US military personnel, 132,142 of these were British. The Japanese also captured 130,000 Allied civilian subjects.⁴ 60,000 POWs were used as forced labour on the Burma/Siam Railway. POWs in the Far East achieved between 20-30 escapes.⁵ Deaths in captivity reveal the differences between incarceration in Europe and the Far East. 4% of POWs died in German hands, whilst 27% died in Japanese hands. Once Mussolini capitulated, thousands of the 70,000 British and Commonwealth POWs held in Italy - mostly from the Africa Campaign - attempted mass escapes. Many died.

In Europe, initial reactions upon capture were shock and fear of interrogation. Arduous journeys and lack of sustenance left POWs drained. Boredom threatened

their mental wellbeing.⁶ Those in work/labour camps faced substantial hardships. Overcrowded, unhygienic conditions caused dysentery, fleas, rats and lice to thrive, damaging POWs' health. Mal-nourishment led to food obsession. Thefts, drunkenness, gambling, and bullying occurred. To improve morale the British held classes on numerous subjects as prisoners shared their expertise. Correspondence courses were undertaken. There were sports and entertainments. Goon-baiting - tormenting their captors - could result in serious reprisals.⁷ POWs had some access to medical attention and protection from the Geneva Convention. Although feasible, escaping was not the priority. Few applauded addictive escapers.

In the Far East, trapped in inhospitable jungles, prisoners fared much worse. They were infested with rats, lice, flies, mosquitoes, fleas, maggots and snakes. Their suffering included overwork, chronic starvation, dysentery, beri-beri, typhoid, cholera and malaria. Packed onto "Hell" ships, used as forced labour on the Burma/Siam Railway, or other Japanese projects, many became physical and emotional wrecks. Wounds frequently turned gangrenous, requiring amputations, often without anaesthetic. They had little medical attention and were subjected to barbaric treatment. For them, the Geneva Convention was non-existent. Despite this, POWs arranged some sports and entertainments. Amazingly, escapes - ostensibly physically and logistically "impossible" - occurred, alongside sabotage and go-slows. These horrors permeated ex-prisoners' whole lives.

POWs worried about loved ones and becoming 'forgotten men'.⁸ None could know the length of their "sentence". Tensions created by powerlessness were off-set

by comradeship. Senior British Officers (SBOs) used discipline to structure days and focus minds. They communicated with Commandants and the Red Cross. Sometimes, a man-of-confidence emerged.⁹ The commitment and quality of SBOs varied. Issues of trust and obedience were problematic. A good SBO in freedom might be unsuited to POW life. There was class snobbery in Europe and the Far East. Countless officers segregated themselves, ate better, and ran rackets.¹⁰ The scale of officers' selfishness and snobbery caused extreme bitterness in the Far East.¹¹ Unsurprisingly, officers' survival rates were much higher, but there were exemplary ones like Colonel Toosey.¹² The ordeal of returned POWs in Europe was overshadowed by the 'horrors of Auschwitz, Belsen and Dachau', and again when 'facts emerged about Japanese treatment of Allied prisoners in the Far East'.¹³ Moreover, in accordance with official policy - escape films were not made before 1945.¹⁴ So, how did film-makers interpret these experiences post-1945?

Well-liked by audiences, POW films attracted some criticism. Film-maker Bryan Forbes observed:

It is curious how many POW films were made . . . it seemed that the cinema-going public's appetite for this genre, and the film-industry's willingness to satisfy that appetite were endless. Perhaps it stemmed from the fact that Britain still endured Austerity, the general public wanted to be reminded of our finest hour.¹⁵

But this is not just supply and demand. An MOI memorandum urged commercial film-makers 'to entertain and amuse, though their films can, and must, do a propaganda job'.¹⁶ Although loosely basing their films on truth, British film-makers recorded the POW experience in Europe as an elite adventure, with roots in the public school, thereby producing a major sub-genre containing significant distortions and omissions. Tapping into the 'public's appetite', they reinforced values of elite masculinity imperative to national regeneration. This sub-genre was dominated by

officers in German hands. However, *Danger Within* (1959) dealt with an Italian camp. A handful of disturbing films covered incarceration in the Far East. They will be analysed in three sections: Prisoners of the Germans, the Italians and the Japanese. Leadership, masculinity and sexuality, with some reference to homosexuality, will also be considered.

Continually newsworthy, *The Colditz Story* is my key film on imprisonment in Europe. Emanating from the hero literature dispelling the idea that POWs sat-out the war doing nothing important or adventurous, the film's timing was critical.¹⁷ Germans such as Colditz Security Officer, Reinhold Eggers, wrote their stories. Both sides communicated,¹⁸ promoting the notion of the POW war against Germany as a cat-and-mouse game. In 2000, Channel Four's television documentary series on Colditz Castle validated this gamesmanship, calling it 'a private war between the cream of British officers and their rank and file German guards'.¹⁹ A cynic might expect the 'cream of British officers' to outflank 'their rank and file German guards'. Some British survivors relished their *Boys' Own* antics. Others disparaged the 'men of spirit'. Alexander 'felt embarrassed' by them, but 'the system says thou shalt give trouble to the enemy'.²⁰ The film met the MOI criteria, whilst capitalising on New Elizabethan adventurousness. Containing enough truth to sustain its mythical status for 50 years, it has become the benchmark for POWs held in Europe. Numerous books and a successful 1970s TV series perpetuated the Colditz myth. A board game was marketed. In the 1990s, former POWs were asked to help preserve the Castle.²¹ Post-Millennium, Colditz generated further television documentaries, reconstructions, articles, books and lectures. ITV screened a new drama *Colditz* in 2005. Yet, the boyish adventurousness of tunnellers and plotters undermined the POW story. The

self-publicised antics of the few subsumed the experiences of the many. Nevertheless: 'No film-maker can go beyond certain assumptions accepted within his own country'.²² Rees explains:

Propaganda gives force and direction to the successive movements of popular feeling and desire, but it does not do much to create those movements ... The propagandist is a man who canalises an already existing stream. In a land where there is not water, he digs in vain.²³

The sub-genre's 'existing stream' was the popular World War Two hero literature of the late 1940s and early 1950s.²⁴ POW films developed, and observed, the following conventions and characterisations, some of which applied to Europe and the Far East and began during the war.

'The gang's all here ...'²⁵

Some conventions were introduced in *The Captive Heart* (1946)* and *2000 Women* (1944)#.²⁶ But *The Colditz Story* (1954)+ established the sub-plots and characterisations which perpetuated the essence of the public school at war, distorted the POW story, and captured the public's imagination:

- 1 Arrival at the camp (wooden huts/barbed wire).*
- 2 Incarceration of a broad spectrum of characters:
SBOs with hidden agendas; hot-headed EOs; career and conscripted officers; dedicated escapers; doubting Thomas's; loners; close twosomes; entertainers and Hooray Henry's (the latter three being homosexual euphemisms); token Scottish; Welsh; Anzacs and Canadians; engineers; boffins and - rarely - cheerful other ranks.+
- 3 Initial hostility between the SBO and the EO.+
- 4 Understated, strong leadership by the SBO, earning him the respect of all, including the Commandant.+
- 5 Escape fever, crazy ideas; an Escape Committee.+
- 6 Goon-baiting, impersonations and the British sense of humour.+
- 7 Reprisals – solitary, withholding parcels and mail, cancelling concerts.+
- 8 Tunnels, cave-ins (someone trapped), discovery and near-discovery.
- 9 A suspected traitor.*
- 10 Close confinement allows man-to-man bonding. Women POWs enjoyed this closeness.*+
- 11 SS search for a prisoner protected by the others.*
- 12 Help from re-captured escapers, the Resistance, and sometimes a woman.
- 13 Camp concerts - often a cover for a major escape attempt.+
- 14 Successful escape following abortive attempts.+

- 15 The courage, ingenuity, scientific and technical expertise of POWs.*
- 16 Guarded references to sexual orientation.
- 17 RAF bombers fly over to POWs cheers.+
- 18 Germans: Reasonable Commandants (who have lived/been educated in Britain, claiming to understand British humour); evil Nazi SS types; corrupt guards; fools; friendly and unfriendly types.+

Other conditions/factors applied in the Far East:

- 1 Barbarism, lack of humanity/conscience.
- 2 Reprisals such as beheadings.
- 3 Violent British responses.
- 4 Help from indigenous natives.
- 5 Lack of concerts except in *The Bridge on the River Kwai*.
- 6 Jungle conditions.
- 7 Japanese contempt for white imperialism.
- 8 Anti-Japanese theme.

Prisoners of the Germans

Balcon's *The Captive Heart* (1946) pre-dated the sub-genre. In studio production before the war ended, it was shot on location in the Marlog Milog Nord Camp, Germany, immediately afterwards. 'There is hardly a family in this country that will not have a special interest in this film', *Kinematograph Weekly* claimed, announcing Balcon's 1945 production schedule.²⁷ Former POW Guy Morgan was script collaborator. Maximising authenticity, film-makers Dearden and Relph interviewed repatriated POWs and the Red Cross. Containing believable camp scenes, stoic heroism and selflessness, the film thoroughly examined the realities of POW life, anticipating repatriation.²⁸ Unifying and transitional, it bridged the gap between the 'People's War' and middle-class recapitulation versions. Focusing on survival of body and spirit it was the most realistic POW film. A dedication saluted POWs whose 'unbroken spirit is the symbol of a moral victory for which no bells have pealed'. This theme was tailored towards the well-being of returning POWs who had not escaped, but had faced personal trauma, then met with disapproval from

some sectors of the public. The film's Doctor (James Harcourt) tellingly remarked: 'The war hasn't exactly chosen us to be heroes'.

The Captive Heart began harmoniously. Captured in France in 1940, SBO, Major Ossy Dalrymple (Basil Radford) insisted that injured other ranks travelled with officers. They marched defiantly into camp singing *There'll Always Be An England*. Czech officer Captain Hasek (Michael Redgrave), hiding amongst them, had escaped from Dachau, where his family were murdered. Assuming the identity of a dead British officer he was initially suspected of being a Nazi. Hasek's narration of letters to Celia Mitchell (Rachael Kempson), the officer's wife, encapsulated the majority POW experience as men coped with capture, confinement, class and the duration:

Men emerging from the twilight, turning their faces inwards, creating in miniature a world of their own ... men who have come to terms with the present and found it far from empty. Men who no longer lie down to fate, but face it and find their own ways of beating it. All this goes up to make up the picture of our life, made bearable only by the letters and parcels received from home. They keep our bodies and our faith alive. And this is true not only of us here in our little wire enclosed cinder patch, but of other camps, great sprawling towns of over 20,000 men or hamlets of a few hundred, each a little piece of England ... summer gives way to autumn, autumn to winter - another Christmas come and gone. Another batch of prisoners ... they don't make the housing any easier, but they bring us eagerly awaited news of the outside world.

A montage unfolded: a concert pianist played; POWs were gardening; tailoring; toy-making; boxing; attending lectures and art classes; using the library; playing sports; unloading Red Cross parcels; strolling as twosomes; welcoming new arrivals and joining a Welsh choir. Dalrymple operated a racing tote. Interestingly, their concert mirrored that of the real Colditz.²⁹ Juxtaposed with this were scenes of their women at home. Time passed. Hasek noted their deterioration in November 1943,

... winter is upon us, bringing with it a new enemy. It is not the duration, but the indefiniteness of duration for, if a man knew the length of his sentence, he could plan accordingly. Afterwards in our memories we shall re-live the sunny days, the freedom of mind and comradeship. We shall forget the wet days, and weeks. Those days when it seemed an effort to do nothing, and our bunks were the only release. Deep down in the hearts of all of us, there dwells a lonely ache for those we love, and a fear of becoming forgotten men ... your letters are more than comfort, they give me strength and hope and happiness. You will never know how much they mean to me.

A bleak montage featured thunderous skies, waterlogged landscapes, and drifting snow. POWs remained dejectedly inside.

Although supporting those being repatriated in 1945, for those remaining, it was a sorrowful experience. The film featured personal sacrifice and rites-of-passage for the young cockney thief Pte. Matthews (Jimmy Hanley) who, in 1940, stole from fellow POWs. He offered his place to save Hasek from the Gestapo. Through the loving reception given to the blinded Scot, by his sweetheart, it tackled disablement and disfigurement. These issues diffused Germany's sexually perverted black propaganda aimed at servicemen to discourage them.³⁰ Widower Pte. Evans (Mervyn Johns) found solace in his small daughter; Lt. Harley was reconciled with his wife; Celia and Hasek realised their love. Although the film's happy endings proved difficult in reality, Balcon received letters of congratulation.³¹ The Returned Prisoners Association was typical:

The pathos, drama, humour, the unquenchable spirit of our soldiers in the hour of defeat, the agony of waiting for the day of liberation, the amazing initiative of men penned in behind the barbed wire of enemy camps, the hopes, joys and sorrows of these prisoners of war are vividly portrayed ... The story rings true because basically it is true ... A film the public must see.³²

Sgt. Legg, thought it 'the most emotionally satisfying piece of cinema ... I am sure it will be of very good service in helping relatives and friends to understand'.³³ Murphy considers the film to be 'richer and more resonant than Ealing's standard realist fare'.³⁴ Critics praised its 'authenticity', but some disliked its 'traces of tinsel'.³⁵ Essentially right for its time, *The Captive Heart* did not establish the POW formula.

Besides their similarities to officers on active service, officers in captivity required different strengths. Trapped in close proximity with the enemy, relaxation was impossible. In literature and cinema, officer POWs obeyed one basic canon - it

was their duty to escape and flout the enemy war machine. Escaping turned defeat into victory. However, in *The Captive Heart*, one abortive attempt was made. Airey Neave, who achieved Colditz's first actual British home-run told a different story:

Every officer in this castle had but a single thought - to escape ... Many were eccentric and unusual men. Enthusiasm for escaping is a matter of individual character, and most of us in Colditz worked out our own science of escape.³⁶

'Men of spirit'³⁷ never gave up. Silly schemes occupied as much time as viable escapes: 'Such activities strengthen the spirit of the POW. They occupy his mind and body and avoid the tedium which may lead to madness. This renders all escape operations worthwhile'.³⁸ Neave's escape was detailed in his best-selling book *They Have Their Exits* (1953), Pat Reid's book *The Colditz Story* (1952), and the 1954 film.³⁹ 'It is the constant hope of nearly every POW - if not his duty - to escape and rejoin his unit', the film *The Wooden Horse* (1950) categorically stated. Others made the same point, usually in conversations between the SBO, the German Commandant and the Escape Officer. On arrival at Colditz, Neave declared:

So strong was the atmosphere of school which influenced our lives that the idea of a camp for naughty boys, a sort of Borstal, caused me no surprise. I was greatly flattered that so early in my prison career, I should be singled out as a nuisance to the enemy. I was like a boy, who, flogged by the headmaster, proudly displays the stripes on his backside ... I looked forward to new adventures.⁴⁰

Moreover, even the barrack-like public school dormitories offered similarities to incarceration, making Colditz seem like a boys' club. Nevertheless, actor Sam Kydd recorded a different experience. Like the majority of POWs, he accepted capture and threw himself into concerts and related activities.⁴¹

Whilst in German hands, Pronay argues, the British largely received better treatment and,

... lost relatively fewer POWs than most other combatants; they were kept by the Germans in camps with model conditions (by German standards and until late 1944) in contrast to those in which Soviet, Polish or French prisoners tended to be held; and, in fact, successful escapes were very small in number.⁴²

Under the Geneva Convention officers must be treated respectfully, and not be forced to work. Medical Officer Les Allen and his companions, German POWs for the duration, were not afforded such latitude. Used as forced labour, they were emaciated and bitter on release.⁴³ Allen felt that, as Germany's main antagonist, the British received more brutal treatment: 'Other POW's did not exactly live in the lap of luxury, but we were singled out because we wouldn't surrender'.⁴⁴ Damaged psychologically, some in Allen's camp committed suicide. Film-makers ignored this, apart from the occasional dash for the barbed wire. *The Password is Courage* (1962) reduced events at a labour camp to comic-capers. Allen berated governments for their pragmatic disinterest in former POWs,

... since the war, British governments have been scared to death of offending the Germans with any suggestion that their treatment of us was less than above board. The political priority has always been the Alliance - first to fend off the Soviet Union - [and then] - to preserve European unity.⁴⁵

Treatment of POWs in Europe varied, according to camps, Commandants and SBOs. Whilst celebrating POWs' successes, Gammon confirmed that, for many RAF prisoners, reality contradicted the myth.⁴⁶ Douglas Bader angered many:

His imperious manner, unreasoned and frequently unreasonable efforts at escape, without thought for others, did not endear him to those who had spent a couple of years in careful planning, or even to those who believed that attempted escape was a game for idiots. Bader's persistent goon-baiting and opportunistic but hopeless efforts would bring searches, restrictions and loss of privileges.⁴⁷

Flying Officer Ken Chapman and Squadron Leader Phil Lamason were treated abominably by the Germans in Fresnes Prison, Paris,

... seemingly cut off from all contact with the living world outside, the prisoners were assembled and then in threes squeezed into tiny three-foot square, wire-roofed box-cells ... positive they were all to be executed.⁴⁸

A nightmare train journey ensued:

Eighty or more squeezed into a sealed box-car left no room to sit, no means of relieving oneself, no view of the outside world, little food and water and always the homogenous mass unable to move apart. The thick, foul air made breathing difficult and sleep impossible ... The tormenting journey ended ... they were being kicked, beaten and driven by SS men towards a square building with a tower. The prisoners' first and abiding feeling was of horror, just to look at the place was a terrifying nightmare like an unearthed cemetery ... the

realisation that they were to become one of these skeleton-like half-alive figures filled the prisoners with cold dread.⁴⁹

This was Buchenwald.

In 1945, after the surrender, a Foreign Office memorandum underlined the sensitivity of the German mindset, stating that government policy 'is entirely in the direction of encouraging, stimulating and interesting the Germans out of their apathy'.⁵⁰ This filtered into film-makers' kinder - but I will argue in Chapter 5, ambiguous - treatment of Germans, as British cinema noted new political alignments in the interests of German psychological recovery, Cold War necessity, German re-unification, re-armament and pan-Europeanism. Differences were manifest in depictions of Germans and apportionment of blame. In *The Captive Heart* Hasek indicated the overwhelming level of consent implicit in the malevolence of Hitler's Germany. Specifically in *Very Important Person* (1961), the German interrogator warned: 'Gestapo methods of extracting information are not quite as civilised as mine'. Post-1945, Reid asked Hans Pfeiffer, Colditz's German interpreter: 'Why did the Germans put up with so much from the Allied POWs?' Mindful of Colditz's celebrity, Pfeiffer's reply is intriguing:

Of course it was your *verdammte Pflicht und Schuldigkeit* as officers to escape ... it was likewise our 'damned duty' to prevent you ... That some of you did actually manage to get away under such difficult circumstances could only arouse the admiration of 'your friends the enemy', but I think your own book shows that such a collection of *enfants terribles* as yourselves could not be handled with kid gloves.⁵¹

Reid boasted:

The germ of admiration planted in the minds of the warders grew to a personal respect as they came into daily contact with men who would stand no bullying and who showed by their actions that the weapons in the warders' hands were not conclusive arguments as to the conduct of affairs in the prison. The result was a *modus vivendi* 'comparatively' neutral as opposed to hostile.⁵²

Colditz was rather more tolerant than other POW establishments.⁵³

The Colditz Story (1954)

The Colditz Story entered the national psyche reflecting Reid's world-view and revealing nothing about the process of capture:

We called Colditz "the bad boys" camp ... An officer had to pass an entrance exam before being admitted through its sacred portals. The qualifying or passing out test was the performance of at least one escape from one of the many "Preparatory School" camps.⁵⁴

Reid confirmed the indoctrination of public schoolboys groomed to become officer elites. Colditz had the highest concentration - including the snobbish Prominente⁵⁵:

When I was a boy at school, I read with avidity three of the greatest escape books of the First World War. They were: *The Road to En-Dor* by E H Jones; *The Escape Club* by A J Evans; and *Within Four Walls* by H A Cartwright and M C C Harrison ... These three epics lived long in my memory, so that when the fortunes of war found me a prisoner in an enemy land the spirit enshrined in them urged me to follow the example of their authors.⁵⁶

For A. J. Evans, escaping was the 'greatest sport in the world'. Reid too had 'quaffed deeply of the intoxicating cup of excitement ... I can think of no sport that is the peer of escape'.⁵⁷ Knowing the qualities promulgated throughout the literature of escape, we can appreciate both their propaganda value and suitability for transfer to entertaining feature films. Hitler's Commando Order, 1942,⁵⁸ demonstrated awareness of the public-school ethos: 'ESCAPING FROM PRISON CAMPS HAS CEASED TO BE A SPORT'!⁵⁹ In sending 'none but officers bent on escape'⁶⁰ to Colditz Castle, Saxony, mythology depicts the Germans as lacking judgement:

Successful escapes depend mostly on the accumulation of escape technique, and they gathered together ... all the escape technicians of the Allied forces from all over the world. Together with this, they concentrated in Colditz the highest morale.⁶¹

The film was an adventurous paean to British public schools, sub-textually celebrating Britain's democratic leadership. Resident Poles accessed "forbidden" parts of the Castle. Greeting British officers warmly, they re-assured Jimmy Winslow (Bryan Forbes). His youthful nerves, excused because he was 'shot down on the night he got engaged', suggested his virginity. SS officer, Fischer (Anton Differing),

informed Guards officer Henry Tyler (Lionel Jeffries): 'There will be no escape unless you wish to die'. SBO, Colonel Richmond (Eric Portman)⁶² was told by the benign Commandant (Frederick Volk), who had lived in, and appreciated, Britain:

All of you have been bitten by this imbecile escape bug. I was a POW myself 1916-18, so I know what I am talking about. As senior amongst the British I have sent for you to warn you that there will be no escaping.

Richmond was a motivator, shrewdly galvanizing impetuous Pat Reid (John Mills) and Mac McGill (Christopher Rhodes) into action:

Richmond: You heard what the Commandant said, 'escaping is verboten'.

Reid: Richmond's a silly old woman - ought to be repatriated.

Mac: I don't know what 'verboten' means. Do you?

Reid: Haven't a clue.

Reid confronted Richmond: 'I am fed up, Sir'. Richmond's domesticity, watering his daisies whilst admitting: 'So am I', infuriated him. Their differences deepened:

Reid: Anyone would think he is a ruddy foreigner.

Mac: Sometimes I think he is.

Reid: Just stood there, watering his daisies . . . Richmond's a washout. We'll have to do without him.

Captain of the Colditz guards, Priem (Denis Shaw) played the game, tolerantly gleeful upon foiling escape attempts and encouraging others.⁶³ German guards taunted Richmond that the British enjoyed Colditz. Yet, Colditz was a hotbed of misjudged escape attempts and rival tunnel collisions. This enabled Richmond to assume overall control. Authoritative, but democratic, he called a meeting of incarcerated nations - Poland, France, Holland and Britain:

You will forgive me gentlemen if I express myself strongly, but everything in this castle is in a damned awful mess. What depresses and surprises me most of all is the appalling lack of co-operation between us on this most important subject of escape ... I propose that each of us 4 senior officers appoint one of our officers as Escape Officer. His duties will be to consider any ideas regarding proposed escapes and to liaise ... avoiding any interference - intentional or unintentional - with any particular plan. In order to achieve this eminent and desirable state of affairs, it will be necessary to have a continuous and frank exchange of information.

Richmond must understand that it was a 'different war for different nations', but his plan was implemented. With cinematic license, British leadership was by

international consent.⁶⁴ Aware that EOs could not escape, Reid nobly rejected Richmond's offer to stand-down.

Reid was astounded by Richmond's proposed impersonation of German guard Franz Joseph, a diversionary tactic to aid escape. Tellingly, Reid absentmindedly watered Richmond's daisies - finally respecting Richmond's authority and humour:

Richmond: There is always hope ... even in hell ... shame we can't keep this in the family.

Reid: Well, there has got to be liaison between the Allies, Sir.

Richmond: I wonder who was the idiot who thought that up!

Rigorously egalitarian, Richmond divided twelve places between four nations. Sacrificing himself to draw German fire when the escape was betrayed, Tyler was shot. The Commandant demanded of Richmond:

Call yourself a British officer? In Germany we would not tolerate an officer like you. You are not fit to hold your rank. Not only do you fail to keep control over your juniors - that I expect - but you organise this criminal escape attempt. You play the leading part yourself. Have you no shame? Have you no conscience? No regrets about the officer who has been shot? Have you no heart?

Punishment was solitary confinement. 'How was solitary'? Tyler asked on their release, laughing-off his wounds. Richmond's reply: 'Great fun, feel I've just come back to college after measles in the sanatorium', was classic British understatement. Likening solitary to being 'sent down', Fl. Lieut. Harold Burton - the first RAF officer to actually escape from a German camp - reinforced this.⁶⁵ Schoolboy nicknames like 'Bonzo' and 'Bunter', emphasized the boyish humour such education breeds. There was a 'new intake of boys' during Richmond's solitary confinement. Guards officers Richard Gordon (Richard Wattis) and Robin Cartwright (Ian Carmichael) suggested that Richmond was 'off to speak to matron', when summoned before the Commandant. They were 'new boys' on arrival or 'old boys' if they remained. Officers imagined dining at the Ritz, the Savoy and the Dorchester. Reid ordered lavishly - Tyler was paying! It was a 'perfect day for Ascot'. This glimpse

into the private lives of these courageous, stylish, men whose backgrounds differed from the common-man-as-hero, strengthened the promotion of the British as a non-militaristic race that does not start wars.

Totally involved in plotting and intending another personal escape, Richmond set a leadership precedent. Another pivotal moment occurred when, identifying a snap escape opportunity, he selected psychologically disturbed Winslow, asking Reid: 'Are you thinking what I am thinking?' Comfortable goon-baiters, Gordon and Cartwright, mesmerized German guards with precision-drilling during Winslow's attempt. Recaptured at the Swiss border, a demoralised Winslow stressed post-escape difficulties: the terrain; people; checkpoints; armed guards; loneliness; hunger and cold.⁶⁶ Winslow's unbalanced mental state, and bravery, showed when he nudged the guard aiming to shoot Frenchman La Tour (Colditz's first successful escapee) as he vaulted over the wire during his snap escape. Cartwheeling crazily, Winslow shouted, 'run, oh run'. Failed British escapes caused frustration:

Richmond: We get ideas alright ... they just aren't the right ones.

Reid: Strikes me an Escape Officer's job is turning down a lot of crazy schemes from fellows half-way round the bend.

Richmond represented democratic freedoms, and humanity. Cold-blooded killing was abhorrent to British officers. Defence of the underdog was a frequent rationale for their actions. Significantly, in *The Colditz Story* the underdog was a Pole. Hearing that their betrayer would be summarily executed by his countrymen, Richmond secretly intervened. Ascertaining that the Nazis held the Pole's family, he requested the Commandant to transfer him. British officers neither condoned kangaroo courts, nor buckled under tyranny. Ex-Colditz POW, Major General Corran Porter, noticed the clamour at every window on his arrival - water balloons and

blazing mattresses rained down on German guards. He was glad to be 'where people treated the Germans with disdain'.⁶⁷ The film faithfully recreated this. Moreover, ex-Colditz POW, Lt. Colonel David Hunter stated that goon-baiting was 'more than idle amusement ... we had something to hide ... they really did not know what was going on'.⁶⁸ 'When you are up against it' claimed another Colditz survivor, 'aptitude suddenly appears'.⁶⁹ Considerable 'aptitude' was apparent in POW films. Reviewing escape ideas, the SBO in *The Captive Heart* emphasized the 'extraordinary number of experts we seem to have on almost every subject'. Colditz was a hive of industry, aided by Red Cross parcels and International Parcels Post containing maps, compasses and German money. Britain set up M19 to organize this. Reinhold Eggers, responsible for Colditz Castle's actual security, installed an X-ray machine. The film showed the British breaking into the parcel store, pre-empting him.⁷⁰

The press book labelled British humour 'the elixir that kept prisoners alive'.⁷¹ A nation with a sense of humour was polarised to fascism. Goon-baiting, ranged from the Guards' display and insolence at roll-call, to Tyler's dangerous action during the riot. As frenzied Priem threatened: 'If you do not stop, I will give the order to fire'. Tyler issued the order. In reality, goon-baiting and officers' rudeness exasperated Eggers - not escape attempts:

One aspect of our relationship with the prisoners was the matter of "correctness". The prisoners took every possible opportunity to nag us about this, but never once in five years did any of their senior officers call for proper behaviour towards us ... Indiscipline ... was the unspoken order of the day on their side ... often amounting to plain personal insolence, or at least studied offhandedness.⁷²

Angered by his officers' laxity, Eggers instituted repeated roll-calls to interrupt the plotting of British officers.⁷³ The film depicted anarchy during roll-calls as a high art. The finest piece of goon-baiting came from undertaker, La Tour, who would 'rather work for twenty Germans than one Frenchman'. Only the Gestapo refused to laugh.

Music became a weapon as broadcast German propaganda was drowned-out by the British singing *There 'll Always Be an England*.

With a fully supported British escape planned during the concert, Richmond explained the responsibilities of democratic leadership: seeing the wider picture; taking unpopular decisions for the greater good; and living with those decisions. Having asked Mac, the plan's architect, to stand down - Mac was demonstrably unstable, and too visible - Richmond must live with Mac's suicidal dash for the barbed wire. He had an agenda, telling a livid Reid:

I am not an individual like you, free to act according to my own desires. I am Senior British Officer. As such my unfortunate responsibility is to see that officers in here don't act like fools and lose their lives while doing so. By taking Mac with you, you might have lost half-a-dozen lives, not one. Do you think I like the job? I did it because this cannot afford to fail. Less than ever now he is dead. Morale was low before. It's rock bottom now. If this plan can work, we can use it time and time again. And it has got to work ... Do it for Mac, and do one thing for me - succeed, then what I did was justified.

During Colditz's actual concert, the impeccably made-up *corps de ballet* - 'miracles of energetic grace ... attired in frilly crepe paper ballet skirts and brassieres'⁷⁴ - performed "*Ballet Nonsense*", captivating Germans and Allies alike, and spawning imitators. Predictably, it was filmed as Nazi propaganda.⁷⁵ The theatre had further value for Eggers: 'It was a privilege we could stop'.⁷⁶ The film's macho version of the ballet covered Reid's escape, setting the standard for goon-baiting. *I belong to Colditz* was sung by four "Scotsmen": '*It's only a dirty old prison camp, as the Commandant knows quite well - If I get to the coast I'll write you a letter, and Colditz can go to hell*'. The Commandant and audience roared. The Gestapo scowled. Following masterful preparations, escapees left through a hole beneath the stage. Strolling through the enemy's relaxation area wearing German uniforms, they stepped straight into popular mythology.

The *finale* reified British leadership and masculinity, proving that the enemy's weapons 'were not conclusive arguments as to the conduct of affairs'.⁷⁷ Losing control, despite repeated threats, a panic-stricken SS officer screamed for Richmond to restore order as the Germans fired indiscriminately. A dangerous, but necessary, release of tensions escalated. Richmond exacerbated matters, requesting an interpreter. Vitally, he was leader by consent. Certainly the Commandant recognized this, politely asking him to 'call your men to order, or there will be bloodshed, if you please'. Richmond's calm command was instantly obeyed. This contrasted with Germany's use of force, the sub-text of POW Von Werra's boast of German victory in *The One That Got Away*. Claiming that 'morale depends on strength', he spoke the language of thugs. Amidst cheers, Richmond threw down the gauntlet: 'They have made our first home run. I have the feeling it won't be the last'. In *The Captive Heart*, prisoners turned 'their faces inwards'.⁷⁸ Here, officers faced outwards, fuelling the myth that they were a special breed, moulded by a tried and tested system. Created from an amalgam, Richmond was the first cinematic SBO to energise leadership.⁷⁹ Colditz could not operate without him. A screen note read: '320 escape attempts. Successes = 5 Polish; 15 Dutch; 22 French and 14 British, a record in any POW camp in WWI and WWII'. Mired in mythology, the film is a cultural icon.

Marketing and/or Reception of *The Colditz Story*

Apropos to the film's success, and as a corollary, its suggested re-make caused uproar:

One of the most famous tales of British courage and fortitude, is to get a Hollywood make-over and become another audacious hymn to how the US won the Second World War ... The prospect of Americans ransacking history at Britain's expense brought scorn from war veterans and researchers devoted to preserving the story accurately for future generations ... It is extremely irritating when the Americans muscle in on everybody else's glory ... *The Colditz Story* has 'always ranked amongst the most glorious of British *Boys' Own* stories'⁸⁰

Signalling its importance, the 1954 film was granted a Royal Premiere, with the RAF Band and Heralds in attendance. The press book espoused adventure and realism, 'the film is neither grim nor tragic; it is often dramatic'.⁸¹ Accordingly *The Colditz Story* subsumed the grey realism of earlier films.⁸² Names, timescale and events were re-arranged - Neave's escape was attributed to Reid.⁸³ Despite its popularity with audiences, criticisms varied. 'Is there to be no escape from escapers?' asked the *News Chronicle's* Paul Dehn. 'Schoolboys and their mental equivalents in all walks of life, cannot have enough of them', claimed the *Daily Mail's* Fred Majdalany. 'It has already stuck me that the life of a POW must be hungrier, colder, rougher and a great deal more degrading', Dilys Powell commented. The *Observer's* C.J. Lejeune, deemed it 'a very special war film'. For the *Daily Mirror*, it was 'a winner without women'.⁸⁴ Emanating from this, themes of leadership, escape and sexuality will be developed through analysis of the following films that depict incarceration in similar and differing ways: *The Wooden Horse* (1950); *Albert RN* (1953); *Danger Within* (1959); *The Password is Courage* (1962); and *Very Important Person* (1961). Chapter 5 discusses the escape of a German POW in *The One That Got Away* (1957).

Leadership and Escape

Two respected films, released between *The Captive Heart* and *The Colditz Story*, based on true stories, were neither the stuff of mythology, nor reconciliation, but of dry, documentary realism. *The Wooden Horse* tackled escape and, unusually, post-escape with 'a ring of truth ... no trimmings, no exaggeration, no sentimentalising'.⁸⁵ Made in Germany and Denmark, it followed Eric Williams' book on the successful escape to Sweden of three British officers from Stalag Luft III run by the German Airforce. SBO (Patrick Waddington) was detached, uncharismatic -

informed but personally inactive. Escape leadership came from dominant, bored narrator Peter (Leo Genn), an experienced older man who befriended John (Anthony Steele), originator of the vaulting horse escape. Problems were laboriously elaborated: persuading the Escape Committee; building the horse; calculating tunnel dimensions; digging speed; disposal of earth, the vaulting club; excusing tunnellers from mundane tasks; cave-ins; allaying German suspicions; documentation; choosing the third escapee (David Tomlinson) - to travel separately - and someone to seal the tunnel. Persistent goon-baiter Paul (Bryan Forbes) performed this task. Post-escape in Lubeck, trust was contentious. 'It is this business of relying on other people', complained Peter, reliant upon John's limited German. John's youthful impatience clashed with Peter's overbearing reticence. The Resistance were similarly cautious, but reliable. Again this was overly protracted. The pair were smuggled to Denmark by Sigmund (Holge Erickssen). Risking her life, Sigmund's sister nervously housed them before transmission to England. The British were 'her saviours'. *Variety* praised a 'commendable degree of documentary fidelity'.⁸⁶ However, it was active leadership, and adventurousness, not 'fidelity', a 'sober, straightforward manner',⁸⁷ or documentary realism that created and powered the momentum of the Colditz myth.

In *Albert RN*, the escape-or-stay debate was rigorously explored through a settled naval POW camp's approach to incarceration. Commandant (Frederick Valk), fostering a good working relationship with avuncular SBO Captain Maddox (Jack Warner) proclaimed: 'In other camps always they want to get away. Here, everyone is content'. Interestingly, the Commandant attempted five escapes as a WWI prisoner in England. Bullish American, Lt. Texas Norton (William Sylvester) - the 'first new boy in three months' - was angry that Canadian Lt. Jim Reid (Robert Beatty), along

with other officers, were long-term POWs. A voiceover intoned: 'Each man fights the enemy in his own way'. Volunteer, Lt. Geoff Ainsworth (Anthony Steel) argued the advantages of staying: 'You get time to think ... to do what amuses you - for as long as it amuses you'. Following these arguments, Artist Geoff created a dummy - Albert - to cover escapees, allowing American Lt. Erickson (Paul Carpenter) the first attempt. Texas castigated Maddox's caution over Albert. Described in the script as 'having a quiet authority which is the British way', Maddox resolutely upheld the safety of his men. Shot by the Gestapo, allegedly 'resisting arrest', Erickson's remains were returned. Nazi, Schultz (Anton Differing) cold-bloodedly murdered Texas, after "collaborating" on his unauthorised escape. 'You'll find things different now' Schultz threatened, when replacing the apologetic Commandant. During Geoff's successful escape, he killed Schultz, sickened by his escalating brutality. *Variety's* comment was typical: 'Like its predecessors, should rack up steady grosses.'⁸⁸ Nonetheless, in this 'beautifully-made picture ... which breathes sensitivity',⁸⁹ the intensity of its central debate displaced adventure.

Later, *The Password is Courage* and *Very Important Person* aspired to the Colditz model of energised leadership and escapes, pushing boundaries of comedy and parody. Apart from *The Captive Heart* the only British POW film dealing with other ranks - *The Password is Courage*⁹⁰ - was the unconvincing story of working-class Cockney Sgt. Major Charles Coward, the film's advisor. A POW from 1940-45, Coward escaped seven times. Showcasing his "daring escapades", the film adopted a documentary style when detailing the teamwork, and meticulous preparations preceding an escape.⁹¹ As played by Dirk Bogarde, Coward's *raison d'etre*, voice, mannerisms and demeanour were middle class, undermining his working-class

origins. Richmond-like, Coward led vigorously. His charismatic leadership was also earned - on one occasion, with his fists.⁹² The film opened with his escape from a forced march. Hiding in a hospital, he was awarded Germany's Iron Cross.⁹³ This implies worthless medals freely doled-out, and was reputedly filmed 'exactly as it happened'. Returning to Lamsdorf Camp, he blew-up an ammunition train, highlighting his individualism. Manacled reprisals were ignored until the Germans "surrendered" as in *The Captive Heart*.⁹⁴ A concert covered their plotting whilst Coward, supported by very close friend Cpl. Billy Pope (Alfred Lynch) acting as EO, advocated escape: 'Just because there is no toff about to give us orders, it doesn't change a thing. We are soldiers. We have got to make every effort to escape. That is our duty'. '100 blokes get their backsides out of here and the rest of us take the rap', moaned a vocal doubter, an accomplished engineer. He was persuaded by Coward's enthusiastic patriotism - they would be 'pulling the Jerries away from the fight'.

Sent to a labour camp and lumber mill for disruptive behaviour, Coward and Pope destroyed it, blamed the Commandant and blackmailed him into allowing Coward freedom of movement. Coward approached Resistance worker Irena (Maria Perschy) for maps. He derailed a German supply train, orchestrated the Lamsdorf escape, and chivalrously surrendered, saving Irena from Gestapo interrogation. His final escape, racing a fire engine through enemy lines with Pope, was as fictitious as his romance with Irena.⁹⁵ MGM's campaign book set the film's tone: 'Der Fuehrer made two mistakes ... starting a war ... and capturing Charlie'. Bogarde's performance as Charlie made the enemy 'as easy to tease as a plump cook'.⁹⁶ Or a Colditz guard. It was 'war for schoolboys, the jollier sparks of the upper third'.⁹⁷ But, the *Observer* warned:

Pretending the Germans were ridiculous was a device everyone used in the war ... it wasn't the truth ... If the real Coward behaved like this, it was a marvellous sustained act of character, the Nazis were terrifying men.⁹⁸

'I suppose it is founded on fact' said Coward, admitting to major embellishments by Director, Andrew Stone.⁹⁹ A triumph for British leadership, war was a game. However, this was not the 'upper third' at war, but other ranks. Film-makers turned a working-class hero into a middle-class clone. He didn't object.¹⁰⁰

If Coward mirrored the comedy, *Very Important Person*, a conventional POW film, doubled as *The Colditz Story* in parody. 'British stiff-upper-lipmanship' was deflated 'sequence by sequence'.¹⁰¹ Escape was the prime motivator. Colditz-inspired silly schemes, from brown-paper hot-air balloons to a rabbit-warren of conflicting tunnels, suggested 'men half-way round the bend'.¹⁰² POW James Robertson Justice, a brilliant, irascible Government Aeronautical Scientist masquerading as naval PR Lt. Farrow, was vital to the war effort. Churchill ordered his escape. Farrow treated everyone as imbecilic, and kicked ranting Nazi Major Stampfel (Stanley Baxter) during roll-call. This garnered the admiration of studiedly-insolent British officers. The unlikeliest couple - camp 'Bonzo' Baines (Jeremy Lloyd) and Jimmy Cooper (Leslie Phillips) - volunteered to escape with him. They shared a hut with Everett (Stanley Baxter, in a dual role as a tunnelling enthusiast and Stampfel). Asked to impersonate Stampfel - another Colditz device - Everett hinted at German brutality: 'It may be alright for some, but others have to face the music'. Farrow rejected a phalanx of ridiculous plans and ideas served-up by escape fanatics SBO (Norman Bird) and EO Wings (John LeMesurier). Unusually, the film showed the scientist subsuming the military mindset, although the SBO and EO assisted in Farrow's escape. Impersonating visiting Swiss Commissioners, Farrow, Baines and Carter simply walked out. British agents would guide Farrow, but not his

companions. Escape plans were juxtaposed with rehearsals for the concert. Every POW film *cliché* was deployed. Back in England, Farrow learned of Baines and Carter's successful home-run, marking this with seats at the Windmill. 'V.I.P. can fairly stand in the hallowed halls ... it deserves to make a fortune', a reviewer commented.¹⁰³

Masculinity and Sexuality

Geraghty wonders if POW films 'edge closer to the dangerous question of how far homosexuality is implied by comradeship?'¹⁰⁴ I suggest that British filmmakers in the 1950s, the decade of homosexual witch-hunts, the Wolfenden Report, and the damaging Burgess and Maclean homosexual spy scandals, definitely tackled it through consideration of close comradeship and domesticity. But, confirming the findings of an Army Report, courage and patriotism were never questioned.¹⁰⁵ More sexualised during the war, post-1945 audiences would have grasped the nuances. As Chapter 4 will show, lesbianism - not criminalised - was inherent in portrayals of women's sexuality, and patently manifest in mannish uniformed women.¹⁰⁶ Homosexuality was suggested in *The Colditz Story*, through the Guards pairing, in Richmond's domesticated watering of the daisies, and his comment that he found women 'rather ruthless'. It can be traced backwards to *The Wooden Horse* and *Albert RN*, and forwards to *Escape to Victory* (1981) where, Captain Colby (Michael Caine) asked a footballer if he wanted to 'eat well and join the team' but, it would 'mean living in the officers' hut'. 'Not without a chaperone' he replied tellingly. *Danger Within* exaggerated a gay relationship. *Very Important Person* offered a similar pairing, less obviously. Both couples featured in perilous escape attempts. Sgt. Major Coward (Dirk Bogarde) and his close sidekick Billy (Alfred Lynch) in *The*

Password is Courage, were tactile, exchanged glances, and intuitively knew each other. Both had a cavalier brand of courage.

Public school-inspired initiation ceremonies and pranks manifested in Colditz. Author Reid related the homo-erotic initiation pranks visited on 'new boys'. Officers impersonating a German medical inspection team intimately examined them, painting their "undercarriages" with blue "disinfectant".¹⁰⁷ Diet deficiencies, and lack of privacy, Reid suggested, frequently meant that 'homosexual yearnings (real or imagined) took the form of closeness, lingering looks, touching and holding hands' - others largely agree.¹⁰⁸ POW films featured this. Red Cross parcels coincided with increased libido.¹⁰⁹ For younger men with homo-erotic urges, the theatre was an enabling, and largely unquestioned, forum. MacKenzie claimed that Colditz's *Ballet Nonsense* appalled Methodist Padre Ellison Platt. Alarmed that Colditz might become 'the new Sodom', Platt described the ballet as 'primarily the production of sex-starved, virile young men whose minds perforce inclined towards abuse as an anti-dote'.¹¹⁰ 'Homosexuality occupied an increasingly large place in contemporary prison humour', intoned Platt. 'Jocular references to masturbation too, are freer than is usual among healthy-minded adults'.¹¹¹ Of men dressing as women in camp concerts, Platt agonised: 'This fight against nature, against tortured bodies and imagination has become perverted with longing, in a battle no young man should be required to fight'.¹¹² MacKenzie stated that some of the 'fresh-faced' types, morphed into glamorous 'women', and adopted feminine mannerisms off-stage. Admirers had 'more than acting on their minds', and after-show 'protection' was required:

A blind eye was turned toward homosexual liaisons in some compounds ... But in an age when homosexuality was very much a closet affair ... some men were shocked. A "hell of a lot of men seemed to be affected here ... some quite out of control".¹¹³

Platt condemned Colditz's secret society for mutual masturbation. Historian Humphries notes this was widely practiced pre-war. Long institutionalised in British public schools and other educational establishments, it enjoyed 'a macho image' as 'a temporary period of homosexual attachment ... a natural stage in the growing-up process'.¹¹⁴ Summerhays, at public school early in World War II, agreed: 'I don't think there was anything more adventurous than mutual masturbation ... it was normal practice for boys to spend nights together'.¹¹⁵

POW frustrations in *The Wooden Horse* surfaced when Peter narrated the day: 'I knew it all so well'. The camera, and the disturbed gaze of some officers, lingered voyeuristically on John's handsome, innocent young face. Peter exploded:

I don't know whether it is better or worse for you married chaps. At least you have got something waiting for you. I've got a feeling life is passing me by. By the time I get back it will be too late ... Just not doing anything, not even fighting ... I'd give anything to get out of this place even for a few days, just to do ordinary things like using the telephone, walk on grass, carpets, walk up and down stairs, use a lift, spend money and have to make a decision.

Pegging-out their washing Peter and John existed in domesticated boredom. Discussing their parcels, John commented: 'If we get any sardines, we can swap them for biscuits and bake a cake' - their masculinity was compromised. To John's query: 'How's this?' whilst blacking-up to steal wood, Peter responded: 'God, you're beautiful'. Latent homosexuality was implicit. They bickered like a married couple. Yet John's escape plan was superbly executed. Peter killed a German soldier in hand-to-hand combat to safeguard their escape. Whilst abhorring this, he did his duty.

Albert RN reinforced the attachment of youth and experience. Sensitive artist Geoff delivered his portrait of the SBO's wife. The description of Captain Maddox's room indicated gender roles confused by war:

A fabulous and fanciful room with the unmistakable imprint of ingenuity and makeshift about it ... Everything about the room suggests constricted masculine imagination, forced by circumstances into domestic channels.¹¹⁶

Maddox 'cannot express himself initially'.¹¹⁷ Significantly, he vocalised his confusion looking at his wife's photo: 'It is easy to let this become the reality, and that the dream'. He recognized that, like himself, Geoff was 'a man apart'. These covert homosexual references were balanced by the Captain's strong leadership and Geoff's bravery. An allusion that Geoff was a virgin was implicit when he refused his escape place - the others had 'lived more'. He had 'not had the time to do anything much', was engaged to Alison, with whom he'd had no physical contact, knew only from letters, and was afraid to meet. Curious only about 'her voice', his frustrations, transferred to Albert, made him doubt his sexuality and masculinity:

The world's full of Alberts ... clueless. Never moves unless you push him. Doesn't have to think or make a decision. No confusion, no frustrations. It is all just worked out for him, the final product of the modern world - the totally free man.

But, showcasing the bravery of homosexuals, Geoff proved that enemy weapons were 'not conclusive arguments as to the conduct of affairs'. Facing the merciless Nazi Schultz he shouted: 'Stop bullying us. Just because you have got a gun in your hand, you think you are another bloody Hitler ... you are a filthy, murdering, degenerate swine'.

Danger Within (discussed below) and *Very Important Person* were more specific on homosexuality, but it was not until TV's *POW* (2004), that an instance of male rape featured. Baines and alleged womaniser Cooper, made exceptional "glamour girls" in the *V.I.P.* concert chorus-line. Wearing make-up, wigs, black stockings, suspenders, frilly panties and padded bras, their concerns were straight seams and slipped padding. Baines found ladies' underwear uncomfortable. He remedied this post-war, becoming 'Australia's leading designer' of '*lingerie*'. Stage-

door Johnnies were despatched with *élan*: 'I'm not *that* sort of girl'. Their high-kicking drill was sensational. When Wings approached him at the theatre, Baines squeakily fluttered: 'But sir, I'm engaged'. Cooper's longed-for sexy dream, surrounded by torn pin-ups, was interrupted. He was told he would be better-off dreaming of his mother. His dalliance with a girl before capture was also interrupted - he had only put his arm around her when the police arrived. Cooper never quite connected with the ladies. Post-war, he became 'one of our more enthusiastic missionaries'. A "camp" Saville-Row tailor, providing essential escape clothing, was suggestively familiar with 'Continental' style. Finally, even their post-escape treat was to the "untouchable" Windmill women. Sexual orientation and bravery were different sides of the same coin in POW films - the one did not necessarily preclude the other. Masculinity was not threatened. Homosexual references did not impinge on specific real-life heroes, but film-makers rightly referenced homosexuals' wartime contributions, when the military were asking for their medals back.

Colditz in the Sun – Prisoners in Italy

Following the Allied invasion of Sicily, the collapse of Mussolini's Italian army, his dismissal on the 25 July, and the disbanding of the Fascist Party, British military authorities issued a stay-put order to POWs in Italy.¹¹⁸ SBOs had secret orders to formulate plans for taking over POW camps following the Armistice. Mason notes that M19 disputed the plan. Prisoners were,

... acutely aware of the possibility of transfer to Germany and further imprisonment there under unknown conditions, but there was so little reliable information about what was happening outside that it was well nigh impossible to decide on a definite plan of action.¹¹⁹

The Allies landed in Italy on 3 September. 5000 British POWs successfully escaped to Switzerland and 12,000 escaped southwards.¹²⁰ Thousands died. Another 50,000 fell into Nazi hands. 'Men had to use their initiative again' Historian Mason claims,

this was problematic. Institutionalised, experiencing conflicting emotions, they must decide whether to disobey the War Office order in a very confused situation'.¹²¹ On the rationale, historians Nichol and Rennell state:

If an explanation for the 'stay-put' order was requested, the line was that it had been given to prevent prisoners from being massacred if they attempted a mass break-out. This ignored the fact that in most camps (though not all) the Italians were more than happy to ... let their prisoners go. The truth was that 'staying-put' made sense to the pen-pushers.¹²²

Danger Within (1959)

Danger Within, the only British film covering this, exaggerated the excesses of Colditz. Based on a true story, the film centred on Campo 127, Lombardy, North Italy where 400 British prisoners from the Africa campaigns were incarcerated in 1943. Former inmate Colin Lesslie, recognized Campo 127 in Michael Gilbert's murder mystery *Death in Captivity* and produced the film. The opening scene set the mood. Nothing was what it seemed. An officer dressed in shorts lay face-down, apparently dead, in what looked like a desert. The camera panned-away, he was sunbathing. Action shifted to Captain Lester's escape bid. He was impersonating Italian officer Capitano Benucci (Peter Arne) when Benucci cold-bloodedly murdered him. Unusually, the traitor responsible for Lester's death, and other failed escapes, was English officer Captain Tony Long (William Franklin), a member of the Escape Committee. Audiences knew this before his comrades.

Mirroring Richmond, Lt. Colonel Huxley, SBO, defended Greek officer Coutoules (Cyril Snape) suspected, without proof, of being the traitor, and would not tolerate a kangaroo court. Arguing with hothead Escape Officer Lt. Colonel Baird (Richard Todd):

Baird: Just because we got a poke in the eye today, does that mean we have to stop trying ... War is not exactly a safe occupation; and as I see it, all of us here are still at war to some extent.

Huxley: To some extent, it's our duty to stay alive.

Baird: In that case, 90% of the officers in this camp deserve a medal, sunbathing, amateur theatricals, bridge parties noon and night. Oh, we can all do our duty and stay alive all right.

Huxley: Every time a POW escapes, that's one up for you and your Escape Committee. But I am not thinking about you or the Escape Committee; if a prisoner gets shot, I am very sorry. I am not thinking about him either. I am thinking about the 400 other men in this camp for whom I am responsible as Senior British Officer. That is why I insist on knowing of, and approving, any future attempts.

With Richmond-like *élan* Huxley told Benucci that he would 'report the facts to the protecting power'. The Italians were shown unfavourably. Commandant Arletti was benign but weak. Guards were lazy, stupid or corrupt. A 'natural born, Nazi-trained killer', Benucci enjoyed his work, which included burning prisoners' mail. Coutoules (a British agent) had been murdered by Benucci who intended to frame the Escape Committee. Prisoners were fingerprinted. Huxley suspected the information was for Nazi records. Officers responded with duck prints and extra hands. Lounge-lizard Major Marquand (Michael Wilding) wore gloves, defending the British with devastating clarity: 'We happen to be English. We like to keep our hands clean'.¹²³ Keep-fit fanatics ordered to 'advance in the manner of the Italian army', stepped backwards. Deeply offended, the Italians were the only European country to refuse the film: 'It insults our armed forces. After Montgomery's memoirs, now British cinema has concerned itself in the most irritating way with our Army'.¹²⁴ The *Daily Mail* reported British Lion's reply: 'We are very surprised at this attitude, because the film shows there are good, and bad, men on both sides ... the worst character is an Englishman'.¹²⁵ Isabel Quigly also differed: 'Sneers at the Italian war effort seem to me perfectly in order, it deserved them ... they are aimed at a particular system and time, not the physical characteristics of a race'.¹²⁶ However, she eschewed nationalism wherein Italian guards were described as 'a funny pong ... spaghetti and garlic'.¹²⁷

Effete Marquand executed an heroic escape plan - despite its betrayal. His friendship with Captain Alfred Piker (Peter Jones) was a homosexual pairing and a major part of the action. They limp-wristedly strolled arm-in-arm, imagined dressing for dinner at the Savoy and used the well-known 1950s' radio homosexual catchphrase: 'After you Claude. No after you, Cecil'.¹²⁸ They, and Captain Rupert Callender (Dennis Price), were proud not to be 'rigger types' but enjoyed watching. Discreetly praying pre-escape, Marquand demonstrated the importance of Christianity. Benucci's premeditated murders of Marquand, Piker and Byfold, confirmed Coutoules's innocence. Non-escapers moaned: 'We'll pay for it ... Why has there got to be a comic strip hero in every camp who mucks it up for everyone'? Callender, solely concerned with his production of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, argued with Long and Bunter Phillips (Richard Attenborough). Tensions between escapees, intellectuals, theatricals and sportsmen, resulted in masculinity being questioned:

Callender: Swaggering about the place playing cops and robbers ... the rest of the camp is heartily sick of the lot of you.

Long: What's your regiment? Catering Core or Ensa?

Callender: You tunnellers think you are a race apart. If you weren't such a nuisance, you would be a joke.

British leadership, demonstrated by SBOs, embraced a forced ruthlessness whereby the ends justified the means, and was exemplified when the Nazis visited Benucci. Upon Italian surrender, Huxley intended to disobey orders, masterminding the escape of 400 officers via the theatre's tunnel, during the performance. Baird disagreed, claiming they would be expected. Huxley planned the unexpected - a daylight escape.¹²⁹ The value of experience was implicit. Like Reid, Baird was converted:

Baird: How did you think it up? It really is something.

Huxley: I have had a bit of practice. I was in the last war in Germany.

Baird: Did you escape?

Huxley: Yes, I was lucky. I crossed into Holland.

Baird: You can count on me, Sir.

