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‘THE HIDEOUS DIFFICULTY OF RECREATING NAZISM AT WAR’: ESCAPING FROM EUROPE IN *THE WOODEN HORSE* (1950) AND THE BRITISH PRISONER OF WAR FILM

Martin Stollery

This essay offers an alternative perspective on the history of British prisoner-of-war (POW) film cycle of the 1950s and early 1960s, with a particular focus on The Wooden Horse (Jack Lee, 1950). Following Dilys Powell, these films have often been understood as variations on the British tradition of public school stories, where schoolboys become ingenious escapers and German captors stand in for the ultimately outwitted prefects or masters. Without denying the relevance of this metaphor, this essay reconsiders, and reconfigures, the canon of British POW films. It argues for an expansion of the historical contexts within which we consider these films, especially in relation to their representations of wartime Europe, beyond the confines of camps for prisoners where the Geneva Conventions applied. The areas discussed are: representations of European resistance activity; representations of Soviet POWs; references to Nazi anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. Producer Ian Dalrymple’s letters while filming on location, and a range of previously overlooked contemporary reviews, extending well beyond Dilys Powell’s, are used to situate the main case study, The Wooden Horse, typically considered the first film in the POW cycle, within these alternative contexts.

Dilys Powell, or the metaphor she evoked, has frequently been cited by subsequent commentators to support the argument that British prisoner-of-war (POW) films enable the Second World War to be reimagined as public school stories. Powell, in a review of *The Wooden Horse* (Jack Lee, 1950), wrote:

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Someone or other ... once said that the English were all schoolboys. I am aware that there is not much room for schoolboys in the modern battle and the welfare state ... All the same I find [the English schoolboy spirit's] emergence in the incidents of war and its reincarnation in this particular film against a backdrop of boredom and wretchedness pleasing and touching.¹

My aim in this essay is to reconsider, and reconfigure, the canon of British POW films. *The Wooden Horse* is my central example, because it is often considered the first in a new cycle of such films, which established a template for others to follow. I propose an expanded historical and generic framework within which to consider these films, especially in relation to their representations of wartime Europe. This is not to deny, however, that notions about the historic English public school, and the rituals and attitudes conventionally associated with it, have provided an important point of reference for understanding and appreciating British POW films in relation to what Nicholas Cull describes as 'old notions of Englishness'.² Powell's comments were certainly representative of what some critics liked about *The Wooden Horse*. Matthew Norgate referred in *Tribune* to the 'mad English', and the *Sunday Dispatch* review praised the way the actors during the film's camp sequences 'might have been preparing a cricket pitch instead of a daring escape'.³ Powell's review was accorded special status by being reproduced in the notes for *The Wooden Horse*'s Edinburgh Film Festival screening. Nevertheless, she was conscious that her insights were derived from a selective appreciation of the initial section of the film, set in a POW camp, rather than its totality: 'it is in this part of *The Wooden Horse* that the qualities which I spoke of just now as typical of the British are strongest'.⁴

Subsequent commentators, taking a retrospective view of *The Wooden Horse* and the British POW film cycle, have overlooked the deliberate selectivity of Powell's perspective. Cull, for example, extrapolates from Powell's comments about the distinctiveness of the public school spirit, to develop an overarching interpretation of the British POW film. In his view, the British POW film cycle relates to a long-standing myth of 'English exceptionalism, that held that the island possessed something special and distinct from the rest of the world', exemplified here in the tenacity of its protagonists and the ingenuity of their escapes.⁵ Cull summarises this with the neat formulation: 'If the received version of the Second World War is the microcosm of English myth, the POW genre is the microcosm of the Second World War'.⁶ It would be foolish to deny the pertinence of this interpretation, but it cannot be accepted as the sole, or in some instances even the dominant significance of these films, or indeed the books upon which they were based. Some recent analysis of the film cycle has started to move away from a 'one size fits all' approach. Gill Plain, for example, describes British POW films of the 1950s as generic hybrids, where elements of the war film mingle with noir, romance and comedy. Plain inevitably employs Powell's public school metaphor, but suggests it is more applicable to *The Colditz Story* (Guy Hamilton, 1955) than to the *The Wooden Horse*, whose camp she likens to a borstal.⁷