400 men drew lots for the escape-order, the doctor and Huxley selflessly went last. To cover disappearing prisoners, perfectionist Callender was forced to advance the performance:

Callender: Do I take it sir that escaping takes priority?

Huxley: What do you think this is - a holiday camp? There is nothing glamorous about being a POW ... I cannot force you to perform this play well ... but perform it you will.

British eccentricity peaked during the performance. A character in *Hamlet, en-route* to England, was despatched with the Shakespearean wisdom: 'He shall recover his wits there. If he does not, it is no great matter ... there the men are as mad as he'. Bunter discovered Long's duplicity, intercepting one of his letters to his "girlfriend" Benucci. Huxley again banned summary execution. Long was bound and hidden. Benucci inadvertently killed him. *Danger Within* was hugely successful. 'A thoroughly good example of its type', and 'a rewarding experience' were typical critical comments.¹³⁰ Tragedy struck the real mass-escape. The *Financial Times* revealed:

The latest of the seemingly endless British films which treat the last war as the pretext for a mixture of high-jinks and cloak and dagger drama, is rather better than most of its type. It is as well that producers have not reminded audiences that the mass breakout against which the fictional story is set, actually happened; for this triumphant exit led to the death of almost all the 400 prisoners who escaped.¹³¹

Rip-roaring adventure subsumed truth.¹³²

Hell on Earth – POWs in the Far East

In an escalating row concerning a reparation apology, the Japanese Emperor's State Visit in May 1998 saw former POWs and ex-servicemen demonstrating against the Queen's procession.¹³³ As the Royal coach drew level they whistled *Colonel Bogey*, 'that anthem for all who suffered, survived and died, as Japanese POWs'.¹³⁴

The Japanese flag was burned. Reviewing the television documentary series *Hell in the Pacific*, 2001, Catchpole declared:

Hell is being captured by the Imperial Army of Japan, beaten senseless, starved until you are a bag of skin and bones, and seeing your closest friends machine-gunned, bayoneted or beheaded.¹³⁵

Having reified Colditz, Reid was realistic about Japan: 'It is above all ... the deliberate torture that sets the Orientals' treatment of their prisoners apart'.¹³⁶ This encapsulated the real and cinematic distinction between capture by the Germans or the Japanese. Barbarity towards Allied prisoners-of-war was indisputably greater from the Japanese. Instantaneous reprisals from beatings, mock-executions and live burials, to land-drowning and beheadings were gratuitous. Since Britain was embarrassed by this, and the ramifications of Japan's easy Singapore victory, cinematic imagery of the Japanese remained brutal. To ensure the violence-level passed censorship, film-makers claimed to be 'anti-war'. Driven beyond all canons of reason, British officers' immoral choices became moral victories, as unremitting Japanese barbarism forced their "dark" side to surface. When responding to calculated evil, film-makers ensured that the British were conscience-stricken. Vitally, this was because they operated within a deeply Christian, British set of moral values.

Cultural differences between the Far East and Europe surfaced in polarised views of POWs. Followers of the Shinto religion, the Japanese embraced death-in-battle. Glorious death in the Emperor's service elevated military personnel into gods and was manipulated by Japanese War Lords. In January, 1941, a new Military Field Code forbade surrender, stressing the shame and dishonour of capture.¹³⁷ Every level of Japanese society - from small children - was indoctrinated. A contemporaneous student explained the Emperor's power. He was a god: 'In Japan, we think you

should die for the sake of the Emperor. No-one can disobey an order'.¹³⁸ Seeing them as individually dishonoured and dishonourable representatives of decadent white imperialism, the Japanese military could neither respect POW's, nor treat them humanely under the Geneva Convention. Huxley felt dishonoured in *Danger Within*:

Most of the officers here, including me and you too, are only alive today, and POWs, because we surrendered, or somebody senior put their hands up for us. Maybe it wasn't our fault, but it is nothing to be proud of.

Here, we could usefully note Lomax's real-life experiences as a Japanese POW on the Burma-Siam Railway:

To have to witness the torture of others and to see the preparations for the attack on one's own body is a punishment in itself, especially when there is no escape. This experience is the beginning of a form of insanity ... I went down with a blow that shook every bone ... scorching liquid pain seared through my entire body ... sudden blows ... the periodic stamping of boots on the back of my head, crunching my face into the gravel; the crack of bones snapping; my teeth breaking; and my own involuntary attempts to respond to deep vicious kicks and to regain an upright position ... realized that my hips were being damaged and I remember looking up and seeing the pick-helves coming down ... putting my arms in the way to deflect the blows. This seemed only to focus the clubs on my arms and hands ... the worst pain came from the pounding on my pelvic bones and the base of my spine. I think they tried to smash my hips. It went on and on.¹³⁹

Then came his 'worst nightmare'. With his companions, he was spirited away by,

... an organization that lurked on the edges of the worst imaginings of all the prisoners ... The Kempeitai's reputation was like the Gestapo's worse, for us, because we knew more about what this Japanese secret police unit had done in China during the 1930s.¹⁴⁰

They were imprisoned in tiny cells:

They had taken away the last shreds of our dignity ... We couldn't communicate with each other ... they gave us a bowl of heavily-salted rice ... a way of making us ragingly thirsty and of breaking us down ... Ants, vicious large red ones, crawled all over me; the immobility of my arms in their splints was a fierce frustration, preventing me from sweeping away insects from my legs and back ... Sometimes in the early morning I was taken by two guards ... [interrogations lasted for days, then the water torture began] ... He directed the full flow of the now gushing pipe on to my nostrils and mouth ... Water poured down my windpipe and throat and filled my lungs and stomach. The torrent was unimaginably choking. This is the sensation of drowning on dry land ... He was too skilled to risk losing me altogether. When I was choking uncontrollably, the NCO took the hose away ... the other man hit me with the branch on the shoulders and stomach ... They alternated beatings and half-drownings.¹⁴¹

POWs' secret diaries detailed these atrocities.¹⁴² Cinema reflected this in: *The Camp on Blood Island* (1958) and *Yesterday's Enemy* (1959). Some critics found these violent films, and attendant publicity, insupportable. Other films under discussion

are: *The Long and the Short and the Tall* (1961); *The Wind Cannot Read* (1958); and *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1958). (*A Town Like Alice* (1956) is discussed in Chapters 4 and 5).

The Camp on Blood Island (1958)

At the World Premiere of *The Camp on Blood Island*, ex-POWs were honoured guests. 'A film which will shock ... Colonel Lambert keeps hope and courage alive in their hearts. It is his granite-based discipline that holds men in some semblance of military order',¹⁴³ warned the programme. Lord Russell of Liverpool wrote the foreword, and explicit details of Japanese brutalities were featured.¹⁴⁴ Director, Val Guest, claimed to be anti-war:

I, along with everyone else, will always feel a great bitterness towards the unprincipled, unnatural and barbarous members of the warring nations; and it is a big protest against the inhumanities they practised that I launch into this film.¹⁴⁵

Analysis proves the film was heavily weighted. 90% of screen-time concerned Japanese atrocities. British retaliation occupied the last ten minutes. This melds with Guest's espousal of reality.¹⁴⁶ Presaging Lomax, Guest approximated the truth. Opening shots showed tortured officer, Lt. Peters, digging his grave on remote Blood Island. POWs were forced to watch. 'Most soon you will be able to rest', smirked Captain Sakamura. Guards laughed. Peters was machine-gunned into his grave. 'You dirty murdering bastards', a POW shouted. An on-screen message read: 'This is not just a story - it is based on fact'. SBO Colonel Lambert (Andre Morell) rebuked Sakamura and was slapped: 'What you did was murder ... There are rules governing POWs and the punishment for attempted escape is not execution'. When demanding to see Colonel Yamamitsu, Lambert's calibre and the POW experience emerged:

Lambert: I have come to protest against the barbarous killing of Lt. Peters.
Yamamitsu: You must not have audacity to question authority of Japanese.

Lambert: I question his authority to allow these atrocities ... to withhold medical supplies and food, and leave our mail rotting.

Yamamitsu: Your men must not cut telephone wires, smash radio ... all bad things ... Escape is futile – nowhere to go.

Captain Sakamura: His Excellency says you are useful people. When war finish, you stay and work for us - save heads.

Lambert: When war finish he, and you, will be busy saving own heads.

Captain Sakamura: His Excellency asks you remember what we will do if Japan loses war.

Lambert: I make a point of remembering ... We are enemies of the Emperor. We will be killed. The camp will be burned to the ground, so will the women's camp.

Sakamura: Prisoners must not do bad things anymore ... [rifle-butting Lambert] ... His Excellency advises you to pray for Japanese victory.

A clandestine radio informed Lambert, and Dutch planter Paul (Carl Mohn), of Japan's surrender. Choosing his moment and saving his men were Lambert's dilemmas. British High Commissioner Beattie (Walter Fitzgerald) blamed him for Peters' death. Peters had orders, to locate a radio transmitter: 'Provoking them night and day ... may I remind you that some of us have wives and families here. You are just stirring up senseless trouble, making it worse for the whole camp'. Sakamura brought dirty bandages, cruelly sneering that Peters 'no longer required them'. Ignoring Beattie, Lambert asked a willing Dr. Keiller to continue Peters' mission. Keiller and his wife Kate (Barbara Shelley, from the women's camp, discussed in Chapter 4), knew the transmitter's location. An officer implored Lambert to relax critical inspections on the exhausted men, but Lambert had an agenda:

There's nothing left but discipline. It's the only thing that holds us together. Take that away and they'll fall apart. It's not going to happen Dawes, even though you all think I am the biggest bastard on the island.

Japanese atrocities included: inhuman treatment of women, implicit in the Padre's prayer 'may they not endure the pains of hell'; taking six men captive for insurance; beheading them in handcuffs; forcing prisoners to watch; and threatening to behead six more every day, including an officer. This was 'Japanese chivalry' boasted the Commandant. They sadistically forced a POW to burn stockpiled mail at roll-call.

Sick men were whipped into becoming slave labour. Keiller, re-captured and tortured, was murdered before Kate's eyes.

A downed USAAF pilot, Lt. Commander Bellamy (Phil Brown), precipitated events. Sakamura gratuitously beat him, and Lambert seized his moment:

You all know that come the end of the war, Yamamitsu will be hunted down like an animal by the Allies, and hanged as a war criminal. He was guilty of crimes in Burma and the Philippines. He was hand-picked for this job ... he has nothing left to lose by perpetrating every form of murder and sadism. Twice Yamamitsu has told me quite dispassionately that he will murder every man, woman and child on this island and raze both camps to the ground if Japan loses the war.

The Padre - who passed Latin messages to the women during funerals - was asked to risk his life again with another message. Beattie attacked Lambert:

Beattie: We should throw ourselves on their mercy.

Lambert: We've had three years of their mercy.

Beattie: How dare you behave in this highhanded, dictatorial manner?

Lambert: I dare because I am the Officer Commanding.

Beattie: That does not give you the right to ride roughshod over people better qualified.

Lambert intended to ask Kate to complete Keiller's mission. Bellamy volunteered. 'You Yanks think you have won the war', cried Lambert furiously. Realistically, Bellamy was the only one who had eaten healthily in three years. 'Good on you, Sir', the officer awaiting beheading cried. Others rallied: 'We'd say you'd worked miracles. You can rely on us, Sir'. Following his wife's needless death from cholera, Beattie acknowledged the redundancy of diplomacy and the primacy of force. This was crucial. Civilised Britain was driven to drastic action as a last resort, to save lives. Beattie detonated a grenade in the Commandant's office, calling the Japanese 'barbarians' who 'must be eliminated to create a better world'. You 'murdered her as surely as if you had machine-gunned her poor, starving body. I have a five-year old son ... my last prayer is that he will live long enough to forget your vile, inhuman behaviour'. Lambert's grenade started the massacre. Fighting fiercely, he accidentally killed Shields (Michael Gwynn) his friend.

Offering absolution, the Padre and another British officer explained the rationale of Lambert and, by implication, the British at war:

Padre: It took great courage for him to do that.

Second officer: It will take even greater courage for him to live with it.

Britain did not practise gratuitous violence, was not detached, and used only necessary force. So, it was established that the women's camp was taken without a single shot being fired. Nevertheless, critic Quigly of *The Spectator*, shocked by the violence, having heard young boys yelling 'yum, yum' at the sight of blood in other war films, complained: 'Here, fourteen years after the end of the war, we are called upon to sympathise with the head-shaving exorbitant savagery of personal revenge'.¹⁴⁷ When actually released upon Japanese surrender, Lomax confirmed Britain's credentials: 'It astonishes me that there were not more spontaneous outbursts of summary justice on the guards, but our normality reasserted itself very quickly, and that did not include lynchings'.¹⁴⁸ Whilst Pte. Whitecross noted 'we had learned to hate with such a hatred that there could be no fitting punishment'. Most men 'just wanted to go home'.¹⁴⁹ After 50 years of psychological pain, Lomax met his interrogator and 'felt an inner relief in being able to forgive him'.¹⁵⁰ Cinematically, anti-Japanese themes remained a contest between uncontrolled barbarity and measured British response. On Blood Island the 'rules' disappeared. British conscience did not. However, the other major POW film of the period was built around interpretations of the 'rules'.

***The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1958) - A bridge too far?**

Unlike *The Camp on Blood Island*, David Lean's immensely popular, American-financed spectacular *The Bridge on the River Kwai* was a sanitised travesty

of POW life, and discredited a legendary SBO.¹⁵¹ Ex-POWs felt insulted, but the film explored human strength-of-mind, not suffering. Lean adapted Frenchman Pierre Boulle's satirical novel¹⁵² - a thinly-veiled attack on the British - with the premise that anyone would collaborate in certain circumstances.¹⁵³ Criticised as pro- and anti-war, the story was based on SBO Colonel Toosey - Colonel Nicholson (Alec Guinness) in the film - sent to Burma in 1943.¹⁵⁴ Lean saw Toosey as a 'magnificent tragi-comic figure well out of the usual run of film characters'.¹⁵⁵ Japanese atrocities were implied by: crosses on the trackside; guards wielding heavy weaponry; slave labour; Shears' observation: 'We're going to be a busy pair of grave-diggers' and Nicholson's civilising mission.¹⁵⁶ Two British atrocities - the ambush and killing of a Japanese patrol and Warden's killing of his own men - were shown. Depictions of British officers were - formal and informal; moral and immoral. Nicholson was a formal, rule-bound paternalist, with 28-years service in the Raj.¹⁵⁷ Major Warden (Jack Hawkins) operated outside the rules, embodying the maverick, informal 'there is always the unexpected' approach. So did Joyce, a young Canadian Commando recruit. Major Clipton (James Donald), a doctor, assumed the voice of reason. Into this equation, came Commander Shears (William Holden) an American self-preservationist, with a "borrowed rank", who traded with corrupt Japanese. This put him in Warden's grey area. A sub-plot concerned their battle of wills.

To his officers' chagrin Nicholson refused an escape committee. It would breach military law. Surrender was a direct order from HQ, Singapore. Shears confronted him:

Shears: The odds against surviving are worse ... You intend to hold to the law no matter what it costs?

Nicholson: Without law Commander, there is no civilization.

Shears: Here - there is no civilization.

Nicholson: Then we have the opportunity to introduce it. Our men must always feel that they are still commanded by us, and not the Japanese. So long as they have that to cling to, they will be soldiers, not slaves.

This presaged the battle of wills between Nicholson, and Japanese Commandant Saito (Sessue Kayakawa), educated at the London Polytechnic. Careerists, they were ineluctably wedded to their military codes, locking horns on the issue of officers working. Saito hit Nicholson with a copy of the Geneva Convention. Nicholson survived torture. Released to loud cheers, he became dominant, reversing roles with Saito, building the bridge as a monument to Britain. British officers, and the sick, worked tirelessly. The doctor suspected collaboration: 'Must we build a better bridge?' Nicholson had an agenda:

The men's morale is high, discipline has been restored and their condition has been improved – are they a happier lot or aren't they? They feed better and are no longer abused or maltreated ... If you had to operate on Saito, would you do your best, or let him die? Would you prefer to see this battalion disintegrate in idleness? Would you prefer to have it said that our chaps cannot do a proper job? Don't you realise how important it is to show they can't break us in body or spirit? One day, this war will be over, and in years to come, I want the people who use this bridge to know how it was built and who built it. Not a gang of slaves, but soldiers, British soldiers ... even in captivity.

Claiming the British embodied the 'kind of guts that sends your officers over the top with nothing but a swagger stick', Shears escaped. He encountered Major Warden (Jack Hawkins) - a Cambridge don, expert in oriental languages, demolition and explosives - in Ceylon. Understated, Warden led a Commando team charged with demolishing the bridge.¹⁵⁸ Uncommitted, Shears cried: 'Nicholson and you are two of a kind - crazy with courage. For what? How to die like a gentleman, by the rules, when the only thing that really matters is how to live like a human being'. Shears, "blackmailed" into guiding them to Kwai, was present when Joyce was asked: 'Could you kill without hesitation?' Displaying British conscience, Joyce replied: 'I suppose I would find it hard to kid myself that killing isn't a crime'. Warden claimed: 'None of us knows the answer to that question until the moment arrives'. When it

did, Joyce could not kill in cold blood. Warden killed automatically. Supported by Siamese women bearers and village elder Yai (M R B Chakrabandhu), their advance was surreally juxtaposed with a polished camp concert. High-kicking, saucily dressed “chorus girls” preceded canoodling soldiers suggestively singing: *‘If you were the only girl in the world’*.

Joining an injured Warden in shouting ‘kill him’ to Joyce - in hand-to-hand combat with Saito - Shears demonstrated how to thrust the knife, dashing to the detonator ‘crazy with courage’. Nicholson died gasping: ‘What have I done?’ Warden’s calculated rocket attack on the train killed Joyce and Shears. ‘I had to do it, they might have been captured’, he spluttered in self-disgust, as the appalled Siamese retreated. Therefore, deliberate killing - in this instance, of your own men - was un-British. Positions regarding the ‘rules’ shifted. Seeking justification, Warden needed them. Breaching theirs, Nicholson collaborated and Saito respected a POW. Newly committed, Shears died ‘like a gentleman, by the rules’. ‘Madness’ cried Clifton, but he ‘did not understand the military code’.¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, Nicholson effectively saved his men.

Kwai cost \$2,800,000; by 1980 had grossed \$22 million world-wide and *Variety* rated it 23 in the list of top earners. It broke box-office records winning seven Oscars, four BAFTA’S, three Golden Globes, The Directors’ Guild Award and numerous others. In 1957 it was the second highest-grossing imported film in Japan. Its British television premiere brought the country, and the National Grid, to a standstill. But capture may not necessarily lead to a camp. Adding a further

dimension, the next two films featured POWs inconveniently held in fluid, combat situations. The third film hid anti-Japanese messages in a love story.

Outside the Wire

Yesterday's Enemy, *The Long and the Short and the Tall* and *The Wind Cannot Read*, cover capture during remote skirmishes where instant decisions were required and the power balance repeatedly shifted. In Hammer Films' Special Press Release for the premiere of *Yesterday's Enemy*, Peter Newman (author), Michael Carreras (producer) and Val Guest (director), discussed the film. Newman explained:

I got sick and depressed with the British and American war sagas, films which invariably showed a romanticised biased, heroic view of war ... a jolly romp in which a good time was had by all. I've often heard some of my young friends say war must have been fun. I only hope, after seeing *Yesterday's Enemy*, they'll feel thankful to be alive and at peace [but] I am certain that the fact that war is futile is not generally accepted.¹⁶⁰

Carreras claimed - it was, 'not an *expose* of British atrocities' but,

... an honest attempt to put the war in its true perspective. It shows the British fighting a war with the gloves off - a war in which no quarter is asked or given ... not a drama of the stiff-upper-lip ... it kicks the heroics out of war ... the overall moral it paints is the utter futility of war for victor and vanquished.¹⁶¹

Guest preached: 'There is little more than a hairline of a decision between a war crime and a glorious victory'.¹⁶² That 'hairline' was British conscience. That 'decision' was pragmatic. 'The British public', Lomax cynically noted, 'was not interested in the Far Eastern war crimes trials ... official policy was to downplay them for the sake of reconstructing Japan as an ally of the West'.¹⁶³ Guest's film redressed this imbalance, taking an anti-Japanese stance despite asserting:

This is not a film suggesting that the British were guilty of war crimes. It does not admit or accuse any country of guilt. It is essentially the story of one man in command and of the nightmarish problem and decision he had to make.¹⁶⁴

Like Lambert, SBO, Captain Langford's (Stanley Baker) dilemma put him at odds with his conscience and men, whilst approaching a Burmese village in 1942.

The press book emoted:

Pearl Harbour has been struck down ... the Japanese are streaking south towards Singapore and beyond. In Burma, the British army is in retreat under pressure of a savage enemy offensive aimed at India. Somewhere in the steaming jungle swamps are the remnants of a British Brigade Headquarters - cut off and hopelessly lost. The unit is commanded by a tough young officer with an even tougher job on his hands ... There is a bloody battle before the British capture the village. All the Japanese - eight privates, a captain and a full colonel - are killed.¹⁶⁵

Langford captured a Burmese carrying money and a coded Japanese military map, shocking him with un-British behaviour. Believing the map contained information vital enough to involve a colonel, Langford extracted this by executing two villagers, and threatening more:

Only you have the power to save them ... tell me all you know, especially about the map and the markings on it ... Our friend thinks he is safe. He doesn't think I will ... There is only one way to convince him.

'This is war', was Langford's rationale, 'I am doing my duty as I see it. All I care about is the safety of British troops. It is two lives for many thousands'. Guest high-mindedly compared Langford's dilemma to President Truman's first atomic bomb decision: 'It is one God-fearing man's belief that a minority should die to save a majority',¹⁶⁶ explaining:

Only Langford's tensed jaw muscles hint at the terrible inner battle he is fighting; the battle of a man whose feelings are torn between his duty as a soldier, and his humanitarian feelings. Inwardly, he is praying that the informer will talk, so he can call off the executions.¹⁶⁷

This was the crux - humanity against detachment. Langford's unit became the prisoners of vicious Japanese Major Yamazuki (Philip Ahn) who 'swooped down', mounting 'another bloody battle'. Whilst admiring Langford's courage and refusal to talk, Yamazuki killed them all without qualms. They died bravely. For Guest, this was 'putting duty above all else - the only honourable course'.¹⁶⁸ Audiences were offered 'The Challenge':

If you believe it was reasonable for Langford to shoot the two villagers in order to force the informer to talk, was the same procedure, when carried out by the Japanese against the British, equally reasonable? The rights and wrongs of what Langford did are problems that people who watch the film will have to work out.¹⁶⁹

Guest *et al* had already done so.

Leslie Norman's *The Long and the Short and the Tall*, produced by Michael Balcon, offered similar dilemmas. A brutalised British jungle patrol, under the discredited leadership of Sergeant Mitchem (Richard Todd), was lost on a sonic warfare mission. Racism surfaced - the Japanese were 'yellow nips', 'yellow bastards', or 'gooks'. Gratuitously savage barrack-room lawyer, Private Bamforth (Lawrence Harvey), yelled 'get a Jap on the end of your bayonet. See what sound that makes'. Masculinity was compromised when Corporal Johnstone (Richard Harris), leered at Privates Whitaker (David McCallum) and Smith (John Meillon) crouched in undergrowth: 'What do you think you are doing - are we intruding?' As Taffy (John Rees) read *Ladies' Friend*, and Whitaker darned socks, Bamforth sneered that the Japs would put them 'in the regimental brothel'. Yet, none could cold-bloodedly kill their captive, ToJo (Kensi Takaki) - it was un-British:

Lc.Cpl. MacLeish (Ronald Fraser): You can't order a man to stick a bayonet in a prisoner. There's such a thing as the Geneva Convention.

Mitchem: It's war. It's something in a uniform a different colour to mine.

Johnstone: He's a Nip.

Bamforth: He's a man.

Mitchem: I'll do it.

Bamforth: You're a dirty, rotten bastard.

Mitchem: I wish I was ... it's all these boys or him.

Regaining his leadership qualities, Mitchem died bravely during an ambush. The cycle ended as captured survivors, Johnstone and Whitaker (who killed Tojo in panic), faced gratuitous torture by the Japanese.

Set in India, *The Wind Cannot Read*, an exotic love story based on Richard Mason's novel, was subtly anti-Japanese and pro-British. RAF hero, Lt. Michael Quinn (Dirk Bogarde) married his Japanese teacher/news-reader Sabbi (Yoko Tani), daughter of an anti-Tojo diplomat. Quinn's Brigadier (Anthony Bushell) allowed the "forbidden" marriage if it remained low-key. Anticipating re-establishing relations with Japan post-war, the Brigadier praised Sabbi:

The courage it must have taken to come out here when the Japanese are the most detested nation on earth ... One day, the war is going to be over and our job then is going to be to see that which is good in Japan isn't wiped out by what is bad ... We are going to be better equipped, she has shown us all the finest qualities of the Japanese people.

However, the Japanese ambushed the Brigadier's vehicle during a reconnaissance mission with Quinn and Fenwick, a deficient officer. The Brigadier sacrificed his life to save them. Their Hindu driver declared total admiration for the British - as had Quinn's servant. Captured by Lt. Nakamura (Henry Okawa), who physically abused his men, Quinn and Fenwick were tortured, interrogated, and forced to watch as Nakamura blew-up an unthreatening British convoy. Having bribed a guard to hear Sabbi's radio broadcast, Fenwick revealed her terminal illness to Quinn. This, coupled with the need to impart vital information, forced Quinn's hand. Regenerated by war, Fenwick was murdered by the Commandant for helping Quinn. Strangling the Commandant as a response to considerable Japanese provocation, Quinn escaped. Anti-Japanese sign-posts began early. The film opened with a Japanese atrocity - helpless Burmese refugees were machine-gunned. Nakamura was a cold-blooded murderer who gratuitously tortured his own men. Moreover, the most forceful clues surrounded Sabbi, the Brigadier's pivotal post-war hope for Japan, that 'most detested nation on earth'. Quinn suspected her morals as she expertly undressed him, and derogatorily called the Japanese 'nips' in her presence. Crucially, Sabbi never

discussed the future. She died of brain cancer. Hopes of Japanese *rapprochement* disappeared with the deaths of Sabbi and the Brigadier.

Conclusions

The enduring popularity of *The Colditz Story* and *The Bridge on the River Kwai* suggests that audiences preferred - and were guided towards - the myths, and revised memory, of war.¹⁷⁰ Following *The Colditz Story* officers in Europe were depicted as focused on larger-than-life escapes from their 'friends the enemy'. They all played the game. Whether depicted seriously, or as a comedy/parody, the POW story in Europe has been dominated by Colditz idealism. Officers in the Far East engaged their consciences and, quite literally, their barbaric enemy. Rampantly anti-Japanese and racist, these films still presented a truer (but not totally honest) POW story. Although more recent films on the war in the Far East have prospered, *Kwai* has dominated the Far East story. This study has found that, whilst escapes were crucial to representations of fighting back, the key to this sub-genre lies in promotion of British leadership. In East and West, SBOs had agendas that showcased their initiative, commitment and rightness. Action men *par excellence*, they cut admirable figures. As experienced, courageous role models to young Escape Officers, they called upon World War One expertise, explaining the burdens of democratic leadership to win their confidence. SBOs faced their oppressors, fought injustice and motivated their men. Most importantly, they seized the moment. Indigenous populations praised the British, regarding them as saviours. Even the enemy was impressed - the *Colditz* Commandant and *Kwai's* Saito particularly so. However, MacKenzie and MacArthur show that there was a side to officers which film-makers generally ignored. In both arenas, many officers behaved selfishly. In the Far East

especially, POWs were embittered ‘seeing officers “vaunting privilege”, neglecting their responsibility to ensure the survival of their men’.¹⁷¹ Yet, as cinematic representatives of British masculinity post-1945, their credentials were impeccable, if considerably exaggerated. This eulogising also applied to homosexuals. In Chapters 2 and 3, war was a masculine preserve. Chapter 4 takes a new look at women and the Second World War by examining their post-1945 involvement.

¹ Captain Hasek, *The Captive Heart*, spoke of POWs fears that they were, or would become, the forgotten men of war.

² Reid, Pat, *The Latter Days at Colditz* (London, (1953) 2003), p 7.

³ Lomax, Eric, ‘The hating has to stop sometime’ *The Express*, 20 September, 1999, p 11.

⁴ Detailed in Appendix 4. Nichol, John & Rennell, Tony, *The Last Escape : The Untold Story of Allied POWs in Germany 1944-45*, (London, (2002) 2003), pp 416-420; *Daily Mail*, 5 February, 2005, summarising MacArthur, Brian, *Surviving the Sword : Prisoners of the Japanese 1942-45*, (Time Warner Books, 2005); and the Imperial War Museum Collections On-line Prisoners. Nichol & Rennell explain the difficulties of arriving at the figures – different sources, lack of co-ordination, different times/dates figures taken, and incomplete German records. 130,000 Allied civilian subjects held by the Japanese were mainly elderly men, women and children.

⁵ Information given verbally by Alan Bowgen, the POW expert at the PRO.

⁶ Bowgen, *ibid*.

⁷ See Gammon, Victor F., *Not All Glory – The Life Experiences of Bomber Command at War* (London, (1999) 2000), p 72.

⁸ Correspondence from Captain Hasek to Celia in which he described POW life and fears.

⁹ This was a man, not necessarily of rank, but of charisma, the ‘Big Man’ paradigm.

¹⁰ See MacKenzie, S.P., *The Colditz Myth : The Real Story of POW Life in Nazi Germany* (London, 2004); and MacArthur, *Surviving the Sword*. Both are thorough investigations of incarceration in the Far East and Europe. A later film, *King Rat*, highlighted self-serving, corrupt, snobbish officers – British and Allied.

¹¹ MacArthur, *ibid*, details the appalling class egos, and behaviour towards the men, of some British officers, who insisted on maintaining rigid differentials and favourable treatment.

¹² Colonel Toosey was the character that Nicholson was loosely based on in *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. Toosey was very much loved by his men, and saved thousands of POWs by reaching agreements and compromises with the Japanese, achieving better food and working conditions etc.

¹³ Nichol & Rennell, *The Last Escape*, p xx .

¹⁴ Ministry of Information request to film-makers during the war, in the interests of the welfare of those still in captivity.

¹⁵ Forbes, Bryan, *A Divided Life* (London, (1992) 1993), pp 310-311.

¹⁶ Elton, Arthur, Ministry of Information memorandum 1945, to Sidney Bernstein and quoted in Moorehead, Caroline, *Sidney Bernstein : A Biography* (London, 1984), pp 160-61.

¹⁷ It is interesting that Kee, Robert, *A Crowd is not Company* (London, (1947) 2000), with its drab and realistic theme, did not achieve cinematic attention in the way that other hero books did. It was not the message that the public wanted to hear.

¹⁸ Eggers, Colditz Castle’s Security Chief, wrote to former POWs and put their experiences in his book - Eggers, Reinhold, *Colditz Recaptured* (London, 1973), introduction.

¹⁹ *Colditz*, C4 TV, 2001. The documentary team took survivors back to Colditz. Michael Alexander was still greatly embarrassed about the continuing antics and notoriety of the men of spirit.

²⁰ *Colditz*, C4, *ibid*.

²¹ *Daily Express*, 27 April, 1998 featured an article, ‘POW who wants a secure future for Colditz’, p 10.

- ²² O'Connor, John E., *Image As Artefact : The Historical Analysis of Film and Television* (Florida, 1990), p 50.
- ²³ Rees, Lawrence, quoting Huxley, Aldous in *Selling Politics* (London, 1992), pp 94-95.
- ²⁴ See MacKenzie, *The Colditz Myth*, and books such as *Albert RN* and *The Wooden Horse*.
- ²⁵ 'The gang's all here...' from the popular wartime song 'Roll Out the Barrel', this song was frequently sung in POW films to drown out German propaganda/music from loudspeakers at the camps. It was also inclusive in that all the prisoners knew it and could join in.
- ²⁶ *The Captive Heart* featured: wooden huts and barbed wire, theft amongst POWs, defiance through music, Red Cross parcels, activities, bravado, Gestapo threats, fears of infiltration, friendships between older and younger men, and comradeship. *2000 Women* featured goon-baiting, close friendships, a German spy, helping RAF men to escape and defiance through music.
- ²⁷ *Kinematograph Weekly*, 11 January, 1945, p 187.
- ²⁸ Turner, Barry & Rennell. Tony, *When Daddy Came Home* (London, (1995) 1996), p 132.
- ²⁹ The Colditz concert featured the same "ballerinas". Balcon would have probably seen this since it was filmed by the Nazis as propaganda and sent around the world.
- ³⁰ *Sex Bomb*, C5-TV, 2004. This documentary looked at the sexually perverted propaganda that Germany rained down on British troops, and the equally explicit, highly secret, British response. The Germans told Allied servicemen that no-one would want them if they were disabled or deformed by war. Others, who were not, would benefit, especially sexually. So, they were fighting for nothing.
- ³¹ Balcon Archives, BFI Special Collections Unit.
- ³² Publicity Manager of the Returned POW Association, 28 March, 1946. St John's Ambulance Brigade 3 April, 1946, Balcon Archives, BFI Special Collections Unit.
- ³³ Balcon Archives, *Ibid*, Sgt. Legg of the Unit Education Office, REME.
- ³⁴ Murphy, Robert, *British Cinema and the Second World War* (London, 2000), pp 197-198.
- ³⁵ For a discussion on this see Burton. Alan 'Love in a cold climate: critics, film-makers and the British cinema of quality – the case of the Captive Heart' in Burton. Alan, O'Sullivan. Tim & Wells, Paul (Eds.), *Liberal Directions : Basil Deardon & Post-war British Film Culture* (Trowbridge, 1997), pp 117-128.
- ³⁶ Neave, Airey, *They Have Their Exits* (Barnsley (1953) 2002), p 77.
- ³⁷ 'Men of spirit' was the term used by Neave to describe escape-orientated prisoners.
- ³⁸ Neave, *ibid*, p 69.
- ³⁹ The film, which showed Reid using Neave's escape, caused a dispute between them. Therefore, at the end, Neave is credited with being the first British escapee from the Castle.
- ⁴⁰ Neave, *They Have Their Exits*, p 69.
- ⁴¹ Kydd, Sam, *For You the War is Over* (London, 1973).
- ⁴² Pronay, Nicholas, 'The British Post-bellum Cinema : A Survey of the films relating to WW II made in Britain between 1945 and 1960' in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and TV*, Vol. 8, No.1, 1988, p 46.
- ⁴³ *Daily Express*, 19 November, 1999.
- ⁴⁴ *Daily Express*, 19 November, 1999.
- ⁴⁵ *Daily Express*, 19 November, 1999, Les Allen's family were devastated when they saw him on his release. The War Office had written to tell families of POWs that, on their return, 'they might be slightly odd for a while' - the only official help on offer he claims.
- ⁴⁶ Gamon, *Not All Glory*.
- ⁴⁷ Gamon, *ibid*, p 72.
- ⁴⁸ Gamon, *ibid*, pp 162-164.
- ⁴⁹ Gamon, *ibid*, pp 162-164.
- ⁵⁰ Memo - August, 1945 - from Donald McLochland, Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office to Sidney Bernstein, quoted in Moorehead, *Sidney Bernstein*, p 167.
- ⁵¹ Reid, Pat, *The Latter Days at Colditz*, p7.
- ⁵² Reid, *ibid*, p7.
- ⁵³ See MacKenzie, *The Colditz Myth*. He has compared Colditz POWs to the rest of the prisoners held in Europe.
- ⁵⁴ Reid, Pat, *The Colditz Story* (London, (1952) 2001), pp 9-10.
- ⁵⁵ See MacKenzie, *The Colditz Myth*.
- ⁵⁶ Reid, *The Colditz Story*, p 9.
- ⁵⁷ Reid, *ibid*, p 9.
- ⁵⁸ Taylor, Eric, *Showbiz Goes to War* (London, 1992), pp 58-59 from German War High Command. The order was issued to POWs later.

- ⁵⁹ Hitler's High Command Order, 1942, issued to all camp commandants and, after *The Great Escape*, to all prisoners.
- ⁶⁰ Reid, *The Colditz Story*, p 90.
- ⁶¹ Reid, *ibid*, p 11.
- ⁶² Although an amalgam, Colonel Richmond is clearly based on Colditz SBO Colonel German. The quality of SBOs at Colditz varied as the Nazis moved them around to solve particular problems. This often meant that other problems surfaced.
- ⁶³ Ramsden, John, *Don't Mention the War : The British and the Germans since 1890* (Little, Brown, London, 2006), p 302, argues that Priem was the consummate guard and that Valk's portrayal of the benign commandant marked a convergence in the rehabilitation of Germans, p 303.
- ⁶⁴ Reid, *The Colditz Story*, a complaint was made by Colonel German, on whom Richmond is based, resulting in his request for closer liaison and more co-operation amongst various nationalities, 'so we did not trip over ourselves in our hurry to leave the camp', p 100.
- ⁶⁵ Cooper, Alan W, *Free to Fight Again – RAF Escapes and Evasions 1944-45* (England (1988) 1997), p 129.
- ⁶⁶ Reid, Pat & Michael. Maurice, *The POW : From the Ancient World to Colditz and Beyond* (Chancellor, (1984) 2000), pp 166-168.
- ⁶⁷ Neave, *They Have Their Exits*, p. 81.
- ⁶⁸ *Colditz*, C4 TV, 2001, which took survivors back to the Castle, 2000.
- ⁶⁹ *Colditz*, C4, *ibid*. A survivor ingeniously showed how to reproduce maps using jellies.
- ⁷⁰ Eggers, Reinhold, *Colditz, The German Story* (Suffolk, 1961), p 117 and C4's *Colditz 2000* Series
- ⁷¹ Press book for *The Colditz Story*, BFI Special Collections Unit.
- ⁷² Eggers, *Colditz, The German Story*, p 64.
- ⁷³ Eggers, *ibid*, p 117.
- ⁷⁴ Taylor, *Showbiz Goes to War*, p 53 quoting Pat Reid.
- ⁷⁵ Taylor, *ibid*. This served two purposes, it implied that prisoners were well cared for and, more subtly, reinforced Goebbels' anti-public school black propaganda depicting elites as homosexuals.
- ⁷⁶ Eggers, *Colditz, The German Story*, p 59.
- ⁷⁷ Reid, *The Latter Days at Colditz*, p 7.
- ⁷⁸ Quote from the film *The Captive Heart*.
- ⁷⁹ See MacKenzie, *The Colditz Myth*, for an analysis of Colditz SBOs and other leaders; and MacArthur, Brian, *Surviving the Sword*, who undertook to let people know what really happened in the East – so little has been revealed about this.
- ⁸⁰ *Daily Express*, 2 May, 2000, emoted that 'The reality is that no American servicemen took part in a Colditz escape attempt - and they were not even at the camp when the daring efforts took place', pp 19 and 10.
- ⁸¹ The press book claimed that the film was factual, but the only real name used was that of Reid. To accommodate the story-line, some characters were created.
- ⁸² Premiere before the Duchess of Gloucester on 27 January, 1955. A Herald trumpeters' fanfare marked the occasion. The grey, realistic films *The Captive Heart*, *The Wooden Horse* and *Albert RN*, although successful, did not capture the public's imagination in the way that *Colditz* did.
- ⁸³ Neave and Reid's bitter dispute rankled over the years as Colditz retained its prominence in the POW sub-genre.
- ⁸⁴ Dehn, Paul, *News Chronicle*, 28 January, 1955. Majdalany, Fred, *Daily Mail*, 28 January, 1955. Powell. Dilys, *Sunday Times*, 30 January, 1955. Lejeune. C J, *Observer*, 30 January, 1955 and *Daily Mirror*, 28 January, 1955.
- ⁸⁵ *Picturegoer*, 14 October, 1950.
- ⁸⁶ *Variety*, 2 August, 1950.
- ⁸⁷ *Monthly Film Bulletin*, V.17 n.200, September, 1950.
- ⁸⁸ *Variety*, 21 October, 1953.
- ⁸⁹ *News of the World*.
- ⁹⁰ *Hannibal Brooks*, a much later film, covered other ranks.
- ⁹¹ Their ingenuity included making uniform dye from jam, boots out of cardboard, compasses from razor blades and matchboxes, and tracing maps in jelly.
- ⁹² The 'Big Man' was a charismatic leader who led not necessarily because he was the most senior, but because he was the most respected and could get the most out of people. See Chapter 6.
- ⁹³ Coward, Charles, in the MGM campaign book for *The Password is Courage*.

- ⁹⁴ *The Captive Heart* showed POWs having their hands manacled and quickly getting out of them. The Germans gave up. This was in reprisal for the Dieppe Raid. Other raids or Allied successes guaranteed some form of reprisal from the enemy to the POWs in their hands.
- ⁹⁵ *Live Arts*, 'The Password was not love says Charlie', 20 October, 1962. Irena was a real person, and she was eventually captured by the Gestapo. Charlie and Irena were both married and there was no romance, Charlie stated. His wife was rather angry about this part of the film and the earlier script which was even more fanciful. She demanded changes. Charlie thought it 'a load of hooey'.
- ⁹⁶ *Observer*, 14 October, 1962.
- ⁹⁷ *Daily Herald*, 13 October, 1962.
- ⁹⁸ *Observer*, 14 October, 1962.
- ⁹⁹ *Topic*, 20 October, 1962. Apparently Andrew Stone telephoned Charlie with 'brainwaves'.
- ¹⁰⁰ Coward was an incredible man. The *Evening News*, 29 December, 1976 carried his Obituary. He was captured at Dunkirk 1940 and sent to Stalag VIII B. He smuggled himself into Auschwitz, swapping places with a Russian. Coward was awarded the Iron Cross by mistake. He gave evidence against Adolf Eichman and against Auschwitz guards at Nuremberg and Frankfurt trials, and was the second Englishman, after Churchill, to be honoured by Israeli Peace Mission – as an Honorary Gentile.
- ¹⁰¹ *Films and Filming*, June, 1961, p 24.
- ¹⁰² Reid complains about this to Colonel Richmond whilst looking for a viable escape plan.
- ¹⁰³ *Films and Filming*, June, 1961, p 24.
- ¹⁰⁴ Geraghty, Christine, *British Cinema in the Fifties, Gender, Genre and the New Look* (London, 2000), p 194.
- ¹⁰⁵ Army Psychological Report, referred to by Murphy, *British Cinema and the Second World War*, pp 209-210. (The Military, directed by the European Court, officially recognized homosexuals in 1999).
- ¹⁰⁶ Usually uniformed woman, if she was not feminine in appearance, or tweedy over-bearing women in positions of authority in civilian life.
- ¹⁰⁷ Reid, *Colditz : The Full Story*, pp 160-161. Clearly this was not the full story.
- ¹⁰⁸ Reid & Michael, *POWs : From the Ancient World to Colditz and Beyond*, pp 166-68.
- ¹⁰⁹ MacKenzie, *The Colditz Myth*, p 214.
- ¹¹⁰ MacKenzie, *ibid*, quoting IWM J E Platt Diary, 18 November, 1941, pp 221-223.
- ¹¹¹ MacKenzie, *ibid*, quoting Platt's Diary, 18 November, 1941, pp 221-223.
- ¹¹² MacKenzie, *ibid*, p 222, quoting Platt's Diary, 18 November, 1941 and 22 April, 1941.
- ¹¹³ MacKenzie, *ibid*, pp 211-212.
- ¹¹⁴ Humphries, Steve, *A Secret World of Sex – Forbidden Fruit : The British Experience 1900-1950* (London, 1988), pp 197-199.
- ¹¹⁵ Humphries, *ibid*, pp 197-199, quoting John Summerhays.
- ¹¹⁶ Director's instructions in the script of *Albert RN*, BFI Special Collections.
- ¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, script of *Albert RN*.
- ¹¹⁸ Nichol & Rennell, *The Last Escape*, pp 40-42. Howard Reid's father was one of many POWs who planned to go. Although the Italians left his camp unguarded, the Nazis arrived early, but he did escape and was aided by the Italians.
- ¹¹⁹ Wynn Mason. W., *Prisoners of War : Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War 1939-45*, Wellington: Oxford University Press, 1954, quoted in Nichol & Rennell, *ibid*, pp 40-42.
- ¹²⁰ Nichol & Rennell, *ibid*, pp 40-42.
- ¹²¹ Wynn Mason, *Prisoners of War*, quoted in Nichol & Rennell, *ibid*, p 40-42.
- ¹²² Nichol & Rennell, *ibid*, pp 40-42.
- ¹²³ It is noteworthy that he happens to be 'English', not British. In these films it seems to be the English who dominate.
- ¹²⁴ *Daily Mail*, 11 March, 1959, reporting *Il Tempo*.
- ¹²⁵ *Daily Mail*, 11 March, 1959, *ibid*.
- ¹²⁶ Quigly, Isabel, *The Spectator*, 27 February, 1959.
- ¹²⁷ Quigly, *ibid*.
- ¹²⁸ Radio shows such as *Round the Horn* had subtle ways of suggesting homosexuality.
- ¹²⁹ Warden (Jack Hawkins) in *The Bridge on the River Kwai* articulated this when assembling his Commando team to blow-up the bridge.
- ¹³⁰ Maclaren, *Time & Tide*, 27 February, 1959. *News of the World*, 22 February, 1959.
- ¹³¹ Hill, Derek, *Financial Times*, 23 February, 1959.
- ¹³² The Colditz connection is strengthened by Bryan Forbes - Winslow in *The Colditz Story* - who wrote the screenplay.

- ¹³³ Controversial State Visit of the Emperor of Japan in 1998 when British ex-POWs turned their backs on his state drive with the Queen as the coach drew level.
- ¹³⁴ This snub to the Queen and her guests, from service and ex-service personnel, was part of a growing row about reparation and an apology from Japan that has been simmering since the war. Prisoners held by the Germans, did receive some reparation. The Japanese prisoners were supported by a strong national press campaign and the public. *Daily Express*, 8 November, 2000, special feature.
- ¹³⁵ Catchpole, Charlie, 'These victims of Japanese cruelty have truly seen hell', in the *Daily Express*, 18 June, 2001. The television series *Hell in the Pacific*, made him realise what his father, a Japanese POW had endured.
- ¹³⁶ Reid & Michael, *Prisoners of War*, p 132.
- ¹³⁷ MacKenzie, S.P., 'The Treatment of Prisoners of War in WWII', *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 66, No. 3, 1994, pp 515-516.
- ¹³⁸ *Japan's War*, C4 TV, 2004.
- ¹³⁹ Lomax, Eric, *The Railway Man* (London, 1995), pp 119, 120, 121.
- ¹⁴⁰ Lomax, *ibid*, p 128.
- ¹⁴¹ Lomax, *ibid*, pp 138-143.
- ¹⁴² MacArthur, *Surviving the Sword*, was also summarised in the *Daily Mail*.
- ¹⁴³ Commemoration Brochure issued at the premiere of *The Camp on Blood Island*, 18 April, 1958
- ¹⁴⁴ BFI Special Collections Archive, World Premiere of *The Camp on Blood Island* (1958) on the 18 April, 1958.
- ¹⁴⁵ Commemoration Brochure, *ibid*, *The Camp on Blood Island*.
- ¹⁴⁶ McFarlane, Brian, *The Autobiography of British Cinema by the Actors and Film-makers who made it* (London, 1997), p 258. Guest told him that: 'I tried very hard to make every film I did with any sort of serious content as much *cinema verite*, as I could'.
- ¹⁴⁷ Quigly, Isabel, 'The Colour of Sadism', *The Spectator*, 25 April, 1958, p 512.
- ¹⁴⁸ Lomax, *The Railway Man*, p 196, 199.
- ¹⁴⁹ MacArthur, *Surviving the Sword*, p 436. He, and countless others had trouble believing they were free, pp 418 and 419.
- ¹⁵⁰ Lomax, Eric, *The Express*, 20 September, 1999. In this, Lomax mirrors the comments of Les Allen, referred to in the German section.
- ¹⁵¹ MacArthur, *Surviving the Sword*, gives a good account of Col. Toosey's successful career.
- ¹⁵² Lean tells of the rows about the Oscar for Best Screenplay, and the lack of credit given to him in Brownlow, Kevin, *David Lean: A Biography* (London, 1996), p 387.
- ¹⁵³ Brownlow, *ibid*, p 391.
- ¹⁵⁴ Brownlow, *ibid*, p 391.
- ¹⁵⁵ Brownlow, *ibid* p 349.
- ¹⁵⁶ MacArthur, *Surviving the Sword*, paints a devastating picture of life as a POW in the East.
- ¹⁵⁷ Colonel Toosey was a Territorial, not a career officer. Post-war, he worked tirelessly for former Japanese POWs.
- ¹⁵⁸ Actually, the RAF and USAF repeatedly bombed the bridge, without fully destroying it.
- ¹⁵⁹ *Timewatch*, TV, 1998 reveals that, on liberation, Toosey weighed seven and a half stone and was taken away with officers. However, he travelled 300 miles back to make sure his men were safe. Saito was interviewed and he also praised Toosey, writing him a letter saying 'I discovered what a great man you are'. He told interviewers that Toosey had 'showed me what a human being should be'. Because of this meeting, he became a Catholic, not an easy thing to be in Japan.
- ¹⁶⁰ Special Press Release (SPR) for the premiere of *Yesterday's Enemy* - 'The Film and Its Challenge' prepared by Hammer Films, BFI Special Collections Archive.
- ¹⁶¹ SPR, *ibid*, 'The Challenge' (bound in red leatherette) which took the form of a discussion to justify the film's violence, pp 10-15.
- ¹⁶² BFI Special Collections Archive.
- ¹⁶³ Lomax, *The Railway Man*, pp 210, 211.
- ¹⁶⁴ SPR, *ibid*, 'The Film and Its Challenge'.
- ¹⁶⁵ SPR, *ibid*, 'The Film and Its Challenge'.
- ¹⁶⁶ SPR, *ibid*, 'The Challenge', pp 10-15. This would not hinder the American market either.
- ¹⁶⁷ SPR, *ibid*, 'The Challenge', pp 10-15.
- ¹⁶⁸ SPR, *ibid*, 'The Film and its Challenge'.
- ¹⁶⁹ SPR, *ibid*, 'The Film and its Challenge'.
- ¹⁷⁰ *The Great Escape* also ranks as one of the best-known POW films in this country, and again, it contains much that is untrue, around a tragic British escape.

¹⁷¹ MacKenzie, *The Colditz Myth* and MacArthur, *Surviving the Sword*, give details of some officers and SBOs who were respected or hated.

Chapter 4

THE BEAUTY CHORUS

From Guts to Sluts

'My comrades who did far more than I and suffered more profoundly, are not here to speak. It is to their memory that this film has been made and I would like it to be a window through which may be seen those very gallant women with whom I had the honour to serve. (*Odette*, 1950)¹

'The Afrika Korps don't bring women into the battle area, and we shouldn't either'. (*Ice Cold in Alex*, 1958)²

'One day, you are going to have a job and a home'. (*The Lamp Still Burns*, 1943)³

'Since God could not be everywhere – He made mothers'. (*The Divided Heart*, 1954)⁴

The received wisdom on women in post-1945 Second World War films is that it was hardly their war and that they were, in the main, airbrushed from the genre. This is widely viewed by many, including feminist historians, as a betrayal of the “breakthrough” achieved during the 1939-45 period when feature film-makers highlighted the active part that women played, be it in the uniformed services, the factory, on the land or on the home front. Films of the calibre of the highly regarded *The Lamp Still Burns* (1943), *They Flew Alone* (1941), *School for Secrets* (1942), *The Gentle Sex* (1943), *Millions Like Us* (1943), *2000 Women* (1944) and *The Way to the Stars* (1945) which paid tribute to women’s wartime contribution, have repeatedly been promoted as role models.⁵ As influential and popular films, they acknowledged both women’s achievements and their centrality to victory. However, this chapter challenges these assumptions. Since women’s physical presence in the post-1945 war genre, or lack of it, reveals a great deal about post-war attitudes to them, I have chosen to examine the texts more broadly and to highlight the language. In doing so, it becomes clear that post-1945, film-makers seriously addressed the “problem” of women and war in differing ways. There is a surprising balance and continuity

between the periods. And, even in their absence, women were very much present post-1945. There were no portrayals of women in the jungle combat film *The Long and the Short and the Tall* (1961), but this film said much about them. Murphy comments that from 1945, there were a few 'powerful portrayals of women at war'; these women were usually foreign and mainly in Resistance films such as *Odette* (1950) and *Carve Her Name with Pride* (1958).⁶ This thesis will broaden the range of post-war films containing 'powerful portrayals', by offering a wider interpretation that acknowledges the astonishing balance, continuity and cross-over of ideas and intent from the 1939-45 films to those of 1945-65. For comparative purposes, films from 1939-45 will be included.

Moreover, despite criticism or neglect of the later examples produced at a time of differing personal and political needs, this study contends that dynamic 1939-45 depictions of women and the Second World War were matched, and even superseded, by constructive post-1945 versions. The mid-late 1940s continued to offer positive female role models, such as the secret-agent in *Against the Wind* (1948) and the politician and her assistant in *Frieda* (1947). Certainly, there was much in the later films, especially in the language, to elicit the ire of feminist historians. Crucially, and regardless of misogynist elements and orientation towards marriage, those post-1945 negative images of women, which frequently involved their sexuality, especially in the 1950s, co-existed alongside creditable attempts to recognize their wartime achievements. Whilst on several notable occasions, those highly regarded 1939-45 films, besides eulogising women's wartime role delicately defined its transitory nature. Consequently, balance and continuity are central to my argument. Screen images of femininity ranged from heartless tarts, to powerful uniformed women at the

top of their chosen Service. Such women had choices to make. That choice (for the majority, it was customarily marriage or its evocation), is less important than the fact that women were still seen in vital roles in some of the major, most enduringly popular war films well into the 1960s. British cinema successfully executed a balancing act on the question of women as the weaker, less important gender in war, and women as fundamental, stoic cogs in the masculine war machine in both the 1939-45 and 1945-65 periods.

Admittedly, there are incontrovertibly substantial differences between the two periods, and here, masculinity and language are key issues. During the war the nation was depicted as united, national identity resided in the feminine, and was especially powerful when maternal imagery was invoked. Attesting the fluidity of this genre, the post-war cinematic shift in national identity and gender roles was delineated by class divisions, and the association of exciting, action-packed (but democratic) elite masculinity and national identity.⁷ To achieve this, film-makers updated the pre-1914 imperialist-type public-school hero – by now an anachronism in the New Commonwealth – and dressed him in the garb of World War Two.⁸ Officer elites dominated British cinema's "official" version of the Second World War, but were assuredly not the whole story.⁹ Yet, by re-affirming the supremacy of officer elites in the post-war genre, film-makers registered society's "preferred" parameters for women, presuming a stabilizing role through largely acquiescent, home-based femininity. 'National identity', historian Antonia Lant comments, 'is not a natural, timeless essence, but an intermittent, combinatory historical product, arising at moments of contestation of different political and geographic boundaries'.¹⁰ Issues surrounding gender appear to be similarly mutable. World War Two became a

significant cultural tool through which British cinema could confront, and address, the issues of the day. Re-working the war in the interests of national identity, regeneration and image, film-makers advocated re-alignment of gender roles and boundaries which had become unbalanced by the war, and were hotly debated. Part of that debate sought to scale-down mothers to the domestic sphere, placing the wider family/nation into the hands of elite masculinity, as represented by Station Commander 'Tiger' Small (Jack Hawkins) in *Angels One Five* (1953). His '2000 strong, fully operational air base was his family', he told a proud mother as she symbolically handed over her son.