Academic writing on novels and memoirs by or about British prisoners of war has, for much longer, tended towards a more multifaceted view, partly because more books were published than were adapted into films. As Mark Rawlinson has

pointed out, British writing about POW experiences, resistance movements and Special Operations Executive (SOE) agents had the potential to move beyond insular conceptions of British identity. In these narratives, captured British military personnel, or foreign nationals working for the British government, spent long periods of time in wartime Europe. Their relationship to Europe was different to that of conventional Allied forces whose main contact with the enemy was in combat situations, or as their captors, and who typically encountered liberated civilians, rather than those living under occupation. Some postwar British writing therefore offered possible openings to emotional and imaginative engagement with recent, unprecedented events, such as resistance to fascist occupation in Western Europe, Soviet experiences of the Second World War and the Holocaust. Michael Burn's *Yes Farewell* (1946), in which the protagonist, a Colditz escapee, encounters sympathetic Soviet characters, is one such example.

Rawlinson also argues, however, that British POW literature often exhibited a tendency to conflate incommensurable institutions and experiences. Rawlinson identifies a significant trend in this writing that takes the British public school as a major, limiting frame of reference: 'By emphasising school in terms of its totalitarian structures, writers appropriated alien political experience at the same time as they constructed a parochial ideological framework for surveying the European scene'.⁸ A major example is Pat Reid's *The Colditz Story* (1952). This book's prologue employs an extended metaphor of escaping as a public school sport. It describes Colditz as a place where one has to attend the prep school of other POW camps, and pass an entrance exam, involving an attempted escape, before being admitted.⁹ A less elaborate metaphor is invoked in Jerrard Tickell's *Odette* (1949), where alongside some harrowing description, the Ravensbruck women's concentration camp is described as a diabolic Roedean, under its headmaster the Commandant, with the S.S. being the mistresses, and the more debased among the prisoners the prefects.¹⁰

Robert Kee's *A Crowd is Not Company* (1947) is interesting within this context. Without escaping them altogether, it hints at the incommensurability of such comparisons. This is demonstrated by its abrupt shift of register in the narrator's account of his initial interrogation by a German officer, shortly after being captured:

I felt as if I were a schoolboy who had done something wrong and was being taken to see the headmaster. I had to wait in a corridor. Memories of long waits in countless English corridors made it familiar. Then the door opened and the headmaster was standing in front of me. He wore riding boots and a monocle and his face was made shapeless by duelling scars.¹¹

By the end of Kee's novel, brutality is observed that far exceeds the grilling Kee's narrator receives from the imagined headmaster. Soviet advances compel the German captors of a group of British prisoners of war to march them to a new camp. They encounter a column of Russian prisoners during the march. The Russians, whose 'clothes were so ragged that it was impossible to tell what colour or shape or even what garment they had been originally, and whose white starved faces contrasted horribly with the black unshaven growth of beard that covered them', are enduring such appalling conditions that the British prisoners throw

cigarettes and soap to them. One of the Russians is assaulted by a Volkssturm guard, 'stamping on his fingers, kicking him and striking him over and over again in the face and chest with the butt of his gun', after he tries to pick up a packet of cigarettes.¹² The British prisoners roar and jeer in protest. One comments, 'I'll forgive the Russians absolutely anything they do to this country when they arrive. Absolutely anything'.¹³

Kee's book demonstrates that public school references coexisted in the source literature with other, less insular perspectives, long before their radical juxtaposition in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969):

The Englishmen were officers. Each of them had attempted to escape from another prison at least once. Now they were here, dead-centre in a sea of dying Russians. They could tunnel all they pleased. They would inevitably surface within a rectangle of barbed wire, would find themselves greeted listlessly by dying Russians ... The Englishmen were clean and enthusiastic and decent and strong. They sang booming well ... They were all masters of checkers and chess and bridge and cribbage and dominoes and anagrams and charades and Ping-Pong and billiards ... [They] had no way of knowing it, but the candles and the soap were made from the fat of rendered Jews and Gypsies and fairies and communists, and other enemies of the State.¹⁴

A prehistory of the 1950s British POW film

In a forgotten essay from 1946, 'Foreign Policy and Cinema', the young British writers Arthur Jacobs and Norman Swallow raised a number of questions about how wartime Hollywood and British cinema had represented Nazism and occupied Europe. Jacobs and Swallow suggested films of 'intrigue', including those we now tend to describe as resistance films, and films of 'escape', should be considered as closely related. One common element was their wartime European setting, albeit not involving regular armed forces, a criterion I apply to the films I discuss in this essay.¹⁵ Jacobs' and Swallow's projection of how this cycle of films could be understood, and should develop, did not gain traction, as a framework for a generic linkage, in the way that Powell's did. Nevertheless, they initiated an alternative approach to, and aspiration for, films involving POWs in wartime Europe that subsequent commentators intermittently touched upon:

A particular aspect of Nazism, the overrunning of continental Europe, was extensively used as a background ... Stories set in the occupied country were largely stories of escape ... The idea of using Europe under the Nazis as a background for films of intrigue or escape was a good one and perfectly legitimate ... [but it] was very rare that an escape story set in an occupied country really said anything about how that occupation affected ordinary people, and how it differed, for example, from the military government of an Allied power or from the Nazi treatment of one of the other occupied countries.¹⁶

Jacobs' and Swallow's call for a more wide-ranging and precise analysis of the social contexts of wartime occupation was coupled with an indictment of British

film-makers, particularly for their failure to adequately represent ‘the international character of the struggle against Nazism ... something greater than the struggle of one nation against another’.¹⁷ Their essay was published a few months after Winston Churchill’s influential ‘Iron Curtain’ speech on 5 March 1946, which rallied some on the British Left to reaffirm, as a counter reaction, the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union. Jacobs and Swallow argued that throughout the war there had been no ‘honest and fundamental treatment of Soviet Communism’. They optimistically suggested future films could show ‘how friendship between Russia and the West might be based not merely on the conveniences of a wartime alliance, but on resistance to Nazi ideas wherever they might spring up’.¹⁸

No mainstream British feature film rose to Jacobs’ and Swallow’s last challenge, but their essay draws attention to the fact that producers during this period initially explored a range of approaches to POW films. Internationalism as well as English exceptionalism was manifest in some of these films, but the former has tended to be overlooked. The one film Jacobs and Swallow unequivocally endorsed was *The Last Chance* (Leopold Lindtberg, 1945), a multilingual Swiss production with significant British input. Ewart G Morrison and John Hoy, two of the non-professional actors who played escaped prisoners of war in this film, were British. *The Last Chance* was well received in its time, winning the 1946 Golden Globe for best foreign film. Little has been written about it by film historians since then, partly because its internationalism does not gel with subsequent conceptions of the POW film cycle.

In *The Last Chance*, two British and one American POWs lead a mixed group of refugees to relative safety across the Italian/Swiss border. An important moment, early in the narrative, is a point-of-view sequence, in a film that generally favours less subjective camera angles, where Lieutenant John Halliday (John Hoy) observes a woman, Frau Wittels (Therese Giehse), throw herself at a train, in a desperate attempt to prevent her husband being transported to a concentration camp. Giehse was a well-known German Jewish actor. To underline Halliday’s alignment with her character, he exclaims: ‘Why can’t we do something!?’ Later in the narrative, Halliday’s recognition of Frau Wittels is vital to the three escapees’ decision to assist the refugees. Wittels focalises what the refugees have suffered, and might still suffer, telling the three escaped POWs: ‘They can take you prisoner, but for them [the refugees], they will be killed [if captured]’. Halliday is shot during the final stage of the crossing to Switzerland. At the end of the film, after his funeral, the last word is given to one of the refugees who has lost his papers for a book he has been writing for 30 years on Europe’s ‘minority problem’, but who vows to begin it again. The issues surrounding the refugees are thereby posited as ultimately more significant than the fate of the escaped POWs, the film’s ostensible protagonists, whose casting would nevertheless have eased its entry into English language markets.

Ealing studios’ *The Captive Heart* (Basil Dearden, 1946) similarly combined immediate points of interest and appeal for British audiences with references to wider European concerns. Access to information about British prisoners of war held in prison camps was intermittent and limited during the war. Jack Beddington, head of film at the Ministry of Information (MOI), discouraged British producers from making films about POW camps because of a concern this could

lead to conditions worsening or reprisals against prisoners. It was almost inevitable, then, that a film primarily located in a POW camp would be produced as soon as the war had ended. *The Captive Heart* was shot on location in Marlag Milag Nord, where Guy Morgan, one of the film's scriptwriters, had been interned. As Charles Barr has observed, small details are telling in *The Captive Heart* because they create 'a little England in its POW camp in Europe ... games, gardening, arts and crafts, a picture of the King being stuck on a wall'.¹⁹ Yet Barr also classifies *The Captive Heart* as one of Ealing's postwar international films, alongside *Frieda* (Basil Dearden, 1947) and *Against the Wind* (Charles Crichton, 1948), all of which prominently feature continental European characters and issues.²⁰