Since true democracy supports plurality, what of the subversive war and Service comedies which Spicer describes as 'mocking the proprieties of the "official" war films'?¹¹ Happily co-existing within the post-1945 period alongside "official" war films, these well-liked alternatives featured uniformed women in powerful and frivolous roles. Porter comments that:

Comedy offers both producers and audiences a pleasurable mode of dealing with socially or sexually repressed desires or fears in an acceptable manner, and it safely displaces sensitive social or personal issues into the realm of fantasy by smothering them with laughter. Comedy also permits an extended process of dialectical negotiation between film producers and their audiences. Sometimes they fail, but often they succeed. It is notable that, during the 1950s, it was either comedies or war films that regularly topped the popularity poles.¹²

One of the most evocative images of a woman officer, perfectly encapsulating the post-war dilemma of military versus femininity, sexuality and a woman's place, appears in the RAF comedy *On the Fiddle* (1961) - discussed later. What is crucial I suggest, is that war films in which women were the central focus appear in both the 1939-45 and 1945-65 periods. So, *The Gentle Sex* was later parodied by *Operation Bullshine* (1959). *The Lamp Still Burns* can be aligned with *The Hasty Heart* (1949). *Waterloo Road* (1945) was mirrored by *The Cruel Sea* (1953) and the *Gift Horse*

(1952); whilst critics and audiences deemed *The Cruel Sea* to be better and more realistic than the benchmark film *In Which We Serve* (1942). The Resistance cycle and Special Operations Executive (SOE) films such as *School for Danger* (1947) and *The Battle of the VI* (1958) complemented each other. This cycle, which included *Night Train to Munich* (1940), *Freedom Radio* (1941) and *One of Our Aircraft is Missing* (1942), forms an important sub-genre. Later films expanded their depictions of women at war - especially SOE women. Post-war audiences were shocked by the torture of separated mother Odette; and the torture and summary execution of widowed mother Violette Szarbo, in *Odette* (1950), and *Carve Her Name with Pride* (1958). Film-makers broached the subject of women POWs with *2000 Women*; expanding it in the harrowing films *A Town Like Alice* (1956) and *The Camp on Blood Island* (1958). Consequently, we might ask if post-1945 war films reflected, or led, opinion on how femininity could “acceptably” be portrayed? Did they become a useful forum for working out the more “sensitive” issues of the day? And, just how far should those 1939-45 films be regarded as a major breakthrough for women?

To appreciate cinema’s position regarding femininity post-1945, an overview of the prevailing political, social and cultural ethos in which film-makers operated is indispensable. In 1945, Prime Minister Clement Attlee praised Britain’s united wartime achievements, requesting a further national effort. He appeared to be anticipating continuation of a class-based society. One sentence is indicative of separate gender spheres: ‘We have to plan the broad lines of our national life so that all may have the duty and opportunity of rendering service to the nation, everyone in his or her sphere’.¹³ Maintenance of the status quo was apparent at the 1953 Coronation, when the Queen succeeded her father George VI. A young wife, mother

and working woman, she dedicated herself to one of the world's most important jobs by vowing to uphold long-held British traditions. Uniformed women proudly marched in her Coronation procession, but the post-war position of British women was ambiguous with considerable, often subtle, pressure. Peacetime brought tensions for those who felt that they had made valuable wartime contributions. Most had learned new skills. Some had operated secretly in dangerous areas and, once declassified, their efforts were screened. Post-1945, women as action figures (although transitory) were essential for the labour force to stimulate the export drive until the men returned. Simultaneously, passive women as arbiters of national stability, homemakers and mothers were crucial to the country's interests.

Since family life, and therefore national interests, were feared to be endangered post-1945 due to the stresses of war and the hard-won tenuous peace, governments and churchmen on both sides of the Atlantic expressed concern. There was unease about homosexuality (reflected in the Wolfenden Report) and the rising divorce rate (Appendix 4). The Archbishop of Canterbury appealed for the rejection of 'wartime morality'.¹⁴ Two of the many social commentators, Dr. and Mrs Bendit, emphasized marriage as an agent of national regeneration: 'Marriage affects not only the married couple ... but the whole community. One may truly say that a country prospers and flourishes just in so far as happiness dwells in its individual homes'.¹⁵ War's dislocations, de-mobilization and perceived threats to masculinity strained marriages and families. But, much of the post-war population enjoyed the bonding experience of war or conscription. War films played a part in this. However, differing wartime experiences and future expectations raised the spectre of discord. War stimulated personal growth in both genders resulting, for some, in personal

dissatisfaction post-1945 when status changes could not be maintained. Roles outside the home for the newly independent, confident woman compounded the issues, encroaching on national needs and masculine morale.¹⁶ In a surreal way, the wartime poster exhorting women to join the Services to “free a man to fight”, could have been replaced post-1945 by one asking women to remain in the labour force until the Services freed a man to work. The Bendits’ view was typical:

Once more, the war has upset the natural balance of things and made them more difficult. For war is primarily a masculine thing, and it has not so much brought men on to the feminine side as brought out the masculine side in women. Women have run factories, women have been air-raid wardens, women have been in the Services, women have shown themselves capable of being original and adventurous and have enjoyed themselves in doing these things, feeling that, though they were not actually fighting, firing guns and driving tanks into battle, they were sharing the ordeal to the utmost of their physical capacity.¹⁷

Women’s achievements were situated in the past. War was condemned for masculinizing women. Gender roles and separation were emphasized. Maintenance of femininity was an issue in the SOE which, as Churchill’s brainchild, emerged in July 1940, with instructions to ‘set Europe ablaze’.¹⁸ Alarmed at the possibility of encountering masculinized women, a relieved Squadron Leader Simpson wrote:

The interesting thing about these girls is that they are not hearty and horsy young women with masculine chins. They are pretty young girls who would look demure and sweet in crinolines. Most of them are English girls who speak perfect French.¹⁹

This was reflected in film-maker’s choice of female stars. Both *Odette* and *Carve Her Name with Pride* stressed that these SOE women were concerned mothers. Losing loved ones, such as Violette’s husband - in films and in reality - activated many women. In films, this promoted a caring, feminine side.

On the dangers in the perceived gender imbalance attributable to World War Two, the Bendits unwittingly revealed the evolution of women’s expectations since World War One, noting that it was:

A very different thing from their grandmothers’ role in war, which consisted in “Keeping the home fires burning till the boys come home”. Consequently, there were seeds of trouble waiting to spring into life if, when the boys did come home, they found that their wives and

sweethearts did not expect to settle into their little houses, or flats and become, once more, domestic servants, or pet animals, who are not expected to have a life of their own.²⁰

So, the most pervasive post-1945 message to women from government, educators, churchmen and a range of experts, was essentially that given to cinematic prisoners-of-war upon capture: 'For you the war is over'. Doris Benjamin, a VAD nurse from 1944-47 had no illusions:

The war gave me an opportunity to branch out. I didn't want a pen-pushing job which was open to women before. It was thrilling to be doing something useful, to make a difference. We knew as women that we were needed. There was no more second-class citizens – until the men came back anyway.²¹

Because of their value as a workforce, few official government films attempted to pursue women's return to domesticity. (A concerted wartime campaign had targeted them for the war effort). Yet, from 1945, government-sponsored nurseries were phased-out. Paradoxically, a 1947 Central Office of Information labour market film informed mothers of young children of nursery or *crèche* places for volunteers.²² The Royal Commission on Population (1949) concluded that feminists' encouragement of women's employment had lowered the birth-rate, weakening male domination within the family.²³ Feminists conceded that, during early childhood, mothers were needed at home.²⁴ The Commission saw the three-four child family as essential to national interests, suggesting measures such as larger family allowances to make motherhood more appealing. In 1942, women's importance to post-war regeneration was stressed by the Beveridge Report. This envisaged housewives and mothers spending up to thirty years on the 'vital' task of 'ensuring the adequate continuance of the British race and of British ideals in the world'.²⁵ 'There is a job of work to be done', David Mace, Secretary of the Marriage Guidance Council announced, 'a vitally important job of work, the rebuilding of family life'.²⁶ Sociologist, John Bowlby, promoted the centrality of the post-war mother/child relationship. The term "adequate mothering" gained currency in literature, official publications, the press and the BBC.²⁷ Popular

magazines for women reinforced the image of mother as lynchpin, devoted to family and home, whilst women ignored Parliamentary displeasure by embracing the feminine, constricting New Look. Underpinning this was the universal notion that women's work was peripheral, undertaken as part of the growing culture of consumerism.

Film-makers, although favouring separate spheres, did not abandon their powerful pro-active wartime images of women post-1945. Instead, they subtly (and blatantly) channelled women towards the home as gender polarisation occurred – marriage being the ultimate prize. In doing so, film-makers reinforced their surprising home and marriage centred 1939-45 messages. This reflected both official thinking and the social and cultural *milieu*. A conspicuous cinematic example of the importance of motherhood occurred during the judgement scene in *The Divided Heart* (1954) where, due to the chaos of the European war, the birth and adoptive mothers fought for the custody of a young boy. Despite years of separation from her son, the birth mother gained custody as two of the three judges stressed the importance of the natural connection. Judge One opted for the birth (or “true”) mother, to redress the ‘stain of shame’ left by war. Judge Three saw the re-uniting of the birth mother and son as essential, their ‘unbreakable bond of flesh was God ordained’. His other reason is intriguing. Taking the official line it succinctly pinpointed, and separated, gender responsibilities:

In childhood, the mother cares for her son. When he is grown, the son cares for and protects the mother ... He is 10 years old and is on the brink of the age when his need will be to give love, rather than receive it.

The film ended tellingly on the train journey to Czechoslovakia, the boy took command as his Czechoslovakian mother failed to understand the German ticket collector. Gentlemanly masculinity was thus reinforced.

However, it was officially realised that, whilst some women favoured returning to domesticity, for others, war had provided new freedoms. The Bendits sympathised, but the end result remained – guidance towards separate spheres:

It is doubtless true that there were many jobs done by women during the war for which men are better suited, both mentally and physically. And, if there is to be a nation in the future, there must be children, and children mean homes and endless chores. So that there must naturally be a drift back, of women from the Services and the factories, to domestic work. Many will welcome this, after the strain of past years. But many may well also feel that they are going back to prison, unless they have some life away from sinks and brooms and washtubs. It is here that husbands must show understanding, while the wives have to find the right balance between doing dull household jobs and living an outside life.²⁸

Cinema recorded these sentiments inside and outside the war genre, on either side of the Atlantic, and regularly recorded the capitulation of many on-screen heroines. Although, with comic irony, misogynist Major Pym (Naunton Wayne) in the parody *Operation Bullshine* (1961), told Captain Brown (Donald Sinden): ‘You’re married, you’re demoralized already’. Non-war films, whilst exploring alternatives, typically supported the inferences of war films, and were peppered with subtleties regarding a good woman’s “place”. Female frustration at this closure occurred in *The Wicked Lady* (1944) through Lady Barbara’s (Margaret Lockwood) tragic inability to conform; and in Maureen O’Hara’s comment in the American film *Lisbon* (1956):

A woman can’t go off doing as she pleases, having fun. We are guardians of morals and manners. That is why you put us on your silly pedestals. So we can’t move a step without falling off.

Ray Milland’s reply encapsulated the “approved” role for women: ‘We put you on pedestals so we can look up to you’. Only women worthy of a pedestal could uphold this feminine ideal and guard the nation’s morality. In the British film *Left, Right and Centre* (1959), Stella Stoker (Patricia Bredin), a glamorous young LSE graduate and prospective Labour MP was handed the magazine *Woman’s Dream* by her boyfriend Bill (Jack Hedley), as she boarded a train *en-route* to her by-election. Horrified, she gasped: ‘What on earth is this?’ Bill replied, with no appreciation of a woman’s

career ambitions, and a very different type of labour in mind: 'I thought you might like it. There is an article on infant welfare. You know, in my opinion, you would do well to settle down and raise a family'.²⁹ But the seminal non-war film on the marital status-quo was *Brief Encounter* (1946). Jivan, in a delicious oxymoron, observes that the film captured the essence of an era when 'marriage and fidelity were in and fun and sex were out'.³⁰

Ambiguities abound in film-makers' simultaneously positive and negative images of women and war, but images of closure should not surprise us. Film-makers acknowledged substantial assistance from the Military for approved World War Two films (Appendix 3). Moreover, contemporaneous military policy deemed women to be non-combatant. Mindful of this, my analysis of the genre revealed a number of continuities, themes, balances and stereotypes from the 1939-45 films to those of 1945-65 and crucially, a distrust of female sexuality which heightened in the later period. Cross-overs from 1939-45 included: establishing the femininity of uniformed woman with grooming rituals and lacy underwear; fearsome mannish woman - uniformed or civilian - including some implied lesbianism; and transitory uniformed woman as a short-term measure. Euro-woman,³¹ exotic, secretive, sexually active outside marriage; the courageous civilian woman POW held in German hands, and later in Japanese hands, offered positive images. Furthermore, marriage material, the "pure" and caring woman; wives as part of a uniformed married couple; the woman/tart of loose sexual behaviour; and wives' infidelities with spivs were constant themes. In addition, home-front woman did not completely disappear, she also crossed-over to the later films. From 1945, there was far greater emphasis on the "good" versus "bad" woman and her suitability for marriage and national

regeneration. Other new stereotypes were: needy, whining woman who leaned too heavily on her man; action orientated SOE woman; combination woman who embodied the mystery of Euro-woman with markedly strong “Englishness” and SOE connections. Furthermore, and crucially important, uniformed woman now had far more power and prestige and coped with high-profile jobs (Hollywood glamour was evident in later incarnations); she was supplemented by confident, accomplished uniformed woman who has loved and lost; Eastern woman, a fantasy feminine role model, beautiful, compliant and graceful; and the courageous nun who worked unceasingly against the Nazis.³² Having identified these stereotypes, themes and characterisations, I have chosen the popular film, *The Cruel Sea*, to provide the foundation for this chapter’s investigation of women’s post-1945 cinematic war.

The Cruel Sea (1953)

Ostensibly about the courageous men who fought the North Atlantic U-boat war, the film *The Cruel Sea* (1953) contained a compelling sub-text on females that dealt with sexuality, purity and marriage material, yet featured women’s essential and intelligent contribution to war. Several of my stereotypes are used. The war at sea was necessarily an all-male environment with limited female presence, but John Newman comments on the women’s significance:

The feminine roles in the film ... will occupy relatively little time on screen, and for this reason their appearances will stand out. This is why Sir Michael Balcon has been paying more than usual attention to the casting of supporting roles.³³

With so much credence given to the selection and reception of these women, despite the brevity of their parts, their characterisations were undoubtedly meaningful.

The Cruel Sea offered three kinds of wife: the innocent young bride longing for her husband’s leave; the unfaithful wife/slut longing for his leave to end; and

Captain Ericson's (Jack Hawkins) wife, who neglected him because, as he bitterly explained 'she has her war work'. These depictions promoted the ideal and purity of a pliant home-centred wife; an indictment of married women's wartime infidelities; and the compromise of a basically good wife – war had interrupted her ministrations to her husband. The inferences were clear. Wife number one was above reproach. Her contribution to the birth-rate would assist national regeneration. Wife number two was beyond redemption and beneath contempt. Significantly, wife number three could redress the balance when the war ended. These women were supplemented by a widowed home-maker, and by uniformed woman. Gladys Bell (Megs Jenkins), was the female representative of the 'People's War' and their sacrifices – including the ultimate sacrifice during a German air-raid. Sister to Coxswain Tallow (Bruce Seaton), Gladys was a welcoming home-maker who had planned to marry Tallow's comrade. Uniformed woman, WRNS Julie Hallam (Virginia McKenna), was efficient, caring, and in the film, a "good" girl whose sexuality was unthreatening. Significantly, in the novel she became pregnant by Lockhart, dying in a drowning accident before there was any suggestion of marriage. Given Balcon's care in casting, and his commitment to national regeneration, we can assume that Julie's "pure" cinematic character was intended as an inspirational role model. This impression was reinforced by crude wardroom banter highlighting the terms in which men at war discussed women. Women you used, or who used you, neither deserved, nor were accorded - respect. Conversely, those deemed fit to marry couldn't be demeaned.

Depictions of the most strongly featured women, Morell's (Denholm Elliott) actress wife Elaine, a selfish, adulterous tart who starred in pin-up magazines; and WRNS Hallam - a vestal virgin by comparison, were instructive. On his last night of

shore-leave before active service, Elaine left Morell alone, telling him to eat out whilst she partied, whining 'don't spoil the end of your leave for me', before departing beautifully gowned and coiffed. Morell answered the telephone. Elaine's unprincipled spiv-like, show-business boyfriend bellowed above sounds of partying: 'Haven't you got rid of that clod of a husband yet?' This was no way to send a man into combat. Juxtaposed with this, WRNS Hallam behaved flawlessly. Elaine, having no redeeming features, would never express regret for her behaviour. The shortcomings of spivs, those unpatriotic men who didn't commit to fighting for, defending, or rebuilding Britain, were defined by women like Elaine. Spivs were not expected to save democracy. Their commitment was only to self. This implicitly celebrated imperialism's finer points, and the values of elite masculinity. Following Morell's death-in-action, First Officer Lockhart (Donald Sinden) and the furiously controlled Ericson damned Elaine:

Lockhart: Have you seen Morell's wife?

Ericson: I've just come from her flat.

Lockhart: How was she?

Ericson: She was in bed.

Lockhart: Was she taking it badly?

Ericson: I think she was taking it very well. You see, I wasn't the only visitor.

Placed on a pedestal, WRNS Hallam enjoyed a strain-free reputation and an important job, being privy to secret information. Beautiful and desirable, she controlled access to the Operations Room. Ericson asked if she had 'been very good' to First Officer Lockhart. 'She hasn't been good to me', a rival officer tellingly exclaimed, 'I thought you would like to know'. Her leave-taking from Lockhart, during an idyllic picnic, was tender:

Lockhart: Better to be on your own than have something to lose. It's a mistake to start thinking about permanent things in wartime.

(He chose to stay with Ericson rather than take promotion)

Hallam: You must be very fond of him?

Lockhart: I'd rather finish the war with him than with anyone else - David and Jonathan. Does it sound silly?

Hallam: No, but a woman doesn't often have that relationship, and if they do, it is not usually about something important like running a ship, or fighting a war.

Lockhart: It's about the only personal relationship that war allows you.

Hallam: You have got very thin.

Lockhart: That was the *Compass Rose* [his ship that was sunk] mostly. You know, when you lose a ship, that's like losing a bit of yourself. The funny thing is that you don't realize it at once. At first, it's just a bad dream. When I was on leave, I went to one of those concerts at the National Gallery. Suddenly I found that I was crying. I couldn't stop. People began to look at me and I had to go out and, after a while, I felt better, and found that I could think of *Compass Rose* and the men who died in her and the sadness and waste of it, and not want to cry anymore. Secrets of a First Lieutenant . . . and then I went home to mum. Do you mind?

Hallam: You don't have to apologise for being a human being. Somebody had to cry for *Compass Rose*, why shouldn't it have been you?

Lockhart: We'll be off again in no time at all now. Julie, am I wrong? Is it better to have something to lose?

Hallam: It's better to have something to live for.

Lockhart: Yes. I seem to have got things a little muddled.

Hallam: Take care of yourself won't you . . . You see, I know where you are going.

This key scene acknowledged, and then confined women's contribution to the war; discussed loss; allowed men to enjoy close friendships and be emotional; hinted at German barbarity; and anticipated the future. Importantly, Julie's caring stoicism equalled the stiff-upper-lip displayed by stressed or emotional officers. At this point, she knew more about the war's progress. Despite having prior knowledge of Lockhart's dangerous posting, she behaved professionally. Yet her emotions were in turmoil. However, by invoking the future, the film diverted her exemplary wartime activities towards peacetime marriage. She gave him something to live for, another constant theme. (Pam, in *The Man Who Never Was*, exceptionally wanted to 'get the war over with before romance'). Released when time had allowed for grieving, *The Cruel Sea's* implied happy ending accommodated Balcon's desire to promote Britain's finer qualities and national regeneration.

Marketing and/or Reception of *The Cruel Sea*

The film was based on Nicholas Monsarrat's novel *The Cruel Sea*, a global publishing phenomenon.³⁴ Serialised in newspapers in Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, France, Greece and the Netherlands, it perfectly reflected

British achievements. Published in *The Reader's Digest* in America, it became a best-seller in 'Denmark, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Japan, Norway and Sweden. In Britain it sold one million copies, with an estimated readership of four million and was chosen by the Book Society'.³⁵ Premiered at the Leicester Square Theatre, London before Admiralty brass, dignitaries and star personalities it was a huge critical and audience success.³⁶ Typical critical reactions included: 'A truly magnificent film', from the *Empire News*; 'At last, a brilliant, starkly factual British war film that does the nation proud, and will impress the world ... the finest film ever to come from Ealing Studios?' trumpeted Donald Zec in the *Daily Mirror*; 'It reflects the best, in the best possible way, of national outlook, attitudes, behaviour, character and achievement, and always with modesty', extolled Fred Majdalaney in the *Daily Mail*. It was 'the best British war picture done in peacetime', the *Daily Herald* excitedly announced, 'like great poetry, it is beauty revealed in tranquillity'.³⁷

For distributors, the film's exhibition campaign book detailed an orchestrated marketing plan. Exhibitors were advised to cash-in on the Royal Premiere; use American size posters; tie-in the book's success; and guarantee recruitment by obtaining naval co-operation. Spectacular naval displays, using real naval equipment and personnel were envisaged. Powerful slogans such as: 'Monsarrat's best-seller comes surging to life', were designed to 'push home the message'; as were press campaigns; pictorial blocks; stills; high-impact trailers; slides and throwaways. Michael Balcon travelled to America, personally controlling Britain's part in the US marketing and distribution of *The Cruel Sea*. Universal executives in Hollywood enthused. The film's Encino tryout enjoyed major success. In Chicago, a delighted Balcon met British Consul, Berkeley Cage, who categorically stated that 'the success

of British films was making his job less difficult'.³⁸ Whilst in New York, Balcon met the most influential people in the world of newspapers, magazines, trade papers, radio and TV, gaining their enthusiastic interest. Ed Sullivan had a private viewing and included the film in his July 12 television programme. Since this had 'a tremendous nation-wide viewing public', Balcon achieved a major publicity coup, and the date of the New York premiere was adjusted to fit.³⁹ *The Cruel Sea* featured two key characterisations of women - their sexuality, and uniformed woman. This study will discuss them over a wider field. Finally, it will examine a third key category, women who faced the enemy directly.

Sexuality

*(For the purposes of this study, sexuality normally refers to sexual behaviour. The exception is mannish woman whose sexual orientation may be hinted at by film-makers).

Negativity was uppermost in the over-arching area of women's sexuality. Evocations stretch from the twin-bedded purity of the likeable, brave and propagandistic matriarch, portrayed by Greer Garson in the American film *Mrs Miniver* (1942); through wholesome marriage material; to a vulgar song sung by Pte. Bamforth (Lawrence Harvey), in *The Long and the Short and the Tall* (1961),⁴⁰ relegating mothers and sisters to the ranks of prostitutes: 'Oh, my little sister Lily has a stroll down Piccadilly, and my mother has another on the Strand'.

War and Service comedies were more relaxed about women's sexuality than "official" war films, frequently reducing it to Hollywood-type sex appeal, femininity, bawdiness, and occasionally, orientation. Blonde bombshell, Margie White (Carol Leslie) in *Operation Bullshine* was emblematic. Ordered to find a uniform that 'does not fit so well', and castigated by the formidable – and, it is hinted, lesbian –

Commander Maddox (Fabia Drake) for wearing heavy make-up, nail varnish and non-regulation stockings, Margie pouted: 'Catch me turning my legs into a military secret'. In *The Gentle Sex*, an "official" film, Dot declared: 'It'll take more than a war to stop me combing my hair'. Margie, along with the others, was marriage-orientated, had learned from her time in the ATS, and targeted Captain Brown with a series of military-like strategies, ruthlessly combined with feminine wiles. Feminine grooming rituals remained an important part of uniformed woman's routine in the genre. Like most Service women, Dot and Margie asserted their femininity, despite their uniforms. Ann queued for a bath, another frequent theme. This allowed women to be shown in their underwear. Even *A Town Like Alice*, saw the women delighted to find a place with an old bath in the Malayan jungle, whereas the boys had no interest. But sexuality and femininity worked two ways. Used by Major Pym (Naunton Wayne) and Captain Brown to distract the Brigadier (John Welsh) during an impromptu inspection, Margie displayed her "charms" to full advantage. The Brigadier's delighted comment: 'Good first impression, what?' to his companion - a frosty-faced liberated reporter (Ambrosine Philpots) - showed that it worked for him, but not for her. Promoting women's success in a man's world, her questions to misogynist Pym were loaded. Rapidly intercepted, they were neutralised by the worldly Brigadier:

Reporter: (Sweetly) - Are the women doing a good job?

Pym: (Blustering) - A good job considering . . .

Reporter: (Sharply) - You weren't going to say considering they are women?

Brigadier: (Hurriedly) - He means considering they have so little time to train.

Reporter: (Slyly) - Is it true that you get these women to look on you as a father figure?

Brigadier: (Sidelining an apoplectic Pym) - The mothers will love that.

Notions of 'father figures' did not meld with the idea of women excelling in the Services, on merit, and against male chauvinism. After initially appearing flippant, ineffectual and unbridled, the ladies assisted in downing an enemy aircraft in record time, mirroring *The Gentle Sex*. Pym, finally proud of them, had originally derided

women's sexuality, complaining that an ATS girl was leaving 'for the usual reasons'. 'Just when a woman begins to be useful' he moaned, 'someone decides to boost the birth-rate'. So, war and Service comedies simultaneously trivialised uniformed women, and lionized them.

When SOE agent Jacqueline Neame joked in *School for Danger* (1947) - an "official" docudrama - that she had 'tried sex appeal, it was a complete flop', she might have benefited from the tactical brilliance of Horace Pope (Alfred Lynch). He remedied the outward lack of a female officer's sexuality in *On the Fiddle* (1961). The camera lingered as frustrated romantic Flora McNaughton (Eleanor Summerfield), an efficient masculine-type (reading trashy passionate novels), undressed down to her uniform shirt, non-military, femininely-laced slip and stockings. Her "masculinity" symbolically dissolved. She became half-officer and half-real woman. This was crucial to an understanding of contemporaneous issues, and masculine worries about uniformed women. To restore her femininity and erase uniformed woman's military anonymity, Flora was about to have her first romantic encounter with Pedlar Pascoe (Sean Connery), arranged by lazy free-loader Pope who "understood" women. 'Trying to do her job' Pope sympathised, 'all highly strung and unhappy. Who would want to be in her shoes?'⁴¹ Nonetheless, she handled a challenging job dealing with personnel whom the RAF deemed difficult to place. Lacking the right values, they were unquestionably difficult to motivate.

"Official" war films, such as *The Cruel Sea*, largely polarised women's sexuality. An early post-war example of a "good" girl can be found in *Landfall* (1953). After meeting in a dance hall, pilot officer Rick (Michael Dennis) and

barmaid Mona (Patricia Plunkett), fell in love. Rick intended to treat her casually, but Mona was saving herself for marriage. Following Rick's passionate kisses, she declared 'no more tonight, you are a nice, clean boy'. Rick turned to her for solace, mistakenly believing he had sunk a British submarine. Mona listened sympathetically. Rick's mother thought that Mona's job, and class, made her the wrong sort. 'She is a nice sensible girl', he emphatically responded. Mona was much more. Piecing together random information, she established his innocence. They married. An exemplary role model, she offered unconditional love and unshakeable trust – the perfect wife, home-maker and candidate for national regeneration. Ann in *The Gentle Sex* provided another example from the earlier period.

“Good” girls exuded healthy innocence. Stoically loyal, charming, popular and caring, they flattered male egos, and were most effective when providing a shoulder to cry on, or intelligently discussing the war. By giving a man a reason to fight, they provided a reason to survive. Presented as virginal, they were supplemented by widows and bereaved *fiancés* offering the extra dimension of a deeper understanding emanating from loving, losing, and an awareness of man's emotional needs. Despite a greater ability to articulate emotions, if tested, their stiff-upper-lip matched that of officers. All of which was essential to their femininity, and package as groomed sophistication when they held serious war jobs, such as that of Eve Kenyon (Dinah Sheridan) in *Appointment in London* (1953). She was the caring widow who understood the pressures that Station Commander Tim Mason (Dirk Bogarde) endured. He worriedly discussed his men's low morale with her. Following his harrowing 90th, and last mission, she emphatically chalked-up his return. Anne Davis (Dana Wynter) in *Sink the Bismarck*, performed a similar

function. Companionate marriage awaited. Miss Carfax (Veronica Hurst) represented the virginal girlfriend in *Angels One Five* (1952). She was not the subject of crude Service banter. Like WRNS Hallam, Mona and Anne, she was respected. Pilot Officer 'Septic' Baird (John Gregson) refused to discuss her, earning himself the Chaucerian soubriquet – a 'gentle parfait knight'. His hut had two trophy walls symbolizing gilded youth at war – fast living and fast dying. Wall one was covered with pieces of downed German aircraft. Wall two was filled with photographs of undressed women, leeringly labelled 'homework'. Announcing her engagement to a Canadian officer, admiral's daughter, WRNS June in *The Gift Horse* (1952), enjoyed his joke that he had 'been played like a trout for 14 months'. His pride in her chastity emerged with his laughing comment: 'My intentions are strictly honourable, unless I am given a choice'. June, aware that his next posting was dangerous, displayed WRNS Hallam's measured professionalism.

As embodied by Mrs Morell, the rogue sexual, predatory female's antecedence resided in the 1939-45 period and related to individual women. It is evident in *A Canterbury Tale* (1944), where the glue-man strove to prevent wartime women's promiscuity, and in Bridie's character in *2000 Women*. It surfaces in Bamforth's crude assessment of all women in 1961, and in that offered a year earlier by *The League of Gentlemen*. Illuminating the characters of seven demobbed, dysfunctional male protagonists, the latter film implicitly offered seven negative examples of post-war femininity and sexuality in its subtext: a gambler's floosie, flitting to another man - if he paid her expenses, she would 'lie back and think of England'; a needy, mature woman financing a gigolo; a constantly nagging wife; pornographic images of women in a fake cleric's suitcase; a blonde gangster's moll being passed around; a bitch who

treated her husband contemptuously, telephoning her lover in his presence; and, discussed in her absence, Colonel Hyde's wife, who had 'taken him for everything'. Nevertheless, Bamforth went further, with a sexually degrading misogynist, vulgar and racist indictment:

Bamforth: You know what it is like back home these days. It's a den of vice and original sin, all those Poles and Yanks and cartloads of glorious Allies in all the colours of the bleeding rainbow. Even the kids are beginning to look like Liquorice Allsorts. You think your girl is sitting at home knitting. She is probably up the mountain right now with a big, buck Yank.

Taffy: She's not like that.

Bamforth: They're all like that - just a lot of groundsheets for the fighting forces.

This theme is subtly present in the non-war film *Blue Murder at St. Trinians* (1957), where a school plaque contained the immortal words: 'Dedicated to the old girls of St. Trinians who rendered valuable service to our gallant American Allies, 1942-45'. In 1961, Bamforth voiced the enduring bitterness emanating from women's wartime infidelities and post-war confidence. With World War Two a safe distance away, his outburst could be more vituperative and, because the action occurred in wartime, registered greater inadequacy. This de-valued the sacrifices of the 'People's War'; reminded us of fighting men's fears; and foregrounded the promiscuity of many women which, for morale reasons, remained hidden during the war, emerging afterwards, through illegitimacy, divorce rates and separation (Appendix 4).⁴² Astonishingly, it was in those 1939-45 films that film-makers first engaged with the physical and emotional strength of feeling on this subject, showing that highly-trained fighting men could use their skills for domestic violence. This on-screen violence was officially sanctioned, providing a safe way of dealing with an uncomfortable subject. Tellingly, the "wrong" kind of female sexuality and the "wrong" masculine images were vilified; although vitally, in the case of the women, it became a matter of degree. We first witness this in *Waterloo Road* (1945). It was one of the most important post-1945 cross-overs.

Unlike Mrs Morell, party-going Dot (Jean Gillie) in *The Gentle Sex* was more fun-loving and foolish than bad. We first encountered her being seen-off at the station by a spiv-type who tried to dissuade her. Dismissed as a 'new fangled woman with a roving eye', Dot succeeded in the ATS. Allowed to admit her mistake, she regretted her bad behaviour towards her estranged husband, an RAF hero. Reading that he had been awarded the DFC and was injured, she observed: 'He deserves something after the way I treated him'. To the comment: 'I didn't know that you were married', she sadly responded: 'I don't think he did either. I used to go to parties without him, got caught-up in a silly crowd. Then he went overseas ... I'd give anything in the world to see him now'. 'Write to him', advised Betty (Joan Greenwood). 'It might make all the difference if he thought you were doing something useful'. Violence in these circumstances was unwarranted. *The Gentle Sex* was more vocal on sexuality. Frigid, promotion-seeking Joan (Barbara Waring) aligned herself with female career officers. She would rather 'have a headache, than a man'. Czech refugee Erna (Lilli Palmer), viewing sexuality from the perspective of a woman who had experienced passionate love, Nazi atrocities and tragic loss, reproved her: 'I've been told that frozen virtue is no asset'. Erna did everything with determined fire – cinematically, European women were usually sexually uninhibited and unstable – but she was acceptable. When an enemy aircraft was shot-down in flames, she savoured the moment with almost sexual relish. Her message was clear, her exotic sexuality could, with modification, be deemed safe. It was acceptable to love with passionate intensity; but unacceptable to be frigid, predatory, ambitious or mannish.

Waterloo Road provided the role models for the spiv, wife and husband-at-war triangle. For morale purposes, the ethos of this film differed from post-1945 versions. Lonely young, naïve wife Tilly (Joy Shelton), was more sinned-against than-sinning. The Bendits earmarked loneliness as a principle reason for wartime infidelities, advising that this did not necessarily change the essential inner person. Tilly was awestruck by ex-boxer Ted Purvis (Stewart Granger), a nasty spiv who regarded the war opportunistically. Having bought his way out of call-up and cheated on tax returns, he preyed on home-front women. Purvis targeted her, sneeringly boasting: 'I like 'em hard to get once-in-a-while. It makes a change'. This indictment of home-front women presaged Bamforth's assessment. Without qualms, Ted used violence against women - a situation repeated in *The Cockleshell Heroes* (1955). Like a POW in *The Captive Heart* (1946), Tilly's husband Jim (John Mills), a serving soldier, received a malicious anonymous letter. In *The Captive Heart* the charges were completely false. Immense pain was generated in both cases. But Jim could go AWOL to resolve it. However, having realised her foolhardiness, Tilly was struggling with Ted as Jim arrived. Officially-sanctioned violence enabled his mother, a military policeman and Doctor Montgomery (Alastair Sim) the family physician, to collude. Jim and Ted's ensuing fight was endorsed by the fire-warden who delayed their evacuation from a burning building. By matching Ted's underhand tactics, Jim won, then reinforced his masculinity by saving Ted's life. This film's premise, veering towards the 'New Jerusalem', was that the future lay in the reconciled couple's lovingly nurtured baby son. Tilly represented a wife reclaimed, highlighting expectations for post-war women.

Attitudes were harsher in *The Cockleshell Heroes*. Mrs Ruddock's infidelities resulted in domestic violence on two fronts. Unrepentant, she and spiv Morris were both unsuitable for national regeneration. An illuminating exchange occurred between them and Captain Thompson (Trevor Howard), who endeavoured to help absentee husband Sergeant Ruddock (David Lodge):

Thompson: You can keep quiet.

Spiv: I'm not in the Army. I don't have to take orders.

Thompson: You make me sick, both of you.

Spiv: If he's deserted and comes home, I shall have to turn him in. I am a good citizen.

Wife: That Captain's got a nerve coming here like that.

Spiv: Anyone would think there was a war on.

Wife: (As Morris roughly handled her) – Here, you'll tear my dress.

Spiv: So what, I paid for it didn't I?

Mrs Ruddock's price was negligible. Her sexuality was conspicuously squalid and over-ripe, her accent, hard to define – but not English. Finding Ruddock in the pub, Thompson, in a cross-class indictment of women, sympathised: 'It is not uncommon. It happened to me. How much time will you need?'⁴³ Ruddock's estimate of 'three minutes' elicited Thompson's response: 'That's not enough you fool. I'll give you fifteen minutes from when we get there. Make a good job of it, and give my regards to Morris'. Outside the house, a curious policeman lingered:

Policeman: What's going on, Sir?

Thompson: One of my men is having a little trouble with the lodger - pity to break-it-up too soon.

Policeman: He's acting under orders, I take it?

Thompson: Oh, yes.

Policeman: He can't possibly disobey orders, can he Sir?

Thompson: No, that would be very tricky.

Policeman: No way of hurrying him I suppose? No, I suppose not.

Policeman: (As Morris was thrown through the window) – Well, I can't stop chatting All night, time for me to check in.

Thompson: Anything doing tonight?

Policeman: No, very quiet.

2000 Women (1944), was unequivocal on the preferred type of woman and her sexuality. Incarcerated by the Germans in a French Chateau, Freda Thompson (Phyllis Calvert) introduced her former room-mate:

Bridie Johnson, known to half of Paris – the male half – as Bubbles Kelly. Married, divorced; re-married, re-divorced ... Just imagine living with her and the unexpurgated story of her love life. The only way to get to sleep was to count men jumping over a stile.

Bridie had a British passport, notably the product of one of her marriages. She flaunted her tainted sexuality before the German Captain to gain a private room. ‘The rat is about to enter the trap of the oldest poison in the world’ an appalled Freda commented, ‘Mata Hari did all her best work at night also’. As the women vied for a bath, Bridie displayed exotic underwear. ‘We are not competing with pros’, someone disapprovingly remarked. But these women entertained sexual thoughts. In a daring analogy, a Scot yelled:

Welcome to the only British territory not occupied by men. Not a single man is allowed in, not even the German guards. That will give you some idea of our state of mind, to say nothing of the trend of our conversation at times.

This implied sexuality was harmless, it would not lead anywhere. Overtly sexual woman however, was a threat to nation and masculinity. Bridie’s sexuality was menacing, she paid the price. Suspected of sleeping with Germans, she was rejected by a Canadian RAF officer, one of three in hiding, to whom she was attracted. He would ‘not believe she was decent if seventeen judges declared her innocent’. Ironically, her death ensured his escape. Novice nun Rosemary Brown (Patricia Roc), the film’s “good girl”, had been scandalously duped by a married man. Keeping her clothes on and her modesty intact, she gained the love of another RAF officer, who promised to wait years for her in an idyllic cottage in England. This envisaged domestic bliss, re-affirmed women’s prescribed post-war role, and could equally be applied to uniformed woman.

Two exceptions to the polarised representations of women’s sexuality were the decent woman who confidently enjoyed her sexuality and femininity, enabling her to make the first approach, and the lesbian. A superb example of the former is in *Ice*

Cold in Alex (1958), a film marked by its latent, but sizzingly exotic sexuality. Its predatory heroine, the aptly named Diana (Sylvia Syms), told Captain Ansen (John Mills): 'A woman always knows what she wants ... you certainly don't understand me. If you did, you would know I don't give up so easily'. Their moments under the desert stars were laden with innuendo bordering on explicitness. The climax of the film, in a bar in Alexandria revolved around a pint of lager. In erotically-charged scenes – toned-down for the Censor – everything was conveyed by looks, silences and lip-smacking anticipation. Diana and Ansen longed to be together. Considerable innuendo inhabited Ansen's comment: 'Let's hope the beer was all I said it was', and Diana's reply: 'Worth waiting for'. Rarely was a British woman allowed to be so yearningly sensual. Another Diana (Anna Neagle), in *Piccadilly Incident* (1948), also ached for sexual release. As a married WRNS, presumed drowned during the Singapore evacuation, she spent several years on an idyllic desert island with four sexually-charged sailors and another WRNS Sally (Brenda Bruce). Continually harassed, Diana fought for her honour but exposed her frustration as she overheatedly writhed in her make-shift tent. Sally, having the same problem, less obviously, commented: 'If the Allies had fought for democracy as hard as we have to fight for our honour, the war would have been over in a month'. They resolved to remain faithful to their menfolk. Diana's willpower went unrewarded. Her husband had remarried, and Diana was killed in an air-raid whilst meeting him. What was unusual about these heroines was the potency of their sexual desire; even the "bad" girls were not depicted thus.

The sexuality of mannish woman, in or out of uniform, was debatable. This was another carryover from 1939-45. An early indication of a lesbian relationship

occurred in *2000 Women*. Dominant Muriel Manningfold (Flora Robson), dressed in mannish tweeds, berated a German officer to ensure that her friend Claire Meredith (Muriel Aked) shared her bedroom. Muriel broke the blackout during an RAF raid to help the crew of a stricken bomber. 'A very decent thing to do', agreed Claire. Both owned-up when a furious German officer demanded: 'Who is responsible?' 'I think we have struck a blow for England in our own little way', said Claire. When a member of the RAF crew crept into their bedroom, Muriel organised the sleeping arrangements. 'The young man shall sleep in your bed, and you shall sleep in mine'. Claire, with a strange facial expression gasped: 'Muriel, you are not suggesting that we have a man in our room?' 'It is our duty, my dear Claire', Muriel responded. Modestly undressing in the dark, they were startled when caught in their unfeminine bloomers and vests as Freda and Rosemary searched for the crew. A revelatory exchanged followed:

Muriel: (Angrily authoritarian) – Nothing like this has ever happened to me before.

Freda: (Amused and not surprised) – I can imagine.

Claire: (In shock and very surprised) – Oh dear, after 53 years – this!

To eliminate doubts about Muriel and Claire's sexuality, as they departed for a German punishment camp, the women sang: 'For they are jolly good fellows'. As with cinema's handling of homosexuality in these films, they were valiant. Their career-minded, uniformed alter-egos thrived on Service life. Lacking the sexuality, femininity and glamour of uncommitted or transitory uniformed woman, a loose question-mark hung over their orientation, because of their success. In a world where post-war society idealized domesticity and the military regarded women as temporarily available – even if powerful and successful – their accomplishments were attributed to excessive masculine testosterone rather than female capability. Consequently, to the horrified scientists in *School for Secrets* the female drilling

sergeant was 'an abomination'. In most post-1945 war films, mannish uniformed woman dauntingly challenged sexuality and masculinity.

Uniformed Woman

Cinematically speaking, the uniformed woman in World War Two was many things. Customarily, however, she was not permanently situated. Unless she happened to be that most ebullient and "unnatural" incarnation – mannish uniformed woman – doyen of Service comedies. In this latter role, she bestrode the Services with a gusto that struck terror in the hearts of the most heavily braided male officers. In *Civvy Street*, she was an unrelenting zealot, typical portrayals being the vigorous WVS fitness fanatic in *The Cockleshell Heroes*, the MP in *Frieda* and the fearsome magistrate in *Operation Bullshine*. In a misogynist statement on uniformed women, reflecting contemporaneous issues, the editor of *Aeroplane* escalated a row on ATA women pilots:

There are millions of women in this country who could do useful jobs in war. But the trouble is so many insist on wanting to do jobs which they are *quite incapable of doing*. The menace is the woman who thinks she ought to be flying a high-speed bomber when she really has not the intelligence to scrub the floor of a hospital properly, or want to nose around as an Air Raid Warden and yet can't cook her husband's dinner.⁴⁴

Ambulance driver Miss Carfax echoed this in *Angels One Five*. She diminished her gender, railing against women's inability to understand war's technology, telling Pilot Officer 'Septic' before the Battle of Britain: 'Oh, how I wish I was a man at this moment ... [but] ... being a useless female makes it easier to understand how you feel ... I am useful enough to drive an old ambulance about, I suppose'. Yet ATA women pilots comfortably ferried supply aeroplanes, graduating to Hurricanes, Spitfires, and eventually, four-engined bombers, freeing RAF pilots for combat.⁴⁵ Ferry pilot Lettice Curtis's experience, claims Adie, was one of many inspiring tales on women's commendable wartime contribution:

They suddenly produced this Hurricane and said to me "Deliver it". It was very worrying – my first one ... somehow I got into it, looked up "Hurricane" in my Pilots' Notes, and got it up and flew it and landed it with several bounces at Prestwich. Then we were given Spitfires. Same thing, you just got in, stared at the controls and flew it.⁴⁶

Despite being labelled 'quite incapable', women were successful in many difficult or dangerous masculine fields during the Second World War. British cinema reflected this. Negative views of women's achievements such as those of Miss Carfax, were balanced by positive ones. These were exemplified in that presumed paean of praise *The Gentle Sex* (1943) and gently parodied in its remake *Operation Bullshine* (1959) amongst others.

The Gentle Sex followed the fortunes of a disparate group of seven women who joined the ATS, succeeding admirably. The film effectively reversed the ATS's tarnished public image.⁴⁷ Although today's self-assured women would feel thoroughly patronised, the words remain a memorial to uniformed women's wartime role, and suggest continuing post-war involvement:

There they are the women, our sweethearts, sisters, mothers and daughters. Let us give in at last and admit that we are really proud of you. You strange, wonderful incalculable creatures. The world you are helping to shape is going to be a better world – because you are helping to shape it. Pray silence gentlemen – I give you "the gentle sex".⁴⁸

A linear progression from a frivolous and uninvolved past is implied:

Before the battle of Waterloo, the officers' ladies put on pretty evening dresses and had a ball. That's as near to the war that they got. The soldiers' girls couldn't get as near as that. Now it looks to me as if, without the women, we couldn't carry on at all. Do you also realise that we are quite a small country trying to do the work of a very big one, and we certainly couldn't, without the women. It gives a man something to think about.⁴⁹

Notwithstanding, *The Gentle Sex* provided clues to the temporary nature of women's war efforts, indicating that the most prized future for women was marriage. As the characters integrated into ATS routine, one sighed, aware that she was unsuitable for marriage – she couldn't even peel a potato. By the end of the film her training, group bonding and successful engagement with an enemy aeroplane, empowered the narrator to say: 'Goodbye Maggie, you'll make a good wife to young Alexander'.

The ATS had equipped her with the required skills for marriage. Tellingly, during an air-raid, a uniformed telephonist excitedly discussed the marriage proposal she had received. Moreover, Ann (Joyce Howard), having her fortune told by Erna (Lili Palmer), was happy to learn that she would marry and have lots of children. Meanwhile, Dot anticipated reconciliation with her husband.

Similarly, *Millions Like Us* depicted Celia (Patricia Roc), romantically fantasizing whilst waiting at the Ministry of Labour. The glamour of the Services attracted her, but marriage was high on her agenda. On seeing a poster proclaiming: 'Serve in the WAAF's with the men who fly', she conjured up images of her uniformed alter-ego assisting an RAF pilot, a naval officer, an Army officer and a gentleman farmer. Finally, as a nurse, she accepted an officer's engagement ring. These scenes were marked by longing glances. Marrying an RAF sergeant, Celia was immediately widowed. However, familial continuity was implicit in the relationship between wealthy Jennifer, and engineer Charlie, who represented the new post-war professional. They would eventually marry, overcoming class barriers. *2000 Women* featured two instructive songs: *There's No Place Like Home* and *There'll Always Be An England*. The inferences were – marriage, home and national regeneration, but these women had courageously outwitted their German gaolers. In 1939, *School for Secrets* depicted women as a temporary, but necessary evil of war. Eminent scientists discussed newly recruited, marching women, ordered by the 'abomination' a female sergeant:

Prof. Heathermill (Ralph Richardson): What a revolting sight. It is a negation of everything feminine.

Dr. McVitie: In eight minutes time, we will be at war they'll be operating every kind of new device we can throw at them.

Heathermill: Women on the technical side? It won't work.

Dainty (Ernest Jay): If war comes 70% of our work will be in those girls' hands.

MacVitie: Poor wee lassies. We are going to feel very guilty soon. They'll have some headaches ... You mark my words, they will find a peaceful solution then we can send the lassies home again.

Although concerned about threats to femininity, the scientists crucially acknowledged that women would operate their new technology.

Uniformed woman retained her power and efficiency into the 1960s. Like WRNS Hallam, she could be greatly respected, despite attempts to undermine her authority. Refused entry to the Admiral's office by Third Officer Masters (Dawn Addams), his trusted PA, a bullying RNVR Lt. Crabb (Lawrence Harvey), in *Silent Enemy* (1958), dismissed servicewomen's entire war effort: 'I came out to this rock of yours to get on with the war, and if you think that a whole army of WRNS, FANY's, ATS's or WAAF's are going to stop me from getting in there, you are very much mistaken'. She exacted revenge by drawing out the bureaucracy. To his rude demand: 'Who says so?' she responded firmly: 'I do, quite alone, without the assistance of FANY's, ATS's, WAAF's or even another WRNS. Crabb was a maverick for whom war was a masculine thing. It is interesting to contrast his outburst with advice on female officers given to US servicemen:

'British Women at War' – A British woman officer or non-combatant can – and often does – give orders to a man private. The men obey smartly and know it is no shame. *For British women have proven themselves in this way.* They have stuck to their posts near burning ammunition dumps, delivered messages afoot after their motorcycles have been blasted from under them. They have pulled aviators from burning 'planes. They have died at the gun posts and, as they fall, another girl has stepped directly into position and "carried on". *There is not a single record in this war of any British woman in uniformed service quitting her post or failing in duty under fire.*⁵⁰

Although WRNS Masters displayed exemplary bravery under fire, the point was made. In many of these films men were reclaiming, or attempting to reclaim, the territory of war. But women assuredly made their presence felt.

Crucially, WRNS Anne Davis (Dana Wynter) in *Sink the Bismarck* (1960) was offered two key wartime posts. The first, at the epi-centre of World War Two planning was with the Admiralty mission to the Joint Chief of Staffs in Washington, to discuss a master plot for vital Atlantic convoys. At the pinnacle of her wartime Service career, Anne was the Admiralty Board's first choice for a post with Admiralty Planning in London. As Captain Shepard (Kenneth More) leader of the *Bismarck* attack declared, she was 'intelligent and dependable'. Shepherd's predecessor had advised: 'Be nice to her ... if she ever got angry and walked out, we would lose the war. Seriously, you can depend on this young lady. I have done it more times than I would care to admit'.⁵¹ This harks back to *The Gentle Sex*, and was frequently articulated by officers. Anne discussed strategy with Shepard, and had her opinions respected. When Shepard staked his reputation on a Solomon-like order involving the lives of 20,000 troops, she commented: 'Excuse me Sir, but do you need to stick your neck out quite so far?' She understood his single-mindedness and bravery, and embraced the intricacies and repercussions of the wider picture. His decision placed his only son in mortal danger. Shepard, a complicated man, had lost his wife and home to the Blitz. But Anne (who lost her *fiancé* at Dunkirk), was a caring "good" girl, telling the Captain: 'You can't avoid pain by fencing yourself off. Sometimes you need the help of other people ... you have to let them get close enough'. On his refusal to allow a naval officer time-off to say farewell to his *fiancé*, an Army nurse sailing from Portsmouth that night, Anne advised: 'You can't turn off your emotions just because there is a war on'. When he demurred, there is an almost imperceptible note of censure directed against the nurse. Her posting intruded upon men's work – the hunt for the *Bismarck*. Censure was implicit in WRNS Diana Fraser's (Anna Neagle) posting to Singapore which precipitated the events that destroyed her

marriage to aristocratic marine officer (Michael Wilding) in *Piccadilly Incident* – subsequently resulting in her death.

Superficially, *Angels One Five* linked the female war with domesticity. Female Control Room Operators collectively sighed as Station Commander (and hero) ‘Tiger’ Small arrived. Christened ‘the beauty chorus’, by the Operations Room Commander, they knitted during quiet periods. Following extensive air-raid damage to the Control Room, a dust-covered female operator jumped up exclaiming: ‘Tea, Sir?’ He evocatively replied: ‘That’s an inspiration. Remind me to have you promoted’. This mirrored a scene in *School for Secrets*, where she jumped up in front of ‘Sir’ and broke her bra strap, both events being female preoccupations, having little to do with war. Uniformed women called out: ‘Tea, Sir?’ almost as often as officers yelled: ‘Fire’, with two notable exceptions. In *The Man Who Never Was* (1956), a love-sick WRNS declared: ‘Come and get it while its hot, Sir’. Whilst in the *Battle of Britain* (1969), tea was dispensed by a uniformed male.⁵² Fundamentally *Angels One Five* was one of many post-1945 films offering the balance of powerful evocations. These women were in direct line-of-fire during the bombing. They did not panic. They stuck to their posts alongside male officers, reinforcing the statement in *Over There*: ‘There is not a single record in this war of any British woman in uniformed service quitting her post or failing in duty under fire’,⁵³ and was implicit in ‘Tiger’s’ decision to exclude ‘civilian woman’, from the operational air-base prior to a ferocious attack. He was unwilling to risk ‘wives, sweethearts and also rans’ (again the distinction on the right kind of female). When the wife of the Operations Room Controller, Mrs Clinton (Dulcie Gray) – a public-school matron-type – objected, ‘Tiger’ compounded this exclusion pleading: ‘Please excuse my crude Service

jargon'. Yet, by implication, uniformed woman was party to Service jargon, had a vital role in the conduct of war, and could be trusted under fire. Similarly, although ATS girl Miss Fallaise (Glynis Johns) in *Appointment with Venus* (1951) was asked by a naval officer to excuse 'Service humour', she was also asked to risk her life on a mission to an enemy occupied island.

Sabotage and Survival

The docudrama *School for Danger/Now It Can Be Told*, reconstructed a mission to France, setting the parameters for secret agent films, using real SOE personnel, training methods and selection procedures. Murphy observes: 'Part of the appeal of *Odette* (1950) or *Carve Her Name With Pride* (1958) comes from showing true stories of women doing things which contradict the roles to which wartime society – and even more so, 1950s society – confined them'.⁵⁴ This is true, but both these films steered their SOE heroines towards marriage in emotional scenes wherein neither revealed her suffering. Their concerns were for their partners and missions:

Peter (Trevor Howard): Wonderful to see you.

Odette (Anna Neagle): How are they treating you?

Peter: Not bad. Were you interrogated?

Odette: Yes. Did they hurt you?

Peter: No, I can't think why. I've been terrified they'd do something dreadful to you.

Odette: It was so good when I heard you sing.

Peter: It was wonderful to find out where you were. Odette, we'll meet again won't we, when the war is over?

Odette: Oh yes, Pierre, we shall meet somewhere.

There was rapture in Odette's and Violette's faces. Well-lit close-ups implied otherworldliness:

Tony (Paul Schofield): Did you go to Avenue Foch?

Violette (Virginia McKenna): Once or twice, but they didn't get anything out of me. It wasn't so bad.

Tony: Darling, if we get out of this.

Violette: *When* we get out of this.

Tony: I shan't ever let you out of my sight again.

Violette: I shan't ever want you to.

As mothers who became warriors, they were very feminine women. Odette embroidered skilfully - a ladylike activity. Violette was a lively flirt working on a beauty counter. Preservation of femininity was a key point in the dispute over Military policy on women's Services as non-combatant, and in their cinematic evocations. Military policy remained unchanged until 1977 when the WRAC was re-designated as combatant. Weapons training for women officially commenced in 1981. But femininity, as a major cinematic theme, crossed-over from the 1939-45 period and was apparent in films concerned with female SOE agents, Resistance women and prisoners-of-war. Post-1945, the dangerous activities of former SOE women became public. Trained in sabotage, demolition, weapons and explosives handling, silent killing and raid tactics; they attended para-military schools, parachute courses, operated wirelasses and honed their language skills. Most were in their early 20s. There were fifty SOE women agents operating in France, many were commissioned as officers in the FANY's or WAAF's. (FANY's had no military restrictions on the use of arms, unlike other women's services). Instructor, Leslie Fernandez highlighted their ladylike qualities and unusual training:

During training, we attempted to prepare them physically, building-up their stamina by hikes through rough countryside. All were taught close combat, which gave them confidence, even if most were not very good at it. *These girls were not commando material ... You would not expect well brought-up girls to go up behind someone and slit their throats, though if they were stopped, there were several particularly nasty little tricks that we handed on, given us by the Shanghai police.*⁵⁵

A highly-trained feminine woman, skilled in 'particularly nasty little tricks' via the Shanghai Police, was a gift to British cinema, and a *force majeure*. Murphy points out that:

The demands of dramatic entertainment inevitably change Odette's role from that of a small and relatively unimportant cog into a heroine of war, and use war as a backcloth for a melodrama about a woman suffering and surviving.⁵⁶

Yet, allowing for cinematic licence in Odette's and Violette's stories, the experiences of SOE women would daunt many men.