The Captive Heart uses the classic melodramatic technique of initially providing more information to viewers than to characters within the narrative about the motives and identity of an innocent protagonist. Viewers are therefore aligned with that protagonist and encouraged to want his or her moral worth to be recognised and rewarded. Early in the narrative, a brief flashback reveals that *The Captive Heart*'s Czech protagonist, Captain Karel Hasek (Michael Redgrave), took a dead British officer's identity documents as part of a desperate escape attempt. The British officers interned with Hasek initially suspect him of being a German agent, because of his mastery of the language. Some are even ready to lynch him on this basis. The senior British officer, Major Ossy Dalrymple (Basil Radford), however, is prepared to give Hasek the benefit of the doubt. It later transpires that Hasek is an escapee from Dachau whose family has been shot for giving food to a Polish Jew. Hasek's British comrades devise an ingenious plan to have him repatriated to England. This involves one of the British prisoners relinquishing his chance of going home. After he has been accepted by the other British prisoners, Hasek corresponds with the dead officer's wife, in a series of passionate letters, to maintain the fiction of his assumed identity. There is a strong intimation at the end of the film, after Hasek goes to England, romance will flourish between them.²¹

If *The Captive Heart* represents English exceptionalism, it is a more encompassing variety than Cull's version, in which plucky public schoolboys (the English) outwit their humourless and slow-witted schoolmasters (their German captors). Hasek is a representative of Czechoslovakia, the nation betrayed in the 1938 Munich agreement as part of the prewar British Government's appeasement policy. *The Captive Heart* runs counter to this type of insularity and indifference. The English in this film can be seen in some respects as exceptional, in their overriding tolerance, and in the ingenuity that ensures Hasek evades the Gestapo. Yet if this is a variant of English exceptionalism, it is one purged of xenophobia. *The Captive Heart* acknowledges Nazi anti-Semitism, and that Nazism has inflicted more suffering upon Hasek, and in allegorical terms other European nations, than it has upon the English.

The Wooden Horse: the first film in a cycle; but not at first

The Wooden Horse, the film version of Eric Williams' novel featuring an improbable yet factually based escape that entails tunnelling under a vaulting horse, is usually classified as the first in a distinctive cycle of 1950s British POW films that encapsulated

the particular version of English exceptionalism Cull describes. *The Captive Heart* is disqualified from full membership of the cycle, by film historians Christine Geraghty and Cull, because of its emphasis upon heterosexual romance, rather than male homosocial relationships, and because escape does not feature prominently within the narrative.²² Historical evidence from the later 1950s supports the identification of *The Wooden Horse* as the first fully fledged entry in the cycle. *The Times*' review of *The Colditz Story*, for example, grouped it with 'such films as *The Wooden Horse* and *Albert, R.N.* [Lewis Gilbert, 1953]'.²³ These associations stuck; by the time *The Colditz Story* was screened for the first time on the British television channel BBC1, on 30 March 1970, the listings magazine *The Radio Times* described it as, 'in the tradition of *The Wooden Horse*'.²⁴

The repeatedly foregrounded similarities between *The Wooden Horse* and the British POW films that immediately followed, rather than preceded it, might seem to offer little scope for further discussion of the consolidation of this generic cycle. Nevertheless, as genre theorist Rick Altman has demonstrated, retrospectively classifying films as the first in a cycle tends to suppress aspects of them that may initially have been linked to other films outside that cycle.²⁵ As Lincoln Geraghty and Mark Jancovich have argued, 'a text may be defined in one way within the process of production, in which a particular cultural industry has its own generic understanding of texts, and yet be marketed or exhibited in relation to a different genre'.²⁶ This was the case with Ian Dalrymple's Wessex Films, responsible for producing *The Wooden Horse*. Wessex was one of the relatively autonomous companies grouped within Rank's Independent Producers initiative during the late 1940s. None of its films prior to *The Wooden Horse* achieved significant box office success. Rank ended the association with Wessex as part of a general retrenchment at the end of the 1940s.²⁷ Dalrymple then followed Michael Powell's and Emeric Pressburger's Archers production company to Alexander Korda's London Films.