Odette was French but had an English middle-class lifestyle. She was a separated, 30-year old mother of three and styled herself an 'ordinary woman' – something that film-makers could barely envisage. As played by Anna Neagle, known for her successful portrayals of Queen Victoria, Odette personified "Englishness". She impressed Colonel Buckmaster (played by himself) Head of SOE 'F' Section; Colonel Henri of the Abwehr (the German equivalent of M16); and her Gestapo torturers. Peter her Section Leader in France, informed London that she was 'indispensable' and chose her for a mission. To radio operator Arnaud's (Peter Ustinov) amazed: 'You are sending a woman?' he replied: 'She has guts, determination and commonsense'. Her success in obtaining the plans of Marsailles harbour was presented as crucial. 'London is screaming for these plans – nice work', she was told. Odette's sadistic female gaoler at Ravensbruck claimed that the plans accelerated the Allied advance, and increased Odette's punishments. However, Murphy reveals that Odette actually carried a bag of money'.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, she organized Peter's return from London.⁵⁸

Captured and interrogated she refused to co-operate, and lied that 'playboy wastrel' Peter, was both Churchill's nephew and her husband. This saved his life, guaranteeing him easier confinement. Interrogator Henri tried a soft approach – concert and dinner – saying: 'I impose no conditions'. 'But I do', Odette vehemently responded. Her Gestapo torturer failed too, stating: 'I can't get anything out of her ... I have tried a red-hot poker to her spine, and have had her toe nails torn out'. Odette was manhandled, and her clothes torn, the camera angles were disorientating. Dark shadows suggested menace as the poker was removed from the fire. Gestapo thugs

continually revived her. Horrified, the Padre exclaimed: 'What have they done?' These torture scenes caused a furore. Later, Odette's feminine concern was to smarten-up for a chance meeting with Peter. She rebutted Henri's shame-faced denial of responsibility:

Whatever you say. However you say it. However much you try to hide behind other people. You can't get away from truth. You are party to the horrors of this war, just like any other Nazi. Therefore it is your fault and your responsibility.

Odette savaged her Ravensbruck gaoler who, in defeat, beseeched leniency:

Gaoler: I am not responsible. I have only carried out orders ... I have three children.

Odette: There is always someone else to blame. I too, have three children.

Odette: Have you forgotten how to pray?

Despite this, Odette's post-war marriage to Peter gave credence to the temporary nature of women's input, however exciting.⁵⁹

Carve Her Name With Pride initially concentrated on gregarious Violette's home-life. Product of a French mother and English father, she belonged to a patriotic, close family, and styled herself "English". Significantly, although she had raven-black hair and Mediterranean appearance she was played by "English rose" Virginia McKenna. A daughter, Tania, resulted from her whirlwind marriage to a French officer, later killed in Africa. Violette's SOE training was detailed on-screen. She befriended her eventual leader, Tony, nervous about the parachute jump to which she looked forward. 'Even the women are better than you are. That's something I never thought I would say', the sergeant yelled with misogynistic praise. Mounting a "raid" on Command HQ at the end of training Violette, and two female agents, ambushed him. This, and her refusal to accept a cyanide pill before her first French mission, established her as a maverick. Travelling in a compartment full of Germans, she calmly accepted a curious officer's offer of a room at his Rouen hotel. Following an RAF bombing raid, she contacted the Resistance, organising the sabotage of a

viaduct. Joining Tony in Paris, she became a feminine flirt, buying a dress for Tania and a Molyneux gown for herself.⁶⁰ Molyneux was the chosen haute-couturier of German officers and their mistresses. On her second mission, she machine-gunned SS troops to cover the escape of a Resistance fighter. Her Abwehr interrogator appealed to her maternal instincts, femininity, youthfulness, and for the safety of other SOE agents. Then, he undermined her patriotism: 'Don't you know the British are using you?' Vehemently responding: 'I am British', she slapped him. Her torture, like Odette's, was impressionistic but menace was omnipresent. Violette, and two other female agents, were executed in Ravensbruck in 1944. (Due to uncorroborated evidence, the exact details of Violette's interrogation and death remain unclear).⁶¹

Violette did not have to undertake that second mission which orphaned her small daughter. For security, Odette severally denied her motherhood. The brutalized German gaoler was a mother. This begs the question: 'What has war done to mothers?' Interestingly, other - childless - SOE women had exciting stories that were not screened.⁶² Despite the flag-waving, a sense of reprimand prevails, supported by contemporaneous doubts about putting women, especially mothers, into such positions. Churchill's SOE plans were strongly opposed, and rightly so, it was some time before the SOE achieved any sort of professionalism. The Services, particularly the "chivalric" RAF, also objected to ungentlemanly conduct of war. Public opinion, upon seeing the films, echoed these concerns. 'The women who made this difficult choice', Binney writes, 'approached it in the same way as men with young children, deciding that this was a time when service to country was paramount'.⁶³ Consequently, Jones' views can be applied to the 1950s' emphasis on "adequate mothering":

In the 1940s, with the British government using the preservation of family life, wifely and motherly duties as tools of propaganda, it simply wasn't imaginable that the same government was sending women on armed missions behind enemy lines'.⁶⁴

Murphy comments that, on cessation of hostilities:

Women seem to have had less trouble adjusting than men. The pressure to go back and live normal lives with husbands and children after their exceptional experiences might have been more beneficial than the pressure on men to live-up to the high points of wartime excitement ... but they [SOE women agents] had broken the mould of women as either helpless victims or Mata Hari-like spies.⁶⁵

Moreover, neither domestic pressures on women agents, nor implied reprimands about sending women into danger, obliterated their achievements. Odette and Violette received the George Cross. The World Premiere of *Odette* was signally honoured by the King and Queen. Odette, Peter and Buckmaster appeared in London, and at premieres throughout the major occupied cities of Europe. Anna Neagle, a much-loved, much-opinionated, British star leading a glamorous unconventional life, was unequivocal about the role of other women post-war: 'Women have their own function in life ... [they] ... should go about the business of being a woman more. They should study the graces of home and deportment'.⁶⁶

Articulating enemy barbarism, implicitly stamping approval on Britain's (and the Resistance's) conduct of the war was not an exclusive masculine preserve, as Odette showed. This was another cross-over from 1939-45 and crucial to positive cinematic depictions of women post-1945. Not, as Geraghty says, because they were Euro-women,⁶⁷ but because they were women – some were British – and they were there. Resistance member Jo de Vries (Googie Withers) in *One of Our Aircraft is Missing* (1942) spoke passionately about RAF bombing raids:

Can you hear them running for shelter? Can you understand what that means to all occupied countries, to enslaved people having it drummed into their ears that Germans are masters of the earth? Seeing these masters running for shelter, seeing them crouching under tables and hearing that steady hum, night-after-night, noise which is oil for the burning fire in our hearts.

Refugee Erna, in *The Gentle Sex* (1943) was equally fervent:

In spite of the bombs - they are nothing ... In France, the French cheer the British bombers over the town because to them, now the bombing is beautiful, and fire and flame are sweet. They cry "bomb us, blast us to dust", as long as that dust blows into the Nazi's eyes. Kill us, as long as you kill them. Don't you understand - bombs are clean? You don't know the filth of the Gestapo. You don't know the misery, the degradation.

Resistance fighter Leoni, in *Orders to Kill* (1958), admonished an Allied assassin who doubted the guilt of his "informer" target:

If you go on behaving like this, there won't be any tomorrow. Were you told to find out if he was guilty or innocent before you killed him? In a war, the innocent and the guilty get killed together. You are not like the rest of us. You believe the best of people. War hasn't corrupted you yet.

Furthermore, in *Conspiracy of Hearts* (1960), Reverend Mother (Lilli Palmer) conspired with Italian soldiers and the Resistance, to save Jewish children. 'It's dangerous, but the work must be done. Don't tell me again it is not women's work', she declared ignoring pitiless Nazi reprisals. Choosing agents for a crucial mission in Belgium, Ackerman (James Robertson Justice) in *Against the Wind* (1948), observed of one female, 'I think we can safely leave her to dream of orange blossom', but the 'vital' wireless operator 'may have to be a woman ... any objections?' 'No, of course not' his companion replied. Experienced Michelle (Simone Signoret) was selected, leaving the most chilling impression of female agents. Ordered to execute traitorous colleague Max Cronk (Jack Warner), a man without a country or conscience, she calmly did so, at point-blank range. Shooting him straight through the heart, she emptied the gun formerly concealed in that most feminine apparatus – housing her radio transmitter – her sewing machine. Michelle's lover, trainee Duncan (Gordon Jackson), believed 'it was no job for a woman', and was astounded to discover that she was his commanding officer. Agents were told that to succeed, they must go from 'being decent human beings, to heartless swine'. Duty came before friendship. Compellingly, this instruction was not gender specific. British cinema depicted women fighting World War Two in many ways. These women chose their path to war, accepting its harsh realities.

Women accidentally caught-up in war were the focus of prisoner-of-war films. *2000 Women* presaged the conventions of the 1950s POW cycle.⁶⁸ Incarceration by the Germans in a French Chateau however, was very different to incarceration by the Japanese on Blood Island or in the Malayan jungle. *The Camp on Blood Island* (1958) epitomised the regime of visceral barbarity inflicted by the Japanese in the name of honour and war, and the pragmatism necessary to regard properly taken, but immoral, British decisions as moral responses. Men's and women's camps were separated by dangerous jungle. These women and children, although sick, starving, sadistically bullied and beaten, constantly resisted. Their suffering included digging their own graves. They were led by diplomat's wife Mrs Beattie, and Doctor Keiller's wife Kate (Barbara Shelley). Kate was beaten by a Japanese officer for tending to a sick woman, instead of signing a death certificate. 'Why don't I fill in a form for all of us? Nine dead in as many days, fourteen critically ill, we need medicines, not sermons' she shouted. Contact with the men was during funerals when the Padre, speaking at gunpoint, surreptitiously delivered messages in Latin which Mrs Beattie translated. As discussed in Chapter 3, fearing a massacre on Allied victory, SBO Colonel Lambert, asked the doctor to swim to the mainland to locate a radio transmitter. After Keiller was re-captured and gratuitously executed by a laughing guard, Kate defiantly attended the deathbed of Mrs Beattie. Following the guard's amused sneer: 'Perhaps we find a doctor for Cholera', Kate risked her life by slapping him, delivering another indictment of Japanese barbarity: 'Find a doctor. Hunt him down. Capture and beat him ... and when you have starved and broken him, shoot him. Get out of here. We don't want you'. Mrs Beattie's funeral ended the flow of information and, this along with the arrival of a downed US pilot, precipitated events.

As a woman of mixed-race prostituted herself with a Japanese guard, Kate courageously continued her husband's mission. Despite her broken health, and alongside the pilot, she survived a jungle trek and a two-mile swim to reach the transmitter, reinforcing what women were capable of achieving. (Women as willing sex-slaves of the Japanese however, were thoroughly reviled, especially in *A Town Like Alice*).

Offering a clear indication that women needed looking after, yet also proving their worth, Jean Paget (Virginia McKenna) in *A Town Like Alice* (1956) appealed to a Malayan Chieftain for help, choosing her words carefully: 'As there is no man to speak for us, I beg you to talk business with a woman'. This cleverly-pitched request encapsulated the women's gruelling wartime ordeal:

We have walked for hundreds of miles and no Japanese officer will take us in, feed us, or look after us when we are sick. So, for months, we have walked from town to town, and in that time, half of us have died. Now our guard is dead. If we go on until we find another Japanese officer, he won't want us either. He'll send us on again, and we shall get ill and we shall all die ... We want to stay in the village, work in the rice fields as your women do ... to work for our food and somewhere to sleep.

'White women have never worked in the rice fields' he said. 'White women have never marched until they died' she responded. Upon his hesitation, she quoted from his Holy Book: 'If you are kind towards women, God is well acquainted with what you do'. Thus women were depicted as the weaker sex, whilst men – backed by religious ethics – were chivalrous towards them. This bolstered elite masculinity and offered an interesting reversal of the white imperial woman who must now seek succour from a native. However, Jean's pragmatism in placing the women and children firmly into village life, thereby closing-down World War Two, saved them.

Initially class-ridden, these women democratically bonded under their natural leaders, Miss Horsefall (Jean Anderson) and Jean. When the Japanese took Kuala Lumpur, the women were systematically robbed, separated from the men, and forced to undertake a 50-mile jungle walk at gunpoint. Miss Horsefall clashed with the Japanese Captain:

Captain: English women have grand thoughts always. Japanese women not mind walk.

Horsefall: We are not Japanese women.

Captain: No! You are arrogant English ... You will apologise and bow.

Jean diplomatically diffused the situation explaining: 'It is hard to be a prisoner. We will try to do good things'. Jean became an instant mother, initially helping the whining Mrs Holland. Upon Mrs Holland's death, Jean took responsibility for her three children. For bonding with Australian POW, Joe (Peter Finch), who stole food and medicines for them, the Japanese brutally beat her. She did not crack. The women were forced to witness Joe's punishment – crucifixion. Abandoned with one Japanese sergeant whom they finally trusted, their trek continued. Overcoming her loathing of the Japanese, Jean comforted the dying sergeant, holding-up his family photographs. 'You can't really hate people, can you?' she asked former lonely hypochondriac Mrs Frith who replied: 'That's a wonderful thing to find out', and a British trait. The survivors grew in stature under Malayan village life. Post-war, Jean returned to the village, donating the water supply they desperately desired. Reflecting on her wartime survival and maternal instincts, she remembered Robin, the remaining Holland child: 'For three years, as the rice was sown and harvested again and again, I looked after you and watched you grow. When the war ended, I gave you back to your father. It was like losing my own child'. Then she discovered that Joe survived. Close to death, he had been taken to hospital. Flying to Alice Springs in Australia, she found him. In this remote outpost of empire, they would marry. As a woman of quality and proven leadership abilities, Jean was eminently suitable for the

regeneration and continuation of British ideals. To mark its importance, the film premiered alongside the BAFTA's.

Conclusions

As World War Two escalated, women were conscripted. The war effort became total and inclusive.⁶⁹ In December, 1941 women between the ages of 20-24 joined the women's services, civil defence or the munitions industry (the exceptions were women with children under age fourteen). By 1945, half-a-million women had joined the armed services. 1939-45 films showed this. Post-1945, the notion of women 'as guardians of morals and manners', operating in the smaller domestic sphere, complemented that of elite masculinity as guardians of national interests, operating in the wider field. So, the concept of British cinema's gender separation and masculine reclamation of this war has currency but, as has been demonstrated, it is not the whole story. This chapter has identified the balance, continuity and cross-overs between 1939-45 and 1945-65 films. Women (some with young children) were present in Britain's post-1945 war genre. They were distinguished by new heights of courage, resourcefulness and efficiency, especially when face-to-face with the enemy. Crucially, some war films were based on true stories, balancing the misogyny, exclusions, negativity, mannishness, marriage-orientated propaganda and comic indulgence, also visible post-1945. Moreover, this was noticeable in the comedies too. The films of 1939-45 therefore did not represent a breakthrough in popular perceptions, but were the forerunner of both positive *and* negative depictions, whilst also championing a return to domesticity. If film-makers', especially post-1945, were overly concerned with elite masculinity, women's femininity and sexuality, it was because these were contemporaneous issues. If some women felt excluded after 1945

– landgirls, factory workers and those organising the home-front – this was because they were, to an extent.⁷⁰ Yet World War Two empowered women, who had proved their worth more than at any other point in history. British cinema’s war genre 1945-65 provided a useful forum for such issues to be accommodated and, very definitely, celebrated women’s achievements.⁷¹ Film-makers created strange bedfellows and implacable enemies on cessation of hostilities. Whilst this was a response to international political considerations, the entertainment factor is also important. Chapter 5 discusses these ambiguous, pragmatic or unyielding, depictions and portrayals against the Cold War background.

¹ On-screen dedication at the end of the film *Odette*.

² *Ice Cold in Alex*, Van Der Pohl (Anthony Quinn) of the Afrika Korps and German Army was dismissive about British women.

³ Paul (Stewart Granger) in *The Lamp Still Burns*.

⁴ A hard-headed reporter in *The Divided Heart* referred to this as an old Jewish proverb when telephoning his story on the court case to establish whether the birth or foster mother should raise the child.

⁵ On the wartime period see, for example, Gledhill, C. & Swanson, G. (Eds.), *Nationalising Femininity: Culture, Sexuality & British Cinema* (Manchester University Press, Manchester 1996), and Lant, Antonia, *Blackout: Reinventing Woman for Wartime British Cinema* (Princeton University Press, Oxford, 1991). However, Webster, Wendy, ‘Reconstructing Boundaries: Gender War & Empire in British Cinema 1945-50’, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television*, Vol. 23, No. 1, January, 2003; Geraghty, Christine, *British Cinema: Gender and the New Look* (Routledge, London, 2000), and Geraghty, ‘The Woman Between: the European Woman in Post-war British Cinema’, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, Sage Publications, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1991 and Harper, Sue, *Women in British Cinema: Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know* (Continuum, London, 2000), for example, have written briefly on aspects of the later period.

⁶ Murphy, Robert, *British Cinema and the Second World War* (London, 2000), p 110.

⁷ The Michael Balcon Archive, BFI, contains correspondence on the extent of military involvement in relation to the important film *Dunkirk*. Assistance from the Military to film-makers went beyond the supply of men, equipment, locations and contacts, as my research discovered.

⁸ Cinema did not abandon the imperialist hero entirely, his films were re-issued or re-made post-1945.

⁹ Until the 1930s when opinions were moderated, all officers in the First World War were portrayed as heroes. Cinematically, World War Two began with the officer hero but, due to criticism, quickly established the concept of the People’s War. Post 1945, the officer class was re-instated.

¹⁰ Lant, Antonia – *Blackout*, p 31.

¹¹ Spicer, Andrew, ‘The Other War: Subversive Images of the Second World War in Service Comedies. Paper given at the University of Central Lancashire in June, 2000.

¹² Porter, Vincent, ‘The hegemonic turn – Film Comedies in 1950s Britain’, *Journal of Popular British Cinema*, No. 4, 2001, p 81.

¹³ Harris, Kenneth, *Attlee* (London (1982) 1995), pp 257-258.

¹⁴ Jivani, Akarim, *It’s Not Unusual: A History of Lesbian and Gay Britain in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1997), p 89.

¹⁵ Bendit, Laurence J., M.D., M.R.C.S., & Phoebe D., *Living Together Again* (London, 1946), p 4.

- ¹⁶ Jivani, *It's Not Unusual*, discusses war's dislocations and the worries of governments and churchmen on both sides of the Atlantic that family life was under threat as a direct result of the war.
- ¹⁷ Bendit, *Living Together Again*, pp 65-66 .
- ¹⁸ Binney, Marcus, *The Women Who Lived for Danger – The Women Agents of the SOE in the Second World War* (London, 2002), Introduction, p xiii.
- ¹⁹ Binney, *ibid*, p 6.
- ²⁰ Bendit, *Living Together Again*, pp 65-66.
- ²¹ Adie, Kate, *Corsets to Camouflage* (London, 2003), quoted in the *Daily Express*, 15 October, 2003. Also a major exhibition at the Imperial War Museum, London, was opened on 15 October by the Queen, on *Women and World War Two*. The same year, a statue was erected to women's wartime service, in all areas.
- ²² Quoted in Webster, Wendy, *Imagining Home – Gender and National Identity 1945-64* (London, 1998), p 19 – this initiative was aimed at both married and single women.
- ²³ The Commission was overtaken by the post-war baby boom.
- ²⁴ This led to claims that the right-wing had appropriated feminist causes.
- ²⁵ Beveridge Report, 1942, p 52, and also see Turner & Rennell for a discussion on the effects of post-war re-adjustments.
- ²⁶ Jivani, *It's Not Unusual*, p 91.
- ²⁷ For a full discussion on these aspects of women's lives, see Lewis, Jane, *Women in England 1870-1950* (London, 1984); Lewis, Jane, *Women in Britain Since 1945 – Women, Family, Work and the State in the Post-War Years* (Oxford, (1992) 1993); Zweiniger-Bargielewska, Ina, *Women in 20th Century Britain* (London, 2001); Webster, Wendy, *Imagining Home – Gender, Race and National Identity 1945-64* (London, 1998); and Giles, Judy, *Women, Identity and Private Life in Britain. 1990-1950* (Basingstoke, 1995).
- ²⁸ Bendit, *Living Together Again*, p 66.
- ²⁹ The irony is, that by the end of this film, it is clear she will marry the Conservative candidate and found a new political dynasty.
- ³⁰ Jivani, *It's Not Unusual*, p 91.
- ³¹ Geraghty claims that women were airbrushed from the post-1945 genre, and replaced by Euro Woman, often in the Resistance and a product of the Cold War. I argue that she can be found in *The Gentle Sex* from the earlier period and, as such, is a cross-over from 1939-45 films.
- ³² This information was drawn from: *The Cruel Sea; The Gift Horse; The Long and the Short and the Tall; In Which We Serve; The Dam Busters; Reach for the Sky; The Captive Heart; Waterloo Road; The Cockleshell Heroes; Appointment in London; Dunkirk; Angels One Five; Perfect Strangers; Operation Bullshine; Piccadilly Incident; The Battle of Britain; A Town Like Alice; The Gentle Sex; Frieda; School for Secrets; Private's Progress; 2000 Women; Sink the Bismarck; Silent Enemy; Landfall; Ice Cold in Alex; Millions Like Us; The Wind Cannot Read; The Purple Plain; The Bridge on the River Kwai; Odette; Carve Her Name with Pride; The Camp on Blood Island; Conspiracy of Hearts and Sea Wife.*
- ³³ Newman, John, *Getting Around the Film World*, 16 August, 1952, p 1. G156 Balcon Archives, BFI Special Collections.
- ³⁴ Exhibition campaign book for the film *The Cruel Sea*, BFI, London.
- ³⁵ Exhibition campaign book, *ibid*.
- ³⁶ The Duke of Edinburgh cancelled his appearance at the premiere because of the death of Queen Mary.
- ³⁷ *Empire News*, 25 March, 1953. *Daily Mirror*, 25 March, 1953. *Daily Mail*, 27 March, 1953. *Daily Herald*, 25 March, 1953.
- ³⁸ Letter from Balcon to John Davis, Rank's Managing Director – 7 May, 1953. BFI Special Collections.
- ³⁹ Letter from Balcon to John Davis, *ibid*. In New York, Balcon met with: Alton Cook, *New York World Telegram*; Jack Gaver, *United Press*; Bosley Crowther, Alice Hughes, *King Realities*; Otis Guersey, *Herald Tribune*; Arthur Knight, *Esquire*; Lyda Moser, *Vogue*; Bill Law, *Look Magazine*; ABC Radio Tape Recording – "Time Capsule"; Leonard Coulter, *Film Bulletin*; Louis Berg, *This Week Magazine*; Miss Terry Morris, freelance writer for *Life* and others; Kater Cameron and Wanda Hale, *New York Daily News*; CBS, *This is New York*; Hillis Mills and Arthur Knight, *Time Magazine*.
- ⁴⁰ Lawrence Harvey's despicable character in *The Long and the Short and the Tall* (1960), described women thus. He sang a vulgar and debasing song which included mothers and sisters under the heading of tarts. *Mrs Miniver*, although an American film, was based on stories written for *The Times* that were turned into a best-selling book, and had script approval from the British Government.

⁴¹ Seminar Paper given by Andrew Spicer at the University of Central Lancashire's *Re-locating Britishness Conference* in 2000. These comedies also provided a habitat for the working classes, the 'People's War', the misfits, miscreants, mischief-makers and sheer irreverence of what Spicer refers to as the 'alternative war'.

⁴² *Divorce 1950s*, C4 TV, 2003. Over half the women who had illegitimate children during the war were married. Often the only way to save these marriages was for the children to be adopted, frequently against their mother's wishes. Studies and a recent TV documentary on divorce have highlighted how difficult many women found post-war re-adjustment to be generally, and especially where infidelity and illegitimate children were concerned.

⁴³ Interestingly, on the class issue, in *The Sea Shall Not Have Them*, a fun-seeking working class wife enroute to London whilst her husband was missing at sea, was juxtaposed with a middle class wife who had rushed to the naval base, to await news of her husband missing from the same ship. A senior officer treated the first with contempt and the second with sympathetic admiration.

⁴⁴ Adie, *Corsets to Camouflage*, p 140.

⁴⁵ A biopic of Amy Johnson, *They Flew Alone*, featured these women.

⁴⁶ Adie, *Corsets to Camouflage*, p 140.

⁴⁷ Princess Elizabeth joined the ATS to bolster its reputation also.

⁴⁸ *The Gentle Sex*, this speech was narrated at the end of the film.

⁴⁹ *The Gentle Sex*, *ibid*, praise from a male officer on a train to a doubting soldier.

⁵⁰ *Over There : Instructions for American Servicemen in Britain, 1942* (Oxford, (1942) 1994), p 12.

⁵¹ Naval Captain in *Sink the Bismarck* (1960) introducing Second Officer WRNS Davis to Captain Sheppard (Kenneth Moore), his successor in the Admiralty Operations Room.

⁵² This film is distinguished by one of its earliest scenes, where rows of uniformed women's dead bodies are gently covered by a blanket, following a serious German air-raid.

⁵³ *Over There*, p 12.

⁵⁴ Murphy, *British Cinema and the Second World War*, p 118.

⁵⁵ Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, p 7.

⁵⁶ Murphy, *British Cinema and the Second World War*, p 116.

⁵⁷ Murphy, *ibid*, p 116.

⁵⁸ See *The Real Charlotte Grays*, C5 TV, 2005 featuring several surviving SOE women. Many had tales to tell that were more exciting than Odette's or Violette's.

⁵⁹ The couple later divorced and Odette remarried.

⁶⁰ This has a basis in truth, she did buy clothes in Paris. SOE files contain invoices for several items of French couture, but not evening gowns. She was known to dress smartly. See Binney on Violette.

⁶¹ Binney, *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, pp 243-144.

⁶² Binney, *ibid*, tells remarkable stories of other female agents. Television too, has championed them with programmes such as *The Real Charlotte Grays*.

⁶³ Binney, *ibid*, p 3.

⁶⁴ Murphy, *British Cinema and the Second World War*, p 114

⁶⁵ Murphy, *ibid*, pp 118-119.

⁶⁶ Neagle, Anna, *Picturegoer*, 10 June, 1950.

⁶⁷ Geraghty, Christine, 'The Woman Between', pp 147-162.

⁶⁸ Many of the conventions of the 1950s POW cycle had appeared earlier in this film – resistance, escape, a concert, a suspected traitor, the RAF flying over on raids and patriotic songs.

⁶⁹ In March, 1941, the Employment Exchange registered all women between the ages of 19-40. Women also kept the home-front going, as mothers and homemakers, coping with bombs, death, shortages, loneliness and fears.

⁷⁰ Adie, *Corsets to Camouflage*, p 217.

⁷¹ In the 1970s, television screened *Tenko*, a hugely popular series similar to *A Town Like Alice*, and has consistently supported women's part in the Second World War. Cinema has recently returned to the subject with films such as: *Paradise Road*, *Tea with Mussolini*, *Enigma*, *Landgirls* and *Charlotte Grey*. *Landgirls* foregrounds their sexuality.

Chapter 5

ROMMEL WAS A GENTLEMAN

Yesterday's enemy?

'We do not blame modern Germany for the crimes of the past ... But if anyone is obsessed with the war, it is them ... The Germans are our friends now. We like and admire modern Germany. But Herr Naumann must not be allowed to sneer at Britain. He must not look down his nose at our war heroes who still survive ... *The Sun* thinks Herr Naumann needs reminding why Britain honours the war years'. (*The Sun*, 1999)¹

'But the myth of the Italian soldier as a quivering wretch, forever succumbing to fright or panic, is only that'. (Sullivan, 1997)²

'In the cold light of day my anger was more often turned to the Japanese who had beaten, interrogated or tortured me. I wanted to do violence to them, thinking quite specifically of how I would like to revenge myself on the goon squad from Kanburi and the hateful little interrogator from the Kempeitai'. (Lomax, 1995)³

Mindful that positive images of the Allies contrasted with negative images of the Axis, this chapter deals with post-1945 depictions of the enemy, looking in turn at the Germans, the Italians, and the Japanese. For the Allies, as previous chapters have shown, this was a "just" war - a desperate struggle between good and evil. It is 'worth dwelling on the Second World War' states political commentator Paxman:

Firstly, because wartime tends to exaggerate those things which draw a nation together; and *secondly*, because World War Two and its aftermath was the most recent occasion on which the English had a clear sense of common purpose. By their own accounts, the picture that emerges is of a quiet people who would rather not have had the inconvenience of war. They certainly only seem to have woken up to its reality at the last possible moment. They saw themselves as law-abiding and civilized. They were certainly sure enough of themselves not to hate, but to laugh at Nazism. And, for all their fear, they took pride in being outnumbered.⁴

This is largely true, but film-makers, despite using revisionist depictions as in the POW sub-genre, or allowing the nation to 'laugh at Nazism' in films such as *The Square Peg* (1958) and *The Night We Dropped a Clanger* (1959) - not discussed here - also exposed the brutal reality.

British cinema skilfully packaged this war as a triumph for British values without apparently excessive egotism,⁵ demonstrating that film-makers were attuned

to national attitudes, and were committed to national regeneration. Certainly the British saw themselves as exemplars in their stand against tyranny and their handling of the political minefield that was post-war Germany and which over-arched European reconstruction. This was reinforced by Britain's recovery and in civilised dismantling of the Empire. Accordingly, this thesis argues that considerable cultural and political ambiguity regarding the enemy permeated British World War Two films, resulting in Janus-like depictions of Germany and Italy.⁶ Most of this ambiguity inevitably concerned the Germans – deemed responsible for both World Wars.

Historian Weight's comment in *Patriots* lends credence to these findings:

The war not only honed the island identity of the British, it also intensified their dislike of the Germans ... Any sympathy the Germans had gained as a result of their harsh treatment after the First World War was erased by the international suffering Hitler caused. Now blamed for two world wars, the Germans were seen as an innately militaristic people and the main carriers of the nationalist virus to which the British thought themselves immune.⁷

He further argues that:

The Second World War soured Britain's view of their Continental neighbours, and for half a century afterwards it undermined the faltering attempts of the country's leaders to reposition Britain as a post-imperial, European nation. Henceforth, the Continent was perceived as a thoroughly alien place, at best troublesome and at worst hostile. The British did not regard all Europeans as tyrants or cowards, but the war confirmed their belief that the Continent was the place where most of the tyranny and cowardice in the world originated. It was this belief, far more than any sentimental attachment to the Empire, which caused the British to be sceptical about European Union in the post-war era.⁸

This attitude is detectable in the genre. With painstaking ambivalence, what cinema contributed in terms of a revisionist view of the enemy, it frequently rescinded with ubiquitous notions of British and Allied superiority. No such duality was granted to the Far East war. Film-makers ensured that Japan was hated. Chapter 3 has demonstrated unremitting Japanese barbarity in the POW sub-genre - particularly *The Camp on Blood Island* (1958). The American-financed exception, *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1958) allowed a personal closeness to develop between fellow warriors - the Japanese and English colonels. Nevertheless, because of Britain's ignominious

defeat in Singapore and the obscene nature of Japanese atrocities, few British films on this war were made between 1945-65, although a number have been made since.

The Germans

Politician Michael Foot, writing as 'Cato', condemned appeasers and Appeasement in his best-selling book *Guilty Men* in 1940, which was re-published post-war. Appeasement was initially criticised by many for delaying action against the tragedy which Germany visited onto Europe. Post-1945, Appeasement - and, to an extent, *Guilty Men* - suited the image of Britain as a democratic, non-militaristic, forgiving nation. The good German/bad German debate mooted in wartime was connected with the anti-Appeasement debate, and has never really been satisfactorily resolved. Between 1940-42 films such as *Pastor Hall* and *Freedom Radio* dealt with good Germans, until Lord Vansittart's views on collective guilt and imposition of a punitive peace, gained ascendancy despite vigorous opposition from influential figures such as Victor Gollancz for whom capitalism and imperialism were also blameworthy.⁹ Vansittart's credo, broadcast in his wartime radio series *Black Record*, based on his book of the same name, had crushingly argued that Germans were fundamentally envious, self-pitying and cruel. Hitler had provided the great majority of them with what they 'liked and wanted'. Therefore, they were 'all tainted'.¹⁰ From 1942, film-makers on both sides of the Atlantic heavily promoted Vansittartism. This politically pragmatic stance was deemed essential when the war escalated, Allied successes were limited, and public morale needed boosting. Post-1945, the collective guilt of the later war years officially lost favour. Politically, the position was again pragmatically reversed as the Grand Alliance faced problems, relations with Stalin and the USSR became strained, and the morale of the German people plummeted.

For Britain and the United States, rehabilitation of West Germany became necessary, if not desirable. Germans were, as received wisdom tells us, depicted in a better light and were redeemable if directed wisely. Films reflected this. Its apotheosis came with a prestigious production, Guy Hamilton's *The Battle of Britain* (1969), a British, German, French and American collaborative effort (not discussed here) that more fully embraced revisionism because national - and personal - egos were involved.¹¹ Each nation negotiated and argued with film-makers and each other.¹²

One film, *Frieda* (1947), dissected German collective guilt whilst contrasting the "light" and "dark" faces of Germany. *The Desert Fox/Rommel* (1951), although specific to the war in North Africa - a very different war - was absolutely central to the good German argument. POW films such as *The Colditz Story* (1954) portrayed war as a game both sides enjoyed, but this was only part of the equation. A considerable number of post-1945 films contained a strong anti-German bias. Often secreted in the plot, it could also be overt. Potent anti-German speeches, as demonstrated in Chapter 4, were often delivered by women in pre- and post-1945 British World War Two films, for example Irna's impassioned anti-German tirade in *The Gentle Sex* (1943), and Odette's major 'You are all responsible' speech. Perhaps women's condemnation of Germany was more politically palatable whilst Britain was suffering the aftermath of war and trying to control the international situation.

Certainly, the advice contained in the military training film for occupying US troops - *Your Job in Germany* (1945) - was virulently anti-German. Whilst it never reached a wider audience, the ideas resonate into the 21st Century:

The next war. That is why you occupy Germany. To make that next war impossible. No easy job. In battle you kept your wits about you. Don't relax that caution now. The Nazi Party may be gone. But Nazi thinking, Nazi training and Nazi trickery remain. The German

lust for conquest is not dead. It's merely gone undercover. Somewhere in this Germany are the SS guards, the *Schutztruppe*, the Gestapo gangsters. Out of uniform you won't know them. But they'll know you. Somewhere in this Germany are storm-troopers by the thousands. Out-of-sight, part of the mob, but still watching you, and hating you. Somewhere in this Germany there are 2 million ex-Nazi officials ... only yesterday, every business, every profession was part of Hitler's system ... We are determined that the vicious German cycle of war/phoney peace, war/phoney peace, war/phoney peace, shall once and for all time come to an end. That is your job in Germany.¹³

The unequivocal British film *A Defeated People* (1946), again for occupying forces, was concerned with denazification, re-education, democratic government and the emerging Cold War:

Our military government – that is your husbands and sons – have to prod the Germans into putting their house in order. Why? We have an interest in Germany that is purely selfish: we cannot live next door to a disease-ridden neighbour ... From wire cages all over Germany the master race of men are slubbering along. They are stripped of their insignia, deloused, and numbered. But this mass of humanity has to be sorted out into something like order. Not only their bodies, but also their minds. What about the ideas in their heads? ... let one man or woman, who still believes in the Nazi regime or the destiny of the German people to rule the world, take office and you have the beginnings of another war.¹⁴

That such wantonly potent imagery was conjured-up indicates the strength of feeling.

Weight comments on anti-German animosity on the home-front:

The end of the war did not temper anti-German feeling. If anything, it grew worse as Britons paused to reflect on the enormity of their suffering. On VE-Day, the *Daily Express* proclaimed: "ALL GERMANS ARE GUILTY!" In the same paper, Noel Coward wrote, "It is certainly victory over the Nazis ... but it remains to be seen whether or not we have really conquered the Germans" ... Churchill was persuaded that castrating the Germans was not a sensible peace aim ... [but] ... made no effort to distinguish between Germans and Nazis.¹⁵

Churchill's passionate anti-German VE-Day speech from the balcony of the Ministry of Health told the people:

This is not victory of a party or of any class. It's a victory for the great British nation as a whole. We were the first, in this ancient island, to draw the sword against tyranny ... The lights went out, the bombs came down ... we came back after long months from the jaws of death, out of the mouth of hell ... not only will people of this island but of the world, wherever the bird of freedom chirps in human hearts, look to what we've done and they will say, "Do not despair, do not yield to violence and tyranny, march straight forward and die if need be – unconquered" ... a terrible foe has been cast on the ground and awaits our judgement.¹⁶

'Judgement' quickly arrived. Post-1945, an 'orgy of Germanophobia' rapidly 'swept the country', Weight tells us.¹⁷ This fuelled a lasting, fiercely polarised, debate crossing all divides.

When the full horror of the Nazi State was revealed, following the screening of the Belsen newsreels, repulsion was global. Sheffield housewife and diarist for Mass Observation, Edie Rutherford, was 'tempted to feel sorry' for the German people, until she 'recalled to mind Belsen'.¹⁸ Another Mass Observation diarist Herbert Bush, on seeing concentration camp newsreels, recorded:

It was not very clear, but clear enough to make me want to put our Nazi prisoners in under the same conditions. Nothing less will make those sub-human beasts realise that it is wrong to torture other folk in such cruel ways. Even the women guards must have been sadists of the worst type ... Judging by the short glimpse I had of these females' faces, I could easily imagine them singing and cursing as they beat their helpless prisoners.¹⁹

On the 25 May he 'wondered whether death by prussic acid is very painful: I hope so, as Himmler chose that way out'. Diarist George Taylor wrote:

My wife tells me there is a lot of dissatisfaction about the reduction in rations. Most people had been expecting a lifting of rations, not a reduction – five years of struggling with food difficulties have been sufficient strain.²⁰

Rumours surrounded Hitler's death. Edie Rutherford noted:

So Hitler may be alive, and with a wife. And with Bormann and Ribbentrop too presumably? Well the earth is just not large enough to hold those folk, and we must get busy and rout them out and finish them off, if alive.²¹

Promoting Anglo-German reconciliation, the Archbishop of Canterbury (Geoffrey Fisher) urged forgiveness, claiming 'there are good Germans'.²² (His largesse did not extend to championing the Welfare State for good Britons).²³ Britain faced major economic problems, suffered an appalling winter in 1947, and was coping with shortages and rationing when the Russians blockaded British, American and French sectors of Berlin.²⁴ Attitudes towards Germany hardened. The Allies' response - the Berlin Airlift from June, 1948 until September, 1949 - caused many Christian people to question why British supplies were being sent to Germany. They felt that, as the victors who had routed the world's greatest evil, they were still making sacrifices. The added strain of the Berlin Airlift was a gesture too far.²⁵ This was mitigated by propagandistic newsreels showing British and American troops' emotional response

to the suffering of ordinary German people and their children,²⁶ although some troops were confused as to why they were saving people they had recently bombed.²⁷ In Britain, despite government efforts to alleviate post-war dissatisfaction, two persistent, strongly-held views on the treatment of Germany - forgiveness or punishment - centred on collective guilt.

However, as a Cold War buffer, Britain and America needed stability in West Germany. The collapse of the Grand Alliance, the USSR's rise to power and dominance of East Germany brought Communism too close. By 1950, Gaddis states, members of the Grand Alliance 'were Cold War adversaries'.²⁸ Their wartime success 'had always depended upon the pursuit of compatible objectives by incompatible systems ... Victory would result in these differences being impossible to overcome'.²⁹ Between 1945-1950, the Allied powers implemented a denazification programme as part of a greater plan to destroy German militarism and National Socialism, bring war criminals to account, and embark upon a policy of re-educating Germans and obtaining reparations. Britain and America expected that 'democratic institutions and practices' would triumph, once Nazi officials had been rooted out and removed from high office.³⁰ The USSR expected to advance Communism. Germans, claims Fischer, 'refused to grapple with the Nazi legacy' anyway.³¹ Escalation of the Cold War and the division of Germany into East (under the control of the USSR) and West (under the control of Britain, America and France), with Berlin shared between them, meant that emphasis shifted from denazification to rehabilitation of West Germany.³² A united Europe was favoured by many. The 1947 Truman Plan ensured continuing American involvement in Europe and, with the Marshall Plan, the USA safeguarded European economic recovery. In 1949, the American-backed North

Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) offered Europe military security. However, the formation of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1958 left Britain out in the cold.³³ Cultural life reflected these changes, occasionally leading public opinion. Although Ramsden discusses revisionism leading to a 'convergence'³⁴, this chapter argues that British cinema (and culture generally) embraced unquestionable ambivalence towards Germans.³⁵ British film-makers excelled at this, keeping their target audience firmly in mind, whilst considerably adding to the political debate.

During the war, Noel Coward, fashionable entertainer and Cultural Ambassador, sang a contentious song with anti-Appeasement and Vansittart overtones.³⁶ Churchill and Roosevelt liked it. However, in case Goebbels could misrepresent it, or it was misunderstood in Britain, it was banned by the BBC. Moreover, HMV refused to record it. Later it found favour and little opposition.³⁷ In the 1950s it was popular with Churchill and most ex-service-personnel:

Don't let's be beastly to the Germans
When our victory is ultimately won,
Let's be meek to them, and turn the other cheek to them
To try to bring out their latent sense of fun,
Let us give them full air parity
And treat the rats with charity,
But don't let's be beastly to the Hun. (Refrain 1)

Don't let's be beastly to the Germans
When the age of peace and plenty has begun.
We must send them steel and oil and coal and everything they need
For their peaceable intentions can be always guaranteed.
Let's employ with them a sort of 'strength through joy' with them
They're better than us at honest manly fun.
Let's let them feel they're swell again and bomb us all to hell again,
But don't let's be beastly to the Hun. (Refrain 3)³⁸

Revealing scurrilous undercurrents, a humorous poem on the European cultural presentation of Germans appeared in the left-wing *New Statesman*: 'It is announced that the Federal Government is expected to publish twelve rules for German tourists':

Fritz abroad, to show he can
Be a little gentleman,

Must as guest of foreign nations,
 Follow rules and regulations.
 Though at home in Germany,
 Doing what comes naturally,
 Foreigners are now complaining
 He's in need of social training,
 So the Government provide
 Every German tourist's guide.
 Fritz before the foreign host,
 Must not, as a German boast,
 Whilst there's not the slightest need
 To pretend that he's a Swede.
 In costume he must be correct,
 In conversation circumspect,
 Nor must he, on first introduction,
 Start giving foreigners instruction,
 But never speaking out of turn,
 Be ready, not to teach, but learn.
 He will not, though the urge is strong,
 Burst uninvited into song,
 Nor yet the worse for drink be seen,
 Nor be in money matters, mean.
 By such behaviour he will be
 Assured of popularity
 With Britons, Frenchmen, and the Dutch
 Who now don't like him very much,
 And soon, with reasonable care,
 Fritz will be welcome everywhere.³⁹

Because it caricatures stereotypical World War Two Germans, highlighting deeply rooted contemporaneous cross-national, cross-European and cross-cultural distrust, it is enlightening. Today, this attitude surfaces during England v Germany football matches, in behaviour, in tabloid reporting, and in music.⁴⁰ For the supporters, these matches are “battles”. They provocatively hum *The Dam Busters' March* on football terraces. This film is so powerfully ingrained in popular memory, that no explanation is necessary. Strong feelings remained with American RAF Spitfire pilot William Ash. Upon his initial capture in 1942, he articulated his view of Germany. A prodigious escapee, he finally wrote his memoirs in 1988:

The military might that allowed Hitler and his vile theories of racial supremacy to turn Europe into a giant slaughterhouse of innocent people was based on both collective muscle and individual people doing as they were told, even when they knew in their hearts that it was utterly wrong.⁴¹

Equally, whilst such anti-Germanism is common-place and long-lasting, many accept modern Germany as an “integral” part of Europe. Nevertheless, Germany's

controversial right-wing Nazi-lite trend, although small, has caused concerns recently.⁴² Clearly, alongside British cinematic depictions of Germany, during and after World War Two, a range of opinion exists but, this study argues, cinema has provided the most abiding (if pragmatically adjusted) memory of this war.

As a prelude to ambiguous depictions of Germans, *Frieda* adapted from Ronald Millar's stage play, touched on what the *Daily Telegraph* described as 'One of the great problems of our time ... How are we to treat Germans – not SS men and war criminals, but the 80,000,000 "ordinary" Germans'.⁴³ The *Evening News* thought it 'grand to have a picture you can argue about'.⁴⁴ In a comment that would gratify Goebbels and all good propagandists, *Reynolds News* noted that:

Frieda does not attempt to delve too deeply into the problems of Germany's future. But it does, by means of an absorbing, intelligent, excellently acted story, start you thinking even while it provides you with good entertainment.⁴⁵

Posters advertising *Frieda* challenged: 'Could you love Frieda?' and 'Would you take her into your home?' Since Frieda, a gentle, caring and courageous German nurse, was played by blonde Swede Mai Zetterling, the questions were rhetorical.⁴⁶ She helped British RAF pilot and POW, Robert Dawson (David Farrar), to escape. They married hastily, he with gratitude, she to escape certain death. Robert described Denfield, his home town, as 'a quiet, peaceful spot ... an ordinary town. Like any other town in England', with 'ordinary English people'. Actually, it was a semi-rural idyll. Pillars of the closely-knit community, Robert's family owned a large manor house. Frieda's arrival early in 1945 required that attitudes to Germans be examined. Reaction was mostly unfavourable. 'The whole nation' says historian Terry Lovell, 'was being invited to see itself like the Dawsons'.⁴⁷

Although a community issue, collective guilt was processed largely using the Dawson family's women. Frieda needed acceptance as Robert's wife; Judy (Glynis Johns) his brother's widow, accepted her unquestioningly; Robert's mother Mrs Dawson (Barbara Everest) was indebted because Frieda saved Robert; Nell (Flora Robson) his aunt and prospective MP saw all Germans as genetically diseased and blameworthy; and Edith (Gladys Henson) their faithful housekeeper, whose hostility was rapidly overcome. Robert's younger brother Tony (Ray Jackson) asked Edith if, like the papers said, it was 'alright to hate Germans?' He and his school friends called Frieda 'Lily the Werewolf'. But when she tended his wounds after a fight, he couldn't hate her. Leading local socialite and family friend, Mrs. Freeman (Renee Gadd), began by "cutting" Judy and Frieda and ended six months later by inviting Frieda to dinner. Robert's marriage jeopardised his private-school post. Moreover, an interesting exchange occurred between a grumbling woman and a clerk prophesying a problematic victory, as Frieda requested a ration book:

Woman: That's cool, giving our rations to a German.

Clerk: We'll be feeding the whole nation before long.

Nell, challenged whilst electioneering, was unequivocal. She represented political, and therefore official, attitudes, and expressed them following public pressure:

Nell: You have chosen to judge my attitude to the German nation as a whole by my attitude to this one German girl ... the responsibility for plunging the world into the misery and disaster of the last five years isn't the responsibility of one man, or one group of men, but with every individual member of the German nation, men and women ... is Frieda responsible? Yes she is. Passively or actively, she has been party to a monstrous crime. She cannot evade responsibility for it. She has no right to escape its consequences.

Frieda confronted Nell who was prophetic:

Frieda: It does not matter what I am myself. Whether I do right or wrong, I am a German - that is all that counts?

Nell: We are at war. When peace comes public opinion will soften. You'll be the yardstick. Six months from now, you'll be accepted by nine out of ten. I am the tenth.

At the cinema, Frieda was confronted with a *Pathe News* item, on Belsen, entitled

Horror in our Times:

A crime unparalleled in the history of the world ... human beings suffering the worst degradation the world has known, even in the darkest ages. Indistinguishable from the corpses all around, the living drag out their terrible existence side-by-side with the dead ... This indeed is Hitler's New Order. Far worse than death itself has been the fate of these victims of the Master Race ... living only in a perpetual nightmare of torture, disease and insanity. Humanity cries out that the atrocious deeds committed in the name of Germany must never desecrate the earth.

Frieda insisted on seeing it all. Robert forced her to admit culpability that she, and all Germans, knew. This was 'done by my people' she said. But Frieda began to gain acceptance. Because of her religious views, and need for full endorsement, a second, Catholic, wedding ceremony was planned. Ricky Mannsfeld (Albert Lieven), her fanatical Nazi brother, arrived wearing a Polish uniform. Ominously, he gave her a Swastika - the symbol of barbarity, whilst in church - surrounded by the symbols of Christianity. Collective guilt then centred around two discussions. The first was between the Catholic priest who believed in 'the good German' or the 'potentially good German' and Nell, who allowed no distinctions:

You can't take Germans individually ... because there's a link - a common denominator in every one of them; something that twice in our time has set the world ablaze. Call it the - essence of Germanism, the German mind. Call it what you like. It's common to every German, man woman and child, and we're blind idiots if we believe otherwise. It's inborn, in the blood.

The second was between Frieda and Nazi-obsessed Ricky, who saw Hitler's death as an interruption, not an end, to Nazism:

Frieda: Hitler is dead.

Ricky: Christ is dead.

Frieda: I was not a Nazi.

Ricky: There is no other distinction outside of a concentration camp. All Germans are one.

Frieda: You want it to happen again.

Ricky: I want it to happen again, and again and again. War is my life. What use is peace to me?

Frieda: In England, you will learn peace.

Lovell claims that here, the film linked war and sexuality. Ricky wooed Frieda for Nazism with 'a vigour, aggression and passion that Robert entirely lacks'.⁴⁸ Frieda, I suggest, equally wooed Ricky with British values. When Robert discovered that

Ricky, a guard at Brandenburg concentration camp, had sadistically maimed a Denfield POW, their vicious fight led to Ricky's death. Subsequent treatment of Frieda, by Robert and Nell, resulted in her suicide attempt. Rescued by Robert who now loved her, Frieda finally gained qualified approval from Nell - and therefore from officialdom and bigots - who admitted: 'No matter what they are. You can't treat people as less than human without becoming less than human yourself'. Historian George Perry suggests there was 'a nagging feeling throughout, that issues were not being resolved'.⁴⁹ This was apparent in the film's contrived happy ending. The play ended with Frieda's return to Germany for 'personal regeneration', symbolic of German regeneration. But the raising of these contemporaneous social and political issues was significant, and unusual. However, depictions of other Germans were far more ambiguous.

Adapted from the book by Kendal Burt and James Leasor and based on a true story, the film *The One That Got Away* (1957) provided a notable exception to the eulogization of British officers. Director Roy Baker made the allegedly revisionist film, to showcase the dramatic escapes from British and Canadian incarceration, of Franz von Werra (Hardy Kruger), a highly-decorated German pilot. Imprisonment in Canada was the British equivalent of Colditz Castle. Von Werra conducted his *Boys' Own*-type escape from Canada to America in the manner of an English ex-public-school officer, whose chums willingly aided and abetted.⁵⁰ Baker apparently held strong views on post-1945 cinematic Germans:

I have never been the sort of director who deliberately makes films with a message, but I came close to it with *The One That Got Away*. From the early 1940s, which meant a period of 15 years or more, I became more and more irritated by the depictions of Germans as homosexual Prussian officers, Gestapo torturers or beer-swilling Bavarians, all presented in ridiculously hammy performances. I had no doubt at all that these characterisations could be proved to exist in Germans - and possibly other nations - but, in my opinion, those cartoon caricatures were dangerously misleading. Just the sort of thing to get the film-

makers a bad name and give audiences a wrong impression. On at least three occasions during the war, the Germans had come close to winning it. By 1957, when the film was shown, they had already shown clear signs of a formidable industrial recovery, heading for leadership of Europe . . . In general they were not the joke characters as shown in the forties and fifties, and they certainly aren't now.⁵¹

Intrigued by the impressive odds against such a feat, Baker was heavily criticised 'for making a German into a hero'.⁵² Kruger, a 'very personable' young German actor, had been carefully selected, and the character's arrogance was considerably toned-down to make the film audience-friendly.⁵³

However, analysis suggests that Baker's film carried a key message that, despite his protestations, was definitely ambivalent. Von Werra, however resourceful, was depicted as an arrogant liar, a braggart, self-publicist and, ominously, an ardent supporter of Nazi Germany for his own advancement. Therefore, the British were superior. Each of his egotistical gestures or speeches was followed by British understatement such as: 'It's the usual claptrap', delivered with studied boredom. Captured during the Battle of Britain, Von Werra was quickly unmasked by gentlemanly, restrained and far more intelligent British interrogators.⁵⁴ Their techniques, although solicitous, were indisputably maverick, but clearly serving national (and international) interests.⁵⁵ Von Werra's interview with Army Interrogator (Colin Gordon) yielded unwitting information to both audiences and interrogators:

Interrogator: Oh, you Germans are so supremely confident.

Von Werra: Don't you know why? You must understand Captain, morale depends on strength, and we are strong, stronger in every respect.

Interrogator: And that's the whole basis of it?

Von Werra: Absolutely. The German people are as one man – our will to victory is irresistible, that is our strength. Of course, we admire England's courage to go on fighting alone, but you will not win.

This speech reflected Vansittart's views on collective guilt, re-confirmed that Germans were arrogant bullies, and boosted England's reputation. RAF

interrogator (Michael Goodliffe) branded Von Werra a publicity-seeking show-off who, to gain promotion in the competitive Luftwaffe, untruthfully claimed to have downed thirteen enemy aircraft in combat, and destroyed six on the ground. Von Werra, sensing photo opportunities in German magazines, ostentatiously kept a pet lion-cub. 'Your glory is largely fictitious', the Squadron-Leader told him, portentously asking: 'What would happen if your fellow captives found out?' Like his English counterparts, Von Werra planned to escape. He succeeded twice. Shipped to Canada, he staged his courageous and ambitious third escape whilst crossing it by train. Travelling alone through Arctic conditions he reached America.

An end note revealed that Von Werra returned to Germany but was lost over the sea soon after. Unlike Guy Gibson, whose similarly untimely death was ignored in *The Dam Busters*, Baker chose to end his film with the death of Von Werra, which undermined his heroic status. Alongside Baker's favourable depictions of the British, this may be the film's real message. The critic of *Films and Filming* mischievously noted:

A first-rate adventure ... with a generosity justified by the prodigious number of British escapes from Nazi captivity that have been celebrated in British films and the heartening knowledge that the case in question was very nearly unique.⁵⁶

Kinematograph Weekly described it as being 'fought mostly on "old school tie" lines', advising that 'it should tickle and trip both sexes'.⁵⁷ But the *Daily Herald* combined aversion to Germans with criticism of Baker:

I had a vision this week ... of thousands of Germans laughing their square heads off at the expense of the British ... it leaves a nasty taste since it is based on the kind of forgive-and-forget mentality which many people will not find to their liking.⁵⁸

Kennedy of the *Daily Worker* branded it 'Rank's Tribute to Nazi Braggart':

The Rank Organisation has grabbed the dubious privilege of being the first British company to make a film glorifying the Nazi air-ace who escaped from a British POW camp just after the Battle of Britain.⁵⁹

Undoubtedly, Baker re-opened old wounds. Closer to other directors than he acknowledged, he actively promoted British values.

Moreover, six years earlier, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel became the first chivalric German in *The Desert Fox* (1951). Connelly tells us that the desert war was legendary for its 'purity', 'cleanliness' and 'gallantry'.⁶⁰ This favoured the myth of 'good Germans ... not necessarily motivated by Nazi ideology'.⁶¹ Furthermore, the 'Afrika Korps and Rommel were the perfect vehicles' through which to 'rehabilitate the West Germans as a decent, freedom-loving people who could be trusted'.⁶² Rommel's myth began in 1941. 'Acutely aware of the power of propaganda in developing his career and reputation',⁶³ he was its chief architect. A World War One hero, Rommel produced a highly-regarded tactical manual, *Infantry Attacks*.⁶⁴ Young describes Rommel as: 'The most celebrated German soldier since World War I'. In 1939 he commanded Hitler's bodyguard, and later took command of the 7th Panzer Division in 1940. Rommel became a 'daring commander of fast-moving armoured formations'.⁶⁵ His suicide was surrounded by intrigue, making him an ideal candidate as a good and honourable enemy. An American film, *The Desert Fox* had enormous British input, and was based on a book written by Brigadier Desmond Young, a British officer,⁶⁶ who had met Rommel in Africa. Mythologisation began immediately. During what the film's narrator described as a ruthless, 'brilliantly conceived and executed' (but ultimately unsuccessful) British Commando raid on Rommel's North African headquarters, a dying soldier asked: 'Did we get him?' A German replied: 'Are you serious?' In 1941, the Commander in the Western Desert, Claude Auchinleck's instructions to all Colonels and Chiefs of Staff of Middle East Forces advised:

There is a real danger that Rommel is becoming a kind of magician or bogeyman to our troops, who are talking far too much about him. He is by no means a superman, although he is undoubtedly very energetic and able. Even if he were a superman, it would still be highly undesirable that our men should credit him with supernatural powers. I wish you to dispel, by all possible means, the idea that Rommel represents something more than an ordinary German general ... please ensure this order is put into immediate effect and impress on all commanders that, from a psychological point-of-view, it is a matter of the highest importance.

After capture Desmond Young refused a German order to persuade the British to cease bombardment. Threatened with brutality, he was championed by Rommel (James Mason), who upheld the Geneva Convention.⁶⁷ They exchanged respectful salutes, Young enthused:

A fox ... his tricks had made even the Tommies tremble ... In spite of which, he was still my enemy, not only of my country, but of all life as I knew it. Not only of democracy as we freemen fashioned it, but of civilisation as we knew it. My first and only sight of the cool, hard professional soldier whose scrupulous regard for the rules of warfare had been exercised in this instance, so fortunately for myself.

Post-1945, Young sought the truth about Rommel's death. Rommel, 'almost a Brit', could 'pull something out of the bag when things looked bleak'.⁶⁸ Favoured by Hitler, he fought an impressive desert campaign despite illness and overwhelming odds. Hitler broke promises regarding fuel, tanks and equipment and demanded that they fight to the last man. 'This is an order to throw away an entire army. He is insane', said Rommel's shocked aide. Blindly defending Hitler as faultless, Rommel revealed a personal ruthlessness echoing that of the Fuhrer, but denied collective guilt:

It's not Hitler, it's those hoodlums again, those thieves and crooks and murderers. Those toy soldiers ... How can he listen to such nonentities? How can he even stand the smell of such filth? Why doesn't he slaughter the lot of them, use his own intelligence?

Dr. Karl Strolin (Cedric Hardwicke), told Rommel of the plan to assassinate Hitler although Rommel was not a full-time July plotter. Surviving this attempt, Hitler gave Rommel a loaded choice - public trial and family disgrace, or self-administered poison, his family's safety and a cover-up. Despite critics' complaints

about honouring a German, this film was ambiguous. It continuously denigrated Nazi Germany and everything that Rommel fought desperately to preserve, thereby questioning his judgement and mitigating admiration. Additionally, long periods of Allied bombardment suggest that it was a paean of praise to British endeavour. For Churchill, El Alamein marked a turning point in the war. 'Before Alamein we never had a victory' he declared, 'after Alamein we never had a defeat'.⁶⁹ This pervades the film and his voice-over, on Rommel, ended it:

His ardour and daring inflicted grievous disaster on us, but he deserved the salute which I made in the House of Commons in June 1942. He also deserves our respect for, although loyal as a German soldier, he came to hate Hitler's ineptitude, and took part in the conspiracy to rescue Germany by displacing the maniac. For this, he paid the forfeit of his life. In the sombre wars of modern democracy, there is little place for chivalry.

Arguably, when Montgomery took over the Eighth Army, Rommel met his actual and cinematic equal. Montgomery even emulated Rommel's self-publicity to counteract German propaganda. In Rommel's case, this study argues, his cinematic legend was both lauded, and devalued, by film-makers' tribute, subtle debunking and ambiguity. Equally, Montgomery's legend was strengthened by not being shown in the film. He subtly became a 'kind of magician or bogeyman'.

Certainly, Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger were masters of the art of the Janus face. Their sea epic, *The Battle of the River Plate* (1956), concerning Britain's first significant naval victory in World War Two, had the backing of Lord Louis Mountbatten and the co-operation of the British, US, and New Zealand Navies. This important and ambiguous film presented an apparently chivalric and gentlemanly German Captain, Hans Langsdorff (Peter Finch), of the "indestructible" German pocket-battleship, the *Admiral Graf Spee*. Duality immediately surfaced. 'No-one suspected that a killer was lurking in the South

Atlantic', the narrator emotively explained. Yet, when sinking British merchant shipping, Langsdorff had picked-up their officers and crews, making them comfortable. 'Pirates, that's what you are', Captain Dove of the merchant ship *Africa Shell* bravely complained, arguing that he had been sunk inside territorial waters. Seemingly reasonable, Langsdorff admitted deliberate killing of civilians:

If you were in territorial waters, it makes it very difficult for me. You write out your protest, I will give you a receipt. I do not like sending ships to the bottom ... nor do I like making war on civilians. Up until now, it's the civilians who have suffered in this war. My orders are to sink merchant ships and avoid a battle.

Condemning Germany's pusillanimous actions, Dove warned: 'One of these days ... you might run up against one of ours.'⁷⁰ A mutually respectful relationship developed. Yet, Langsdorff cheated again, placing his model of Dove's ship outside the line on his coastal map. Machiavellian in disguising his ship's type and usage to get close enough to sink thousands of tonnage, Langsdorff became a bogey-man. Confiding in Dove, and softening the Nazi image, Langsdorff likened his actions to those of a 'pretty girl', who 'changed her clothes' according to the occasion.

Further proving Germany's treachery, Commodore Harwood (Anthony Quayle) briefed the captains of HMS *Exeter*, *Ajax* and *Achilles*:

The *Graf Spee* was in position well before war was declared. Up to September 30th, she attacked no shipping. I can guess why not. Hitler thought that after the fall of Poland, Britain and France would make peace. On September 30th, she sank the *Clement* . . . between 5th and 10th October, her victims were the *Newton Beach*, *Ashley*, *Huntsman* and *Trevarni*. She moved to a new hunting ground ... presumably to attack the Cape and Australia routes. But she sank a small tanker *The Africa Shell* ... same day she sank the Blue Star Line's *Doric*.

With commendable naval skill and daring, Quayle attacked. Heavily engaged, *Exeter* suffered serious damage, Captain Bell (John Gregson) courageously decided that he would ram the *Graf Spee* if necessary: 'It would be the end of us, and the end of her, and that is all that matters'. Langsdorff's crippled ship became trapped in the neutral port of Montevideo, Uruguay. Honouring the International Code, he

released his prisoners. Giving Dove his model of *The Africa Shell*, Langsdorff revealed his flawed judgement, and reinforced the superiority of the British who, unlike the Germans, had courageously attacked a bigger, fully-armed warship:

It wasn't until we closed on them that I realized they were cruisers ... I couldn't take my eyes off them. They came at me like destroyers ... I couldn't believe they would do that unless they were supported by bigger ships.

Allowed three days for repairs, Langsdorff astonished the world's press and diplomatic core by sailing on schedule, despite facing annihilation. Praised by Harwood, HMS *Cumberland* arrived to reinforce Britain's blockade. Langsdorff scuttled his ship, commenting 'crew comes first'. Harwood, delighted and very British, exclaimed: 'Many lives have been saved today'. Dove assured Langsdorff that 'everyone on shore whose come in contact with you, respects you'. Nevertheless, an American reporter's commentary established that an important arm of a malevolent world threat had been removed by the British:

A tiger of the seas has been hunted down, burning from stern to stern, while the hunters – those who tracked her down, fought her and pursued her and drove her to a violent and tragic death ... are back on their watch.

This film enjoyed massive publicity and a Royal Premiere. The press book suggested: competitions; guards-of-honour; stage shows; foyer displays; naval publicity and recruitment; high-ranking naval officers; civic officials; tracing veterans and inviting film critics and press. An impressive, five-part picture strip was made available to local and national newspapers.⁷¹ In this narrative, with its youth appeal, British naval superiority was explicit and German treachery was implicit, despite Langsdorff's celebrity.⁷²

Warming to their duality-of-purpose theme, Powell and Pressberger provided another "likeable" German officer. *Ill Met By Moonlight* (1957), an adventurous, public-school romp, was again based on a true story, 'The Wartime

Diary, in Crete, of W. Stanley Moss'. The film opened with a blatantly anti-German narration that praised Allied assistance, especially the 'handful of islanders from the British Isles', and linked the Cretans to the Grecian Wars:

Nobody outside of Crete, knows what the Cretans went through in the years following the German invasion. It was a nightmare of horrors, most of it caused by their kindness to Allied strikers, sheltering them, feeding them, looking after them, as after their own children.

Major Paddy Leigh-Fermor (Dirk Bogarde), and his chosen companion Captain Billy Stanley Moss (David Oxley), kidnapped hard-line Prussian aristocrat General Karl Kreipe (Marius Goring), spiriting him to Cairo with considerable help from the Cretan Resistance. Leigh-Fermor, prone to swaggering around in pirate dress, was a member of Special Services who were working with the Cretans to defy the vicious Nazi occupation. Kreipe and Leigh-Fermor played a cat-and-mouse game, wherein Kreipe surreptitiously left clues for German soldiers - his Knights' Cross, his Iron Cross 1st Class, his hat, buttons and lucky gold coin - and Leigh-Fermor secretly rounded them up. Attempting to bribe Leigh-Fermor's young Cretan helper Niko (Dimitri Andreas), Kreipe was dismayed to learn that the Germans had burned Niko's house down, brutally shot and killed his father, forced his mother and sister to flee to a distant village and left Niko to fend for himself.

At the submarine pick-up point, the British officers asked Kreipe if he knew Morse Code. Shocked that British "amateurs" and Cretan "illiterates" had routed the Third Reich's best, he gasped at their audacity. Leigh-Fermor also demythologised Rommel:

Kreipe: You are taking me to Cairo?

Leigh-Fermoy: Field Marshal Rommel didn't make it, but you will.

Kreipe: God in Himmel! I have allowed myself to be captured by amateurs. I shall be the laughing stock of the Wehrmacht.

Reminding Kriepe that the Cretans were philosophers thousands of years ago, when ‘your ancestors were running around with horns on their heads’,⁷³ Leigh-Fermor demeaned Nazi efforts to create a civilized, archeologically sound, master-race ancestry. On-board the submarine, an admiring Kriepe was made comfortable:

Kriepe: You are not amateurs, but professionals.

Leigh-Fermor: No hard feelings?

Kriepe: It was a highly successful military operation, brilliantly executed.

Leigh-Fermor: Do you have a message for General Brier? [Kriepe’s deputy]

Kriepe: Yes, tell him that he is an incompetent idiot.

Despite the respect engendered between Kriepe and Leigh-Fermor, the “amateurish” British emerged as superior, professional defenders of the under-dog, against militant, brutal and incompetent invaders.

Whilst film-makers offered a number of ostensibly “likeable” (but ultimately inferior) Germans in all arenas, other war films contained overtly anti-German material. In *The Small Back Room*, Captain Stuart (Michael Gough) was revolted by a new type of German bomb that had killed several children who handled it. Scientist Sammy Rice (David Farrar), disarming the double booby-trapped bomb, was equally damning:

Stuart: I expect the blasted things are mocked-up as teddy-bears or candy bars. Jerry has a lovely mind.

Sammy: Jerry certainly is no gentleman.

As a small-scale drama, and untypical in terms of other films in the war genre, *Dick Barton Special Agent* (1948), still demonstrated an unequivocally damning position on the differences between British democratic ideals and Germany’s ruthless disregard of humanity.⁷⁴ Not only was Barton (Don Stannard) a gentleman, but - underlining British chivalry - he was imprisoned in a suit of armour by a manic Nazi who had escaped Nuremberg’s judgement and proposed to unleash Hitler’s lunatic plan on an English coastal backwater. Once implemented, it would eliminate the

entire population by infecting British water supplies with billions of cholera germs, 'Germany's deadly little allies'. Cholera as a German ally melded with the notion of a diseased nation of genocidal killers. Barton angrily shouted:

That's just the kind of filth your sort would dream up ... They hang your sort in this country ... I've seen your picture in a file with a lot of other rats ... you won't get away with this ... you filthy swine.

True to imperialist literature, a boy helped Barton until it became too dangerous:

Boy: I'm a Barton boy.

Dick: You've done a grand job, but its man's work now.

Later, Dick tellingly commanded: 'Hold on there, young warrior'. In this scenario, British masculinity was chivalrous, brave and resourceful, providing a national role model whilst involving British youth - the target audience.

Twelve years later, *Sink the Bismarck* (1960) depicted Hitler-worshipping, glory-seeking Admiral Lutjens (Karel Stepanek) as a fanatic who deliberately drowned his own sailors in his lust to serve the Fuhrer. Occasionally contrasted with the ship's more compassionate, modest Captain Lindermann (Carl Mohner), Lutjens dominated the *Bismarck's* action. Seduced by death and destruction, especially when delivered from a position of strength, he declared:

We are going to sink their ships until they no longer dare to let them sail ... You are sailing in the largest, the most powerful battleship afloat, superior to anything in the British Navy. We are faster, we are unsinkable and we are German. You cadet officers have been selected by the highest authority to make this voyage. When you return to the fleet, you will have many interesting stories to tell ... of German seapower ... of Nazi victory ... Never forget that you are Germans. Never forget that you are Nazis.

Significantly, he did not differentiate between being a Nazi and being German. Rejoicing in the blowing-up of HMS *Hood* with the loss of the 1500 souls, Lutjens' saw only personal advancement. Bragging about Hitler's congratulatory telegram and promise of Luftwaffe cover, he believed they were invincible. Lutjens' fanaticism was responsible for *Bismarck's* destruction. Against Lindermann's

advice and, as Hitler's unquestioning acolyte, he refused to enter port for repairs: 'It was not the victory that was ordered'. The British Captain was introspective after destroying the *Bismarck*. His conduct, and telegram to the Admiralty, spoke volumes about the British at war. '*Bismarck* is sunk. Fleet is returning', he wrote. 'Gentlemen, let's go home', he simply told his men. Without gloating or rejoicing at enemy lives lost, survivors were picked-up. Unnecessary or gratuitous brutality was un-British.

Some of the most abiding images of German brutality, apart from the torture scenes in *Odette*, belong to *Seven Thunders* (1957) and Balcon's *Dunkirk*. In *Seven Thunders*, a bullying German soldier, brandishing his machine gun, repeatedly threatened harmless small children playing inside a building. Angrily firing to frighten them, he killed a little girl. Shaking with fear of French reprisals, he ran away. Following this killing, the whole of Marseilles's Old Quarter stood, silently exuding palpable hatred of this barbaric occupation. German soldiers were also depicted as rapists, drunks and dropouts. Despite knowing that the Quarter was an area of relentless poverty, an SS General, and Hitler's acolyte, ordered the Colonel to force the inhabitants out, thereby destroying their spirit and keeping heavily armed Germans safe:

General: Do whatever is needed ... It is not safe for our men to show themselves down there, even in daytime.

Colonel: Are you seriously suggesting that I should destroy the homes of more than 20,000 men, women and children?

General: Your humanitarian sentiments do you credit. You have heard the Fuhrer's orders. How you carry them out is your affair.

Complicit and lacking in humanity, the Colonel blew-up their homes as people fled, providing another cowardly and savage image of the German occupation. *Dunkirk* began with the aerial gunning-down of helpless refugees - mostly the elderly, women and children. Although this was a frequent cinematic depiction, when

compounded with the harrowing beach scenes as the Luftwaffe rained terror down on largely unarmed men - many already dreadfully injured and trapped between the heavily armed Germans and French coast - German barbarity was writ large. The most appalling scene was the aerial attack unleashed on kneeling men and youths, praying at a makeshift service. However, one film, *The Man Who Never Was* (1956), based on a true story, eulogised British Naval Intelligence's sophisticated invasion ruse, and apparently saluted Teutonic thoroughness; then, by second-guessing Germany's response, de-valued the enemy's diligence. Having prepared a man's body to represent a drowned officer-courier, and chaining a briefcase containing fake plans to invade Sicily to his wrist, the British dropped it off the coast of Spain. This fooled the enemy by diverting attention from the real invasion. German experts meticulously examined, and authenticated, the documents. In London, they used Irish spy Patrick O'Reilly (Stephen Boyd), who contacted Irish malcontents, and investigated the fictional officer's life.⁷⁵ This indicated a crack German intelligence network in the heart of London. Foiling this doubly reinforced Britain's achievements, and undermined the Irish.⁷⁶ From these examples alone, we can see both Vansittart's and revisionist representations of Germans, frequently in the same film. But cinema's over-arching message was national regeneration and the promotion of British leadership. Despite revisionism, Germans habitually appeared untrustworthy, cowardly, brutal or inefficient.

The Italians

The comic image of the Italian Army persists. It was echoed in *'Allo, 'Allo*, the oft-repeated, 1980s British television comedy series, which caricatured an Italian captain bedecked with more plumes than an ostrich and enough braid and

medals to cover an army of colonels. Along with his fey, lazy disposition and flirtatiousness, it is hardly a picture of a warrior hero.⁷⁷ In *The Cockleshell Heroes* (1955), a commando taking part in an initiative test - dressed as a German paratrooper - had to get from Scotland to Portsmouth, without official assistance. Acquiring an Italian Captain's uniform, a thing of conspicuously theatrical beauty, with an overly large braided hat, he endured a barrage of ribald comments directed against the Italian Army. A comically insulting portrayal in the POW film *Danger Within* (1959) actually damaged Anglo-Italian relations.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, historian Brian Sullivan redeemed the Italian soldier, stating that he was bedevilled by national poverty, poor leadership, lack of training, housing and proper clothing. His inferior equipment was inadequate. Furthermore, he suffered from officers' snobbery and lack of comradeship.⁷⁹ Sullivan cites numerous incidences where Italian soldiers fought bravely.⁸⁰ In reality, 'in all of Italy's wars, as in the Second World War, the Italian soldier was as brave as any other. In some ways he displayed more valour than most'.⁸¹ Their disintegration in September, 1943 resulted in national shame which, he notes, resonates today in their 'sense of dishonour' at their failure to defend Rome:

Throughout the war, whether under Mussolini or Badoglio, the Italian soldier had done his best, fighting for what he was told were his country's interests and honour. Three-hundred-and fifty-five thousand died in battle, succumbed to wounds or perished in prison camps. The incompetent leaders at the summit of the fascist *regime* and its militarist-monarchist successor failed to match such selflessness and dedication. The Italian soldier deserved better, even considering the purpose of his war. That he fought for an evil cause in 1940-43 is incontestable. That he fought heroically is undeniable.⁸²

Italian director Roberto Rossellini's landmark realist film *Rome, Open City* (1945), was one of the first films that attempted to restore Italy's wartime reputation by redressing some widely believed inaccuracies and imbalances. He highlighted Italian suffering and resistance to Nazi occupation.⁸³ This film, popular in America, was followed by *Two Women* (1960) which also foregrounded Italian suffering.

Sullivan's revisionist findings, and cinema's duality, are reflected in a positive reference from Rommel's aide in *The Desert Fox* (1951). Commenting on the hopelessness of their situation, despite their superb fighting skills, he indirectly praised the valour and endurance of Italy's soldiers, telling the Field Marshal: 'The Italians have had almost as much as they can take'. *The Silent Enemy* (1958) provided another positive depiction. Although they were fighting a covert guerrilla war from neutral Algeiras, Italian frogmen were resourceful and courageous. Their leader Tomolino (Arnoldo Foa) was described by British hero, Lt. Crabb (Lawrence Harvey), as the finest and most respected marine engineer in the world. As human torpedoes, their weaponry was pioneering, whilst their mode of attack was innovative, superbly planned and executed. One major British film, *Conspiracy of Hearts* (1960), used Italian heroism to turn a former enemy into an ally. Catholic nuns - from several nations, including England - housed in an Italian Convent, bravely, and intelligently, conspired with Italian soldiers and the Italian Resistance to save Jewish children from Nazi annihilation.

Conspiracy of Hearts forcefully separated Italians from Nazi brutality. It also promoted certain elite British values. Reverend Mother Katherine (Lilli Palmer), representing compassionate and resourceful humanity, was a German princess. Initially, not all the nuns approved as she risked her convent by making it a safe-haven for Jewish children relentlessly hunted by the Nazis. Her faith - and Nazi atrocities - convinced doubters:

Sister Gerta (Yvonne Mitchell): It is the second time this week we've nearly been caught.
Mother Katherine: No, it is the second time this week that we've been saved.

Following Mussolini's downfall, governance of Florence was assumed by the Nazis. Mother Katherine, fearing they would enter the village, demonstrated that even God

would have a hard fight against the Germans: 'Our work will need all the help from heaven it can get'. The new Nazi governor Colonel Horsten (Albert Lieven) was introduced to apparently indolent Italian Major Spoletti (Ronald Lewis) by robotic Nazi Lt. Schmidt (Peter Arne):

Horsten: Schmidt's an invaluable man Major, completely obedient, completely stupid. With a regiment like him I could conquer the world.

Spoletti: (Insolently) - Haven't you such a regiment Colonel?

Horsten: (Lighting a cigarette) - British, it works every time, if it would fail now and then I would feel more hopeful of winning this war.

Horsten was concerned about incessant Italian partisan activity near the Garrison:

Spoletti: Partisans live in the hills ... Nobody knows who they are, where they are.

Horsten: These Will'O'the Wisps are effectively dynamiting a number of our supply trains needed at the front.

Spoletti: I can tell you nothing helpful.

Horsten: You have the highest percentage of people escaping from any camp in Italy.

Spoletti: We, in the Italian Army, have had no training in the confinement of children. It didn't seem reasonable to make such a fuss over children.

Horsten: The German Army is no more responsible for Nazi politics than you are of Mussolini's idiot dream of being Caesar. I am as tired as you of this new business, I wish it had never started ... If an army was totally reasonable, it would not fight at all. But we are at war, and all orders must be obeyed. All orders.

This speech went directly to the culpability of all Germans and the bravery of the Italians. During the next children's escape attempt, the Germans accidentally killed a nun. Mother Katherine asked them not to punish the transgressor: 'Adding one brutality to another is against God's Law'. When a curfew, broken on pain of death, was imposed, she condemned it:

Mother Katherine: You are threatening us with murder?

Horsten: I cannot argue the morality of war with you.

Mother Katherine: No sir, you can't.

A severely traumatised Jewish girl, when asked her name, whispered 'Jewish Dog'. Novice Sister Mitya (Sylvia Syms) gasped: 'Who could do this to little children?' Starving and terrified, these innocents had lost trust. An Italian truck driver noticed the lack of meat bones in the camp's garbage, indicating meagre provisions for Jewish children. 'We save them for the Italian Army', a German soldier mocked,

‘especially the backbones’. This subtly transferred Italy’s war with the Allies - and resultant lack of respect - to their new enemy the Germans.

Because of their religious festival Yom Kippur, the starving children refused to eat. Highlighting the importance of religious freedoms, Mother Katherine and the nuns learned Jewish rituals. The Resistance found a courageous Rabbi (David Kossoff). ‘Is there a Rabbi left in Europe’, a surprised Sister Gerta asked, ‘the Germans have been so thorough?’ The festival showed just how thorough, it required that the children write the names of dead relatives. Each child had a lengthy list. Horsten raided the convent during the celebration. As the petrified children tried to escape, the Rabbi was shot and killed. An Italian Catholic Priest assisted a Jewish boy in giving the last rights. This crucially established the boy’s manhood. Nazi barbarity escalated. They beat the Priest mercilessly, and manhandled Mother Katherine, threatening to shoot her and three nuns, continuing with every tenth nun unless they informed. Mother Katherine declared: ‘The same God who loves children, punishes with all the tortures of Hell, the killers of children’. Tellingly, Horsten sneered: ‘If only martyrs knew what bores they are’. As Spoletti and the firing squad fought and killed the Germans, he called Horsten a ‘brute’. Significantly, two of war’s most searing images, and reasons to fight, were foregrounded - brutality towards nuns (women) and children.⁸⁴

The Japanese

When news of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima was made known, the public’s attitude towards the Japanese was ‘serve them right’. An understandable desire to punish is discernible in some Mass Observation diaries. Herbert Bush wrote:

News of the first atomic bomb dropped on Japan; what an awful weapon judging by the papers. Where should we be now if the Germans had made them first? It is probably a painless death to die by atomic bomb, and all your friends would be with you when you went into the unknown.⁸⁵

Previously Herbert wondered:

How the Allies will fix up peace with Japan and still leave the Emperor on the throne. The best thing we could do would be to lock him up and make the Japanese understand that he is not a divine creature after all ... Now what shall we do with our stock of atomic bombs? There is no place in the world to drop them on except Japan.⁸⁶

Whilst Edie Rutherford commented: 'Japan gets her second atomic bomb. How many before she wakens? I brought up the subject of the new bomb at work yesterday. Horror of its power is definitely the chief reaction'.⁸⁷ The next line of her entry superficially concerned the arrival of grapefruits. Angry at Japanese stubbornness, Herbert speculated: 'I wonder what game the Japs are playing now. I expect that we shall have to drop another bomb before they make up their minds to allow the Emperor to take orders from a soldier, a foreign devil'.⁸⁸ Yet, Edie was conscious of Japanese barbarism to POWs, and British suffering:

One girl at work maintains that because of the atomic bomb we are as bad as the Japs. I hotly repudiated the idea. Bombing like that gives a quick, clean death, whereas the tortures inflicted upon our men by the Japs makes a drawn-out and appalling end for a man ... if the 70,000 civilians this island lost in air raids etc. had gone in one night, we'd have had five years in which to pull ourselves together, whereas having lost them in six years, we are going to take years yet.⁸⁹

In June, 2005, Japanese Health Minister, Masahiro Morioka, told right-wing MPs:

The trials which condemned those behind atrocities that included the deaths of thousands of British POWs were not valid ... "It is wrong to say that only the victorious countries are right and that defeated countries are wrong ... [the guilty men] ... were not considered criminals in Japan and their trials were illegal."⁹⁰

Outraged ex-POWs and veterans complained that this 'would reopen old wounds' as the 60th Anniversary of VJ-Day approached. Japanese barbarity towards would-be escapers was highlighted as one survivor described how, amongst non-stop barbarity, beheadings were common. He witnessed 'four recaptured POWs being put to the sword, describing the blood spurting out of their necks "like two great red walking sticks"'.⁹¹ The *Daily Express* asked: 'Did Japanese soldiers commit war

crimes?’⁹² On the VE-Day commemorations in August 2005, an angry *Daily Express* editorial headed: ‘Sorry is still not enough’, accompanied an article: ‘Tributes to our Burma Stars on a day of tears’:

Japan’s Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has apologised for his country’s savagery in the Second World War. This is far too little, far too late. It remains Japan’s great shame that, unlike Germany, it has never properly confronted its wartime past. An expression of “deep reflections and heartfelt apology” might sound sincere but what Japan clearly wishes is for the whole subject to simply go away ... And it is noteworthy that while Japan is forcing itself to say sorry, its government is also approving textbooks that whitewash its wartime atrocities.⁹³

Whilst a *Daily Mail* article, *Gateway to Hell*, discussing the closure of the notorious Changi jail, graphically detailed Japanese atrocities during the fall of Singapore:

In one sickening incident, some 400 patients, doctors and orderlies in the city’s Alexandria Hospital had been butchered. A surgeon was even bayoneted in the middle of an operation, as was the man he was operating on. For those who escaped this slaughter, an equally terrible fate awaited ... [the Bangkok, Rangoon, Burma railway] ... It was not without reason that Changi became known as the “Gateway to Hell”.⁹⁴

Clearly, unlike Germany, the strength of ill-feeling towards Japan has never abated.

As Chapter 3 has established, the Japanese treated military and civilian POWs, with premeditated and gratuitous barbarity. Japanese disregard for human life extended to ill-treatment of civilian women and children who had become POWs. References to Japan’s refusal to sign the Geneva Convention appeared in all POW films. The Japanese, intensely racist, hated ‘arrogant’ white women, delighting in forcing their passive obedience, even offering them positions as prostitutes. Yet they never diminished the women’s spirit. Within the bounds of existing censorship on the portrayal of women and violence, *A Town Like Alice*, (1956) from a novel by Nevil Shute, based on a true story, exemplified this. As discussed in Chapter 4, this film eulogised British women POWs. As used here, it is unequivocal on Japan’s implicit malevolence. When Kuala Lumpur was over-run in 1942, the brutality meted out by the Japanese left women and children shaking

with fear. They were manhandled and robbed by armed soldiers. Their men-folk were beaten, removed or murdered. Earlier, British soldiers' bodies had been looted. This established their captors as monsters, a view further advanced as soldiers tricked and forced the women and children to undertake a continuous march through the Malayan jungle, without supplies or medicines. Certainly the camp commandants, watching them beg, reinforced the image of calculated barbarism. Callously condemning the women to certain lingering death, they plumbed new depths of evil. Further evidence of Japan's gratuitous cruelty emanated from Joe's public crucifixion for stealing food for the women and children, and Jean's ferocious beating, off-camera, for accepting it.⁹⁵ When, close to death, Joe's continued defiance of his torturers prompted his surprise release, this was not a humane decision, nor one designed to make the Japanese look less monstrous as Murphy suggests.⁹⁶ It stemmed from Japanese recognition of a warrior prepared to die for his beliefs. All Japanese were indoctrinated thus.⁹⁷

Indiscriminate Japanese bombing of Singapore harbour, and deliberate targeting of unprotected merchant ships, featured in films such as *Piccadilly Incident* (1948) and *Sea Wife* (1957).⁹⁸ But these character-led films were only partly concerned with Japanese atrocities. The main targets in *Piccadilly Incident* were WRNS telephonists, and other non-combatants, fleeing Singapore. Their unarmed, unescorted ship was sunk by a prowling Japanese submarine. In *Sea Wife*, after their ship, carrying mainly women and children, was gratuitously sunk by a Japanese submarine, survivors drifted for days in a rubber dinghy. Nun (Joan Collins), RAF officer (Richard Burton), racist businessman Bulldog (Basil Sydney), and the ship's black Purser, Number Four (Cy Grant), encountered that same

submarine and requested food and water. This was refused unless the group provided information - which they did not possess - on Allied shipping. Japan's brutal view of humanity was revealed:

Japanese officer: If you do not give information you are useless. My honourable Commander say "goodbye". We have nothing to spare.

Bulldog: If you will not supply us, we will be compelled to give ourselves up as your prisoners.

Japanese officer: My Commander regrets that he has no space for prisoners. If you are not prepared to die honourably by your own hand, he is prepared, as a human man, to slit your boat with his sword.

RAF Officer: That's murder.

Bulldog: It's against every code of every civilised nation.

Japanese officer: On the contrary, my Commander is behaving according to international law. He will leave you unmolested.

Nun: He cannot turn away from us and leave us to die. That would be a stain he must not place upon his conscience.

The intervention of the Japanese-speaking Purser, who revealed the presence of the nun, gained meagre supplies and an over-garment for her. This could not eradicate the wanton murder of so many others, or the fact that the submarine - which had not left them 'unmolested' in the first place - was still prowling.⁹⁹

In the interests of telling a good (if dubious) story, and triumphing in the large Japanese market, *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1958), discussed in Chapter 3, disregarded the gravity, bitterness and barbarity of the war in the East and its aftermath. Released at a time of continuing Japanese emergence as a global economic power, and although controversial, this was not revisionism *per se*. Where the film merely implies Japanese atrocities, it highlights their failings, weaknesses and inferiority, devaluing their abilities. Japanese engineers were portrayed as being incompetent. They built the bridge in an unsuitable and dangerous place. Guards could not control POWs' sabotage or go-slows. Some were corrupt, trading with Shears (William Holden). The chief engineer lost face, was publicly disgraced, and severely punished by Colonel Saito (Sessue Kayakawa). Saito negated his role as

commandant, allowing it to be commandeered by Nicholson (Alec Guinness). Director David Lean conveyed this role-reversal during dinner in the Commandant's quarters. First Saito stood and explained his needs to the seated Nicholson. Then Nicholson stood and explained his demands to the seated Saito. In a subtle relinquishing and embracing of power, Nicholson seized the moment. Using British officers, who 'built bridges all over India', to build a superior bridge, Nicholson saved Saito from ultimate dishonour. Their relationship reached the point of exchanging personal histories and ambitions. Yet, losing sight of the larger picture Saito, basking in complacency, did not guard the bridge properly. His moment of triumph became his moment of defeat.

Japanese officers cruelly abused and publicly disgraced their men. This was a major failing, and featured in several films, most notably in *Kwai* and *The Wind Cannot Read* (1958). Meanwhile, *A Town Like Alice* (1956) saw an elderly sergeant disgraced, disowned and forced to wander alone with the women because he shared their stolen food whilst starving. Japanese barbarism in *Tunes of Glory* (1960) was articulated by Colonel Barrow (John Mills). Recalling his suffering as a POW in the East, to his aide (Gordon Jackson), he mirrored Eric Lomax's real-life experiences, discussed in Chapters 3 and 6:

When you really believe you are dying, you think of the most absurd things ... when I was in the prison camp, they nearly drowned me, then they brought me round, then they put a red cloth over my mouth and kept it wet until I nearly drowned again, and the only thing that pulled me through was the thought that one day I'd come back and sit in the middle of that table as the Colonel, like my Grandfather and his Father before him.

To his aide's comment: 'You survived, you're here to tell the tale', Barrow wretchedly replied: 'Who said I survived?' The Hammer film *The Secret of Blood Island* (1965) continued the theme of unremitting brutality towards male POWs, raising the level by introducing the torture of a woman secret agent hidden in the

camp. Upon her refusal to talk, her torturers planned to deliver her to the Kempeitai, an organisation far more barbaric than the Nazi SS.

Conclusions

Cinematic depictions of the enemy discussed in this chapter are closely bound-up with, and follow through, Chapters 2, 3 and 4. Unsurprisingly, the war against Germany dominates the genre. Moreover, since POW films constitute the limited Japanese sub-genre, they provide the benchmark for the Far East war. The Italians, comically denigrated earlier, are redeemed here. Furthermore, although there are enormous differences, there are similarities in depictions of the Axis. Germans - and to an extent, the Italians - feared the Nazi SS; however, the Italians were shown to resist. The genre indicates German collective guilt through their complicity. Committed Nazis were rarely, if ever, disobeyed even if it meant certain death, as in *Sink the Bismarck*. Whatever atrocity Hitler's acolytes demanded was accomplished without resistance, as in *Seven Thunders*. The Japanese feared the fiendish Kempeitai but were indoctrinated from birth into unquestioned belief in the Emperor and the military code of death before dishonour. Germany and Japan were similarly, and frequently portrayed inflicting brutality upon helpless innocents, for example the Luftwaffe's gunning-down of lines of fraught refugees, and the Japanese sinking of ships carrying women and children.

As we have seen, although *The Camp on Blood Island* seriously strained censorship boundaries regarding portrayals of Japanese violence towards men and women, it was another fifty years before the British and Australian collaboration *Paradise Road* (1997) screened the extent of Japan's treatment of women POWs.

Despite being outside my time-frame, it is important, for comparative purposes. Unfettered by previous censorship restrictions, this film graphically illustrated women undergoing barbaric tortures such as being doused in petrol and burned to death.¹⁰⁰ So, the Far East war remains a tragically uncomfortable and unpopular subject. During the sixtieth anniversary of this war, two sympathetic television programmes were screened. Firstly, the BBC2 docu-drama *Hiroshima* featured rare footage of the dropping of the first atomic bomb in 1945.¹⁰¹ Secondly, Channel 5's *The Hiroshima Pictures* showed 3000 childlike paintings done by witnesses on the ground. They painted horrors such as Hiroshima's six rivers jam-packed with bodies down to the sea. None of these "artists" had ever spoken of, or exorcised, their experiences. Uncovering what happened to ordinary Japanese people, the paintings added a new chapter to Japanese history.¹⁰² Neither altered the public mindset on Japanese atrocities. Whereas Germans received a revisionist, politically expedient make-over, this chapter has shown that film-makers were extremely ambiguous towards their late enemy. These attitudes persist. The Italians redeemed in *Conspiracy of Hearts* had been mocked in earlier films. Today they are usually portrayed comically, as in *'Allo, 'Allo*. However, British film-makers did not improve the totally barbaric image of the Japanese in the few films from 1945-65, or in those made since.¹⁰³ Whilst there are living survivors of the Far East war, it would be unthinkable.¹⁰⁴ The next chapter examines war's dysfunctional residue during combat, on the home-front, and as a homecoming legacy, and will reveal new ways in which film-makers depicted the hero.

- ¹ *The Sun*, 'Why We Will Not Forget the War Herr Naumann', 17 February, 1999, on Britain's obsession with World War Two, Editorial.
- ² Sullivan, Brian R., 'The Italian Soldier in Combat, June 1940 – September 1943 : Myths, Realities and Explanations', in Addison. Paul & Calder Angus (Eds.), *Time to Kill : The Soldier's Experience of War in the West 1939-45* (London, 1997), p 177.
- ³ Lomax, Eric, *The Railway Man : A POW's Searing Account of War, Brutality and Forgiveness* (London, 1995), p 210.
- ⁴ Paxman, Jeremy, *The English : A Portrait of a People* (London, (1998), 1999), p 87.
- ⁵ However, *Reach for the Sky* was hagiographic, and *The Dam Busters* narrowly missed being so.
- ⁶ Janus-like depictions of our greatest Ally, the Americans also permeate these films. This was done with throw-away remarks, for example, in *The Dam Busters*, it is remarked that all the best theatre seats are occupied by Americans, whilst in *Circle of Danger*, an American is killed by the British because his zealous antics threaten to wreck a dangerous and vital mission.
- ⁷ Weight, Richard, *Patriots : National Identity in Britain 1940-2000* (London, 2002), p 101. Weight suggests that 'In the late nineteenth century Germany had begun to replace France as the prime "other" by which the British defined themselves, and the Second World War completed that process'.
- ⁸ Weight, *ibid*, p 101.
- ⁹ Lord Robert Vansittart's views had similarities to US Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau's expressed in the Morgenthau Plan which wanted to destroy the Ruhr mines and industrial Germany. The latter hypothesized a warlike German soul and wanted to pastoralize Germany post-war. Journal - Institute of Historical Review, 'Dealing in Hate : The development of anti-German propaganda', Internet <http://www.ijhr.org/books/connors/dealinginhate.shtml>, pp 14, 18. Gollancz, Victor, *Shall Our Children Live or Die? A Reply to Lord Vansittart on the German Problem*, vigorously opposed Vansittart, citing capitalism and imperialism as bearing much of the guilt.
- ¹⁰ Weight, *Patriots : National Identity in Britain*, p 101, quoting Calder. Angus, *The 'People's War' : Britain 1939-45* (London (1969) 1992), p 490.
- ¹¹ See Mosley, Leonard, *The Battle of Britain : The Making of a Film* (London, 1969). This book details the film from conception, through production, to reception and shows that considerable egos, in-fighting and quarrels were involved, as well as international co-operation at the highest levels.
- ¹² Mosley, *ibid*, is devoted entirely to the making of the film, discussing the negotiations, rows, compromises and national egos involved, and the difficulties of getting appropriate aircraft etc. This is a very interesting account of behind the scenes activity.
- ¹³ The US film, 'Your Job in Germany (1945)', in Marwick, Arthur & Simpson, Wendy (Eds.), *War, Peace and Social Change: Europe 1900-1955 – Documents 2: 1925-1959* (Buckingham, 1990), pp 169-170.
- ¹⁴ Ministry of Information film, *A Defeated People* (1946), transcription by Aldgate, Tony, in *War, Peace and Social Change: Europe 1900-1955 – Documents 2: 1925-1959*, pp 171-174.
- ¹⁵ Weight, *Patriots : National Identity in Britain*, pp 104-105, quoting the *Daily Express*, 1945.
- ¹⁶ For an interesting discussion on this subject see Weight, *ibid*, Chapter on 'Warriors'. This quote is on p 105 and is from Gilbert, Malcolm, *The Day the War Ended : VE Day 1945 in Europe and around the World*, (1995), pp 128-9.
- ¹⁷ Weight, *Patriots : National Identity in Britain*, p 106.
- ¹⁸ Sheffield housewife and Socialist Edith Rutherford, Mass Observation (MO) diary entry on Saturday, 10 June, 1945, quoted in Garfield, Simon, *Our Hidden Lives : The Remarkable Diaries of Post-war Britain* (London, (2004) 2005), p 73.
- ¹⁹ London pensioner Herbert Bush, MO diary entry on Saturday, 5 May, 1945, quoted in Garfield, *ibid*, p 18.
- ²⁰ Sheffield accountant George Taylor, MO diary entry on Saturday, 26 May, 1945, quoted in Garfield, *ibid*, p 32.
- ²¹ Rutherford, MO diary entry on Saturday, 10 June, 1945, quoted in Garfield, *ibid*, p 39-40.
- ²² Weight, *Patriots : National Identity in Britain*, p 106. Fisher was championing the Germans to readers of *The Daily Telegraph* – these readers would probably be amongst the better-off, or aggrieved middle-classes.
- ²³ Weight, *ibid*, p 107. He tells us that Fisher, unlike his predecessor William Temple, did not see the Welfare State as a 'necessary step towards a Christian society'.
- ²⁴ Berlin had been divided into British, American, French and Russian sectors post-1945.
- ²⁵ This airlift was a tribute to the skill of the pilots who negotiated a small air corridor, faced Russian aggravation and worked a 24-hour daily schedule. A huge amount of aid was given - figures

below are taken from *Berlin Airlift Quick Facts*, <http://www.usafe.af.mil/bherlin/quickfax.htm>, 29 October, 2005:

<u>Country</u>	<u>Flights</u>	<u>Food*</u>	<u>Coal*</u>	<u>Other*</u>
USA	189,963	296,319	1,421,119	66,135
UK	87,841	240,386	164,911	136,640
France	424	unknown	unknown	unknown

* short tons

- ²⁶ Secret History - *The Berlin Airlift*, C4 TV, 1998.
- ²⁷ *The Berlin Airlift*, C4, *ibid*.
- ²⁸ Gaddis, John Lewis, *The Cold War* (London, 2005), p 6.
- ²⁹ Gaddis, *ibid*, p 6.
- ³⁰ Fischer, Klaus P, *Nazi Germany – A New History* (London, 1995) , p 573.
- ³¹ Fischer, *ibid*, p 573.
- ³² The Allies' insistence upon denazification was intended to identify and punish leaders of, and those seriously involved with, the Nazi regime. Five categories of guilt were established – major offenders, offenders, lesser offenders, followers and exonerated persons. Whilst the process punished some leading Nazis, others committed suicide, disappeared or lied to escape punishment. For a full account of this, see Fischer, *ibid*, pp 570-573.
- ³³ The Truman Doctrine in 1947 was in response to Britain's inability to finance Greece and Turkey any further, and to Soviet aggression in the Middle East. The Marshall Plan 1947, in return for economic aid, expected Europeans to work together. NATO was set up for military containment. America, Canada, Britain, Portugal, Italy, Norway, Denmark and Iceland were founder members, with the premise that 'an armed attack against any member shall be considered an attack against them all'. This was a Cold War measure. The EEC was set in up 1958, member states were Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands and West Germany, to safeguard their trading interests.
- ³⁴ Ramsden, John, *Don't Mention the War : The British and the Germans since 1890* (Little, London, 2006) Brown, pp 295-324.
- ³⁵ Ramden, John, *Don't Mention the War : The British and the Germans since 1890* (London, 2006), pp 295-324. He notes that director Alexander Korda believed that there were no good Germans.
- ³⁶ For a useful discussion of Noel Coward's attitudes and his song *Let's Not Be Beastly to the Germans*, see Ramsden, John, *ibid*, pp 179-180.
- ³⁷ Ramsden, *ibid*, p 180.
- ³⁸ Song (free download) printed on <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/2WWcowardN.htm> and <http://www.leoslyrics.com/listyrics.php?hid=C2Z1KhKvG14%3D>, 25 April, 2006.
- ³⁹ "Sagittarius", *New Statesman*, 8 January, 1955.
- ⁴⁰ The film *Escape to Victory*, concerns a World War Two football match between Allied POWs and German soldiers.
- ⁴¹ Ash, William, *Under the Wire* (Bantam, London, 2005), p 143.
- ⁴² Montefiore, Simon Sebag, 'Ordinary Monsters' in the *Daily Mail*, 4 September, 2004, commenting on the German film *Downfall* released in September, 2004 showing Hitler in what some people claim is a more sympathetic light as part of the worrying and devious Nazi-Lite approach. Whilst this is a small organisation, a Berlin professor is amongst the influential people who support this movement, and some television producers have also shown interest. This has led historian Montefiore to ask: 'Is it really an ominous sign that Nazism is clawing its way back to respectability after 50 years of post-war reconstruction and re-education in Germany?' pp 38-39.
- ⁴³ *Daily Telegraph*, 7 July, 1947.
- ⁴⁴ *Evening News*, 3 July, 1947.
- ⁴⁵ *Reynolds News*, 7 July, 1947.
- ⁴⁶ Film critics loved her and were unanimous in their praise. See press book.
- ⁴⁷ Lovell, Terry, 'Frieda' in Hurd. Geoff (Ed.), *National Fictions* (London, 1984), p 31.
- ⁴⁸ Lovell, *ibid*, p 34.
- ⁴⁹ Perry, George, *Forever Ealing – A Celebration of the Great British Film Studio* (London, 1981), p 79.
- ⁵⁰ *The One That Got Away*, this German pilot got back to Germany and rejoined the war, only to be shot down again and listed as 'missing presumed killed', on-screen note at end of film.

- ⁵¹ Baker, Roy, *The Director's Cut: A Memoir of 60 years in Film and Television* (London, 2000), p 99.
- ⁵² Baker, *ibid*, pp 96, 97.
- ⁵³ *Films and Filming*, December 1957, p 24.
- ⁵⁴ See Rennell, Tony, 'Did Britain Really Stoop as Low as the Nazis?', *Daily Mail*, 19 November, 2005, he discusses a secret World War Two establishment – The London POW Cage - in which German POWs, including Von Werra were interrogated using brutal methods, pp 38-39. See also Cobain, Ian, 'The Secrets of the London Cage', *The Guardian*, 12 November, 2005. The London Cage or the Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre, was run by M19.
- ⁵⁵ Lt. Colonel Alexander Scotland, its Commander, mused, "Abandon hope all ye who enter here ... For if any German had any information we wanted, it was invariably extracted from him in the long run", in the manuscript of his book which the Foreign Office suppressed.
- ⁵⁶ *Films and Filming*, December 1957, p 24.
- ⁵⁷ *Kinomatograph Weekly*, 1955, V483, Pt.27, p 27.
- ⁵⁸ Carthew, Anthony, *Daily Herald*, 11 October, 1957.
- ⁵⁹ Kennedy, Robert, *Daily Worker*, 12 October, 1957.
- ⁶⁰ Connelly, Mark, *We Can Take It: Britain and the Memory of the Second World War* (Pearson Longman, Harlow, 2004), p 213.
- ⁶¹ Connelly, *We Can Take It*, p 214.
- ⁶² Connelly, *ibid*, p 214
- ⁶³ Barr, Niall, *Rommel in the Desert* summarised in BBC Internet History – *Rommel in the Desert*, http://bbc.co.uk/history/war/wwtwo/rommel_desert_1.shtml.
- ⁶⁴ *Infantry Attacks* was Rommel's own book, on World War One military tactics.
- ⁶⁵ Barr, *Rommel*, BBC Internet History.
- ⁶⁶ There were many crossovers in film-making between Britain and America. Finance, storylines, stars etc. These collaborations tended to blur the area.
- ⁶⁷ Young played himself in the film. His biography 'went through eight editions in the year of publication alone', see Connelly, *We Can Take It*, p 216.
- ⁶⁸ Connelly, *ibid*, p 215.
- ⁶⁹ National Archives, *El Alamein*, <http://www.spartacus.Scholnet.co.uk/2WWelalamein.htm>, Internet.
- ⁷⁰ The narrator, highlighting British strength, mentioned HMS *Repulse*, *Reknown* and *Hood*.
- ⁷¹ Press book for the film carried impressive pictures of the stars and the ships and was heavily weighted towards involvement of youth. Since Lord Louis Mountbatten was involved, it is to be expected that every stop was pulled out to promote this important picture.
- ⁷² Langsdorff, having saved his crew, committed suicide and was accorded a respectful funeral in South America. Powell and Pressburger did not end their film with Langsdorff's suicide, they had already undermined him sufficiently, 'Timewatch', *The Battle of the River Plate*, BBC2, 2006.
- ⁷³ *Secret History – Hitler and the Holy Grail*, C4 TV, 1999.
- ⁷⁴ *Dick Barton Special Agent*, was a popular BBC radio show in the 1940s and 1950s. It's huge national following crossed class, age and gender barriers and owes much to public school *Boys' Own-type* heroics, where everything is polarised between good and evil, and women were allowed to be "plucky".
- ⁷⁵ This film was also used to show the attitude and behaviour of disaffected Irish. Their view of the English was depicted as damning. The landlady and taxi driver were very bitter and they were dangerous enemies of Britain.
- ⁷⁶ Cinema's depictions of the Irish varied according to the IRA situation. Yet, *The Cockleshell Heroes* featured an Irishman – nicknamed IRA – volunteering to fight for the British.
- ⁷⁷ Gavin Richards played Captain Alberto Bertorelli in Seasons 4-6 of *'Allo, 'Allo*, BBC1 TV.
- ⁷⁸ Discussed in Chapter 3, Prisoners of War.
- ⁷⁹ Sullivan, Brian R, 'The Italian Soldier in Combat, June 1940 – September 1943: Myths, Realities and Explanations', in Addison. Paul & Calder Angus (Eds.), *Time to Kill: The Soldier's Experience of War in the West 1939-45* (London, 1997), p 177.
- ⁸⁰ Sullivan, *ibid*, pp 177-205.
- ⁸¹ Sullivan, *ibid*, p 177.
- ⁸² Sullivan, *ibid*, pp 204-205, quoting Illari, *Soldati e partigiani*, pp 28-29; Lucio Ceva, 'The North African Campaign 1940-43: A Reconsideration', in *Decisive Campaigns of the Second World War*, Gooch, John (Ed.), (London, 1990), pp 100-101.

⁸³ Politically, this was a brave film to make. Key members of his creative team had been in the Italian Resistance. The film was seen as an authentic attempt to set the record straight. Audiences sympathized with its premise and it won many awards.

⁸⁴ *Tea with Mussolini* (1999), a drama/comedy of feisty British and American female expatriates on an extended cultural stay in Italy, immediately before, during and after World War Two, offered a more sensitive and rose-tinted portrayal of the Italians. However, this film still promoted many British values.

⁸⁵ Bush, MO diary entry on 7 August, 1945 quoted in Garfield, *Our Hidden Lives : The Remarkable Diaries of Post-war Britain*, p 72.

⁸⁶ Bush, MO diary entry on 11 August, 1945, quoted in Garfield, *ibid*, p 76.

⁸⁷ Rutherford, MO diary entry on 8 August, 1945, quoted in Garfield, *ibid*, p 73.

⁸⁸ Bush, MO diary entry on 13 August, 1945, quoted in Garfield, *ibid*, p 76.

⁸⁹ Rutherford, MO diary entry on 14 August, 1945, quoted in Garfield, *ibid*, p78.

⁹⁰ Morgan, Tom, 'Japanese Minister says: Do not call us war criminals', in the *Daily Express*, 23 June, 2005. The special Tokyo Court in 1948, tried 28 "Class A" war criminals. The Minister claimed the court could have been wrong in convicting them, p 9.

⁹¹ Morgan, *ibid*, p 9.

⁹² Morgan, *ibid*, p 9, the article stated that: '12,000 Allied POWs and 100,000+ Asian labourers died or were executed while building the "railway of death between Thailand and Burma"'.
⁹³ *Daily Express*, 16 August, 2005, pp 6 and 12.

⁹⁴ Grove, Trevor, 'Gateway to Hell', in the *Daily Mail*, 10 October, 2005.

⁹⁵ Odette's and Violette's torture by the Nazis was also off screen, implied by dark shadows, instruments of torture etc. This reflects the severe censorship restraints on treatment of women at that time. Television *Tenko* in the 1980s was a little more realistic on women suffering when captured in Singapore.

⁹⁶ Murphy, Robert, *British Cinema and the Second World War* (London, 2000), p 233.

⁹⁷ Television's hugely popular series *Tenko* (1981-84), an amalgam of women and children's real experiences, and faithful to this film in many ways, brought their part of the war in the East to home audiences. Many who watched *Tenko* with their children remembered the film. For details of *Tenko*, see Internet <http://users.bestweb.net/~foosie/bbctenko.htm>.

⁹⁸ Stock scenes of barbaric treatment of easy targets in feature films (and newsreels) are reminiscent of the German bombing of endless lines of innocent fleeing civilian refugees in occupied countries; and the German U-boat activity in the Atlantic which saw the sinking of very many unescorted British and Allied merchant ships, including those carrying children to safety in America. Clearly, both the British and American navies would have sunk enemy shipping but screened images were those of the Germany and Japan, with the exception of *The Cruel Sea*, where Captain Ericson plowed his ship over British survivors to chase after a U-boat.

⁹⁹ Similar scenes and conversations occurred in *Paradise Road* (1997). A Japanese captain who spoke to women survivors following the sinking of the *Prince Albert*, carrying mainly women and children, commented that: 'Japan has not signed the Geneva Convention. If war has come, it can only mean the time for rules has ended. The aim is to win'.

¹⁰⁰ The appalling punishment of being doused in petrol and burned to death was perpetrated in the film on a native woman. Allowing a white woman to be depicted thus was clearly too much for both film-makers and audiences at that time. A white woman was depicted as being left for days, tied in a kneeling position with sharpened stakes in front and behind, but was finally saved by the Kempeitai officer's fear of Allied reprisals.

¹⁰¹ *Hiroshima*, BBC2 TV, 2005.

¹⁰² *The Hiroshima Paintings*, C5 TV, 2005.

¹⁰³ Later films were often international co-productions and could involve Japan, Australia, New Zealand and USA.

¹⁰⁴ However, watching British television news coverage in 2006, of the Japanese Prime Minister playing air guitar at Gracelands, Elvis Presley's Memphis, Tennessee mansion, in the presence of US President George Bush, whilst the President thanked him for taking an American cultural icon to his heart, one wonders what could happen next.