This precarious industrial context intensified the pressure upon Wessex to produce a hit film. Dalrymple frequently referred, in his correspondence during the shooting of *The Wooden Horse*, to the general slump, the dreadful prospects for the industry, and the likelihood of Wessex being forced to go into 'cold storage' after production ended.²⁸ He had previously been associated, as a supervising editor and then scriptwriter, with successful films based upon contemporary middlebrow novels, including *The Good Companions* (Victor Saville, 1933) and *South Riding* (Victor Saville, 1938). He continued this trend as the chief producer at Wessex, with films such as *The Woman in the Hall* (1947) and *All Over the Town* (1949), both based upon recent novels. The key point about Dalrymple's acquisition of the rights to Eric Williams' novel *The Wooden Horse* (1949) was therefore not its subject matter, but its status as a pre-sold literary property, purchased in Wessex's final bid for commercial success.²⁹ Dalrymple promised Collins publishers: 'We shall do everything in our power to make the film a credit to the book and to our industry, and of appeal to the widest possible audience'.³⁰ As a review in *The Scotsman* proclaimed, this was first and foremost an 'inspiring film of a best seller'.³¹ Only after the success of *The Wooden Horse*, and the gradual consolidation of a new cycle of British war films, could a producer such as Daniel Angel, whose credits included

Albert R.N., *Reach for the Sky* (Lewis Gilbert, 1956), and *Carve Her Name With Pride* (Lewis Gilbert, 1958), specialise in this genre.³²

The majority of films in the British POW cycle were based upon pre-existing literary sources, memoirs and plays as well as novels. The emergence of the POW cycle in the 1950s followed a Second World War literature-publishing boom which began in the late 1940s and continued into the next decade and beyond. Publications by or about former prisoners of war outnumbered the films made on this topic. Broad criteria for selecting which properties were most suitable for adaptation therefore gradually emerged. *The Wooden Horse's* box office performance certainly enhanced the appeal, for producers, of literary sources primarily focused upon the process of escaping from a POW camp. S.P. Mackenzie has argued, 'attempts at breaking out were peripheral to the plot', in more episodic and contemplative books, such as *Yes Farewell* and *A Crowd is Not Company*, 'and within a few years it became very obvious that what the public really wanted in the way of reminiscences by former POWs were tales of ingenious and ultimately successful escapes.'³³ Escape provides a focus, at the most general level, for goal-orientated film narratives, usually with positive endings, as well as some regulated diversity, insofar as each film following this template could deal with a different type of escape. Furthermore, the idea of escape, connoting what Juliette Pattinson, Lucy Noakes, and Wendy Ugolini describe as an 'implicit celebration of the masculine traits of action and ingenuity', carried a positive cultural valence.³⁴

Ken Worpole has pointed out how certain examples of British popular writing about the Second War, books which attained a certain level of commercial success, had their profiles boosted by new editions, paperback versions, film adaptations and the tendency of critics and historians, then and now, to focus on these better-known titles to the exclusion of others.³⁵ Eric Williams' *The Wooden Horse* is a prime example, with new editions, including one for children, and paperback versions following in the film's wake. Yet although they enjoyed a high profile, narratives focused primarily upon the process of escaping from a POW camp never entirely dominated either the literary or the film market. *Yes Farewell*, for example, did not make it into paperback, but it did not completely disappear. The Reprint Society published a second edition, in 1947, not in paperback, but more cheaply bound and therefore at a lower price than a hardback. Similarly, although escape was one of the basic constituents of British POW films during the 1950s, one relevant distinction is the extent to which they focus primarily on escaping from a camp, compared to the attention they devote to what happens afterwards. Only two films, *Albert R.N.* and *The Colditz Story*, and one television series, *Escapers' Club* (ITV, tx. January–May 1956), focused primarily upon the process of escaping from POW camps, before producer Daniel Angel and director Hugo Fregonese varied this template in *Seven Thunders* (1957). In *Seven Thunders*, escape from a POW camp is not represented at all, except as part of the backstory. The focus instead is on its British POWs getting out of Marseilles. Yet *Seven Thunders* was not a complete innovation within the film cycle. Even if *The Last Chance* is discounted, *The Wooden Horse* had already dealt at some length with Peter Howard's (Leo Genn's) and John Clinton's (Anthony Steel's) escape across Europe.