Chapter 6

PERSONALISING WAR

War's dysfunctional residue

'There are two significant facts about British war films: they make money, and they are a phenomenon of the last few years only ... it was only when post-war reconstruction lost its imagination and ossified into the uneasy pseudo-comfort of the 1950s that recourse to the National Myth became necessary.' (Prince, 1958)¹

'The beginning, like so much about me, went back to the war'. (*The Ship That Died of Shame*, 1955)²

Earlier chapters discussed a sanitised, heroic version of the Second World War as a usable and regenerative British national past. Yet, despite being enshrined in Britain as one of the defining events of the twentieth century, this war had negative personal consequences for many combatants, civilians and veterans which British cinema enthusiastically mined. The realities of active combat, wartime service, the civilian and veteran experience offered boundless challenges and pitfalls. For some war was a fulfilling or redemptive experience. Others became traumatised and psychologically damaged. A few took excessive satisfaction in war, believing that they "owned" it. Loss of self-esteem could represent a major obstacle either during hostilities, on the home-front or following demobilisation. Moreover, feelings of rejection alongside economic and political considerations affected many veterans post-1945. Psychological damage or dysfunction may become manifest during combat, as civilian conscience or as a homecoming legacy. I have generically termed this, 'war's dysfunctional residue'. This chapter addresses this phenomenon and analyses the sub-genre by concentrating on: Perceptions of Combat Experience; The Veteran Experience; Combat Dysfunction; Heroic Reinforcement; Malingerers, Revellers and Redemption; Repatriation; Crime and The Homecoming Legacy.

For over 20-years, film-makers channelled war's dysfunctional residue into three main sections within a vibrant sub-genre concerned respectively with combat dysfunction, civilian conscience and the homecoming legacy. Research indicates that combat dysfunction is not what it initially seems. This chapter therefore, offers a new interpretation of the sub-genre, focusing on a body of major films ostensibly depicting a dysfunctional combatant who consistently behaves heroically whilst undertaking his odyssey, as in *Ice Cold in Alex*. Throughout, his strengths were expounded more powerfully than his weaknesses. Representing the nation's finest qualities he subtly reinforced cinema's updated imperialist hero. Although war-as-regenerative was the primary message of these films the subtext suggests major heroism not major dysfunction, what we might term 'heroic reinforcement'. Following the wartime fall of Singapore and in a post-imperialist *milieu*, by admitting a little fallibility, film-makers could portray Britain as a laudable, leading, democracy.

In addition to heroic reinforcement, film-makers dealt with malingerers, revellers and redemption. Fictional malingerers and profiteers contributed very little to the war, and much to lack of deference in *Private's Progress* and *On the Fiddle*. However, where actual heroes - such as Guy Gibson and Douglas Bader - revelled in war in *The Dam Busters* and *Reach for the Sky*, their mythical status cinematically outweighed their flaws. This tempered any suggestion of innate militancy, allowing the important concept of war-as-redemptive to be accommodated, as in *The Small Back Room*, *Rake's Progress* and *Dunkirk*, three major films that underscored civilian redemption. *Dunkirk* also featured a working class soldier who, redeemed by war,

embraced the values of elite masculinity. These men personalised war, habitually explaining: 'It's personal'.

Despite producing a major sub-genre of films on incarceration in Europe and the Far East, film-makers largely ignored a homecoming legacy based on the problems of returning POWs. The few films that covered repatriation, such as *Libel*, *Frieda*, *Mine Own Executioner*, *Room at the Top* and *Tunes of Glory* told a very different story to that implied by Balcon's *The Captive Heart*. Additionally, lack of deference and critiques of heroism also surfaced here. However, film-makers readily accommodated a homecoming legacy of discontent following a self-fulfilling war. The demobilization experiences of those who had enjoyed a good war and felt betrayed and disillusioned by the society they returned to was a popular subject. Disgruntlement and lack of excitement could lead to illegal activities and grudge-laden lapses into revenge. Film-makers began to promote, and reflect, fears that the 'New Jerusalem' had been undermined by soft options and selfishness. Weight locates the start of disillusionment to within a year of VE-Day celebrations.³ Post-1945, crime became a major cinematic concern (Appendix 1). A significant number of World War Two films linked veterans - especially officers - with dysfunction and crime as in *The League of Gentlemen*, whilst *The Intruder* dealt with issues amongst other ranks. Homecoming legacy films presented an alternative reality, warning that regeneration could become degeneration. But, this thesis argues that, although bitter and cunningly manipulated in these films, many "heroes" imposed limits on their immorality. The next section will briefly look at Perceptions of Combat, before addressing the Veteran Experience and dealing with the analysis proper.

Perceptions Of Combat Experience

Historian Joanna Bourke has controversially argued against received wisdom that war has effects ranging from sobering to traumatic, is fought only when necessary, and is a terrible experience. The structure of war, she concludes, encourages the pleasure of killing, so ordinary human beings become enthusiastic killers without becoming brutalized.⁴ Warfare 'was as much about the business of sacrificing others as it was about being sacrificed'. For 'thousands of men and women, this was what made it a lovely war'.⁵ 'Society, so easily organizes itself for war', she claims.⁶ Nevertheless, I would suggest that society also 'easily organizes itself' for global rescues.⁷ Her findings overlook war's dysfunctional residue, professionalism or comradeship. Wars in films and literature, she contends, are 'narratives of pleasure'.⁸ This is not automatically true as this chapter will show.

Time to Kill (1997), a collection of essays edited by historians Addison and Calder, argues more convincingly on combat experiences. To be understood, combat must be experienced. Paradoxically, those who experience it frequently cannot remember it Addison and Calder claim. Significantly, many combatants never actually see the enemy.⁹ Ellis suggests that the myths of the Second World War tended to swamp "bad" memories therefore, people with bad experiences remained silent. Moreover, most reflections were written by elites, who viewed war as a 'cerebral exercise', whilst most combatants' experiences were swallowed in 'the "Fog of War"'.¹⁰ Furthermore, despite the technology employed, the 'sharp-end of war remained a largely intimate affair'.¹¹ During combat, Keegan suggests, cruelty, frenzy, fear, emotions and fantasy 'feed on, and are fed by, each other', narcosis is provided by drugs and drink, but the 'Big Man ... brings combat alive ... is

mimicked' and 'sets a standard'.¹² However, Lee reminds us that soldiers 'get fragmented perceptions of their war experiences', and oral history accounts of these are 'personal, anecdotal and subjective'.¹³ Eventually, negativity can be overcome by adventure, training, experienced comrades, keeping busy, and a comforting fatalism.¹⁴ In this vein, Henderson similarly cites 'amazement' at the scale of events and being part of something 'momentous', alongside the mundane, battle shock and 'sense of loss and frustration'. She quotes a Scots Guard for whom killing was fraught with difficulties:

An awful savagery now seemed to take hold of us ... I felt as if some wild animal had got me by the throat and I had to keep shouting and shooting or else my normal self would return and bring fear with it.¹⁵

Certainly, for the British, the war genre 1945-65 maintained that cold-blooded killing was abhorrent. 'Honour', 'compassion', 'conscience', the need for 'self-esteem', and that of 'comrades, family, state and nation' were more likely to surface.¹⁶

The Veteran Experience

In 1945 there was limited understanding of combat trauma or war's dysfunctional residue. However, eminent medical periodicals *The Lancet* and *The British Medical Journal*, Spicer tells us, dissected 'war neuroses'.¹⁷ Dr. James, Hon Psychiatrist to St Mary's Hospital, London, forcefully argued that 'no soldier is quite the same after experience of battle. For all it is an emotional experience which includes fear, hate, rage, grief, the shocks of frustration or the overwhelming relief of success'.¹⁸ A.T.M. Wilson praised the Army's Civilian Resettlement Units for repatriated POWs.¹⁹ Documentaries were shown, for example *A Soldier Comes Home* (1946). Additionally, Mass Observation produced pamphlets such as *The Journey Home* (1946).²⁰ Murphy highlights the 'fear of purposelessness' and 'the potential conflict between wartime co-operation and post-war selfishness', reported by Mass

Observation.²¹ For returning service-personnel, and those at home, the Bendits' *Living Together Again* offered guidance. Their object was to re-establish relationships, leading to stable family life, an efficient labour force and national regeneration. On reintegration, they advised,

... certain types have found service life stimulating and good: far better than the dull routine between home and bench or office desk. Such people find homecoming very difficult, and in their hearts feel rebellious at having to try to fit in with civilian ideas of how to live. When they get home, it is hard to settle down. They are lonely, they feel cramped and cooped up, and some are inclined to break loose in the hope of recapturing something of the old sense of freedom. In any case, there will be many who will feel the need for far more life and movement than they can get in the home. And though for some, this is merely a form of drug to help them avoid thinking about what they have undergone, there are others for whom active life is a temperamental necessity.²²

The Bendits empathised with POWs:

Few people who have not experienced it can realise the damage which may be done to the mind and feelings of one who has been a prisoner of war ... If he is unlucky enough to be taken prisoner, the little power of self-assertion represented by his rifle or automatic is taken from him. More than ever he is treated as a "nobody". Finally he is herded into a camp. Here he has long periods of nothing to do except what he can find for himself, and his opportunities are severely limited ... Some may use the enforced idleness as time of reflection and become philosophical, but the majority find it an incredible burden ... their minds may become inward-turned in a thoroughly unhealthy way.²³

Prisoners faced a different war than the active fighting man who,

... has something to make life in wartime bearable; he is doing his duty, protecting his home, beating the enemy, getting kudos, and he is kept busy. The prisoner has none of these compensations. So it is scarcely to be wondered at if things go badly with him. And after years of this, he comes back feeling himself a strange outlandish being, who belongs nowhere and who is understood by nobody except those who have shared the ordeal with him.²⁴

In June 1945, '700,000 casualties had already returned' and 'the total British Armed Forces exceeded four-and-a-quarter-million'.²⁵ Provision was divisive because 'powerful influences were at work in Britain during the immediate post-war years to prevent ex-servicemen receiving any concessions measurably greater than those granted to the population at large'.²⁶ Britain's dilemma in 1945, historian Reese claims, can be explained by war's debilitating economic burdens and the enormity of demobilisation. Current political ideas promoted equality, so demobilisation became enmeshed with the embryonic Welfare State. There was the perception that in a Total

War, all suffered equally and, despite Labour's full employment pledge, trade unions wanted more control.²⁷ The British Legion championed veterans through its journal, successfully raising important issues such as help for those disabled by war. As thousands of veterans entered universities, undertook training or army vocational courses, thousands more were disappointed. However, charities attempted to supplement authorities' shortfalls.²⁸ Arguments became polarised between demands for positive discrimination for veterans and claims that 'we are all in the front-line now'.²⁹ Colonel George Wigg, MP supported equality:

The British Legion policy of preference in employment for ex-servicemen and women is, in my view short sighted but I can well understand the advocacy of such a policy by those who remember only too well what happened after the last war ... Now with a Labour Government pledged to a full-employment policy there are more jobs than men ... a square deal not only for the ex-servicemen and women.³⁰

A former officer, Quintin Hogg, MP, championed ex-servicemen:

If the saying means that there has been in the main any comparable degree of sacrifice or hardship between those who worked in civvy street and those who underwent the rigours of life in the field, or the prolonged heartache of separation from their families, I must say I have yet to hear more pernicious and dangerous rubbish ... The point is that real equality of opportunity between one who has spent the last 6 years in the Service, and one who has not, is only pious humbug unless some degree of preference in the early stage is given to the ex-Serviceman and woman.³¹

Using British Legion journals and oral testimony, historians Turner and Rennell charted re-integration after 1945. Allowing for memory distortions and subjectivity, frustrations centred on relationships, housing and job prospects. It was felt that uniting for a common goal should have made Britain more democratic, ensuring that 'a decent life was genuinely possible for all'.³² The popular mood amongst ex-Service personnel 'veered from general optimism ... to personal anxiety at missing out on life's chances'. Moreover, a survey exposed a self-improving desire to move from mining, textiles, wholesale and retail trades, catering and domestic work, into shipbuilding, engineering, transport, communications and the professions.³³ Disaffected veterans returned to find a society in which greed and

crime were prevalent. Highly trained with skills valued in war, they felt devalued in peacetime:

Some of the saddest cases of failed expectations were to be found among commissioned officers, young men who had succeeded on merit ... There were many excuses, not all of them specious, for failing to accommodate the officer class ... it was by no means axiomatic that military leadership carried over into business management or the professions ... Negotiation and consultation were two essential skills that many ex-officers had to learn from scratch. They were simply not used to having their orders questioned.³⁴

The Directorate of Army Welfare Services warned employers that 'it is unreasonable to expect these men to be able to get fully into the new routine of life at once.'³⁵

Sydney Jacobson, a recently demobilised officer writing on officers' problems in the *Picture Post*, noted 'a sharper gap between their war earnings and the pay they can expect in civilian employment'.³⁶ An evocative photograph entitled: 'The Return to Civvy Street : The Day He's Dreamed of is Full of Doubts', accompanied the article and showed an officer standing uncertainly outside his home. It warned that he was embarking on 'a life of readjustment in a world to which he seems a stranger, and in which he's not sure he can find a place'.³⁷ Jacobson highlighted fears that the men who stayed at home had benefited disproportionately, and that 'the qualities that were called for in war' would not have a 'marketable value in peace'.³⁸ He explained post-war reality for officers:

In place of the easy companionship and assured feeling of a corporate life, he has to pick up the threads of interrupted family relationships, or begin new ones, and to deal as an individual with men and women who are often tired, who have had their own war burdens.³⁹

The veterans most keenly aware of an 'unbridgeable gap' in civilian relationships were those 'who gave most to the war' and 'took from it broadened and disciplined minds and a feeling of pride and satisfaction with a great common effort'.⁴⁰ He issued the chilling warning that 'a class that feels itself dispossessed is always easy game for political exploitation. Hitlerism for example, grew out of the dispossessed middle classes of Germany after 1918'.⁴¹ Implicit in the alignment of dissatisfaction with

'Hitlerism', was the newly emergent Cold War threat of 'Communism'. This project will now explore combat trauma by focusing initially on dysfunction in *Ice Cold in Alex* (1958). Contemporaneous criticisms will be cited and themes identified.

Combat Dysfunction – *Ice Cold in Alex* (1958)

During the war, combat trauma and dysfunction emanated from the stress and fatigue of battle, personal worries and commitment lapses. Cinema resolved this with a return to the values of elite masculinity or an heroic death. The need to perform and succeed subsumed fears. So, the finer qualities, leadership and heroism of Captain Ansen (John Mills) in *Ice Cold in Alex*, were consistently flagged-up despite apparent dysfunction, making him the perfect paradigm for my theory of heroic reinforcement.

Dr. James encapsulated combat pressure:

Action is followed by a reaction of fatigue and of bitter guilty mourning for lost comrades. But there can be no rest, the soldier soon learns the urgent need to steel himself, often by a process of dissociation, to renewed efforts for fresh tasks. It is not surprising that the soldier breaks sometimes ... In my experience it is not possible for soldiers to make an infinite number of calls upon resolution and endurance.⁴²

Ansen's solution came from a bottle. Nevertheless, his Irish Brigadier (Liam Redmond) trusted him to organise an immediate evacuation to Tobruk. This entailed leaving behind his battle-weary comrade Captain Paul Crosbie (Richard Leach). Paul, unaware that Ansen had volunteered to remain, felt betrayed. Essentially, Ansen possessed hidden strengths - leadership, organisational abilities, dependability, tenacity and selflessness. Commandeering their transport, the Brigadier was blown-up by a German mine. 'My toolkit' cried loyal engineer and improviser, Sgt. Tom Pugh (Harry Andrews). Seemingly worthless, Ansen cried 'My whisky'. Forced to travel with two nurses in an old ambulance - efficient and caring Sister Diana Murdoch (Sylvia Syms) and immature and hysterical Sister Denise Norton (Diana Clare) - he negatively commented 'dames and mines, lovely party'.

An arrogant German, masquerading as Afrikaaner Captain Van der Poel (Anthony Quayle), joined them. We first encounter him spying on the group from a high vantage point. Establishing him as a colossus - indicative of brute strength - the camera shot downhill between his legs. He felt superior, particularly when Diana requested him to hide his whisky because Ansen drank. Poel's bravado was replaced by anxious sweating after he stepped onto what they believed was a landmine. Ansen knelt, brushing the sand cautiously aside. Unruffled, courageous and diminutive, he revealed a bean tin which he offered as 'a souvenir'. 'Strange sense of humour', Poel shakily responded, his sombreness almost betraying his German roots. Yet Ansen had proved that German reliance on overwhelming strength compared unfavourably with British courage, altruism and initiative, as embodied in elite masculinity.

Denise was shot as Ansen outran a German patrol. Avowing abstinence until they reached Alexandria, he blamed himself. 'I feel worse about this than anything' he confided to a compassionate Diana. 'These things happen in wars', Poel unemotionally claimed, before negotiating safe conduct. Pugh became suspicious because Poel did not operate according to South African practice, regularly disappeared into the desert with his backpack, and inexplicably mediated safe-passage with a second German patrol. Again Poel undermined Ansen, implying he was too weak to dig the nurse's grave in the rock-hard sand. Later Poel's brute strength was used positively on their behalf, to jack-up the ambulance. Asserting his leadership during a disputed direction change following the fall of Tobruk, Ansen guided them safely to a British refuelling depot where, dressed as Arabs, covert upper-class British officers confided that they were 'just toddling around'.⁴³ It emerged that Ansen, who

had survived a siege, a battle and a withdrawal, had been captured and ill-treated by the Germans. Having escaped and wandered the desert alone for two days, he was returned to duty, without treatment, rest or leave. Stumbling into a quagmire, Poel lost his radio. Masterminding the hazardous rescue, Ansen wisely reminded them 'he trusts us now, let's leave it like that'. They had the advantage of superior knowledge and needed Poel's strength. The co-operation required to get the ambulance to the top of a steep hill was fuelled by Ansen's refusal to be beaten, but tempers frayed. 'I've taken about enough from you', shouted Poel, whilst responding to Ansen's determination. For Ansen, reaching Alexandria was 'a personal thing'. Poel's admiration visibly grew when the ambulance slid down the hill. With classic understatement Ansen said 'Let's take a little exercise'. Four enemies became a team, bringing different qualities: leadership (Ansen); engineering skills (Pugh); strength (Poel); caring and another reason for Ansen to succeed (Diana).

On reaching Alexandria, mutual respect crossed national, class and gender boundaries. Together, they had defeated the desert, a greater enemy. None wanted Poel (Otto Lutz, a 21st Panzer Group engineer) shot as a spy. Drinking lager in his favourite bar before the hand-over, Ansen toasted Lutz:

Ansen: Here's to you Otto we all know we wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you.

Poel/Lutz: I was misinformed about the British – so different from what I have been told. It has been quite an experience – all against the desert, the greater enemy.

'It is forbidden to fraternize with the enemy', a young MP reprimanded Ansen. With regained self-belief, confident in his masculinity and authority, Ansen ordered him to wait outside, commenting: 'Fresh off the boat, thinks all that armoury is the answer'. Since the West needed Germany as a Cold War buffer, and with the continuing escalation and tensions of the Cold War, the overt message could be construed as being that, for the greater good, co-operation was possible between former enemies.⁴⁴

Its sub-text was the superiority of British leadership. Ansen's odyssey proved that with courage, fairness and commitment, he had controlled a perilously fluid situation. Director J. Lee-Thompson showed an aspect of the British rarely portrayed, as latent eroticism marked Ansen's relationship with Diana, see Chapter 4.⁴⁵ Reinforcement of his masculinity, and sexual fulfilment, depended on reaching Alexandria.

Marketing and/or Reception of *Ice Cold in Alex*

Praised by critics and public, the film won the Berlin Film Festival International Federation of Film Critics' Award by a unanimous jury vote.⁴⁶ Many of its campaign posters were erotic. '*Ice Cold in Alex* – it's a sizzler', proclaimed the *Daily Express*.⁴⁷ A jaded *Daily Herald* critic disapproved of 'the policy which keeps all our stars permanently in battledress', but thought it 'the best picture we have made this year'.⁴⁸ The *Manchester Guardian* called it 'a war film to Rival "*Kwai*"'.⁴⁹ For Dilys Powell it was 'such an adventure' that 'one wants it to go on'.⁵⁰ Finding the characters unconvincing, Majdalaney of the *Daily Mail* praised J. Lee-Thompson's expertise, concluding that the film 'would have been more impressive still if one did not inconveniently remember other films in which the object of the exercise has been to get a four-wheeled vehicle across impossible country'.⁵¹ However, C.A. Lejeune complained 'doubtless there have been slower films ... but I can't recall any'.⁵² 'Heroic reinforcement', the film's main theme, generically over-arches those of elite leadership and national regeneration. Moreover, individual excellence, teamwork and survival are apparent. Accordingly, this chapter now focuses on films in similar vein: *The Gift Horse* (1952); *The Purple Plain* (1954); *Cockleshell Heroes* (1955); *Private's Progress* (1956); *The Dam Busters* (1955); *Reach for the Sky* (1956); *The Small Back Room* (1947); *The Rake's Progress* (1945) and *Dunkirk* (1958).

Heroic Reinforcement in Other Films

Negativity surrounded Lt. Cmdr. Hugh Fraser's (Trevor Howard) acceptance of a dilapidated Lend-lease US destroyer in *The Gift Horse* which was based on a triumphant Combined Operations mission. 'I'd heard you British were scraping the bottom of the barrel', commented his American counterpart, shocked that only four officers and fifteen crewmen had sea-going experience. 'That's why I'm here' responded Fraser, a widower. This discouraging picture of Fraser presaged heroic reinforcement and developed alongside the odysseys of three inter-connected characters, the ship and the crew: Flotilla Captain Dave Wilson (Hugh Williams) habitually undermined Fraser. They were old rivals following a pre-war incident in which Fraser, unfairly blamed for a collision, had resigned. Wilson's taunts implied his duplicity, not Fraser's guilt; Dripper Daniels (Richard Attenborough), crewman and class-divisive trade-unionist, constantly quoted abstruse regulations; Fraser's First Officer, Lt. Jennings (James Donald), continually disavowed him; the ship frequently broke-down; and the alienated crew wanted to scrap both ship and skipper.

Due to U-boat activity and fog, Fraser provoked antagonism by making a course decision that resulted in the sinking of an unprotected British merchant ship:

Lt. Grant: It's not what you might call a success story.

Lt Jennings: What's one more ship and 20 lives between friends?

Doctor: I'd be inclined to give a man like Fraser the benefit of the doubt.

Lt. Jennings: I still say the man's impossible.

Following this tragedy, Wilson was smugly furious. 'You simply can't keep putting up blacks' he explained in club parlance. Fraser unequivocally took responsibility. Despite another breakdown, through excellent teamwork, his crew hit an enemy aeroplane. Wilson deviously claimed it. Acknowledging Wilson's seniority, Fraser

told his men 'we've destroyed our first enemy aircraft ... I will see that we celebrate'. Instead, they were ridiculed for fouling the harbour boom. Wilson again attempted to demean Fraser, announcing that 'the Admiralty takes a dim view'. 'My mishandling of the ship?' interrupted Fraser with honest dignity. Like Ansen his intrinsic worth paralleled negativity. When Daniels' mother faced a cancer operation he refused to ask favours from 'stinking officers'. Fraser had him flown home. He was compassionate when Yank (Sonny Tufts) went AWOL to search for his wife and baby lost in the West-country blitz. Following his crew's public-house brawl because the ship had been labelled 'a floating atrocity', Fraser socialised with, and appeased, the landlord. Hitting wreckage that Lt. Grant (Robin Bailey) - over-stretched on the bridge - failed to chart, Fraser accepted ultimate accountability, thereby saving a career officer and gaining Wilson's admiration. Upon meeting his sixteen-year old only son, who had secretly joined the Navy, Fraser hid his parental fears and offered him a man's drink. At celebrations for Christmas, and Jennings' engagement, Fraser never faltered and - despite having just received news of his son's death - warmly welcomed a petrified recruit aged seventeen. 'Here's to our ship ... and our skipper', proudly toasted a transformed Daniels.

Fraser's absolution emanated from Wilson's offer of a volunteer-only Combined Operations' mission to ram the port gates of St. Nazaire with their explosive-packed ship. German battleships anchored there. As a measure of the man, his crew volunteered *en-masse*. Jennings refused his own command to remain.⁵³

With burgeoning respect, he and Fraser reached a warriors' closeness:

Jennings: I've never been what you might call a sentimentalist, but ... if we do manage to scramble aboard the MLs and get back to Blighty, things won't be quite the same.

Fraser: I know.

Successfully ramming the dock under fire, Fraser evacuated his wounded. Captured during ferocious fighting he - and his now united crew - cheered when their “worthy” ship exploded, indicating their success. Fraser had transformed an unfamiliar, dangerously unreliable ship, doubting officers and inexperienced crew, into a battle-winning combination. Furthermore, Wilson righted a wrong; Jennings prized an exceptional leader; and Daniels discovered his real enemy - the Germans - to whom he quoted the Geneva Convention. Having brought these journeys to successful fruition, Fraser’s own heroic odyssey provided a role model for national regeneration and leadership, restated his masculinity and bolstered his self-esteem.

A different challenge faced Canadian volunteer RAF pilot Forrester (Gregory Peck) in *The Purple Plain*, adapted from an H.E. Bates novel. Forrester’s Burmese odyssey also fits my heroic reinforcement paradigm. Disconnected by grief, having lost his new bride in the London Blitz, he sought suicide missions. By remaining aloof from his comrades, and gaining medals for attempted self-destruction, Forrester earned their contempt. Blore (Donald Pleasance), a non-combatant academic family-man with everything to live for, shared quarters with Forrester whom he vehemently disliked. Dr. Harris (Bernard Lee), concerned about Forrester’s nihilism, introduced him to Anna (Win Min Than), the beautiful Oriental woman assisting missionary Miss McNab (Brenda de Banzie). Anna’s serenity and Eastern logic⁵⁴ healed Forrester’s trauma:

Forrester: I didn’t want to go on living. You would think that would be easy enough in war, but it didn’t work ... I got medals instead.

Anna: It is not good to die inside.

Forrester: It’s like living in a bad dream.

Anna: Here, we bury the dead in the earth. Not in our hearts. Is the dream over now?

Forrester: I think so.

Anna: Will you always come back?

Forrester: Yes.

Anna: I will always be here.

Later, on a routine mission with Blore and wary navigator Carrington (Lyndon Brook), Forrester frantically fought to save their lives by crash-landing safely in Japanese-held jungle. Facing extreme danger, with limited water, Carrington's injuries and reasoning that Headquarters would not search for 'three corpses in Japanese territory', he recommended moving on. 'You've been round the bend for ages', Blore judgementally cried. Afraid of capture by the Japanese and in a shift of impetus after breaking his collar-bone, self-preservationist Blore committed suicide. In contrast, Forrester regained the leadership strengths and selfless courage needed for survival. Having made Carrington comfortable, he undertook a hazardous trek for help. Forrester began with a reason to die. Connecting with an admiring Carrington, and returning to Anna, he ended with reasons to live - re-stated masculinity, esteem, comradeship and national pride. This medal would be for unconditional valour and exemplary leadership. Heroic reinforcement had subsumed dysfunctional heroics.

A Commando operation provided the backcloth for heroic reinforcement and journeys of discovery in *The Cockleshell Heroes*. Apparent World War One cowardice signalled traditional careerist Captain Thompson's (Trevor Howard) dysfunction. In 1940, he clashed with Major Stringer (Jose Ferrer) who, on the outbreak of war, 'joined in a rush of boyish enthusiasm'. Using a motley crew, Stringer headed an *ad hoc* mission, in which selected two-man canoe teams would limpet-mine heavily-guarded German shipping in Bordeaux harbour. Their odysseys were intertwined:

Stringer: Will you be able to take orders from me?

Thompson: I am quite used to the normal chain of command.

Stringer: You are not exactly brimming over with enthusiasm for this party.

Thompson: I am not qualified to comment on the possibility of your plan.

They clashed over Stringer's preference for enterprising individualists:

Stringer: Try to fit them into a mould and you will destroy the very quality I am looking for.

Thompson: I am a professional marine. I don't like temporary officers ... volunteers for hazardous service ... or musical comedy operations designed to win a VC for somebody ... I just don't like heroes.

Stringer: It may not be the right way, or the marine way, or the professional way, but it is my way.

An initiative test identified Stringer's team, but his dress-rehearsal was catastrophic.

He turned to Thompson who unequivocally condemned him:

Stringer: What did I do wrong?

Thompson: You made every kind of mistake ... you're no leader. You made no effort to understand your men ... They are like schoolboys with a lenient master.

Stringer: What do I do?

Thompson: You become an officer. You take this sloppy lot and make them into a team. You pitch into them until they learn to do exactly as they are told, whether they like it or not. You told me once that I was a military machine, with no feeling for the men. Well, you've just killed the whole lot off ... not a man would have reached his objective ... and the men despise you for it ... I am not accustomed to being associated with this kind of a mess ... I am thoroughly ashamed to be a member of your unit.

Caring leadership defined Thompson, who helped when Sgt. Ruddock went AWOL over his wife's infidelities.⁵⁵ Later, Thompson unburdened himself as he and Stringer got drunk. From a seamless line of generals, and part of the Marine "family", he coveted action.⁵⁶ A trusted new officer in 1918 during the battle of Cambrai, he was ordered, on doubtful intelligence, to capture an isolated German machine-gun post in what became a suicide mission. Massively outnumbered and determined to prevent a massacre, he got his men to safety. His message to HQ never arrived, leaving his military career in ruins:

My company commander ... managed to pass most of the blame on to me ... "You didn't seem to realise Thompson, that in the Royal Marines, we don't cower on the ground the moment someone fires. Well, what does that say ... I was just Lt. Thompson, the promising young officer who couldn't be trusted under fire ... Since then ... I've been handed every lousy administrative job ... Now it's too late for me to have a second chance. I wouldn't know what to do with it ... I suppose I should hate you for having something which I no longer can have ... this is your chance. It doesn't come to all men ... Don't fail yourself.

Volunteering to replace Ruddock's subordinate injured partner, Thompson grabbed his 'second chance', ensuring this suicide mission's success. 'Keep the line straight boys', he bravely ordered before those captured were executed. His

leadership, professionalism and heroic masculinity were re-stated. Only Stringer, who had not failed himself, and Clarke (Anthony Newley), survived. Qualifying the deaths of all on such fundamental missions, eight approving ghosts appeared behind them. Whatever angle film-makers favoured - Ansen's battle fatigue, Fraser's apparent inefficiency, Forrester's grieving death-wish or Thompson's alleged cowardice - the heroic reinforcement message, emphasising leadership and national regeneration, prevailed. This chapter will now explore dysfunction and redemption as depicted by malingerers - for whom war meant personal opportunism; revellers - for whom war meant personal aggrandisement and ownership; and civilians - for whom war meant redemption.

Malingers, Revellers and Redemption

Comedy provided the "safest" arena for "deviant" behaviour or critiques of heroism. *Private's Progress*, arguably the best example of this, implied a 'failure to live up to ideals of heroism, as well as a complete disregard for such ideals',⁵⁷ thereby directly challenging the ethos of the Second World War film. The army was depicted as being corrupt from the top down, and shown as a malingerer's paradise. Everyone was dysfunctional, including Windrush's mother and sister.⁵⁸ Despite debunking the 'People's War', class, the army and patriotic wartime films, and boasting that it received 'absolutely no official assistance', the film was used for army training. For Spicer, Stanley Windrush (Ian Carmichael) represented the 'last idealistic gentleman' in a changing post-1945 world and the directors, the Boulting Brothers, had 'captured the mood of cynicism about British society'.⁵⁹ Failing officer-school, Windrush became the pawn of his uncle, manipulator *extraordinaire* Brigadier Bertram Tracepurcel (Dennis Price) and his fixer Pte. Percival Cox (Richard Attenborough),

an 'unholy class alliance of corrupt entrepreneurs for whom, war was a time of opportunity'.⁶⁰ Windrush despised army routine. 'The British Army are not idiots' his friend, Egan (Peter Jones) responded, 'I think you'll find the system's intelligent enough. There's a reason for everything'. Cox and Windrush's skiving unit angered disillusioned Major Hitchcock (Terry Thomas) who loathed army life. He discovered his men in a cinema womanising, bored, and sleeping through both the 'People's War' film *In Which We Serve* and patriotic newsreels that claimed:

The British soldier today is highly-skilled and highly-trained. Modern methods are carefully designed to help him develop a spirit of initiative and determination ... The British soldier is fighting fit, and fit to fight.

In best army tradition Hitchcock transferred them. Similarly Windrush, excelling on a Japanese interpreters' course, was attached to Tracepurcel's secret Hatrack mission behind German lines. Art-fraudster Tracepurcel, and Cox, planned to "reward" themselves - on behalf of a grateful nation - by "rescuing" European art treasures previously "rescued" by the Nazis. Third biggest box-office hit of 1956 behind *Reach for the Sky*, and dedicated: 'To all those who got away with it', the film culminated with "innocent" Windrush's arrest, alongside the guilty. Corrupt from the top down, the army was redeemed through Egan, and by assisting the police in arresting the criminals, as it was in *The League of Gentlemen*.

Whilst Tracepurcel, Cox and Windrush anticipated avoiding enemy action, *On the Fiddle* allowed dysfunctional RAF shirker Horace Pope (Alfred Lynch) and "naive" Pedlar Pascoe (Sean Connery) accidentally to heroically succeed on a top-secret mission. However, facing the enemy in combat had not been on their original agenda. Nevertheless, they were decorated by their superiors who, unable to admit to military mayhem, were equally anxious to lift their regimental medal tally. By debunking medal-winning, film-makers trivialised excessive heroics. Importantly, the

military dealt with corruption, and proved that even shirkers could rise to the occasion. Yet there were officers who revelled in fighting by going beyond the limits of patriotic duty, to engage in personal crusades where medal-winning was *de-rigueur*.

For those revelling in war, combat elevated living to a higher plain. National heroes Guy Gibson and Douglas Bader epitomised this. Although courageous, both were flawed, needing combat to be complete. Cinematically, they exemplified the 'Big Man' paradigm but in reality were resented for going to personal extremes.⁶¹

This contrasted with most officers' prevailing desire - cessation of hostilities.

Hastings observes:

In times of war, fighting men are suddenly cherished ... Few ... emerge as heroes. Most, even if they have volunteered for military service, discover amid mortal peril that they prefer to act in a fashion likely to enable them to see home again, rather than to perform the sort of feats which win medals. This does not mean that they are cowards. The majority do their duty conscientiously. They are reluctant, however, to take those strides beyond duty which mark out the men who win battles for their countries.⁶²

'Now's your chance to be a hero', Gibson's superior significantly commented on war's declaration.⁶³ Bomber Harris, Hastings notes, recognized:

A man of action who sought to imbue every flier he led with his own commitment to carry the war to the foe, to inflict retribution upon Nazi Germany in fire and rubble for the great evil which it brought upon the world. Gibson possessed an attribute Harris esteemed, but which many mild-mannered young bomber pilots lacked: "Hun-hate".⁶⁴

Hastings reveals Gibson's drive:

He wanted to get on with it, to engage the enemy, to fight. He volunteered for extra sorties ... and was more than happy to accept any risks involved ... So keen was he that during the Luftwaffe's Blitz on Britain, he switched from bombers to fighter planes to be where the action was.⁶⁵

Gibson's finely-tuned story, re-created in *The Dam Busters*, exposed nothing post-raid or personal.⁶⁶ The raid made him a global legend. The film immortalised him. Assigned a desk job following propaganda missions to America, Gibson craved action. On the 19 September, 1944, he flew as Master Bomber in a Mosquito-raid on

the German city of Rheydt and was lost over Holland. Conceited and egotistical, it was suggested that, against advice, he was flying too low.⁶⁷ 'Many celebrated warriors are detested by their comrades' but, confirms Hastings, 'it was a shock to discover how much Gibson was disliked by some of those who served under him'.⁶⁸

Combat lust infused Bader, whose story, in the film *Reach for the Sky*, inspired Medhurst to condemn it as 'that seminal distortion' amongst British war films.⁶⁹ Pre-war, Bader (Kenneth More) monopolised the spotlight. The film revered him as a maverick. At Kenley, Air Vice Marshal Halahan scolded 'we don't want schoolboys in the RAF'. Prior to the accident in which he lost both legs, a senior officer at Cranwell warned 'a good pilot shouldn't have to prove it all the time', but his secret smile suggested approbation. Following his remarkable recovery, Bader's civilian frustrations were resolved by war. Combat became his enabler and redeemer in the masculinity stakes. 'Good, now we can really get at them', he exclaimed as Hitler invaded France. He commanded 242 Squadron comprising of battle-scarred Canadian pilots, winning their approval. His most vocal critic Stan Turner (Lee Patterson) eventually assumed his mannerisms. Bader's belligerence got them vital equipment. 'Legs or no legs, I have never seen such a mobile fireball', said Turner. Portrayed as a superstar in the Battle of Britain, Bader's devil-may-care confidence was inspirational. 'Engine in front, armour plate behind, tin legs underneath - how the devil can they get me?' he laughed. 'To his pilots he was a Superman', the narrator intoned. Hastings explains:

It is hard to exaggerate the influence that displays of battlefield prowess have always exercised upon others, especially adolescents who are least equipped to perceive the worth of other virtues.⁷⁰

This was imperative, since youth was cinema's target audience. Backed by Air Vice-Marshall Leigh Mallory (Lindon Brook), Bader was lionised as the instigator of the

Duxford (or Big) Wing, comprising of 36 aircraft. He led the Wing from September 1940. 'I'd rather have started with 36 aircraft than 12', he stridently insisted. Clearly, commanding five squadrons had wasted his superior abilities. 'Let's get on with the war' he declared at Tangmere, throwing away important files - a cinematic device signifying action-man Bader's unique contribution. However, this devalued the war's "little" people whose contribution entailed bureaucracy, not medal winning. Fact was subsumed by myths. 'As long as there was a battle to fight, Douglas was going to fight it', the narrator reverently intoned. Depicted as one of Colditz's "naughty boys", Bader greeted relieving Americans in 1945 by asking if there were 'any Spitfire operations'. He wanted to 'get in a couple of trips before it's all over?' 'You'd think these chaps would have had enough', a senior officer enthused. Still lusting for battle, Bader selfishly demanded 'one last fling in the East' when reunited with his wife.

A television documentary, *Secret Lives on Douglas Bader* (1996), told a different story without scorning his courage. 'You either loved or hated him', claimed his second wife. Ground crews remembered his lack of consideration, describing him as 'rude', 'aggressive' and 'false' and so egotistically involved in the RAF that it 'was his surrogate family'.⁷¹ Unlike his screen persona, his Battle of Britain role was peripheral. Aggressively by-passing authority, he gained approval for the Duxford Wing outside the normal chain-of-command. The Wing was controversial because it left airfields undefended.⁷² Senior RAF figures claimed he caused friction in the Service, and as a POW.⁷³ Consequently, his Colditz batman was one of many who hated him.⁷⁴ Summing-up, *Secret Lives* declared: 'If the reality did not always fit the myth, the legless fighter pilot was the perfect symbol for a nation fighting back from adversity. Few heroes are without their flaws'.⁷⁵ To praise those who revelled in

war, film-makers unambiguously adopted the strategy of myth. Bader and Gibson, 'made famous by war',⁷⁶ proprietarily saw it as theirs. This was their psychological flaw - it was too personal. 'Whatever their vanities and blemishes', Hasting advises 'they did great service to their countries of a kind which few are capable'.⁷⁷ This was film-makers' key point. My next section discusses wartime dysfunction, focusing on redemption. Some affected civilians needed to be in uniform, not proprietarily, or for medals, but because they associated military service with masculinity. For others war gave life unexpected purpose. Here, there is a sense of men being inexorably led towards a greater destiny.

In *The Small Back Room*, adapted from a Michael Balchin novel, scientist and munitions expert Sammy Rice (David Farrar) suffered greatly after losing a foot. This ruled-out military service and emotionally emasculated him, despite having priority civilian job status. Lacking ambition beyond the military, and to the concern of Susan, his girlfriend and Professor Mair's efficient departmental secretary, Sammy drank to ease his physical pain and mental anguish. Murphy describes Sammy's pain 'as a mark of his integrity' in 'a society run on Machiavellian ... lines'. Sammy's loyalty to his boss, Mair, was tempered by military aspirations. The confidant of top civil servant Pinker (Geoffrey Keene), Sammy was apathetic when warned of a political threat to Mair's department. Yet, charged with finding the solution to a new type of German bomb which exploded, not on impact, but if handled, Sammy impressed Captain Stuart (Michael Gough) with his rationale. He noted, despite his drinking, that three of the four deaths were children's. This suggested attractive packaging of the bomb. At Mair's Reeves' anti-tank gun trials, Colonel Holland (Leslie Banks) approached Sammy voicing military concerns about scientists'

autonomy and their critical lack of field experience or Terms of Reference. Sammy challenged Waling (Jack Hawkins), an egocentric government salesman who had cynically pre-sold the gun. Sneering at the military, Waling attacked Sammy's insecurities:

Waring: Don't let yourself be impressed by soldiers.

Sammy: Whenever we disagree with the military, we are always right. Except that they have to use the stuff, and trust their lives to it.

Waring: Medals have an emotional appeal for you. Nobody gets medals for having brains.

At a farcical Whitehall meeting on the Reeve's military application, Professor Bryant's recently appointed National Scientific Advisory Group arbitrarily dismissed Mair's gun. Further impressing the military with his integrity, Sammy defended it as 'an excellent weapon, but not quite ready', and thwarted Bryant with the vital question 'Have you seen the gun fired?'

Sammy's apparent "political" unresponsiveness and self-pity alienated Susan who declared, 'you have got to make up your mind whether or not you are going to spend the rest of your life being someone it's just too bad about'. Colonel Strang (Anthony Bushell) appreciated Sammy's worth when he calmly replaced Stuart who died disarming one of two new bombs. Sammy worked tirelessly to secure the volatile second trembler, refusing Strang's brave offer of assistance:

Sammy: Sorry, it's a personal matter.

Strang: If anybody ever has any doubts about what you can do with your hands, arms or any other part of you send them to me.

They exchanged respectful glances. Now redeemed, Sammy's masculine re-birth reached its apotheosis at the War Office, with Holland's offer of the uniformed rank of major:

Up until now, we have been losing the war ... it is the intention of His Majesty's Government that we shall win it. And, contrary to the impression conveyed by the popular press, it will be won by the Army, the Navy and the Air Force in that order ... The Army is to have its own research section. The man in charge shall have a free hand – equipment, personnel etc. – we want results.

Like Ansen and the others, Sammy's heroic qualities negated his lapses. Moreover, this film cleverly probed Establishment, scientific and military in-fighting. Interestingly, it was a TV regular in America at the height of the 1950s' Cold War, when scientific advances under military and political impetus, created public concern about scientists' role in creating atomic weaponry.⁷⁸

In contrast to Sammy's experience, the civilian journey towards military redemption in *The Rake's Progress* was through a wastrel's life. Vivian Kenway (Rex Harrison), a wealthy MP's son, was given a soldier's cap badge on Armistice night 1918 and told that 'the common fighting man' won *that* war. The badge became his talisman. He became an irresponsible, headline-hitting playboy. Only Jennifer, his father's secretary, could influence him. 'My type's becoming obsolete ... the champagne has gone flat', he sadly confided, as realisation of his irrelevance dawned. Abandoning her on their wedding-eve, Vivian enlisted. Maverick-like, he disobeyed orders to stay-put to check whether a vital bridge was mined, and made the headlines again - this time, honourably. The *Daily Mirror* proclaimed: 'Vivian Kenway, playboy of the roaring Thirties, fails to return from patrol'. A colonel arrived after Vivian sipped a deathbed glass of champagne:

Colonel: His RT packed up soon after he'd crossed ... he'd been holding the bridge approaches for the best part of four hours.

Corporal: His last words were 'A good year'.

Colonel: It's men like him that made it possible.

Corporal: I think he was referring to the champagne, Sir.

Subtly critical of Appeasement, Jennifer articulated his epitaph: 'This was Vivian. In peace a misfit, a man who wanted to live dangerously in a world that wanted to play safe. In war, a fine soldier, perhaps that was his destiny'. Redemption was writ large. Since Vivian held the First World War cap badge as he died, the symbolism suggested

that *this* war was won by elites who were paying the ultimate price for a more equal society.⁷⁹

A different civilian redemption was recorded in Balcon's *Dunkirk* (1958). Enjoying a soft, reserved occupation, Holden (Richard Attenborough) personally avoided the war whilst profiting from it. This earned him the contempt of a shipwrecked naval officer and an older middle-class reporter. Hostile to *Dunkirk* - unlike other small-boat owners - Holden's epiphany occurred during the disembarkation of traumatized *Dunkirk* survivors. He completed several heroic trips until his overloaded craft failed. Returning with the Navy, he proudly blossomed when, upon disembarking in England, a commentator called to him and his youthful companion 'alright *soldiers*, keep moving'. *Dunkirk* also featured happily unmotivated Lance Corporal Tubby Binns (John Mills) who had responsibility thrust upon him when his superior was killed. Cut-off from their unit in France, and overcoming many hazards, he courageously and authoritatively guided his patrol to the beaches, where they selflessly assisted in the hospital before embarking. 'We wouldn't be here without you', said his grateful men. Working class Binns grew in stature, and into leadership, in the heat of battle, finally accepting elite values - the genre's reinforcing mechanism for other ranks. Similarly, antagonistic officers ultimately connected with their superiors. Films covering the homecoming legacy offered another perspective. 'Anyone wanting to know what it was like to be a wartime victor and a peacetime loser might do well to look at them carefully', claims McFarlane.⁸⁰ My next section does this, firstly addressing tormented POWs' repatriation, including the decline of deference and the corresponding need for society to change. Not 'wartime victors', they struggled with peacetime life in *Frieda* (1947);

Libel (1959); *Mine Own Executioner* (1947); *Room at the Top* (1959) and *Tunes of Glory* (1960).

Repatriation

Reviewing POW repatriation from Germany, MacKenzie describes polarised realities,

... the War Office and other departments went to great lengths to make men feel they were valued rather than merely cogs in an impersonal machine, after years of incarceration impatient recovered personnel did not always take kindly to renewed exposure to service bureaucracy, even of a comparatively benign variety.⁸¹

Experiences differed according to which of the Allies repatriated POWs. 'You're one of those undisciplined bastards who have been sitting on your arses in Germany enjoying yourselves whilst we've been fighting the war for you', taunted an insensitive NCO to a seasick POW onboard the *Nieuw Amsterdam*.⁸² Repatriation Centres and psychologists strove, often unsuccessfully, to assist. MacKenzie reports broadcaster Rene Cutforth's livid reaction to official advice to his family. 'Do you mean to say that the bloody army gave you lessons on how to be married to me? To hell with that ... I will not have my life interfered with'.⁸³ Thousands of ex-POWs found this too invasive. Yet official advice 'did not extend to telling them what to do when POWs stole food from other people's plates ... or hoarded matches and candles, or woke screaming in the night with bad dreams'.⁸⁴ MacKenzie found widespread bitterness on pay reimbursement and job prospects. However, literary and cinematic investment in the Colditz myth turned imprisonment in Europe into an adventure that negated homecoming realities. Prisoners from the Far East were more likely to be unstable. Traumatized by Japanese brutality and jeopardised by Allied victory, starving and filthy, they told of American generosity and of caring British Wrens and Red-Cross nurses.⁸⁵ These POWs barely remembered cleanliness and were

'frightened' to see 'so much plenty'.⁸⁶ Author MacArthur compares this to their post-homecoming experiences. Many felt that they simply did not 'belong', and that 'the only people who understood us were ourselves'.⁸⁷

Few films tackled repatriation. The reality - unlikely to attract large audiences, especially the crucial target audience - could be disturbing.⁸⁸ Ex-POW Batchelder noted 'someone once said we were heroes until the day the war ended, then nobody wanted to know us'.⁸⁹ This was a recurring theme. For POWs outwardly unscathed, claustrophobia, nightmares and depression were common. *The Captive Heart* had romanticised repatriation from the West against a background of VE-Day fireworks, suggesting that there, difficulties ended.⁹⁰ Problems enumerated in *Frieda* and *Libel* were happily resolved. Interestingly, the latter film turned violent class hatred into a platform for aristocratic paternalism. However, on the sixtieth anniversary of VJ-Day 2005, former POWs in the Far East revealed that on repatriation, they had been distraught to find little public interest in their dilemma.⁹¹ Unquestionably, British people on the home-front suffered greatly. Nevertheless, some returning servicemen, especially POWs, felt angry and rejected. *Mine Own Executioner*, the only portrayal of a man made dangerously psychotic by war, and *Tunes of Glory*, an evocation of post-war torment, were close to the reality of servicemen imprisoned by the Japanese. *Room at the Top* questioned elite masculinity, fiercely exposed class inequalities post-1945, was more open in its depictions of women as sexual beings and, along with *Tunes of Glory*, set meritocracy against traditional class boundaries. These themes were part of the sense of shift and change in British society that showed middle-class pragmatism and sensitivity

towards, and willingness to deal with, controversial issues. The overarching theme of these films was men ineluctably changed by war.

One such man was RAF officer Robert Dawson (David Farrar) in *Frieda*. An escaped POW, he married his German nurse Frieda (Mai Zetterling). Arriving in England, months before the war ended, Frieda was greeted with suspicion. The war-ravaged Polish landscape contrasted with Robert's idyllic village community, presaging a man torn between two worlds. Robert became two people; sure of his place in the community pre-war, and a changed and indecisive ex-POW. Previously a popular school-master, Robert's POW experiences - and Frieda's initially hostile reception - sapped his self-esteem. Welcomed by his Headmaster, Robert vacillated:

Headmaster: Good masters are few and far between.

Robert: It is five years since I took a class. I don't know whether I could pick-up the reins. I'm not very sure of myself.

However, some staff and students made his life unbearable. Robert's changed persona was cleverly established by Judy (Glynis Johns), the widow of his brother Alan, who was killed on a Cologne raid. Alan and Robert had been inseparable. Robert's familiarity - compared to his icy formality with Frieda - confused Judy. She confided in Nell (Flora Robson), Robert's politicised aunt:

Judy: From the moment he came back ... Robert is Alan to me.

Nell: One half of you knows that Alan is dead ... the other half doesn't, and won't.

Judy: And then?

Nell: Then you'll see only Robert himself.

Sequentially defending Frieda and suspecting her, happy and unhappy, Robert was volatile. Primarily protective following the Belsen newsreel, he then insisted she was complicit. Disputing Nell's anti-German collective-guilt stance, he then agreed with her. Initially trusting Frieda's fanatical Nazi brother, he then killed him in a brutal fight. Rejecting Frieda he precipitated her suicide attempt, and then rescued her. In doing so, he re-claimed his identity, job, masculinity and self-esteem.

Adapted from another popular stage drama, *Libel* manipulated continuance of the Aristocracy. Ex-POW, Sir Mark Loddon (Dirk Bogarde), a much loved and respected aristocrat, returned from the war a partial amnesiac prone to nightmares and unnerved by reflections. On a deferential televised tour of his Elizabethan ancestral home, his memory lapses were fielded by his American wife Lady Margaret (Olivia de Havilland). 'What am I supposed to do, tell the whole country the war has changed me?' he complained. During incarceration, another POW, Mark's doppelganger, a class-envious actor Frank Welney (also Bogarde) emulated him, but moaned 'talent doesn't count for anything - you have to know the right people'. Frank alarmingly turned his discontents and class-bitterness into violence. This highlighted continuing class inequalities. A visiting Canadian pilot, Mark's POW friend Jeffrey Buckenham (Paul Massie), traced him. Convinced that Mark was charlatan Frank, Jeffrey triggered a libel case. Even Margaret doubted Mark, whose memory gradually returned. Whilst escaping he had suffered head injuries viciously inflicted by Frank. Mark struck back in self-defence. Frank, presented as No. 15, a human wreck without an identity, appeared in court wearing Mark's jacket. Both men were powerful metaphors for the changes wrought by war. Mark's authenticity was established by discovery of his talisman secreted in the jacket. With aristocratic paternalism he offered his compensation to finance Frank's care. Robert Dawson and Mark moved on. Prisoners of the Japanese could not.

Spicer described *Mine Own Executioner*, as a 'virtual textbook case of combat neurosis.'⁹² At that time, cinema's fashionable pre-occupation with the damaged mind also featured in non-war films. Adapted from a Michael Balchin novel, the film

nurtured seething violence. Schizophrenic pilot Adam Lucian (Kieron Moore) was shot down near Rangoon. Incarcerated by the Japanese for a year, he broke-down under torture. His post-war psychosis stemmed from this and his violent, but unavoidable, murder of a Japanese guard whilst escaping. Tormented dreams haunted his nights. Psychiatrist Felix Milne (Burgess Meredith) tried to control Lucian's aggression and racist loathing of the Japanese. Despite improving, and dangerously underestimated by Milne, Lucian committed suicide after murdering his wife Patricia (Dulcie Gray) - believing she was a Japanese guard. Milne, unprofessionally preoccupied with his mistress, to his patient's detriment, survived an investigation. Murphy argues that, in 'splitting maladjustment' between irresponsible Milne and psychotic Lucian, their characters were not dealt with satisfactorily' and Lucian's psychological problems were 'never fully explained'.⁹³ Yet Lucian's story, the most extreme version of the returning POW, surprisingly thrilled audiences.⁹⁴ Pertinently, the film questioned medical ethics whilst exploring contemporaneous issues: companionate marriage abuse (Patricia lived in danger); the results of middle-class adultery; and inadequate provision for war-induced psychosis.⁹⁵

Decline of deference was the dominant theme as ex-POW and working-class anti-hero Joe Lampton (Laurence Harvey) challenged the status quo, his class position, officer heroics and contemporary sexual *mores* in *Room at the Top*.⁹⁶ Bomb sites, continuing class inequalities, squalor and a smoky, industrial landscape, contrasted with luxury houses and tree-lined avenues as Joe, motivated by a sense of personal injustice, mentally compared life in Dufton (his home town) to Warnley (his aspirational home) suggesting a post-war society rigidly, and unfairly, divided on

class lines and privilege. Indeed, Mr. Hoylake, Joe's new boss at the Treasurer's office indicated a social divide of mammoth proportions and little understanding:

Hoylake: You'll meet a different class of people. We pride ourselves on being civilized.

Joe: (Very defensively) - Dufton is not much of a place, but we are not savages there.

Hoylake: (Contemptuously) - You think not?

Significantly, and reinforcing Hoylake's comments, those in favourable class positions all abused their privileges, and were willing to manipulate, or even destroy, the lives of "lesser" beings.

A sergeant during the Second World War, Joe now covetously competed with ex-officer Jack Wales (John Prestbrook) - a snobbish braying braggart - for the hand of Susan, daughter of the politically powerful, manipulative, millionaire mill owner (Donald Wolfit). At their first meeting, Jack - up from Cambridge - lost no opportunity to belittle Joe's "inferior" class position and "undistinguished" war record, calling him Sergeant as a form of disdain:

Jack: Sergeant Observer?

Joe: How did you know?

Jack: Oh, I can tell. Didn't you ever get beyond Wellingtons?

Cruel class enmity re-surfaced when Joe mispronounced the word 'brazier' during rehearsals with Warnley's middle-class drama group. Jack laughed the loudest and intentionally mortified Joe. Hostility increased at a later meeting where Joe's lack of deference clashed with Jack's scornful vanity:

Jack: Hello Sergeant.

Joe: Do me a favour. I know all about your war. I know you were a squadron leader with a distinguished record, the DSO and all the rest of it, but the war is over. Stop calling me Sergeant.

Jack: Sergeant, you are selling me short. Didn't anyone tell you about my DFC.

As prisoners-of-war in Europe, their experience of war - like their class position and upbringing - had been very different. Jack had escaped and received a medal in the heroic public school tradition. By remaining a POW, Joe - like thousands of others -

had used incarceration to gain an education, and accountancy qualifications, in the expectation of a better, more meritocratic post-war life.⁹⁷ Incensed by Jack's display of unmitigated arrogance, Joe expostulated: 'That type makes me mad - the boys with the silver spoon. They think they can take everything as a sort of divine right'. Joe's friends were equally dismissive of Jack - and all elite masculinity - they heartily agreed with Joe's mocking comment: 'Different brand of courage, don't you know'. Clearly they were insinuating that medals freely given to Jack and his ilk were less readily available to heroic other ranks. The Second World War still dominated their lives, and the hope inspired by victory, had largely proved to be a false dawn.

However, Joe was manipulative too. He also used women and accorded them little respect. During a violent row with his French mistress Alice Aisgill (Simone Signoret), his selfish resolve to put himself first and his increasing bitterness over Jack's privileged existence were signified and again harked back to the war:

Alice: Why didn't you escape like Jack Wale?

Joe: Don't mention that swine to me. He had a rich father to look after him and buy him an education. Those three years were the only chance I'd get to be qualified. Let these rich bastards who had all the fun be heroes. Let them pay for their privileges. If you want it straight from the shoulder, I was bloody-well pleased when I was captured. I didn't like being a prisoner, but it was a damned sight better than being dead.

Alice: You've never really been hard-up. You've never been hungry.

Joe: What do you think that POWs get to eat?

Alice: Even then you didn't starve. There has always been somebody to take care of Joe, even got extra for yourself because you got along so well with the guards.

Prior to his marriage to Susan (because of her pregnancy), Joe returned to his working-class roots where he clearly had nothing in common with his poor but decent relatives. His shocked aunt pleaded: 'You wouldn't sell yourself for a pan full of silver?' Her honest values were superior to those of Susan's mother, Mrs. Brown (Ambrosine Philpotts), an aristocrat who had married beneath her station for money. The luxury of the Brown's vast home, complete with servants and swimming pool,

was contrasted sharply with the bomb-damaged streets and dilapidated houses that Joe's aunt, and many Britons were forced to occupy. Joe's parents had been killed, and the family home demolished, by German bombers. Emphasizing the failure of the 'New Jerusalem', young children played in the dangerous rubble. Mrs. Brown, immaculate, pampered and ruthlessly controlled, was juxtaposed with the downtrodden, work-worn working-class woman to whom Joe explained that he 'was not really a stranger'. Later, further cementing Joe's alienation, a group of working-class youths told him that his 'sort' did not belong there. He fitted neither Susan's class, nor his own. Harper argues that, since Alice was older than Joe, the film was about 'the declining marketability of older women',⁹⁸ but *Room at the Top* is much more than that, it encapsulates a period when elite heroism and the existing social and cultural order was being contested. The film ended with Joe in the limousine after his marriage, looking discontented and trapped. In the final analysis, *Room at the Top*, ground-breaking in its honesty, realism, sexual freedom and the overturning of many taboos on depictions of women, appears to advocate maintenance of the status quo, or at least the need for a certain level of personal integrity lacking in the main protagonists.

Varying their approach, and highlighting lack of deference, Director Ronald Neame and Producer Colin Lesslie, showed that World War Two greatly impacted on the two protagonists in *Tunes of Glory* set in the mid-1950s. Respected Sandhurst lecturer, jungle warfare expert and 'stickler for detail', gentlemanly ex-POW Lt. Colonel Barrow (John Mills) was the Highland Regiment's new Officer Commanding. Enthusiastic in war, acting Lt. Colonel Sinclair (Alec Guinness) was a thug lacking peacetime challenge. The film pitted Barrow - the product of a military

family, Eton and Oxford; against Sinclair, the uncouth product of Sauciehall Street - former boy soldier, and 'drunk and disorderly' inmate of Barlinnie Prison. 'I see you came in that way, by university degree. I came in the other way,' Sinclair insolently challenged. Seduced by the Colditz myth, he ridiculed elite officer heroics and Barrow's revelation that he had also been jailed:

Sinclair: A POW camp eh, officers' privileges and amateur dramatics. It's not the same thing.
Barrow: I think I would have preferred Barlinnie.

Both were proud of the Regiment that Barrow's ancestors, 'generations of generals', had commanded. Barrow honoured tradition, the gentlemanly code and the regimental harmony and continuity inherent in the living-and-dead all together 'idea'. Sinclair boorishly encouraged rabble-rousers and scorned gentlemanly ethics. His loutish officers roughly-handled Barrow's female guests and belittled him at his genteel social evening. Displaying a nervous tick, Barrow confided to his aide (Gordon Jackson) that 'ridicule is always the finish'. Tearfully describing his near-death POW torture - including the Japanese land-drowning atrocity - Barrow revealed that his ambition to be the Regiment's best commander saved him. His trauma, and Sinclair's destabilizing and class-based aggression, escalated into a collision of minds and army worlds – the regimental 'idea', past, present and future.

Sinclair faced a Court Martial for striking a piper. After much soul-searching, Barrow attempted *rapprochement*:

You may have come in here as a boy piper Sinclair, but I was here before you. I was born into this regiment, born into an idea. The bandaged feet at Corunna; the square at Waterloo; the thin red line; the charge of the Highlanders hanging onto the Cavalry's stirrup; and *Scotland the Brave*; the mud at Paesschendale where my father fell; and I have kept up with the history, I even know the chapter where you took over in the desert sitting on the end of a Bren gun carrier like a bobby at a tattoo. Accuse me of anything you like, but don't accuse me of not caring. I've eaten, walked, slept and dreamt this regiment since my first toy soldier ... if I could, with honour, find a way out I assure you I would take it.

Perceiving weakness, not regimental solidarity, Sinclair took advantage, asking 'who is hurt by the headlines "Ex-Colonel strikes lover-boy Corporal"'. What was it you said ... "the idea" of the battalion, the living-and-dead all together'? Swearing support, Sinclair immediately reneged, triggering Barrow into committing suicide - his honourable course. Now haunted by the 'idea' of Barrow's ghost - and countless regimental others - Sinclair broke-down, according Barrow a full-ceremonial funeral above his rank. Implicitly, this film probed a conventional peacetime army's justification in the nuclear age. Explicitly, through class versus meritocracy, it valued Barrow's code and strongly vilified Japanese atrocities. A further legacy of war involved homecomings marred by crime, waste and malaise, resulting in a pyrrhic victory for some (although many veterans successfully made the transition from war to peace). Films in this vein will be discussed following a brief overview of crime.

Crime

Recently released Public Records reveal that war was a breeding ground for crime which intensified post-1945. Mobsters, racketeers and spivs prospered, especially in London.⁹⁹ 20,000 deserters existed through crime. The Blitz, blackouts and shortages provided criminal opportunities. Following the first London Blitz, crime rose steeply. Every blitzed major city was similarly affected.¹⁰⁰ Raids on shops and jewellers proliferated.¹⁰¹ With much of the regular police force at war, corruption and inefficiency permeated their conscripted, temporary replacements.¹⁰² In 1942, one-and-a-half million American GIs arrived, fuelling a gun culture. Armed robberies increased.¹⁰³ A new crime-wave of safe-breaking, using stolen Army explosives, emerged.¹⁰⁴ Mobsters gained ownership of West End Clubs and led glamorous lifestyles. Crime amongst young women rose considerably.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, casual

prostitution flourished and red-light districts mushroomed.¹⁰⁶ The eulogistic documentary *Britain Can Take It* gained a whole new meaning – Britain did.

Historian Chibnall notes that commodity shortages presaged an ‘illicit alternative economy’, fuelled by ‘increasingly sophisticated criminal organisations.’¹⁰⁷ Millions flouted the law, buying black market goods, especially rationed goods and luxuries. Spivs were almost universally regarded as providing an essential service. Criminalising them in the public mind-set was part of cinema’s rationale, beginning with *Waterloo Road* and continuing after 1945 in films such as *The Cockleshell Heroes*. Spivs were depicted as unpatriotic, cowardly despoilers of home-front women. However, in *They Made Me A Fugitive*, sinister Narcy ‘almost succeeded in proving that the civilized rules of society have not survived the war’, Murphy tells us.¹⁰⁸ The spiv culture placed people in minor contact with criminals, raising the spectre of cinema’s target audience - youth - being contaminated. Historian Maureen Waller posits the view that post-1945:

The wartime community spirit was replaced by a selfish Me First mentality, and general lowering of the moral climate. The new Labour Government projected its forthcoming plans for the welfare state not as a vision for living for which the country would need to work hard, but, naively, as the first great chance to get something for nothing. It was an attitude that seeped into the very fabric of life ... It was the heyday of the criminal, the racketeer and the spiv, as more and more ordinary people joined the scam.¹⁰⁹

Clearly this did not apply to everyone, but formed the backdrop to a homecoming legacy wherein film-makers re-created the dissatisfactions and drabness of post-war life, highlighting an unwillingness to settle for second-best. This is reflected in my key film *The League of Gentlemen* amongst others.

Homecoming Legacy – *The League of Gentlemen* (1960)

In 1950, historian Ross described the perceived difficulties in winning the peace:

The war had been an emotional pinnacle from which, subconsciously, they would have liked to look down for ever ... But in their bones they knew that they would never feel quite so much, or ask and get so much from life again. Out of the crucible of war, a generation had created certain standards of responsibility, of excitement, of purpose, that no social blueprint could live up to.¹¹⁰

Author Booker noted the war's impact on the 'outward character of English life'.¹¹¹

Five years afterwards, 'New Britain' was still 'the grey and seedy land of Graham Greene's wartime novels; or even that grim present which, in 1948, George Orwell had projected into an even grimmer future'.¹¹² Turner and Rennell reported 'a heavy greyness' that 'absorbed much of whatever energy and enthusiasm servicemen had in reserve'.¹¹³ A veteran complained:

I was repelled by the way people seemed obsessed with getting hold of things which were in short supply – mostly things which, in the army, I had thought unnecessary ... The culture shock of Civvy Street was considerable. The most unsettling thing was that nobody ever told me what to do next ... The feeling was one of focussed resentment at the theft of six years of my life'.¹¹⁴

Additionally, Turner and Rennell claim that veterans were 'specifically asked not to talk about their experiences because that was a barrier to family life', but it was the 'silence, separateness and refusal to share, that built the barriers'.¹¹⁵ Film-makers accommodated much of this.

Flanking the more cohesive body of homecoming legacy films this sub-genre offered implausible - occasionally topical - storylines. Forbidden passion with post-war consequences featured in *The Glass Mountain* (1949), *The Fool and the Princess* (1948) and *The Quiet Woman* (1951). Jailbirds and escapees creating problems, or released to assist the war effort, were depicted in *Tiger in the Smoke* (1956), *The Small Voice* (1948) and *The Safecracker* (1958). In *Train of Events* (1949), a German

POW in England deviously attempted to find a new identity by escaping to Canada. The consequences of returning from the dead, or the sudden reappearance of a veteran, were covered by *The Years Between* (1947) and *The Deep Blue Sea* (1955). Some veterans were inherently evil and returned to cause post-war havoc, as in *Cage of Gold* (1950) and *Silent Dust* (1949). Additionally, Vesselo and Murphy identified 'morbid burrowings' or film-noir undertones in *The Flamingo Affair* (1948), *Night Beat* (1948) and *The Clouded Yellow* (1950).¹¹⁶ Furthermore, socially aware Captain Gladstone Wedge, VC (Jimmy Hanley), in *It's Hard to be Good* (1949), was appalled by post-war selfishness. Whilst in *All Over Town* (1949), the local hero fiercely defended a drunken woman veteran. Nevertheless, the core-issues surrounding veterans: devaluation of wartime skills, loss of excitement and comradeship; class-based inequalities and critiques; feeling left behind, unappreciated and misunderstood; or being manipulated into crime, are epitomised by the following films.

Fundamentally, the casting of Jack Hawkins, cinema's most steadfast British officer, as the criminal ex-Lieutenant Colonel J. Hyde in *The League of Gentlemen* represented chaos.¹¹⁷ This film classically depicted officers' post-war dilemmas - wasted lifestyles, criminality, sleazy women and bitterness.¹¹⁸ The most bitter - Hyde - had been made redundant after 25-years' unblemished Army service. Convinced he had been betrayed in two key areas - his profession and marriage - he felt emasculated and vengeful. Spending his final weeks at Army Headquarters illegally researching service records, he selected officers and experts whose demobilizations were ignominious. This encapsulated the film's message, the potential of dispossessed officers when criminally manipulated. Sending copies of an American novel *The Golden Fleece* concerning a million dollar US bank robbery, and half a £5 note, he

invited them to a Café Royal luncheon. Playboy, Major Race (Nigel Patrick) arrived late, embodying hints of homosexuality, class-snobbery, anti-trade unionism and criminal proclivities, announcing: 'I took the wrong turning, not for the first time. Found myself in a roomful of trade unionists cooking up their next wage claim - all Tories'.

Hyde outlined their faults - the reasons he needed them to commit a copycat crime:

The Padre, Captain Mycroft (Roger Livesey): 'You took to the old dog-collar racket. What denomination are you now - C of E? No, that stopped at Bristol at the Assizes. I thought the judge went a bit far myself. ('An absolutely 1st class Quartermaster')

Lt Lexy (Richard Attenborough): 'Kicked out for giving information to the Russians. The joke being that you did it for money not principles'. ('A radio king')

Captain Porthill (Bryan Forbes): 'Quick fingered in Cyprus, thrown out for shooting an EOIKA suspect. Still using those fingers to play the piano in seedy nightclubs and extracting money from middle-aged ladies for services courageously rendered'. (A 'good, trained soldier, ruthless if need be')

Major Race (Nigel Patrick): 'Resigned his commission just before a flourishing smuggling ring was discovered in post-war Hamburg'. Race commented 'It was the right thing to do, breeding will out'. ('A transport expert' and 'No. 2')

Captain Stevens (Kiernan Moore): 'One time Fascist backroom boy ... Saw the light just in time and was made an officer and a gentleman. Unfortunately, he couldn't quite behave like one. The Sunday newspapers had a field day. There is nothing the public likes better than catching the odd man out'. I see this as a homosexual reference. (A 'good, trained soldier, ruthless if need be')

Captain Weaver (Norman Bird): 'A sad case ... save your tears for the men who died as a result of his gross negligence - four members of a bomb disposal squad, acting under Captain Weaver's orders, while he was acting under the influence'. ('An explosives expert')

Major Rutland-Smith (Terence Alexander): 'Gallant Captain-hyphenated-Smith ... you always wanted to die with your boots clean ... but marriage changed all that. His wife's money bought him out after she'd settled some embarrassing mess bills'. (A 'good, trained soldier, ruthless if need be')

Hyde on himself: 'You'll find nothing on me, not a blemish. My criminal career is just about to blossom. I served my country well as a regular soldier and was suitably rewarded after 25 years by being declared redundant'. ('I'll synchronise the watches')¹¹⁹

A blackmailer and abuser of army trust Hyde - flawed, arrogant and aptly named - manipulated their mal-adjustment. 'Whereas the war has provided the opportunity for

men to be their brothers' keepers' McFarlane argues, 'in the complacent post-war world the old class differences kept them apart'.¹²⁰

As Hyde expected, Race followed him to his manor house and debunked heroics, commenting 'never be a hero ... never get ahead of the mob, they are likely to shoot you in the arse'. Hyde invited him for dinner and an overnight stay. Homosexual subtleties peppered their interaction. Race even donned a frilly-apron to wash-up:

Race: I'm usually the one who's followed.

Hyde: All my men loved me.

Race: Mummy thought the world of me.

Historian Hill cites a post-dinner scene where they comfortably smoked together, 'cinema's conventional vocabulary for dealing with love-making'.¹²¹ Race regarded Hyde's equal shares plan as 'socialistic nonsense'. Hyde had spent a year meticulously planning the robbery. 'Think of it as a full-scale military operation. What chance has a bunch of ordinary civilians got against a trained, army-disciplined, military unit'? This was the crux. 'We always produce the right man for the job - even if it is the wrong job', said Race contemptuously. Chairing another meeting, Hyde observed, 'your presence restores my basic disillusion in the goodness of human nature'. They billeted with him, ironically under Queen's Regulations. His military-style briefing reflected international tensions: 'I intend to put our hard-earned knowledge to a peace-time use ... we owe it to our country not to stagnate ... who knows, despite our various defects, we may be called upon again'. Their raid on an army establishment to steal essential equipment was flawlessly executed. Army slackness was implicit. They adopted Irish accents, Hyde having observed that 'the British will always give the Germans, the Russians, the Japanese, or even the Egyptians the benefit of the doubt, but never the Irish'. Smugly instituting their cover

- Co-operative Removals - Hyde told a rookie policeman that they were helping ex-servicemen to 'adjust'.

Hyde mocked army formalities, post-war bureaucracy and parodied Churchill's 'Finest Hour':

This is the battleground on which we will fight. And here, I promise you, we shall enjoy *our* 'Finest Hour'. What price glory? £100,000 each tax free. You won't have to sign a form for it. You won't even have to salute.

Highlighting the award of "gongs" for large mistakes and little effort, Lexy intoned appreciatively, 'he's a nut case ... he'll end up with a knighthood'. When Race disobeyed orders, Hyde also debunked the heroism that was integral to elite masculinity: 'We can't afford to waste all the work we are doing just because one man wants to be a hero. I've nothing against heroes except that they usually crook it for everyone else'. The night before the "mission", the camera, in a bittersweet comparison, panned each bedroom as in *The Dam Busters*, signifying the end of dedicated training, and the creation of professional teams with precision raid capability. Hyde and Race suffered pre-mission nerves, evoking an operations room:

Race: The waiting always killed me.

Hyde: Killed everyone.

At the manor, celebrating an apparently faultless raid, they marched to *Soldiers of the Queen*, the camera panned a row of cash-filled suitcases, the reward for an illegal precision raid. Deferring to Hyde, the team gradually withdrew. Bunny Warren (Hyde's despised former Brigadier) arrived, signalling loss of control. A sad product of the system, Bunny exuded platitudes. 'A dead soldier', he crassly remarked on seeing an empty bottle, 'I've seen plenty of them - ha, ha'. He personified military leaders' peacetime irrelevance and critiques of officer elites. 'Pity the sad, unwanted,

redundant brass-hats, stepping gingerly into Civvy Street', the left-wing *Daily Worker* commented, 'what are the poor devils fitted for except to plan wars'?¹²²

With newly-acquired selflessness, Race offered to cover Hyde's escape as the police and the army closed in. Demonstrating leadership responsibility, Hyde covered for Race. 'Do your time and flog your memoirs to the Sunday papers', Race advised. Nonetheless, their downfall was due to carelessness and arrogance. The PC had noted the removal van's false number plates, whilst a car-spotting boy noted Hyde's car. The League, handcuffed in the police van, respectfully saluted:

Race: (Smartly) - All present and correct, Sir.

Hyde: (Proudly) - At ease, gentlemen.

Their masculinity, professional pride and comradeship were restored. 'What better release for your lawless urges ... than cheering these "heroes"? Hinxman naively asked.¹²³ Nonetheless, in debunking the myths surrounding British heroism and elite values audiences were challenged to look beyond this to the trajectory and needs of post-war society.

Marketing and/or Reception of *The League of Gentlemen*

In 1959, to critical approval, a group of prominent film personnel combined to make their own films.¹²⁴ Hugely successful, *The League of Gentlemen*, based on John Boland's book, was their first production as Allied Film Makers, an independent British company. Film critic Mosley commented that 'for pace and thrills, it compares with that other crime classic, France's *Rififi*'.¹²⁵ The *Times* thought it 'witty and well acted'.¹²⁶ Powell described it as 'full of ingenious and enjoyable excitements'.¹²⁷ Betts deemed it 'a pleasure to see jolly Jack Hawkins swapping his usual rock-like honesty for polished villainy'.¹²⁸ The *Daily Worker* praised Hyde's

'wicked authoritativeness and splendid fanaticism'.¹²⁹ Perceptible themes include post-war bitterness directed towards class, lost skills, comradeship, esteem and masculinity. Cleverly manipulated, discontent was channelled into active revenge. The films: *They Made Me a Fugitive* (1947); *The Intruder* (1953); *The Good Die Young* (1954) and *The Ship That Died of Shame* (1955) embrace these themes, highlighting the role of manipulators.

'Cash in on the crime wave'¹³⁰ - frequently sensationalised in newspapers - advised the press book for *They Made Me a Fugitive*, adapted from Jackson Budd's novel:

No picture for many years has cashed-in so completely on the news-sensations that set front-pages sizzling. "They Made Me a Fugitive" explores the new London underworld grown rich on the black market loot - nylons, perfumes, whisky. The gangster story hits the headlines day after day. So the front-pages were the natural exploitation-field when Warner Bros. publicity men planned the campaign that gave Warner Theatre four of its biggest weeks of 1947.¹³¹

Film historian McFarlane observed that the stars Clem Morgan (Trevor Howard), Narcy (Griffith Jones) and Sally Connor (Sally Gray) played against type:

When Trevor Howard, icon of British decency in so many British war films ... turns up as an unshaven non-hero fleeing from the law ...one knows that something has gone terribly wrong with life in post-war Britain.¹³²

Manipulative gang leader Narcy described by Inspector Rockcliffe (Ballard Berkeley) as 'cheap, rotten after-the-war trash - not a "respectable" crook', planned to exploit ex-RAF officer Clem's purposelessness. Dazzled by Narcy, Clem's girlfriend Ellen (Eve Ashley) was specific:

Narcy: What you need is an outlet for your energy.

Eve: What he needs is another war.

Clem allowed a gamble to decide his future - smuggling - but set limits to his immorality when this escalated into warehouse robbery and murder for which Narcy framed him. Breaking jail years later, Clem burgled a house where a woman begged

him to murder her husband. His shocked refusal prompted her to commit the murder and blame Clem. Her opportunism underlined the rot besetting post-war Britain. 'How did you come to get mixed up with scum like Narcy', Inspector Rockcliffe empathized, 'you had a fine record?' Ex-RAF, Rockcliffe channelled his need for excitement legitimately through the police.¹³³ Narcy's physically-abused ex-girlfriend Sally established Clem's innocence but could not legally prove it. Despite the film's dark, noirish, sensationalist elements, Clem was redeemable. Rockcliffe envisaged an appeal to the Home Secretary. McFarlane praises the film for blaming problems onto the post-war neglect 'of those who served the country well during the war'.¹³⁴ He identifies upper-class Clem as the 'first fully-fledged version of the ill-adjusted protagonist'.¹³⁵ However, Narcy was an "advanced" version of *Waterloo Road's* Ted Purvis, the template for irredeemably evil manipulators. Despite critical disdain, *They Made Me a Fugitive* was a top box-office draw in 1947.

An up-market version of Narcy, and particularly disliked by middle-class audiences,¹³⁶ cunning socialite Miles "Rave" Ravenscourt's (Laurence Harvey) moral decline was infinite in *The Good Die Young*. Having none of the attributes associated with elite masculinity and living-off his rich wife, he was loathed by his aristocratic father. Rave compounded this by gambling and consorting with mobsters. Gratuitously butchering a German patrol at El Alamein - the "chivalrous" war - Rave lied to win medals.¹³⁷ Post-war, he engineered the downfall of three desperate - but previously respectable - veterans. Genuine Korean War hero GI Joe (Richard Baseheart) needed cash to take his English wife home to America. Highlighting veterans' concerns, a stay-at-home employee had taken Joe's promotion. 'You seem to forget you've just taken two years off to fight', shouted Joe's boss whilst firing

him. US Airman Eddie (John Ireland) had deserted the Service following his actress wife's adultery. Injured professional boxer Mike (Stanley Baker) couldn't fight, becoming desperate for survival when his wife's feckless brother cost him his savings. 'They should have stayed single which may be the film's subtext', critic Erickson suggests.¹³⁸ But, their problems were firmly located in Rave's manipulation of their post-war alienation:

I realized that while I had been away, the others at home had their chance and took it with both hands. There was money to be made, lots of money, and they made it. Do you remember how they welcomed us back, they waved and cheered us in the streets, but that's about all they ever did?

He posited a clean robbery of an unarmed postal van but produced guns, thereby upgrading it to armed robbery, despite rejection of the weapons by Joe, Eddie and Mike. To their horror, Rave excitedly murdered several men, finally killing Mike and Eddie. Almost safe at Heathrow Airport, survivor Joe was confronted by Rave who wanted the robbery proceeds and no witnesses. They killed each other. This film took a high moral tone but specifically empathized with Joe, Eddie, and Mike, basically decent men who, lured into crime as war's dysfunctional residue, set moral limits to their downfall. Moreover, since evil manipulator Rave had no moral compass and, supporting the film's constantly re-iterated pontifical stance, the money remained hidden - symbolically in a graveyard.

Lack of a moral compass defined second-in-command George Haskins' (Richard Attenborough) *modus operandi* in *The Ship That Died of Shame*, based on a Monsarrat novel. For critic Madjalaney, the film dated itself accurately with 'its tale of spivs, smuggling, nylons, and maladjusted ex-servicemen'.¹³⁹ Containing anti-war and pro-war nostalgia and critiques of certain officer elites,¹⁴⁰ the film operates best as a critique of the loss of the 'New Jerusalem', with manipulators feeding on Britain's

metaphorical carcass. Producer Michael Relph wanted to show 'what people had done with the country that they inherited after the war'.¹⁴¹ The press book referred to Gun Boat 1087 as the 'pride of the flotilla'.¹⁴² A model for wartime achievements and a metaphor for post-war Britain, 1087 had mounted fast raids on the enemy coast. As 'fighter pilots of the sea', the team was comprised of steadfast Commander Bill Randall (George Baker), braggart Haskins who chalked-up doubtful "kills", and Petty Officer Dick "Birdie" (Bill Owen) who 'loved the ship like a woman', their success depended on the ship's reliability and manoeuvrability.¹⁴³ Bill told his fledgling wife Helen (Virginia McKenna) that she provided 'a purpose' in life. Her unnecessary demise, caused by a discarded German bomb, represented a potent symbol of the surreptitious loss of Britain's wartime idealism, and went unnoticed until Bill discovered her.

Post-1945, Bill purchased a boatyard which failed, and was denied his former employment. His boss Sir Richard (Ralph Thomas), another wartime beneficiary, chided 'you've no-one but yourself to look after'. The dated Coastal Forces Club reunion underlined Bill's exclusion. Flashy, manipulative Haskins engineered a meeting, debunked wartime idealism, and entangled Bill in his sideline 'smuggling a few things to lighten-up post-war darkness, instead of all this living in the past'. Haskins located decaying 1087 and suggested fast boat trips across the channel, thereby reviving, McFarlane states, 'old wartime challenges'.¹⁴⁴ 'We'd be doing her a favour getting her out of this graveyard ... We would carry whatever people want, nylons, perfume, wine, cigarettes'. 'Put like that', Bill reflected, 'it was like a moral crusade'. Birdie joined them. They encountered Customs' men and pirates. Haskins produced a rifle, and traced pirate leader and class-snob Major Fordyce (Roland

Culver). Manipulated by London gangsters, Fordyce, lacking the values of his class, disturbingly spoke for disaffected officers:

Fordyce: Found things had changed a bit after I got out of the Army - had to live of course - got a bit tired of working for the plebs after fighting for them.

Haskins: Perhaps you were fighting on the wrong side.

Fordyce: Not so far from the truth.¹⁴⁵

As Fordyce proffered his hand on completion of business, Haskins demonstrably mocked gentlemanly ethics:

Fordyce: Gentleman's agreement and all that.

Haskins: Don't be silly.¹⁴⁶

Cargoes from Fordyce began with counterfeit sterling - an old Nazi plan to wreck Britain's economy. 'So now we are doing it for them', cried Bill angrily. Cargo two was a child killer, whom Haskins murdered when Customs closed in. 'You take the money for the easy stuff, but when we reach a little further into the drain' he sneered, 'you want out'. Bill and Birdie also set limits to their immorality, but Fordyce murdered an inquisitive Customs Officer. He and Haskins forced Bill and Birdie to flee to Portugal. *En-route*, Haskins, now manically driven, injured Birdie and killed Fordyce. Main protagonists, Bill (hope) and Haskins (corruption), struggled for control as 1087 rolled, killing Haskins before smashing against the rocks. Thrown clear, Bill and Birdie's failings were finite. Implicitly, so were Britain's.

The Intruder tackled these themes differently, emphasising continuing class inequalities through a working class protagonist. In this vein, Hasting's rhetorical question - 'What had it all been for, the devastation, sacrifice and misery?' - superbly illustrates class exclusions and rigidity as insensitively demonstrated post-1945:

At one of the first big fashionable weddings after VE-Day, London socialites Chips Channon and Emerald Cunard stood gazing on the jewelled throng. Channon said complacently: "This is what we have been fighting for".¹⁴⁷

Colonel Wolf Merton (Jack Hawkins), an ex-tank commander, undertook a moral, emotional and physical journey seeking to understand why Ginger Edwards (Michael Medwin), one of his finest wartime troops, had burgled his home.¹⁴⁸ Merton asked: 'What turns a good soldier into a thief?' Ginger's post-war life was marred by betrayal. Through abuse, Ginger's uncle had caused his younger brother's death. Ginger's girlfriend had been unfaithful with a spiv, and Ginger had escaped from an arbitrarily long prison sentence for his uncle's manslaughter. Undoubtedly, working class veterans had been let down, and class barriers remained. Merton contacted former comrades George Summer (George Cole), whom Ginger had helped to prepare for the officers' club, and businessman Captain Perry (Dennis Price), a snobbish coward whose wartime deficiencies had been covered by Ginger's bravery. Price, arrogant and disloyal, had none of the attributes usually associated with elite masculinity and did not merit respect. Trading on his rank, selfish manipulator Perry alerted the police. Because of Merton's interest, Ginger surrendered. He was redeemable. The film questioned the failures of both the 'New Jerusalem' and the wartime "family" - military and national.¹⁴⁹ Left-wing Lindsay Anderson thought Ginger should have rejected Merton.¹⁵⁰ Spicer sees Merton's actions as 'military paternalism'.¹⁵¹ In this case, the primary solution rested with the military, whilst the primary problem was that 'the old class barriers', as McFarlane comments, were 'still seen to be in place' and, as such, were outmoded and open to criticism.¹⁵²

Conclusions

Within this large and long-running sub-genre, and mindful of national regeneration and continuing international respect, major combat (and civilian)

dysfunction films promoted heroic reinforcement, elite masculinity and the benefits of British leadership. Additionally, malingerers offered light relief and a version of the 'People's War', revellers became legends, and war's redemptive properties were foregrounded. Moreover, when dealing with the homecoming legacy, film-makers also ensured, in the limited number of repatriated POW films, that Japan remained a truly barbaric enemy. Here, also, the decline of deference is writ large. Since the homecoming legacy was more concerned with class-barriers, manipulation of bitterness and crime, I have dealt more fully with these films. They more correctly - if over-dramatically - add to our understanding of the aftermath of World War Two, indicating the nation's mood following victory celebrations. In the national psyche, this war has become our "finest hour", but film-makers reminded us that an hour is a short time in a nation's history. What is most striking in film-makers' portrayals of the homecoming legacy, is the return to a class-hierarchical society, and warnings of a nation in decline, afraid of losing its power, having misappropriated victory and many of the people who achieved it. As film-makers celebrated heroic reinforcement and British leadership, they frequently allowed hope to spring from the disheartening aspects of the homecoming legacy. This was crucial since, for most veterans, homecoming was optimistic, and the nation was being promoted as a democratic role-model. Clearly British cinema had its finger on the nation's pulse to the extent that it could also criticize that which it lauded by showing what many thought was wrong with Britain and those who embraced middle-class values of patriotism, and duty within a rigid class hierarchy. This is apparent in contemporaneous critic Madjalany's comment that 'film-makers were attuned with the times'.¹⁵³ With hindsight, McFarlane asserts, what film-makers screened 'is now borne out by the facts of post-war British history'.¹⁵⁴ As this study has shown, allowing for cinematic

license, Britain's Second World War genre post-1945 is worthy of far more respect than has previously been forthcoming.

- ¹ Prince, Rod, 'A Great Little Country', *ISIS*, 7 May, 1958, p 26.
- ² Captain Bill (George Baker) in *The Ship That died of Shame*.
- ³ Weight, Richard, *Patriots – National Identity in Britain 1940-2000* (London, 2002), p 181-182, noted that the mood of even the *Picture Post* had changed since VE-Day.
- ⁴ Bourke, Joanna, *An Intimate History of Killing : Face-to-Face Killing in 20th Century Warfare* (London, 1999), Introduction.
- ⁵ Bourke, *ibid*, p 375.
- ⁶ Bourke, *ibid*, Introduction.
- ⁷ Bourke, *ibid*, Introduction – Global aid, was organized immediately and efficiently in 2005 to counteract the devastation of the Tsunami. This is just one example of an organized society, there are many others not necessarily war-related.
- ⁸ This is much less true now than it used to be. Films are taking on more realism, for example, *Saving Private Ryan*. Televised documentaries and news remove much of the "pleasure" and mystery of war. One of the most applauded documentary series has been *The World at War* (1973).
- ⁹ Addison, Paul & Calder, Angus (Eds.), *Time to Kill* (London, 1997), Introduction.
- ¹⁰ Ellis, John, 'Reflections on the Sharp End of War' in Addison and Calder, *Time to Kill*, pp 12-18.
- ¹¹ Ellis, 'Reflections', *ibid*, pp 12-18.
- ¹² Keegan, 'Towards a Theory of Motivation', in Addison & Calder, *ibid*, pp 12-16. See my Chapter 3 where the Big Man is discussed in the context of POWs.
- ¹³ De Lee, Nigel, 'Oral History and British Soldiers' Experience of Battle in the Second World War', in Addison & Calder, *ibid*, pp 359-368.
- ¹⁴ De Lee, 'Oral History', in Addison & Calder, *ibid*, pp 359-368.
- ¹⁵ Henderson, Diana M., 'Reality and the Armchair Experience', in Addison & Calder, *ibid*, pp 21-28. This feeling of being part of something momentous was particularly evident in Olivier's *Henry V*.
- ¹⁶ Keegan, 'Towards a Theory', in Addison & Calder, *ibid*, pp 12-16.
- ¹⁷ Spicer, Andrew, *Typical Men : The Representation of Masculinity in Popular British Cinema*, Chapter 9 'Damaged Men' (London, 2001), p 161 and Murphy, Robert, *British Cinema and the Second World War* (London, 2000), p 186.
- ¹⁸ James, Dr. G.W.B., CBO, MC, MD London, 'Psychiatric Lessons from Active Service', *The Lancet*, 22 December, 1945, pp 801-805. Dr James was a Brigadier RAMC; Consultant in Psychiatry to the Middle East Force 1940-43, and to the Army at Home, 1945-45.
- ¹⁹ Wilson, A.T.M., *Pilot Papers*, 'The Serviceman Comes Home' (Pilot Press, 1946), pp 9-28.
- ²⁰ Spicer, *Typical Men*, Chapter 9 'Damaged Men', p 161 and Murphy, *British Cinema and the Second World War*, p.186.
- ²¹ Murphy, *British Cinema and the Second World War*, pp 186-187.
- ²² Bendit, Dr Laurence J & Phoebe D., *Living Together Again*, (London, 1946), p 13.
- ²³ Bendit, *ibid*, p 19.
- ²⁴ Bendit, *ibid*, p 19.
- ²⁵ Reese, Peter, *Homecoming Heroes - An Account of the Rehabilitation of British Military Personnel into Civilian Life*, (London, 1992). He notes that, following the Armistice in 1918, First World War figures yielded an Army strength of 5 million, with over 1,600,000 returned casualties, and that National Service was responsible for annual outflows of some 160,000 young men between 1948-1962, many of whom had dependents. pp 208, 209. Reese concludes that: 'At no other point in our history were there so many veterans – three generations who had experienced the rigours of serving their country at times of national threat.
- ²⁶ Reese, *ibid*, p 213.
- ²⁷ Reese, *ibid*, p 213.
- ²⁸ Turner, Barry & Rennell, Tony, *When Daddy Came Home : How Family Life Changed Forever in 1945* (London, 1995), p 169.
- ²⁹ Reese, Peter, *Homecoming Heroes*, p 213
- ³⁰ *British Legion Journal (BLJ)*, March 1946, quoted in Reese, *Homecoming Heroes*, p 211.
- ³¹ *BLJ*, March 1946, quoted in Reese, *ibid*, p 211.
- ³² Turner & Rennell, *When Daddy Came Home*, p 169.

- ³³ Turner & Rennell, *ibid*, p 169, noted that an army survey of qualifications for specialist duties had asked soldiers in March, 1944, what 'was their uppermost worry post-war'? 60% wanted further education, whilst 66% wanted technical courses and a major occupational shift, p 184.
- ³⁴ Turner & Rennell, *ibid*, p 182.
- ³⁵ Turner & Rennell, *ibid*, p 186.
- ³⁶ Jacobson, Sidney, 'The Problem of the Demobbed Officer', *Picture Post*, 26 January, 1946, pp 26 and 27.
- ³⁷ Jacobson, *ibid*, pp 26 and 27.
- ³⁸ Jacobson, *ibid*, pp 26 and 27. This powerful article was concerned that: 'Resourcefulness, ability to look after men, power of command and readiness to accept responsibility', were offered daily in *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph*, and that officers' earning power without 'specialist qualifications and experience', was virtually nil.
- ³⁹ Jacobson, 'The Problem of the Demobbed Officer', pp 26 and 27.
- ⁴⁰ Jacobson, *ibid*, pp 26 and 27.
- ⁴¹ Jacobson, *ibid*, pp 26 and 27.
- ⁴² James, Dr. G.W.B., 'Psychiatric Lessons from Active Service', p 804.
- ⁴³ This may be an attempt to show early SAS covert activities, wherein British officers, trying to live like the locals infiltrated areas.
- ⁴⁴ It is possible to make parallels between this and Britain's desire to lead Europe as the Cold War heightened.
- ⁴⁵ This was discussed in Chapter 4.
- ⁴⁶ Quigly, Isabel, *Spectator*, 18 July, 1958.
- ⁴⁷ *Daily Express*, 27 June, 1958.
- ⁴⁸ *Daily Herald*, 27 June, 1958.
- ⁴⁹ Norgate, Matthew, *Manchester Guardian*, 28 June, 1958.
- ⁵⁰ Powell, Dilys, *Sunday Times*, 29 June, 1958.
- ⁵¹ Majdalaney, Fred, *Daily Mail*, 27 June, 1958.
- ⁵² Lejeune, C.A., *Observer*, 29 June, 1958.
- ⁵³ This close comradeship between the captain and his first officer occurred in *The Cruel Sea*, where the relationship was so close that the younger man chose to fight the war with the "hero" – clearly a man of destiny - rather than take his own command.
- ⁵⁴ Murphy, *British Cinema and the Second World War*, suggests that the function of Oriental women in war films was to offset images of Japanese brutality. Anna certainly provided an antidote for underlying fears regarding what capture by the Japanese, p 232.
- ⁵⁵ Chapter 4 covered this in detail.
- ⁵⁶ The same sentiments were expressed in *Tunes of Glory*.
- ⁵⁷ Webster, Wendy, *Englishness & Empire 1939-1965* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005), p 194.
- ⁵⁸ Windrush's mother abandoned her family and ran away with another man. His sister (a possible lesbian) and her husband, were involved with dubious art deals and numerous selfish, party-loving and devious-looking characters.
- ⁵⁹ Spicer, Andrew, *Typical Men* (London, 2001), Chapter 6, 'Fools and Rogues', p 113. Personally, I would nominate Lt. Colonel Barrow (John Mills) in *Tunes of Glory*. He was the supreme idealist, and was pitted against the supreme abuser of idealism.
- ⁶⁰ Spicer, *ibid*, Chapter 6, 'Fools and Rogues', p 113.
- ⁶¹ The 'Big Man' is usually associated with large armies. In POW camp situations he is a natural, but not necessarily ranked, leader. See MacKenzie, S.P., *The Colditz Myth : The Real Story of POW Life in Nazi Germany* (New York, 2004). See also Keegan, John, 'Towards a Theory of Combat Motivation', in Addison. Paul & Calder. Angus (Eds.), *Time to Kill*, pp 12-16.
- ⁶² Hastings, Max, *Warriors : Extraordinary Tales from the Battlefield* (London, 2005), p xi.
- ⁶³ Hastings, *ibid*, p 218.
- ⁶⁴ Hastings, *ibid*, p 218.
- ⁶⁵ Hastings, 'Warriors : A Damned Nasty Hero', *Daily Mail*, 26 March, 2005, pp 50-52.
- ⁶⁶ Refer to Chapter 2 for a case study of *The Dam Busters*.
- ⁶⁷ Hastings, 'Warriors : A Damned Nasty Hero', pp 50-52.
- ⁶⁸ Hastings, *Warriors*, p xxi
- ⁶⁹ Hurd. Geoff (Ed.), *National Fictions* (London, 1984), p 38.
- ⁷⁰ Hastings, *Warriors*, p xvii.
- ⁷¹ *Douglas Bader – Secret Life*, C4 TV.

- ⁷² *The Big Wing*, untitled internet document by Eric Bogomolny in ‘Douglas Bader – “personification of RAF heroism during the Second World War”’ in *World War II Aces*.
- ⁷³ This is dealt with in Chapter 3. Gibson also offended his superiors, particularly his mentor Bomber Harris, he was big-headed, arrogant, wouldn’t listen, and criticised Bomber Command’s activities. See *Hastings Warriors*.
- ⁷⁴ *Douglas Bader - Secret Life*, C4 TV.
- ⁷⁵ *Bader*, *ibid*, C4 TV.
- ⁷⁶ *Reach for the Sky*, in this film, the narrator is excessively admiring of Bader.
- ⁷⁷ *Hastings, Warriors*, p 368.
- ⁷⁸ It is interesting, that at a time when Cold War scientists were beginning to frighten the public with the awesome weapons they were producing, that American TV should take so readily to this film.
- ⁷⁹ It is useful to compare this film, made in 1945, with films such as *The Ship that Died of Shame*. The earlier film represents idealism, the later one shows the failure of the ‘New Jerusalem’.
- ⁸⁰ McFarlane, Brian, ‘Losing the Peace : Some British Films of Post-war Adjustment’, in Barta, Tony (Ed.), *Screening the Past – Film and Representation of History*, Westport, USA, 1998, p 106.
- ⁸¹ MacKenzie, *The Colditz Myth*, p 388
- ⁸² MacKenzie, *ibid*, p 392.
- ⁸³ MacKenzie, *ibid*, p 396.
- ⁸⁴ Turner, Barry & Nichol, John, *The Last Escape*, p 394.
- ⁸⁵ See the film *The Camp on Blood Island*; Lomax, Eric, *The Railway Man*; and MacArthur, Brian *Surviving the Sword*.
- ⁸⁶ MacArthur, *Surviving the Sword*, pp 433-434.
- ⁸⁷ MacArthur, *ibid*, p 437.
- ⁸⁸ Even today, this is an unpopular subject with government, the military, serving and ex-service personnel. The controversy over the Gulf War Syndrome and post traumatic stress disorder frequently raised headlines.
- ⁸⁹ Turner & Nichol, *The Last Escape*, p 392. Batch Batchelder was a prisoner in Germany and took part in the POW trek.
- ⁹⁰ This is covered in Chapter 3.
- ⁹¹ 15 August, 2005, ITV 6 pm News covering the sixtieth anniversary of VJ-Day.
- ⁹² Spicer, *Typical Men*, p 165.
- ⁹³ Murphy, *British Cinema and the Second World War*, p 190.
- ⁹⁴ Spicer, *Typical Men*, p 166.
- ⁹⁵ See Turner & Rennell, *When Daddy Came Home*, they refer to the violence and aggression experienced by returning servicemen and their families.
- ⁹⁶ Although the film was adapted from Braine’s novel which was set in 1947, it is much looser in its post-war time-scale, for example, Susan’s clothes, in particular, relate to the mid-fifties, the lingerie shop she visits is well-stocked and the shopping centre appears to be thriving.
- ⁹⁷ This is very much in line with the findings of Turner and Rennell, *When Daddy Came Home* which described returning servicemen’s job hopes and movements away from the old industries.
- ⁹⁸ Harper, Susan, *Women in British Cinema : Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know* (Continuum, London, 2000), p 96.
- ⁹⁹ *Bad Boys of the Blitz*, C5 TV, 2005.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Bad Boys*, *ibid*, C5 TV.
- ¹⁰¹ *Bad Boys*, *ibid*, C5 TV.
- ¹⁰² *Bad Boys*, *ibid*, C5 TV, conscripted police were often over-tired, having done a day’s work before going on duty.
- ¹⁰³ *Bad Boys*, C5 TV, official response to this in 1942 was: better trained and more police; young offenders and looters were caught first; under 16’s received a second chance and deserters were rounded-up. For more hardened youth, borstals were designed to crush the spirit.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Bad Boys*, C5 TV, claims that US troops supplied gelignite for criminal activity.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Bad Boys*, *ibid*, C5 TV, shop-lifting increase amongst lower class women, and prostitution spread to well-brought up young women.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Bad Boys*, C5 TV, one raid exposed an officers’ establishment, with married women as the incumbents. This was hushed up by Scotland Yard.
- ¹⁰⁷ Chibnall, Steve, ‘Ordinary People “New Wave” realism and the British crime film 1959-1963’ in Chibnall, Steve & Murphy. Robert (Eds.), *British Crime Cinema* (London, 1999), p 97, quoting Morton, J, *Gangland : London’s Underworld* (London, Warner, 1993) and Campbell, D, *The Underworld* (London, BBC).

- ¹⁰⁸ Murphy, Robert, *Realism and Tinsel – Cinema and Society in Britain 1939-48*, p 153.
- ¹⁰⁹ Waller, Maureen, *London 1945*, John Muray, London, 2005, p 277.
- ¹¹⁰ Ross, Alan, *The Forties* (London, 1950), quoted in Turner & Rennell, *When Daddy Came Home*, p 224.
- ¹¹¹ Booker, Christopher, *The Neophiliacs : The Revolution in English Life in the fifties and sixties* (London, (1969) 1992), p 32.
- ¹¹² Booker, *ibid*, p 85.
- ¹¹³ Booker, *ibid*, p 85.
- ¹¹⁴ Turner & Rennell, *When Daddy Came Home*, p 185.
- ¹¹⁵ Turner & Rennell, *ibid*, p 224.
- ¹¹⁶ Murphy, *British Cinema and the Second World War*, p 187-188, quoting Arthur Vesselo, 'The Quarter in Britain', *Sight and Sound*, Autumn 1947, Vol. 16, No. 63, p 120. Of these films, only *They Made Me a Fugitive* had major impact.
- ¹¹⁷ Although in *The Small Back Room* Hawkins played a caddish weapons salesman whose concerns were self-interested, and who enjoyed discomfoting his staff, didn't care about what happened to servicemen and tormented scientist Sammy Rice.
- ¹¹⁸ These women were examined in Chapter 4.
- ¹¹⁹ Their post-war slide and details of their women were covered in Chapter 4.
- ¹²⁰ McFarlane, 'Losing the Peace', p 101.
- ¹²¹ Hill, John, *Sex, Class and Realism* (London, 1986), pp 90-93, I suggest that many post-war WWII films are ambiguous regarding homosexuality, because there are so many hints which, at that time, could not be more than that. They would have been picked up by audiences. Hill's book is detailed on this subject. O'Sullivan, Tim, 'Not quite fit for heroes : cautionary tales of men at work – *The Ship That Died of Shame* and *The League of Gentlemen*', in Burton, Alan, O'Sullivan, Tim & Wells, Paul (Eds.), *Liberal Directions : Basil Dearden & Post-war British Film Culture*, (Trowbridge, 1997) .
- ¹²² Hibbib, Nina, *Daily Worker*, 9 April, 1960.
- ¹²³ Hinxman, Margaret, *Daily Herald*, 8 April, 1960.
- ¹²⁴ Mosley, Len, *Daily Express*, 8 April, 1960. A group of prominent film personnel Jack Hawkins [Actor], Michael Relph [Director], Basil Dearden [Producer], Bryan Forbes [Screenwriter/Actor] and Guy Green [Director/cinematographer], became Allied Film Makers, wanting to 'meet the film crisis' - lack of funding, competition with Hollywood etc.- faced by British cinema.
- ¹²⁵ Mosley, *ibid*.
- ¹²⁶ *Times*, 11 April, 1960.
- ¹²⁷ Powell, Dilys, *Sunday Times*, 10 April, 1960.
- ¹²⁸ Betts, Ernest, *People*, 10 April, 1960.
- ¹²⁹ Hibbib, Nina, *Daily Worker*, 9 April, 1960.
- ¹³⁰ The film was adapted from the novel *A Convict Has Escaped* by Jackson Budd.
- ¹³¹ Press publicity book for *They Made Me A Fugitive*, 1947.
- ¹³² McFarlane, 'Losing the Peace', p 93.
- ¹³³ Other officer veterans in these films were shown to get the adventure they still craved by joining the Police or Customs and Excise, rather than commit crimes.
- ¹³⁴ McFarlane, 'Losing the Peace', p 101.
- ¹³⁵ McFarlane, *ibid*, p 100.
- ¹³⁶ Spicer, *Typical Men*, 167.
- ¹³⁷ The Desert War has the reputation of being war in its purest form, therefore Rave's despicable actions, in murdering the Germans, are even more evil because of this war's supposed chivalry.
- ¹³⁸ Erickson, Hal, *Internet All Movie Guide*, 'The Good Die Young', accessed 1 July, 2005.
- ¹³⁹ Majdalaney, Fred, *Time and Tide*, 30 April, 1955.
- ¹⁴⁰ For a discussion on this see O'Sullivan, 'Not Quite Fit for Heroes : Cautionary Tales of Men at Work', in Burton, O'Sullivan & Wells, *Liberal Directions*, pp 172-193.
- ¹⁴¹ McFarlane, Brian, 'Michael Relph' in *Sixty Voices*, p 192. See also *Liberal Directions*.
- ¹⁴² publicity book (PPB) for *The Ship That Died of Shame*.
- ¹⁴³ PPB, *ibid*, *The Ship That Died of Shame*.
- ¹⁴⁴ McFarlane, Brian, *An Autobiography of British Cinema by the Film-makers Who Made It* (London, 1997), p 103.
- ¹⁴⁵ Film-makers depictions of middle-class officers' post-war disillusion, drift into crime and ripeness for manipulation, seem to echo Jacobson's stark warning of what happened to disaffected middle-

classes in Germany with regard to 'Hitlerism'. See Jacobson, 'The Problem of the Demobbed Officer', pp 26 and 27

¹⁴⁶ See *Tunes of Glory* for a more serious questioning of the gentlemanly ideals and what happens if they are abandoned.

¹⁴⁷ Hastings, Max, *Daily Mail*, Saturday, 9 July, 2005, p 25.

¹⁴⁸ McFarlane, *An Autobiography of British Cinema*, p 273. The homosexual undertones of their relationship in Maughan's novel were removed from the screenplay at Hawkins' request. Hawkins may have been worried about *The Cruel Sea* which was also released in 1953, and which raised questions concerning Ericson's (Hawkins) relationship with Lockhart (Donald Sinden). The climate of 1950's Britain for homosexuals was dangerous.

¹⁴⁹ The Services as family, was an important cinematic concept. Continuity flowed backwards to Barrow's "ideal" and military forbears and forwards to future generations. Colonel Barrow in *Tunes of Glory*, and Thompson in *The Cockleshell Heroes* are amongst those important characters and films that stress both concepts.

¹⁵⁰ McFarlane, *An Autobiography of British Cinema*, p 102, Anderson was presaging the angry young man.

¹⁵¹ Spicer, *Typical Men*, p 167.

¹⁵² McFarlane, 'Losing the Peace', p 97.

¹⁵³ Majdalaney, Fred, *Time and Tide*, 30 April, 1955 commenting on *The Ship That Died of Shame*.

Spicer also made a similar claim in *Typical Men: The Representation of Masculinity in Popular British Cinema*, p 113.

¹⁵⁴ McFarlane, 'Losing the Peace', p 106.

CONCLUSIONS

'Never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense'. (Churchill, 1941)¹

'The thing is that the military ones I did were very successful and well remembered pictures'. (Todd, 1998)²

'Above all, it means that all concerned with the creation of script and film must become careful students of the contemporary world: they must know and feel their people and their country, the difficulties and joys that are the stuff of ordinary life, so that they can re-create it on the screen'. (Balcon, 1952)³

This thesis began with the hypothesis that a degree of social engineering was employed by middle-class British film-makers after 1945 to reassert their public-school inspired outlook and values, effectively placing British elite masculinity at the heart of national identity and regeneration. It does not suggest an organised conspiracy, but a propitious merging of people, connections, ideas and opportunity. Once the myth of the 'People's War' - a device designed to encourage the widest possible participation in the war effort, had run its course - a re-imposition of middle-class ideals occurred across a range of cultural forms. This was particularly potent in the literature of war and cinematic interpretations of that literature. However, this thesis has acknowledged that, by the end of the 1950s, both these avenues of dissemination – along with theatre and television – also signified the decline of deference by questioning middle-class values and heroics.

After 1945 Britain's class divisions remained. By the late 1950s it was recognized that the 'New Jerusalem' had failed to become established, despite the high-minded ideals promoted during the war and reproduced in the war genre. 'Britain would preoccupy herself with the problem of ensuring that her rich people grew richer', states Calder.⁴ The implementation of the Welfare State facilitated their revival as the middle classes undertook to manage it, assuming positions of leadership

and authority at local and national levels. Moreover, this significantly contributed to a re-established middle-class power-base and assured their economic renaissance. War films reflected this trend and occasionally led it. The resultant cultural legacy certainly went far beyond justifying, remembering or coming-to-terms with the war. Sixty years later the genre's myths remain forceful. The 'People's War' myths – Dunkirk, the Blitz, the Battle of Britain and national unity – were phased in slowly as the war progressed. Following cessation of hostilities, remembrance concentrated largely on British elites as new areas of the war story such as individual heroism, the POW experience, Combined Operations and the SOE, began to unfold.

Accordingly, during the 1950s' upsurge in the World War Two genre, the nation's 'corporate imagination'⁵ was redirected to centre on leadership and elite masculinity. Individual excellence was prized as film-makers strove to promote Britain whilst consistently ignoring the contributions of the 'People's War' and those of Indian or African troops, for example. It may be the case that the first cross-cultural steps towards the Thatcherism of the 1980s emanated from this early flowering of new ideas, individualism and a less caring society, as the 'people' were eased out of the war.⁶ In this context, Connelly notes that the Falklands War 'also led to a revised popular history of the Second World War, a reframing according to Thatcherite tenets' as she personally assumed ownership.⁷ As this study has shown, the Suez debacle was in Balcon's mind when he produced *Dunkirk* to restore Britain's reputation, a goal to which he was dedicated. Clearly, World War Two has served many purposes, and many politicians, and it continues to do so. Nevertheless, this study has found that, such is the impact of British World War Two films 1945-65 - and even the 1939-45 versions - that their values, ideas and characterisations are too

deeply rooted, too frequently aired in our homes on television, and more recently in the cinema, to be hi-jacked, diverted or undermined for very long. The dynamism of World War Two's culturally generated consensual memory appears to be infinite.

Moreover, from 1945, film-makers' re-shaping of the public's consensual memory was aided by the fact that, despite the camaraderie, much of the war experience was individual and subjective. Most people - and events - were pieces of the "jigsaw" of war. Few were privileged to witness the broader canvas as it unfolded. Furthermore, since much of the male population had experience of one or both World Wars, the Korean War or conscription, the "adventure" implicit in the later films added "value" to their personal participation. Vitality, the familiar connection of war, masculinity and adventure had continued from the popular pre-1914 imperialist boys' literature which was still readily available. Interest in this literature had faded during the Second World War and was revived as publishers noted the success of the cinematic war genre.⁸ Film-makers had reworked and modernized the imperialist hero placing him in a World War Two setting where war was not only exciting and manly, but good for Britain. Since the mid-1950s television has completed the cycle of dissemination by making the Second World War a large part of its scheduling. And, although parodied in contemporaneous comedies and satirised on television in the 1960s, the values and stereotypical characters perpetuated in the popular post-1945 genre remain firmly established and instantly recognizable. As a propaganda exercise, this genre succeeded in enriching the credit side of 'our national account',⁹ despite allowing the debit side: dysfunction, crime, officers' critiques of post-war society, and lack of deference towards the officer class, to be screened.