The Wooden Horse, Odette, and the resistance film

As much as possible of the final section of *The Wooden Horse* was shot in the European locations the escapees travel through in the source novel. British and continental European actors, professional and non-professional, were cast to represent their respective nationalities. A fair amount of dialogue in *The Wooden Horse* is in European languages other than English. For these reasons, Dalrymple's view of the European location shooting outside the POW camp was 'in places ... there is a realistic atmosphere, despite the hideous difficulty of recreating Nazism at war, with everyone lying low about it'.³⁶ However, the dominance of Dilys Powell, rather than Jacobs and Swallow, as the starting point for critical commentary on *The Wooden Horse*, and the British POW film cycle more generally, has contributed to the section of the film dealing with Peter's and John's escape across Europe being overlooked. Even when it is mentioned, as in Christine Geraghty's brief account of this film cycle, it is seen as standing outside its main line of development.³⁷ This underestimates the complexity of the British POW film cycle's history.

George Orwell famously wrote, mainly in relation to the Soviet Union, but including Nazi Germany as well:

England is lacking in what one might call concentration-camp literature. The special world created by secret-police forces, censorship of opinion, torture, and frame-up trials is ... known about and to some extent disapproved of, but it has made very little emotional impact ... English disapproval of the Nazi outrages has also been an unreal thing, turned on and off like a tap according to political expediency ... To understand such things one has to be able to imagine oneself as the victim ...³⁸

One cycle of British films, dealing with European resistance to German occupation, partly belied this judgement. *The Wooden Horse* partially relates to this cycle, particularly the resistance film *Odette*, released in the same year. The latter film represents SOE agent Odette Sansom's work with the French Resistance during the Second World War. The similarities extend beyond the fact that negotiations took place between Dalrymple and producer Herbert Wilcox's representatives about the use of *The Wooden Horse*'s reconstructed POW camp at Luneburg Heath to serve as Ravensbrück concentration camp in *Odette*.³⁹ *The Wooden Horse* and *Odette* were based, respectively, upon Williams' semi-autobiographical POW camp narrative and a popular work of non-fiction, Tickell's *Odette: The Story of a British Agent*, both published in 1949. Sansom (Churchill), like Williams on *The Wooden Horse*, acted as a consultant for Wilcox's film. Both films were partly shot in European locations. Both films featured interactions between British escapees or agents and European resistance movements, and addressed the fear involved in 'lying low' under occupation. Both were British box office successes, linked together as the most popular 'wartime adventure stories' of 1950 in *Sight & Sound*'s survey of that year's releases.⁴⁰

Wendy Webster has identified a number of shifts in the British resistance film cycle, a group of films described by reviewers as generically related at the time, between 1940 and 1950. According to Webster, resistance films produced between 1942 and 1944, such as *The Day Will Dawn* (Harold French, 1942), tended to

advocate close and equal cooperation between Britain and its occupied European allies. These films promoted a notion of the 'people's resistance' that in some respects resembled the contemporary emphasis, within British culture and some other British films, on the collectivist 'people's war'.⁴¹ The wartime resistance films therefore came close to defining Britain as an integral part of Europe. British resistance films produced later, in a Cold War context where America and the Soviet Union were staking aggressive claims to Europe, tended to define Britain's role in terms of wartime leadership.

The European sequences in *The Wooden Horse* put escapees Peter and John in situations where, rather than occupying a leadership role, they are repeatedly vulnerable to discovery and dependent upon members of the French and Danish resistance to help them escape. Robert Murphy, in his discussion of the diversity of British war films, draws attention to how *The Wooden Horse's* protagonists are put under pressure and at times show signs of emotional strain, especially after they have escaped from the camp.⁴² One moment in the film when Peter and John explicitly articulate fear is when they leave a flat in Copenhagen where they have been hiding with their Danish resistance contact's sister, Kamma (Lis Lowert). Her brother translates, 'she's frightened all the time'. John replies as he leaves, 'she's not the only one'. The 1949 edition of the source novel includes a passage that elaborates on Peter's thoughts and feelings at this point in the narrative:

The girl was frightened all the time. Every time a door opened, or she heard footsteps on the pavement below, she started nervously in her chair and only relaxed when the footsteps had died away in the distance.

This fear was new to Peter. In the camp the prisoners had not been afraid of the Germans. You might be shot escaping, but that was a risk of war. In escaping he had not been frightened like this. That had been the hot, exhilarating fear of excitement. This was the cold, pervasive fear of the Gestapo, the fear of informers, the helpless fear of the civilian under military rule. This girl's fear was of torture, of whips and the horror of the concentration camp. The fear of being taken away to an unknown but imagined fate ... It was infectious. For the first time since leaving the camp Peter began to regret its security, began to admit their danger in being outside the camp. He wanted to get away from this girl, away from the fear in which she lived.⁴³

This passage crystallises the threat and danger of occupied wartime Europe in gendered terms. Some British reviewers of the film version of *The Wooden Horse* preferred the 'exhilarating' yet 'secure' sequences leading up to escape from the camp to the 'cold' ones in occupied Europe. There is a sense here in which to imagine oneself as a victim of the wartime European situation is, as Orwell put it, to put oneself in the same position as the frightened girl in this description. Some British reviewers disengaged from the part of the film set in occupied Europe that, to an extent, ran counter to this gendered distinction.

Contemporary reviewers were, however, more fulsome in their praise for one sequence in the now overlooked part of *The Wooden Horse*. Positive references to it, initially, were at least as prevalent as evocations of the public school spirit.⁴⁴ Ewart Hodgson, for example, ranked it in his *News of the World* review as among the

greatest moments in any of the films he had seen.⁴⁵ French resistance leader André (Jacques Brunius) interrogates Peter through a series of quick-fire questions, delivered in rapidly edited shot/reverse shots, designed to catch him out if he is a German agent or a collaborator masquerading as a British POW.⁴⁶ On one level, this sequence is consistent with the generally 'cold' tenor of *The Wooden Horse's* European section, where British escapees find themselves in uncertain and vulnerable situations. Here, a British male protagonist is not only dependent upon, but also temporarily placed in mortal danger by the French resistance. Near to the beginning of the sequence, there is a cut to a medium shot of one of André's colleagues, who is well built, darkly attired, wields an iron bar and blocks the exit. The same figure is seen in the background of most of the subsequent shots featuring Peter. André's dialogue, 'you know what will happen if we find you are not British, you will be found floating in the dock', reinforces the stakes of the interrogation. Peter, however, performs with consummate professional competence, never stumbling or wavering in his answers, so that by the end of the interrogation he has drawn a clear line between himself and undercover agents, informers and collaborators, by clearly asserting his British identity through an accumulation of small but telling details. In response to André's questions, Peter confirms he drives a Morris car, grows lupins in his garden and knows that the area around the statue of Eros in Piccadilly Circus is famed for its flower-sellers. The interrogation concludes when André unexpectedly slaps Peter at the end of the interrogation to provoke an exclamation in his native language. From this point onwards, Peter and John receive assistance from the French and Danish resistance that eventually enables them to escape to Sweden.

The Wooden Horse's interrogation sequence bears comparison with one in *Odette* also singled out by contemporary reviewers as particularly effective and harrowing. *The Times*, for example, referred to the eponymous heroine being 'tortured', and how she 'suffered', and particularly praised Odette's "I have nothing to say" in the face of the worst the Gestapo can do'.⁴⁷ As Penny Summerfield points out, there is a significant emphasis on 'physical humiliation' in this interrogation of a female agent.⁴⁸ The corresponding passage in the source book contains three references to the vulnerability of women's bodies. The eponymous heroine (Anna Neagle) is interrogated and tortured by the Gestapo but refuses to divulge any information about her activities as an SOE agent. *Odette's* interrogation sequence conforms to Wendy Webster's model of the late 1940s resistance film: 'British leadership – organizing resistance from London or working alongside continental Europeans as SOE agents – is masculine, setting Britain apart from the narrative of Continental female strength and suffering'.⁴⁹ The female French/British SOE agent *Odette* suffers and bravely does nothing to undermine the mission she has been assigned by British leadership. The emphasis in *The Wooden Horse* is upon male mental agility; in *Odette*, it is female physical vulnerability. The interrogation sequence in *The Wooden Horse* redeems the feminised vulnerability experienced by the male escapees in the section of the film set in occupied Europe.