As this study has made clear, Britain's World War Two feature films 1945-65 are culturally, politically and historically significant as key sources of information about British society at an eventful time in the nation's history. Mushrooming in the 1950s the genre, when considered in its social, economic and political context, provides compelling documentary evidence of a rapidly changing post-1945 world dominated by issues surrounding the export drive, loss of British prestige and Empire, the Suez debacle, Cold War politics and policies, Communism, a reconstituted Europe and middle-class unease. Gender issues compounded uncertainties as men and women - military and civilian - transformed by war, continued to attempt to rebuild their lives. The drive towards national regeneration which over-arched the genre is particularly forceful, as are the links between elite masculinity and Britain's leadership. This was a society in flux, which both embraced traditional values as embodied by Elizabeth II, the new young Queen, and looked backwards to align itself to the confident and adventurous reign of Elizabeth I by positing New Elizabethan ideals. At the same time, the 1951 Festival of Britain pointed to the future and 1950s' war films emphasized British leadership, scientific and technological excellence. Having forsaken Churchill in 1945 as a man for war, not peace, electors re-instated him in 1951. A statesman *extraordinaire*, the fusion of his imperialist past, Second World War triumph, connection with the British public and international renown, coincided with the momentous events of the 1950s enumerated earlier.¹⁰ Film-makers appear to have understood that the last great imperialist and the common man of the Second World War came together in the person of Churchill, a conduit, linking past, present and future. Accordingly, they regularly used his rhetoric which foregrounded his charismatic leadership. Churchill's 1941 exhortation, quoted at the head of this

chapter and delivered to the pupils of Harrow School, melds perfectly with the elite public-school ethos that permeates these films.

By paying particular attention to the genre's language, not only set-piece speeches but comments and conversations, persuasive and pervasive ideas have emerged. Additionally, what these films left unsaid, to be implicitly understood, has laid bare the society that spawned them. Whilst historians must be wary of placing too much emphasis on the genre's complete fidelity, this study has demonstrated that it should be taken seriously. It reflected, supported - and occasionally led - the hopes, fears, jealousies and ambitions of the period as seen through the lens of British film-makers who were either middle class or had aspirations to be so.

Chapter 2 has argued that the myth of the 'People's War' was allowed to recede (but not disappear entirely)¹¹ after 1945, as Britain's leadership qualities, the contribution of elite masculinity and scientific skills were lauded. These were expressed through the achievements of middle-class heroes, and were fundamental to national regeneration. The popularity of the genre with audiences signified its entertainment value. Echoing German propaganda supremo Joseph Goebbels and major film-makers such as William Wyler and Daryl Zannuck, actor John Mills explained the best way to market a message: 'Is it entertaining ... that's always been my yardstick? I don't like speaking from the pulpit; if you have a message, it should be packaged in a chocolate wrapper'.¹² Certainly no chocolate soldier, the Second World War hero identified in this thesis was adroitly presented in a favourable, although not usually hagiographic, light. Nevertheless, *The Dam Busters* sailed extremely close to idolatry whilst, in *Reach for the Sky*, Douglas Bader was

exceptionally depicted in hagiographic terms.¹³ Generally, the post-1945 hero embraced all that was good and likeable in the iconic imperialist hero. Expediently updated, he was given technological mastery and a newly democratized outlook for the post-imperial age. Simultaneously familiar, and excitingly different, his unknown territory was the future of mankind as he fought to preserve western-style democratic freedoms. Expansion of the Empire was no longer a viable arena in which the British hero could operate. Scientists were now respectable, avuncular, family men whose inventions were essential to the war effort, and upon whose skills our heroes relied, and our future depended. Whether working alongside the military, or unseen and fondly referred to as ‘boffins/backroom boys’, their image was a safe one. In contrast, cinematic representations of Cold War scientists in non-war films were frequently terrifying. Moreover, the scientific imagery of the war genre was also preferable to that of real-life scientists who, under enormous pressure from governments and the military, actually dealt with Cold War realities and nuclear threats, as they developed horrifying weapons of mass destruction.

Chapter 2 has also demonstrated that Britain could wage a “dirty” covert war if forced to do so, supplementing clean-cut heroic organisation men and traditionalists or careerists with mavericks of varying degrees and motivations. This did not undermine the clean-cut hero, but rather highlighted Britain’s ability to produce the right man for the right job. Surprisingly, mavericks and traditionalists not only crossed swords, but might use each others’ tactics to complete their missions. Whereas *Boys’ Own* ex-public school heroes such as the much-celebrated organisation man Guy Gibson became myths in their own lifetimes, the achievements of mavericks (usually upper and middle-class officers) often in remote and dangerous

regions, went largely unrecognized until this cinematic sub-genre appeared. Interestingly, and in-line with British pragmatism, mavericks gained the tacit - and amused - approval of their superiors. This helped to assuage the possibility of the over-exposure of organisation men and traditional heroes. It gave audiences new visions of war, subtly telling the world that Britain had capably covered all angles, and was still a force to be reckoned with.

Crucially, one important vision that provided continuity with films made during the war was presented, and idealised, by Gibson's precision bombing raid on the Ruhr dams. This was essential, both to the prestige of Bomber Command, and Britain's conduct of the war. Previously for example, the church congregation in *Mrs Miniver* had gratefully acknowledged the squadron of bombers overhead (a device to show that Britain was taking the war to the enemy). Additionally, as demonstrated in Chapter 4, refugee Erna (Lilli Palmer) in the wartime film *The Gentle Sex* passionately welcomed Allied bombers on behalf of occupied France, 'the French cheer the British bombers ... They cry "bomb us, blast us to dust", as long as that dust blows into the Nazis's eyes'. Resistance worker, Jo de Vries (Googie Withers) in *One of Our Aircraft is Missing* was similarly impassioned on Bomber Command's worth, declaring in occupied Holland, 'seeing these masters running for shelter, seeing them crouching under tables and hearing that steady hum night after night, noise which is oil for the burning fire in our hearts'. Later, POWs in Europe appreciatively gazed skywards as RAF bombers flew over. Whilst Gibson, Erna and Jo openly praised Bomber Command for what were essentially polarised strategies, their combined messages were impressive, even if they represented the views of British scriptwriters

and film-makers intent on promoting Britain, rather than reporting actual French, Dutch or Czech public opinion.

In Chapter 3 we have seen that 1950s' cinema reclaimed the POW as part of the war effort in a lively sub-genre that reinstated him both for his own benefit and, equally importantly, in the public mindset. Upon their return, not all POWs had been regarded with respect. Veterans' societies noted a general suspicion that they had had an easy war, opted out, sat-back and waited for the result. 'Few people who have not experienced it can realise the damage which may be done to the mind and feelings of one who has been a prisoner of war', cautioned the Bendits, post-war social commentators with a panacea for everything.¹⁴ Initially, Balcon's *The Captive Heart* had attempted to reassure both returning POWs and their families. This chapter showed that he was highly praised by veterans' societies for doing so. When filmed in the 1950s, books such as *The Wooden Horse* and *Colditz* opened-up new vistas and a more active war fought from captivity. However, the self-perpetuating and growing myths surrounding Colditz Castle and the game-playing when captured by Germans - or Italians - were taken to ridiculous extremes by film-makers who portrayed the POW camp as a more adventurous extension of the public school, and its inmates as *Boys' Own* heroes who, on planning escapes, were spurred on by their chirpy chums.

Nonetheless, film-maker Val Guest tackled the appalling barbarity surrounding capture in the Far East with much realism in *The Camp on Blood Island* and *Yesterday's Enemy*. Although the amount of gratuitous horror would have attracted teenage audiences, he circumvented the Censor and critics of war films and violence, by claiming to be anti-war. Whilst other film-makers also made this claim,

the Far East war films provided more actual screen evidence of the need to do so. Since the Japanese market for feature films was huge, Guest clearly believed in his subject strongly enough to risk offending Japanese audiences. He, and the few other film-makers dealing with the Far East war, determinedly argued a strong anti-Japanese case, their sympathies lying with the men whose lives would forever be blighted by such wanton inhumanity. In these depictions, the British were in a living hell. Consequently, they behaved when roused by utter barbarity, with a decidedly unexpected but entirely justifiable ruthlessness. Even the sensitive love story *The Wind Cannot Read*, this study has argued, contains strong anti-Japanese elements. With the exception of David Lean's unquestionably sanitised *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, and following Guest's impressive lead, the handful of British films covering capture in the Far East were all anti-Japanese to varying degrees.

An interesting, previously untapped area that emerged from my analysis of the POW sub-genre was film-makers' commitment to subtle and covert suggestions of homosexuality as a fact of Service life. Whilst obviously not conducting a virulent crusade, they ensured that serving homosexuals had a limited, but honourable place in the re-telling of World War Two, thereby reflecting the fact that homosexuality was a major political issue during the 1950s. The mainstream view was that it was an aberration that could be corrected. Consequently, aversion therapies of emetics and electro-convulsive shock treatment, along with lobotomies, chemical castration and, finally jail, were features of Britain's huge post-1945 witch-hunt. Careers and lives were ruined merely by suspicion and rumour. In 1953-54, the Army Medal Office wrote to Rupert Croft-Cooke and many other suspected homosexuals, asking for the return of their war decorations.¹⁵ Homosexual Alan Turing, who cracked the enigma

codes and invented the modern computer, was one of the high profile people targeted by the authorities. A year after being sent for trial in 1952 he committed suicide.¹⁶ Whilst identifying this theme in the POW sub-genre, I have also encountered references in other films of the war genre, such as *The League of Gentlemen*, *Circle of Danger*, *The Cruel Sea* and *The Long and the Short and the Tall*. Since the experience of war had increased audiences' sexual awareness and activity, film-makers' attempts to show the patriotism and bravery of these men would not have gone unnoticed.¹⁷

Over-arching this was the mid-1950s' Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean spy scandal. The Americans were furious that a British public-school and Cambridge educated homosexual group, holding Foreign Office positions, had been Russian spies. Protected by fellow conspirator Kim Philby, they sold atomic secrets to the Soviets and were responsible for the deaths of many secret service personnel. Anglo-American relations and Foreign Office credibility were damaged by the scandal and by the easy defection to Russia of Burgess and Maclean followed later by Philby. During the war, Goebbels had made propaganda films portraying public schools as dens of decadence. This was something film-makers such as Balcon strove to correct. Not only was the patriotism and bravery of homosexuals being recognized against such a volatile backdrop, but national and international audiences were being shown that Burgess and Maclean were not representative of their ilk. Notions of duty, honour and a loyal fighting spirit were more likely to be in evidence.

Chapter 4 has argued that women continued to have a significant on-screen presence in 1950s' war films. Despite received wisdom suggesting that they were air-

brushed from World War Two post-1945, my research has revealed that crucially, a balance, continuity and two-way flow exists between the acclaimed films of the 1939-45 period and those under discussion, with on-going positive - and negative - depictions of women well into the 1960s. Whilst some women were crudely portrayed as sluts as in *The Cruel Sea* and *The Cockleshell Heroes*, and some were physically absent but present in thought, word, photograph or letter, there were still sufficient numbers of women actively involved in war who were portrayed as brave, efficient, and indispensable to the war effort.

These women were feisty, and their opinions were frequently listened to. In the Services, they were trusted as in *The Man Who Never Was*, and offered top jobs as in *The Cruel Sea*, *Sink the Bismarck* and *The Silent Enemy*. Frequently handling sensitive, top-secret information on dangerous missions, they controlled their emotions when their menfolk were involved. They could manage a lecture theatre full of braying, superior RAF types with aplomb, as in *Appointment in London*, or deal with emotionally and physically destroyed men in Burma as in *The Hasty Heart*. During the most damaging and frightening German air raid on the RAF base in *Angels One Five*, the female Operations Room staff continued working when their building was hit. In *Appointment with Venus* an ATS girl was sent to her Nazi-occupied Channel Island home on a rescue mission. As civilian women prisoners of the Japanese, separated from their menfolk in *A Town Like Alice*, their exemplary courage, behaviour and survival instincts were strongly featured. Whilst SOE women were very feminine, they completed assault courses and handled weapons and explosives. Parachuted or shipped into enemy terrain to liaise with the Resistance, they demonstrated a level of intelligence, resourcefulness and bravery of which many

men would have been proud. And, although the sub-genre of comedies is not wholly analysed by this study, the females in these films, despite the froth that preceded their actions, usually completed their duties with surprisingly consummate skill. In this cinematic replaying of the war, women were unquestionably there and positively active.

With the benefit of hindsight, information confirming wartime promiscuity, and no longer constrained by morale-building, film-makers' negative depictions of women could be more potently expressed in the period 1945-65. Such depictions often centred on their sexuality and infidelities, and were frequently bound-up with the spiv, who has become a stock character in British culture since his debut in *Waterloo Road*. One of his cinematic functions was to target home front women. An unscrupulous coward, he used violence towards the women whom he had 'bought'. Perceived loss of the 'New Jerusalem' was another area in which negativity towards women was shown, as in *The League of Gentlemen* where pessimistic and downright misogynist depictions crossed class barriers. Moreover, as Chapter 3 has demonstrated, when subtly questioned, the sexual orientation of British masculinity was more positively handled than that of the women in Chapter 4, particularly uniformed women. If being in uniform was regarded either as a temporary wartime measure for the majority of females, or an abomination (hinting at lesbianism or mannishness) for the minority, this was aligned with contemporaneous thinking and current Service procedure. Many women expected uniformed service to be temporary. Nevertheless, this study resolutely posits the view that depictions of women in the later films were more constructive and affirmative and certainly in line with - and frequently ahead of - society's expectations at that time.

Chapter 5, finding that the 1939-45 Vansittart view of collective German culpability did not cinematically end post-1945, has again argued against received wisdom. Certainly revisionist views were much in evidence, but so were Janus-faced depictions of the enemy, which highlighted British ambiguity and political *savoir-faire*. As Chapters 2, 3 and 4 focused on British accomplishments, leadership and democratic freedoms, they subtly implied enemy inferiority. Interestingly, film-makers' usually modest reticence suited another national myth, that of understatement, a far more engaging British tool than the American "gung-ho" zeal so disliked by contemporaneous critics.¹⁸ Unexpectedly, whilst the image of the Italian Army can still elicit laughter,¹⁹ the Italians were reclaimed, particularly so in *Conspiracy of Hearts*. But the 1945-65 depictions of the Japanese were not revised. Cinematically, World War Two never ended as missions, skirmishes and adventures in enemy territory were used to emphasize British supremacy without overdoing it. Mills' 'chocolate wrapper' and Goebbels' 'velvet glove' promotion of entertaining propaganda were much in evidence. Political expediency in international relations necessarily took precedence over obvious gloating but, for film-makers, the iron hand was very firmly in the 'velvet glove' and the 'chocolate' had a hard centre as they subtly chastised the enemy, whilst offering the British for the admiration of the world.

Chapter 6 has explored 'war's dysfunctional residue'. War is depicted as being psychologically problematic, affecting some people during and after hostilities in a number of ways. As has been demonstrated, in Britain, there was a sense of shift and change, to which British cinema, throughout the period under review - especially the post-1945 war genre - was attuned. During the 1950s and early 1960s, middle-

class hegemony was pragmatically pulling in two directions; it was conservative and sensitive to contemporaneous critiques, and particularly nuanced in matters of class, homosexuality and depictions of women. Other concerns were new patterns of international status and loss of empire as new directions and challenges emanated from the old and new worlds. However, whilst willingly accommodating new elements, film-makers' also remained faithful to the dominant themes recorded in this thesis. A significant finding here was that during depictions of combat, apparent dysfunction acted as 'heroic reinforcement'. Each perceived flaw or fault in the hero's story was supplemented by a major act of heroism, or consummate leadership skills, as film-makers found more subtle ways to eulogise. Moreover, British infallibility had been challenged, during the war by the Dunkirk evacuation and the fall of Singapore, and afterwards by withdrawal from India and colonial unrest, as Britain's imperialist past and empire evolved into the Commonwealth.

Because they show war's many facets - including the civilian experience - film portrayals of malingerers, revellers, those redeemed by war, and those experiencing demobilization difficulties, form an instructive sub-genre. Yet after 1945, although demobilization problems marred the homecoming for many, few films tackled POW repatriation. Having largely established incarceration in Europe as a jolly jape led by Colditz heroes, I suggest that it would have been difficult for film-makers to problematize their homecoming. Equally the atrocities inflicted on POWs by the Japanese, if projected into irrevocably damaged peacetime lives, could prove counterproductive for national regeneration. Films on repatriation from Europe therefore covered change and acceptance; but those on the Far East, remained distinctly anti-Japanese. Film-makers in the 1950s, with bold social comment,

increasingly blamed 'war's dysfunctional residue' and the 'homecoming legacy' on the loss of the 'New Jerusalem', a conviction that steadily gained credence throughout the decade. There was a persistent feeling that men, let-down by everyone - including the military - had been dispensed with after acquiring and applying the various skills that helped to win the war. This fed easily into the rising crime wave and dissatisfactions that marked post-war Britain, not the least of which was continued rationing and shortages due to the export drive.

In the 'homecoming legacy' sub-genre, film-makers treated the spiv even more censoriously in order to damage the charismatic aura emanating from his ability to live vicariously and supply everyone's needs. Frequently depicted in a racist manner, he was of mid-European or Jewish appearance.²⁰ Shown here as a corrupter of men with decent military records, he traded on their post-war dip in fortunes whilst graduating to full and vicious membership of serious crime gangs. Through the spiv, film-makers made several points, not least of which - apart from women's dangerous sexuality - was drawing attention to the rising crime wave, and society's waste of good men following demobilisation. The spiv was as much a product of the Second World War as the traditional hero and heroine. I have shown the trajectory of his development from that first outing. Marked out by his lack of patriotism and flashy lifestyle, the spiv was the antithesis of everything the officer stood for, becoming a lesson in immorality as film-makers criminalized him. In his more criminal manifestation in *They Made Me a Fugitive*, his character was heavily involved with London gangs, and showed no compunction when brutally attacking his women. In his more sophisticated screen persona he could be a theatrical, as in *The Cruel Sea* or an ex-officer, like Haskins (Richard Attenborough) in *The Ship That Died of Shame*.

One striking finding was that officially sanctioned violence was used against the spiv in films as varied as *Waterloo Road* and *Cockleshell Heroes*. Moreover, Inspector Ratcliffe's damning vocalisation of his character in *They Made Me A Fugitive*, summed up official attitudes. So, it is interesting that the spiv enjoyed longevity post-war with an improved image. In the St. Trinian's films from 1951 to 1953 he was represented by Flash Harry (George Cole)²¹ and humanised. He is now reproduced on television as an updated character in his own right, separated from the war.²²

If the war genre flourished because the timing, ideas and opportunities were auspicious rather than conspiratorial, press and campaign books for the major films reveal how film-makers resolutely and consistently turned this to their advantage with regard to the target audience – youth. This is best illustrated by the strident marketing of *The Dam Busters*, detailed in Chapter 2. Education departments, schools, colleges, youth organisations and military recruitment officers were targeted to ram the message home, giving the films and their promotion an “official” edge. The values and adventures of exciting elite heroes were vigorously promoted through these and many other diverse avenues from essay-writing to aeroplane and ship recognition. This represents a significant finding. This genre is not only important, informative and durable, it enters our homes, via our television screens, and continues to flourish beyond the Millennium. And this brings us to a key area worthy of its own research project - television and the Second World War.

Postscript

Many memorable films have left audiences wanting to know more. ‘What happened next?’ ‘What else is there to know?’ In the case of British audio-visual war

stories it has increasingly fallen to television - now the most prolific disseminator of knowledge about the Second World War - to provide the answers. Televised dramatisations began in the 1970s as cinema lost interest in war films, or could not afford to make them for shrinking audiences. For a nation defining itself by this war, two crucial but ultimately unfounded worries surfaced in the 1950s; that television would signal the demise of cinema, and that national identity would be adversely affected by the poor quality of television programming.²³ As television viewing increased in the mid-1950s the popularity of British World War Two films ensured that they were part of cinema's fight-back. Nevertheless, whilst cinema gave birth to and nurtured the genre, it was the medium of television that enabled it to grow and mature over the following sixty years. These feature films were, and are, regularly shown on the small screen, alongside documentaries, dramas and made-for-TV films on the subject. Television is significant because nearly every British home has at least one television set. Both invasive and informative, this medium has the diverse advantages of longevity, immediacy, serializations and up-to-date analysis. With the value of hindsight, it can encapsulate existing knowledge and break new ground, particularly when previously unseen records are released. Whilst researching this thesis I was astonished at the vast amount of Second World War material put out by terrestrial and satellite channels. This is now supplemented by the Internet as various television channels' research, programming, educational packages and much else on the war, is made available.

In the twenty-first century, television channels maintain their interest in the Second World War, providing a burgeoning archive of material. Apart from cinema's prolific output of feature films, another crucial source is the vast amount of film taken

during the conflict as contemporaneous governments and film-makers strove to record it for posterity. The resultant major archive from officialdom and cinema has been progressively added to, mined and screened, by all television channels. Covering a broad spectrum, television features documentaries or dramatisations that either add to, or expose, the myths created by World War Two films. Citing film title first and documentary title second, recent examples are: *The Heroes of Telemark* with *The Real Heroes of Telemark*; *The Dam Busters* with *Secret History : The Dambusters*; *Charlotte Gray* with *The Real Charlotte Grays*; and *The Bridge on the River Kwai* with *Timewatch : Kwai the True Story*. Another interesting aspect of television scheduling is the mixture of myths and influences that we can be subjected to in a given time-scale. In the same week, or on the same day, we might view the inclusive 1939-45 'People's War'; the exclusive war of officer elites post-1945; the brief flowering of the decline of deference films;²⁴ the fanciful war films of the late 1960s and 1970s; and the brutality and realism of the 20-minute segment on the D-Day landings as depicted in *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), amongst others.

Important occasions such as the sixtieth anniversaries of the D-Day landings, VE-Day, VJ-Day, the Holocaust, and the dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan, received immense television coverage in 2005. Harrowing programmes on the more sensitive war issues, such as the *Auschwitz* series, were aired. Previously, much of this material had been secret, unobtainable, deemed too disturbing, or likely to create post-war problems. Both British and American feature film-makers have returned to the Second World War in recent years, whilst *Band of Brothers* (2002) - an American TV series with British collaboration - rekindled American television's interest and was immensely successful on both sides of the Atlantic. In January 2006, British

television screened *Johnny and the Bomb*, a children's time-travel story. Centred on this war and billed as a "family" serial, it was scheduled in the popular Sunday teatime slot, a time when many families traditionally gather.²⁵

As this study has illustrated, the Second World War is deeply embedded in the national psyche. This indicates the lasting impression created by British culture in general, and British film-makers in particular. It is a cultural legacy that Balcon (and fellow film-makers) would have been proud of, yet could not possibly have imagined despite his declaration: 'We have a glorious story to tell of our courage, efforts and hopes for peace and progress'.²⁶ Moreover, as the guardian and regenerator of national identity, arbiter of morality and social commentator, these British war films must be respected for fulfilling Balcon's post-1945 vision and becoming 'ambassadors to the world'. As a corollary, *The Dam Busters*, arguably the most famous British war film of them all, is to be re-made by former satirist and television presenter-turned-establishment-figure Sir David Frost, who purchased the rights to Brickhill's book in November, 2005.²⁷ Given that this thesis is based on British fascination with the cinematic war genre, I end it with a question: 'Will this start the British cinematic cycle all over again?'

Ultimately, this thesis is offered in the belief that it has added to our knowledge and understanding of this important British genre by focusing on previously unexplored themes and issues, whilst paying particular attention to the language used. In addition, the introduction of this thesis has identified other themes for exploration. Nevertheless, I feel that it is in the key area of television - outlined here - that this work could most fruitfully be carried on.

¹ A major speech delivered at Harrow School, 1941, quoted on the Internet site, <http://www.winstonchurchill.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?ageid=1> The Churchill Centre, 12 January, 2006

² Todd, Richard, in *Films of the Golden Age*, Issue No. 14, Autumn 1998, pp 91-94.

³ Balcon, Michael, 'The Feature Film Carries on the Documentary Tradition', *Quarterly Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, VVI, Pt. 4, 1952, pp 351-353.

⁴ Calder, Angus, *The People's War : Britain 1939-45* (London, (1969) 1994), p 585, reflecting that, with regard to a class-based society, nothing had really changed in post-war Britain, noted a 'callous and hedonistic' post-war British society. The Second World War genre certainly reinforced this view in its films covering 'war's dysfunctional residue'.

⁵ Nairn, Tom, *The Break-up of Britain : Crisis & Neo-nationalism* (Verso, London, (1986) 1997), p 266.

⁶ See Connelly, Mark, *We Can Take It* (Harlow, 2004) for a discussion on Mrs Thatcher's appropriation of the Falklands War and Churchill's national leadership. Thatcher, unlike Churchill, did not acknowledge the people, it was her war, her success and her leadership, pp 276-284. Noakes, Lucy, *War and the British "Gender and National Identity 1939-91* (I.B.Tauris, London, 1998) also notes the connection between representations of the Second World War and the Falklands War.

⁷ Connelly, *ibid*, p 276-284.

⁸ See Paris, Michael, *Warrior Nation : Images of War in British Popular Culture – 1850-2000* (London, 2000), p 250.

⁹ Balcon, Michael, 'Let British Films be Ambassadors to the World,' *Kinematograph Weekly*, 1945, p 135, spoke of redressing 'the debit side of our account' presented by German propaganda during the war.

¹⁰ Although the Conservatives were returned, it was by numbers of seats and not votes.

¹¹ The 'People's War' and other ranks found a voice in the comedies. Often presented as an alternative war, one with less respect and more grumbling, but which frequently ended in a confident re-assertion of the status quo, for example, *On the Fiddle* (1961).

¹² Mills, John, in McFarlane, Brian, *An Autobiography of British Cinema by the Actors and Film-makers Who Made It* (London, 1997), p 414.

¹³ Had either film been American, they would have been overwhelmingly hagiographic, especially *The Dam Busters*. Hollywood director/producer, Daryl Zannuck told Richard Todd that, because it was a true story, Britain should have banged the drum much more, Hollywood would have done. See Todd, Richard, *In Camera* (London, 1989), p 92. It is very interesting that *Private's Progress* was released in the same year as *Reach for the Sky*, as the other extreme.

¹⁴ Bendit, Dr. Laurence J and Phoebe D., *Living Together Again* (London, 1946), p 19.

¹⁵ Jivani, Alkarim, *It's Not Unusual : A History of Lesbian and Gay Britain in the 20th Century* (London, 1997), p 104.

¹⁶ Jivani, *ibid*. Alan Turing had agreed to have female hormone therapy (high doses of oestrogen), p 123.

¹⁷ As Chapter 4 has demonstrated, lesbianism was implied in many films. It was not a considered to be a crime, not because it was approved of, but because Queen Victoria believed that it did not exist, so no law was passed regarding women. It was also a useful way to "masculinize" uniformed or authoritative women.

¹⁸ This was a frequent bone of contention amongst critics who did not like the war genre. Many thought British understatement of any kind, just as dangerous as America's gung-ho approach. The slogan "gung ho" was adopted in the Second World War by US Marines under General E. Carlson, see Internet site http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry_auob/50100401?_type=word&queryword=g.

¹⁹ The hugely popular series '*Allo, 'Allo*, BBC1 TV, 1984-94, featured an Italian Captain whose uniform was braided, medalled and feathered to excess. He was lazy and flirtatious. This series is regularly repeated 20 years after it began.

²⁰ The spiv, apart from his usual mid-European or Jewish appearance, flaunted gold jewellery, and had a uniform comprising of a wide-shouldered camel overcoat, a wide lapelled striped suit, and a trilby. His hair was greasy and black.

²¹ *The Belles of St. Trinians* (1953), *Blue Murder at St. Trinians* (1956) and *The Pure Hell of St. Trinians* (1961) featured the spiv strongly. Although he is involved with St. Trinian's school as

bookmaker and bootlegger, he is a somewhat jaunty, lovable character who rescues the girls on several occasions.

²² One of his most popular, and likeable, incarnations is the used car salesman Arthur Daley (George Cole) in the television series, *Minder*, ITV, 1979-1994. Since then, Del Trotter (David Jason) has popularised the character even more in another television series, *Only Fools and Horses*, BBC1, 1981-96, 2001-2003 and constantly repeated. Both characters favour the big-shouldered camel coat, the heavy gold jewellery and are of Jewish appearance.

²³ It is ironic that Balcon, who had a vested interest in countering anti-British German wartime propaganda, and presenting Britain at its best, see 'Let British Films be Ambassadors to the World', should have been a member of the National Television Council which strongly opposed commercial television in 1954 believing that it would 'destroy the fabric of British culture', because television has such prolific output of Second World War films and related material.

²⁴ However, films that cover the decline of deference do not appear to be given the amount of air time that the other war films enjoy.

²⁵ The television drama series, based on best-selling author Terry Pratchett's children's story, which switches children and their families between the Second World War and the present day, faithfully reproduced the wartime segments in the style of the war genre of films. The appeal of this drama series was cross-class and cross-generational.

²⁶ Balcon, 'Let British Films be Ambassadors to the World', p 135.

²⁷ Frost has stated that he intends to be faithful to the original, but director Peter Jackson will pay more attention to the development of the bomb and top brass disapproval, using now de-classified information. So far the name of Gibson's dog has caused a furore, especially on the Internet. It is suggested that Nigger (Digger in America), may be left out of the story altogether. But the emotive and unfailingly popular *Dam Busters' March*, will, according to Frost, be used again. See Jagalsa, Mark, 'Dambuster Blockbuster', *Daily Express*, 2 September, 2006, p 25.

Appendix 1

CATEGORIES OF BRITISH FILMS BY DECADE 1940 to 1970

Year	Rom- ance	Drama	Com- edy	Music- als	Crime	War	Rev- ue	Fant- asy	Hist- ory	Advent- ure	Child- ren	Sport	Relig- ion	Horror	Murder	Nudist	West- ern	Total	% War Films	Year
1940	1	8	28	5	20	14	2	1										79	17.7	1940
1941	1	8	27	6	7	12	1	1	3	1								67	17.9	1941
1942		1	19	3	6	19	1	1	4									54	35.0	1942
1943	2	4	15	8	8	20	3											60	33.3	1943
1944	5	5	9	7	6	9	2	3			1							47	19.1	1944
1945	6	10	6	7	10	8	1	3	1		2							54	14.8	1945
1946	6	6	7	11	9	7	2	1	2	3	4							58	12.1	1946
1947	3	16	7	4	22	2	1	2	2	5	7	1						72	2.8	1947
1948	5	16	24	7	39	5	1	10	4	4	1	2						118	4.2	1948
1949	16	13	33	5	30	9	1	4	2	4	4		1					122	7.4	1949
Total	45	87	175	63	157	105	15	26	18	17	19	3	1					731	14.3	Total
1950	4	17	18	4	30	6	2	1	2	7	5			1				96	6.3	1950
1951	1	14	27	5	32	5	3	5	2	5	5							104	4.8	1951
1952	4	15	28	5	43	4	3	4		5	6		1					118	3.4	1952
1953	2	9	26	6	53	10	1	7	2	5	16	4		1				142	7.1	1953
1954	6	10	31	2	59	6	2	5	3	11	6	3						144	4.2	1954
1955	4	11	34	5	45	9		2	1	4	7	1	1	1				125	7.2	1955
1956	1	8	25	11	43	7		6	1	8	8	1	1	1				121	5.8	1956
1957	2	15	28	6	62	13		1	1	14	5			5				152	8.6	1957
1958	6	11	22	4	37	21		3	2	9	6		1	8	1			131	16.0	1958
1959	2	12	26	8	39	11		2		7	5			5		1		118	9.3	1959
Total	32	122	264	56	443	92	11	36	14	75	69	9	4	22	1	1		1251	7.3	Total

Year	Rom- ance	Drama	Com- edy	MUSIC- als	Crime	War	Rev- ue	Fant- asy	Hist- ory	Advent- ure	Child- ren	Sport	Relig- ion	Horror	Murder	Nudist	West- ern	Total	% War Films	Year
1960	2	21	34	9	42	7	1	5	3	4	6			5		1		140	5.0	1960
1961	4	14	31	5	59	9		3	2	7	6	1		5		3	1	150	6.0	1961
1962	1	24	40	6	49	9		3	2	11	4			5		2		156	5.7	1962
1963	3	20	29	14	41	4		7	3	5				1		3		130	3.1	1963
1964	3	8	14	10	29	5		5	1	7	8			8		2		100	5.0	1964
1965	2	10	19	11	24	4		5	3	5	3			7				93	4.3	1965
1966	2	7	28	8	20	3		7	2	2	4			8				91	3.3	1966
1967	5	13	19	5	20	5		10	1	7	10		2	9		1		107	4.7	1967
1968	3	19	12	8	16	5	9		5	2	8			4			1	92	5.4	1968
1969	6	21	22	3	15	9		11	4	2	8	1	1	4				107	8.4	1969
Total	31	157	248	79	315	60	10	56	26	52	57	2	3	56		12	2	1166	5.1	Total

NB Gifford's definition of a war film is 'a dramatic story in a wartime setting or reconstruction of a wartime incident' = a narrow definition.

For this chart, the wider definition is used comprehensively so, where Gifford has listed films as drama, romance, history and comedy for example: Freida, The Ship That Died of Shame, Circle of Danger, Reach for the Sky, Hotel Sahara and The Square Peg. I have also listed them as WWII films.

SOURCE: This chart has been compiled from information in The British Film Catalogue 1897-1970 Denis Gifford - Redwood Press, Trowbidge, Wiltshire - 1973

Appendix 2

FILM AND TELEVISION

CINEMA ADMISSIONS		TELEVISION LICENCES			
Year	Millions	Year	Total	Monochrome	Colour
1935	907				
1940	1,027				
1945	1,585				
1950	1,396	1950	343,882	343,882	
1955	1,182	1955	4,503,766	4,503,766	
1960	501	1960	10,469,753	10,469,753	
1965	327	1965	13,253,045	13,253,045	
1970	193	1970	15,882,528	15,609,131	273,397
1975	116	1975	17,700,815	10,120,493	7,580,322
1980	96	1980	18,284,865	5,383,125	12,901,740

NB The 1950s are clearly highlighted as a critical time for the film industry. Television licence figures jumped from 343,882 to 10,469,753. Simultaneously, cinema attendances dropped from 1,396 million to 501 million.

Figures for cinema admissions were issued by the Department of Trade.

Figures for television licences were issued by the BBC.

Television licences before 1939 wartime shutdown estimated at 20,000 plus (Source: BBC Handbook).

From the late 1950s, it was not uncommon for the seriously worried film industry to slip adverse references to its new rival - television - into its films. Saturday Night and Sunday Morning is a prime example of this paranoia, there are many others.

Ironically, 50 years on, television is constantly recycling feature films; whilst today, the popularity of videos has ensured the release and re-release of every kind of film from the silents to prestige features. Famous box-office successes are amongst those released on video for rental and sale within a short time of their cinematic success, realising unprecedented extra profits for film-makers. Television could now be said to have encouraged and increased enjoyment of feature films. In addition, television companies have also put money into the making of films - Channel 4 for example.

SOURCE: Figures taken from a 'Statistical Survey of the British Film Industry' by Patricia Perilli in British Cinema History, Eds. James Curran and Vincent Porter, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1983.

Appendix 3

GOVERNMENT/MILITARY ASSISTANCE GIVEN TO POST-WAR BRITISH FILM-MAKERS FOR THE PRODUCTION OF WORLD WAR II FILMS

Through on-screen acknowledgements, film-makers offered pointers to the extent of film industry, government and military involvement permeating post-war World War Two films. Information, manpower (officers, men and technical advisers), equipment, weaponry, access to locations, negotiations with foreign governments and their Military are all indicated. Building on wartime co-operation and, when considered in concert with their ethos, education, outlook, friendships, social contacts and such events as attendances at premiers by royalty, military and other dignitaries, it appears that powerful establishment messages were being officially (and unofficially) sanctioned. Heroic national myths were created, appropriated or enhanced by this genre at a vital time in Britain's history, which heralded the Cold War and nuclear deterrents, and was marked by challenges to integration and defence cuts from Service and Military chiefs.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Film</u>	<u>Assistance received from</u>
1946	<i>The Captive Heart</i>	British Zone of Germany, Officers and men of the 51st Highland Division and 50th AA Brigade, War Office, British Army of the Rhine
1948	<i>Against the Wind</i>	Societe des Chemins de Fer Belges, Belgian Ministry of the Interior and of National Defence, British War Office, British Air Ministry
1950	<i>Odette</i>	Odette Churchill, GC, MBE. Captain Peter Churchill, DSO, Croix de Guerre. Colonel Maurice Buckmaster, OBE, Admiralty, War Office, Air Ministry
1950	<i>The Wooden Horse</i>	British War Office, Air Ministry, German and Danish civilians
1952	<i>Appointment in London</i>	Air Ministry, RAF
1952	<i>The Gift Horse</i>	Admiralty, US Navy Department, Technical Adviser and St Nazaire Society
1952	<i>Five Fingers</i>	Government of Turkey
1953	<i>The Cruel Sea</i>	Admiralty
1953	<i>They Who Dare</i>	Admiralty, War Office, Air Ministry, Lebanese Air Force
1953	<i>Sailor of the King</i>	Officers and men of HMS Manscman, Cleopatra, Glasgow, Technical Adviser
1953	<i>The Malta Story</i>	Government and people of Malta, British Air Ministry, Admiralty. Malta Drama League, Air Chief Marshall Sir Hugh Lloyd, KCB, KBE, MC, DFC
1954	<i>The Sea Shall Not Have Them</i>	Air Ministry, RAF
1954	<i>Angels One Five</i>	Air Ministry, RAF, Hawker Siddeley, Portuguese Government, Technical Adviser
1955	<i>Above Us the Waves</i>	Admiralty, Technical Adviser

1955	<i>The Colditz Story</i>	Technical Adviser
1955	<i>The Dam Busters</i>	Air Ministry, RAF, A.V. Roe, 617 Squadron and Survivors
1955	<i>Cockleshell Heroes</i>	Royal Marines and other branches of the Royal Navy
1955	<i>Above Us the Waves</i>	Admiralty, Naval Adviser
1955	<i>The Ship That Died of Shame</i>	Technical Advisers, Admiralty
1956	<i>Reach for the Sky</i>	Air Ministry, RAF, Technical Adviser, British Science Museum
1956	<i>The Battle of the River Plate</i>	Board of the Admiralty, Royal New Zealand Navy, Indian Navy, US Navy, Uruguayan Navy, British Merchant Navy, Commander in Chief Mediterranean Station, C in C Portsmouth, C in C of US 6th Fleet
1957	<i>The Bridge on the River Kwai</i>	Government of Ceylon
1957	<i>The Yangtse Incident</i>	Admiralty, War Office, Air Ministry C in C's. Officers and ratings HM Ships, other naval establishments
1958	<i>Ice Cold in Alex</i>	War Office, Royal Army Service Corps in Libya, UK and Libyan Governments
1958	<i>Carve Her Name With Pride</i>	'Odette' Hallowes, GC, MBE, Major L P Fernandez, MC, Croix de Guerre
1958	<i>Dunkirk</i>	Lt Colonel Ewan Butler, Lt Cdr John Fiddler, DSO, Admiralty, War Office, Les Forces Armes Francaises, The Merchant Navy, Small boat owners
1958	<i>I Was Monty's Double</i>	Government, C in C British Army, Admiralty and Services at Gibraltar, M.E. Clifton James
1958	<i>The Wind Cannot Read</i>	Indian Government
1958	<i>The Silent Enemy</i>	Admiralty, War Office, Air Ministry. Officers and men of the Mediterranean Fleet Clearance Diving Team
1959	<i>Operation Amsterdam</i>	Royal Netherlands Army, Civic Authority, Amsterdam and Ymuiden
1960	<i>Sink the Bismarck</i>	Admiralty
1968	<i>The Battle of Britain*</i>	British Government, Air Ministry, Ministry of Defence, Foreign Office and RAF. Governments of the United States of America, Germany and Spain. Also, decorated World War II flying heroes of Britain and Germany.

* This film marked the first telling of the Battle of Britain from the viewpoints of the British and the enemy

Appendix 4

DIVORCE

ENGLAND AND WALES (1937-1960)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Partner who initiated the Petition:</u>		<u>Total</u>
	<u>Husband</u>	<u>Wife</u>	
1937	2,765	2,985	5,750
1942	6,303	5,310	11,613
1944	10,154	8,236	18,390
1946	26,429	15,275	41,704
1948	18,456	18,619	37,075
1950	13,207	15,889	29,096
1952	14,705	19,065	33,770
1954	12,708	15,639	28,347
1956	12,538	15,215	27,753
1958	11,540	14,044	25,584
1960	12,109	15,761	27,870

(Source: Civil Judicial Statistics, HMSO)

- 1 Between 1937 and 1946 there is a huge increase, much of which can be attributed to hasty wartime marriages, adultery, housing problems and different expectations after the war.
- 2 In 1946, many more men petition than women, figures which take in masculine worries as well as the reasons enumerated in No. 1.
- 3 In 1948 figures between men and women are more or less equal.
- 4 Tendency between 1950-60 for more women than men to petition. This could be for "agreed" quickie divorces, as well as foregoing reasons. It can also indicate dissatisfaction of women and their willingness to go-it-alone if they have not found a new partner.

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A Canterbury Tale (1944) Dirs. Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger
Against the Wind (1948) Dir. Charles Crichton
Albert RN (1953) Dir. Lewis Gilbert
All Over Town (1949) Dir. Derek N. Twist
Angels One Five (1952) Dir. George More O'Ferrall
Angel with the Trumpet. The (1950) Dirs. Anthony Bushell and Karl J. Hartl
Another Time, Another Place (1958) Dir. Lewis Allan
Appointment in London (1953) Dir. Philip Leacock
A Queen is Crowned (1953) Castleton Knight
Appointment with Venus (1951) Dir. Ralph Thomas
A Town Like Alice (1956) Dir. Jack Lee
Battle of Britain. The (1969) Dir. Guy Hamilton
Battle of the River Plate. The (1956) Dirs. Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger
Battle of the VI. The (1958) Dir. Vernon Campbell Sewell
Black Tent. The (1956) Dir. Brian Desmond Hurst
Bless 'Em All (1949) Dir. Robert F. Hill
Brief Encounter (1946) Dir. David Lean
Bridge on the River Kwai. The (1958) Dir. David Lean
But Not in Vain (1948) Dir. Edmond T. Greville
Cage of Gold (1950) Dir. Basil Dearden
Camp on Blood Island. The (1958) Dir. Val Guest
Captive Heart. The (1946) Dir. Basil Dearden
Carve Her Name With Pride (1958) Dir. Lewis Gilbert
Children of Chance (1949) Dir. Luigi Zampra
Circle of Danger (1951) Dir. Jacques Tourneur
Clouded Yellow (1950) Dir. Ralph Thomas
Cockleshell Heroes. The (1955) Dir. Jose Ferrar
Colditz Story. The (1954) Dir. Guy Hamilton
Conspiracy of Hearts (1960) Dir. Ralph Thomas
Conspirator (1949) Dir. Victor Saville
Count Five and Die (1958) Dir. Victor Vicas
Cruel Sea. The (1953) Dir. Charles Frend
Dam Busters. The (1955) Dir. Michael Anderson
Dancing with Crime (1947) Dir. John Paddy Carstairs
Danger Within (1959) Dirs. Don Chaffey and Peter Graham Scott
Desert Fox. The (1951) Dir. Henry Hathaway
Deep Blue Sea. The (1955) Dir. Anatole Litvak
Desert Mice (1959) Dir. Michael Relph
Devil's Jest. The (1954) Dir. Alfred Goulding
Dick Barton Special Agent (1948) Dir. Alfred Goulding
Divided Heart. The (1954) Dir. Charles Crichton
Don't Panic Chaps (1959) Dir. George Pollock
Dunkirk (1958) Dir. Leslie Norman
End of the Affair. The (1955) Dir. Edward Dmytryk
Enigma (2001) Dir. Michael Apted
Escape to Victory/Victory (1981) Dir. John Huston
Eyes That Kill (1947) Dir. Richard M. Gray
Flamingo Affair. The (1948) Dir. Horace Shepherd
Fool and the Princess. The (1948) Dir. William C. Hammond
Freedom Radio (1941) Dir. Anthony Asquith

For Freedom (1940) Dirs. Maurice Elvey and Castleton Knight
Frieda (1947) Dir. Basil Dearden
Gentle Sex. The (1943) Dirs. Leslie Howard and Maurice Elvey
Gift Horse. The (1952) Dir. Compton Bennett
Glass Mountain. The (1949) Dir. Henry Cass
Great Escape. The (1963) Dir. John Sturges
Guns at Batasi (1964) Dir. John Guillermin
Hasty Heart. The (1949) Dir. Vincent Sherman
Heaven Knows Mr Allison (1957) Dir. John Huston
Heroes of Telemark. The (1965) Dir. Anthony Mann
Hope and Glory (1987) Dir. John Boorman
Hotel Sahara (1951) Dir. Ken Annakin
Ice Cold in Alex (1958) Dir. J. Lee Thompson
Ill Met By Moonlight (1957) Dirs. Michael Powell and Emeric Pressberger
Intruder. The (1953) Dir. Guy Hamilton
In Which We Serve (1942) Dir. David Lean and Noel Coward
Its Hard to be Good (1948) Dir. Jeffrey Dell
I See A Dark Stranger (1946) Dir. Frank Launder
I Was Monty's Double (1958) Dir. John Guillermin
Key. The (1958) Dir. Carol Reed
Lamp Still Burns. The (1943) Dir. Maurice Elvey
Landfall (1953) Dir. Ken Annakin
Land Girls. The (1998) Dir. David Leland
League of Gentlemen. The (1960) Dir. Basil Dearden
Left, Right and Centre (1959) Dir. Sidney Gilliat
Libel (1959) Dir. Anthony Asquith
Lili Marlene (1950) Dir. Arthur Crabtree
Long and the Short and the Tall. The (1961) Dir. Leslie Norman
Lost People. The (1949) Dir. Muriel Box
MacKenzie Break. The (1970) Dir. Lamont Johnson
Malta Story. The (1953) Dir. Brian Desmond Hurst
Man Who never Was. The (1956) Dir. Ronald Neame
Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence (1983) Dir. Nagisa Oshiuma
Millions Like Us (1943) Dirs. Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat
Mine Own Executioner (1947) Dir. Anthony Kimmins
Morning Departure (1950) Dir. Roy Ward Baker
My Brother's Keeper (1948) Dirs. Alfred Roome and Roy Rich
Night Beat (1948) Dir. Harold Huth
Night We Dropped a Clanger (1959) Dir. Darcy Conyers
No Time to Die/Tank Force (1958) Dir. Terence Young
Odette (1950) Dir. Herbert Wilcox
One That Got Away. The (1957) Dir. Roy Ward Baker
On the Fiddle (1961) Dir. Cyril Frankel
One of Our Aircraft is Missing (1942) Dirs. Michael Powell and Emeric Pressberger
Operation Amsterdam (1959) Dir. Michael McCarthy
Operation Bullshine (1959) Dir. Gilbert Gunn
Operation Crossbow (1965) Dir. Michael Anderson
Open City (1945) Dir. Roberto Rossellini
Orders to Kill (1958) Dir. Anthony Asquith
Paradise Road (1997) Dir. Bruce Beresford
Passport to Pimlico (1949) Dir. Henry Cornelius
Password is Courage (1962) Dir. Andrew L. Stone
Pastor Hall (1940) Dir. Roy Boulting
Perfect Strangers (1945) Dir. Alexander Korda
Piccadilly Incident (1948) Dir. Herbert Wilcox
Portrait from Life (1948) Dir. Terence Fisher
Private Angelo (1949) Dirs. Michael Anderson and Peter Ustinov
Private's Progress (1956) Dir. John Boulting
Purple Heart. The (1944) Dir. Lewis Milestone

Purple Plain. The (1954) Dir. Robert Parish
Quiet Woman. The (1951) Dir. John Gilling
Rake's Progress. The (1945) Dir. Sidney Gilliat
Reach for the Sky (1956) Dir. Lewis Gilbert
Red Beret. The (1953) Dir. Terence Young
Reluctant Heroes (1951) Dir. Jack Raymond
Return from the River Kwai (1989) Dir. Andrew V. McClaglen
Safecracker. The (1958) Dir. Ray Milland
Saturday Island/ Island of Desire (1952) Dir. Stuart Heisler
Sea Shall Not Have Them. The (1954) Dir. Lewis Gilbert
Secret of Blood Island. The (1964) Dir. Quentin Lawrence
School for Danger/Now It Can Be Told (1947) Dir. Wing Commander Edward Baird
School for Secrets (1946) Dir. Peter Ustinov
Sea of Sand/ Desert Patrol (1958) Dir. Guy Green
Sea Wife (1957) Dir. Bob McNaught
Sea Wolves. The (1981) Dir. Andrew V. McLaglen
Seven Thunders/The Beasts of Marsailles (1957) Dir. Hugo Fregonese
Ship That Died of Shame. The (1955) Dir. Basil Dearden
Silent Dust (1949) Dir. Lance Comfort
Silent Enemy (1958) Dir. William Fairchild
Single-Handed/Sailor of the King (1953) Dir. Ray Boulting
Sink the Bismarck (1960) Dir. Lewis Gilbert
Small Back Room. The (1949) Dirs. Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger
Small Voice. The (1948) Dir. Fergus McDonnell
So Little Time (1952) Dir. Compton Bennett
Square Peg. The (1958) Dir. John Paddy Carstairs
Steel Bayonet. The (1958) Dir. Michael Carreras
Target for Tonight (1941) Dir. Harry Watt
Tea With Mussolini (1999) Dir. Franco Zeffirelli
They Flew Alone (1942) Dir. Herbert Wilcox
They Made Me A Fugitive (1947) Dir. Alberto Cavalcanti
They Were Not Divided (1950) Dir. Terence Young
They Who Dare (1954) Dir. Lewis Milestone
Those People Next Door (1952) Dir. John Harlow
Tiger in the Smoke (1956) Dir. Roy Ward Baker
To End All Wars (2001) Dir. David L Cunningham
Train of Events (1949) Dirs. Sidney Cole, Charles Crichton and Basil Dearden
Traitor. The (1957) Dir. Michael McCarthy
Tunes of Glory (1960) Dir. Ronald Neame
Two-Headed Spy. The (1958) Dir. Andrew de Troth
Two Thousand Women (1944) Dir. Frank Launder
Very Important Person (1961) Dir. Ken Annakin
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Way to the Stars (1945) Dir. Anthony Asquith
Wedding of Lilli Marlene (1953) Dir. Arthur Crabtree
Wind Cannot Read. The (1958) Dir. Ralph Thomas
Woman With No Name. The (1950) Dir. Ladislaw Vajla
Wooden Horse. The (1950) Dir. Jack Lee
Whisky Galore/Tight Little Island (1949) Dir. Alexander MacKendrick
Wish You Were Here (1987) Dir. David Leland
Worm's Eye View (1951) Dir. Jack Raymond
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Documentaries and Dramas – A Selection

'Allo, 'Allo, BBC1, 1984-94
A Queen is Crowned and Elizabeth is Queen, BBC, (1953) BBC2, 2000
Australia - The Queen in Australia and Welcome the Queen, (1954), BBC2, 2000
A Very British War Movie, Channel 4, 1999
Auschwitz, BBC2, 2005
Aviators - Heroes of Flight 1930s/1940s, BBC2, 1998
Aviators - Supersonic Test Pilots, BBC2, 1998 - Parts 1-3
Bernstein - A Painful Reminder 1945, BBC2, 1998
Britain's World War Two Heroes – The Paras, Channel 5, 2001
Britain's World War Two Heroes – 1958 Col. Maynes – Maverick, Channel 5, 2002
Britain's World War Two Heroes – Midget Submarines in the Pacific War, Channel 5, 2002
Churchill's Secret Army - Channel 4, 2000 - Parts 1-3
Cinema - British Censorship – Channel 4, 1997 - Parts 1-2
Colditz – BBC1, 1972-74
Cold War - BBC2, 1998
Conscription - Army of Innocents - National Service, Channel 4, 1997
Conquest of Everest, The, BBC1, 1953
Coronation Britain, The, Channel 5, 2002
Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, BBC1, 1953
Did We Have to Fight?, Channel 4, 1999
Don't Mention the War, Channel 5, 2000
Douglas Bader - Secret Life, Channel 4 1996
England v Germany - The First Hundred Years, Granada, 2000
Escape from Colditz, Channel 4, 2000, Parts 1-3
Empire - The Unknown Soldier, Channel 4, 1999
Equinox - Britain's First Atomic Bomb, BBC1, 1997
Family at War, ITV1, 1970-1972
Finest Hour - The Battle of Britain; The Blitz; Dunkirk, BBC1, 2000
Gladiators of World War Two – Bombers, Channel 5, 2001
Gladiators of World War Two – Fighters, Channel 5, 2001
Goodnight Mr Tom - Carlton, 1998
Goodnight Sweetheart, BBC1, 1993-1999
Hiroshima - Second World War - Effects and Reasons, BBC2, 2005
The Hiroshima Paintings, Channel 5, 2005
Hitler – Blackmailer, Channel 5, 2002
Hitler's Rise, Channel 5, 2002
Hitler and Stalin, BBC2, 1999
Indian Independence - 50th Anniversary, Channel 4, 1997
Interview with Steven Spielberg, BBC2 1998

Mutiny in the RAF, Channel 4, 1997
The Myth of the Dam Busters, History Channel, 2001
The Nazis - A Warning from History – 1997, Parts 1-6
Normandy Landings : D-Day Veterans Discuss Saving Sergeant Ryan, BBC2, 1998
Nuremberg – The Nazi Trials, BBC2, 2006
People's Century - Post-war Japan/USA, BBC1, 1997
The Second World War in Colour, Granada, 1999
The Second World War in Colour (2), Granada, 2000
Secret History - Berlin Airlift, Channel 4, 1998
Secret History - The Dam Busters, Channel 4, 1994
Secret History - Mau Mau Terrorist Conflict , 1956, Channel 4, 1999
Secret History - Hitler's Search for the Holy Grail, Channel 4, 1999
Secret History - The Swastika and Sex, Channel 4, 1999
Secrets of World War Two – Magnetic Mines, Channel 5 TV, 2001
Secrets of World War Two – V Rockets, Channel 5 TV, 2001
Secrets of World War Two – The Man Who Never Was, Channel 5 TV, 2002
Secrets of World War Two – Japanese Suicides, Channel 5 TV, 2002
Secrets of World War Two – Nazi Pirates, Channel 5 TV, 2002
Secrets of World War Two – Telemark, Channel 5 TV, 2002
Secrets of World War Two – Nazi 'U' Boats, Channel 5 TV, 2002
Secrets of World War Two – US Aid and 'U' Boats, Channel 5 TV, 2002
Sex Bomb, Channel 5 TV, 2004
Shine On Harvey Moon, ITV, 1982-1995
State Funeral of Sir Winston Churchill, BBC1, 1965
Tenko - TV 1981-1984
Timewatch - German Prisoners of War in Britain, BBC2, 2000
Timewatch - Hitler's Search for the Holy Grail, BBC2, 1999
Timewatch - Kwai the True Story, BBC2, 1997
Timewatch - Lenin's Secret Files, BBC2, 1997
Timewatch - US Nuclear - Strategic Command, BBC2, 1996
Timewatch – The Battle of the River Plate, BBC2, 2006
Typically British - History of the British Film Industry, 1995
The War of the Century - Hitler and Stalin; Nazis v Russia; Stalingrad, BBC2, 1999
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Windrush - Part 1 - Enoch Powell, BBC2, 1998
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