Soviet POWs

James Chapman has argued that postwar British war films tend towards insularity in relation to Britain's allies during the Second World War: 'There are a few films

which include the Americans, and a few which include the French Resistance, but – significantly – none which include the Soviet Union'.⁵⁰ As Nicholas Pronay has pointed out, historians need to distinguish between general and more nationally specific tendencies in films about the Second World War.⁵¹ British, Hollywood and Soviet films, all tend to focus primarily upon their own military forces' contributions to the war. The significant issue is the precise patterns of inclusion, exclusion or emphases of representation in any given national and historical context. In Britain, the Russian people's war effort was celebrated in *The Demi-Paradise* (Anthony Asquith, 1943). Another wartime example of a mainstream film-maker promoting solidarity with Russia was *The Wooden Horse*'s producer Ian Dalrymple's praise, in a BBC radio talk in January 1943, for the Russians' 'invincible ... spirit', and his acknowledgement that 'we have not endured so much'.⁵² By the early 1950s, more negative Cold War representations of Soviet agents were emerging, in films such as *High Treason* (Roy Boulting, 1951). As Tony Shaw has argued, however, the shift in representations was not as extreme as in Hollywood, partly because the British film industry was never subjected to the same kind of concerted anti-Communist campaign that occurred in Hollywood.⁵³ *The Wooden Horse* is a case in point.

Eric Williams' source novel refers briefly to Soviet prisoners of war. British escapees Peter and John observe them in Lubeck: 'These men were barely alive, too weak almost to lift the picks and shovels with which they were expected to work. They moved slowly, eking out their meagre strength, never smiling, doomed to slavery until the war was over'.⁵⁴ A column of Russians prisoners, identified as such in a line of dialogue as they march past, also appears in the film. One of them, echoing Kee's *A Crowd is Not Company*, stoops to pick up a cigarette butt. This reference has been overlooked by commentators on *The Wooden Horse* who consider it solely in prospective terms, as the film that inaugurated the 1950s British POW film cycle. The Russian prisoners in *The Wooden Horse* can be seen as a continuing, albeit fleeting acknowledgement of what Dalrymple described during the war as the 'agony' endured by these 'heavily pressed' yet 'brave' allies.⁵⁵ However, another perspective is equally plausible. The extant script of *The Wooden Horse*, credited to Williams, contains a facile comparison that says of Peter and John: 'They have been out for three nights now and, unshaven and tired, look little better than the Russians'.⁵⁶ At this point in the narrative, they are at a low ebb; the implication in the script is that the Russians provide a warning of what happens to those without hope or morale. In 1953, in a typical piece of Cold War rhetoric, Williams attributed the oppressive condition of Russian prisoners primarily to Communism rather than Nazism. Compared to the Russians, 'it was not only food and the knowledge of his rights that keep the British prisoner going. We also had a tradition of freedom and unity, and the best leadership we could have had'.⁵⁷

Nazi anti-Semitism and the Holocaust

Cull hypothesises that POW films, as part of their insular celebration of a certain myth of Englishness, were

marked by a wish to avoid thinking about the experience of the Holocaust. The genre allowed a flirtation with the world of barbed wire fences, and even atrocities, without direct engagement with the true implications of ethnically specific mass extermination.⁵⁸

This is a productive argument, but care has to be taken not to apply it anachronistically. As Antero Holmila has reaffirmed in his recent analysis of late 1940s British press coverage of what we now, but did not then, refer to as the Holocaust, there was considerable coverage of Nazi atrocities, but 'the systematic nature of the Jewish tragedy, the uniqueness of the extent to which it was particularly Jews who had suffered, was virtually absent'.⁵⁹ British POW films can certainly be seen, in retrospect, in terms of historical elision, but they cannot be marked by a wish to avoid engaging with the Holocaust when other sources of factual information, such as the press, did not frame it in this way. The resistance film was the primary locus for representations of Nazi atrocities in British cinema of the 1950s. *Odette* and *Carve Her Name With Pride* contain relatively graphic representations of their heroines' incarceration in Ravensbruck concentration camp for women. However, as Penny Summerfield points out, these British films representing a specific concentration camp 'do not discuss the ethnic aspects of Nazi persecution', and instead associate it with women.⁶⁰ By contrast, the male escapees in *The Wooden Horse*, in one sequence, are explicitly likened to Jews in wartime Europe, but marginal references to specifically anti-Semitic persecution, and its magnitude, contained in the source material, were almost completely absent by the time the film appeared.

The process of adapting *The Wooden Horse*, from page to screen, from 1945 to 1950, can be situated within the larger context of discussion, during this period, of what we now call the Holocaust. Many historians have argued there was a general tendency, during the Cold War, to downplay the racist extremities of the Nazi past as part of the process of promoting West Germany as an ally against the Soviet bloc. Holmila argues other factors, including nationally specific ones, also have to be taken into account. British press reports, especially during 1947/8, of the end of the mandate in Palestine, with some Zionist groups targeting British troops, developed a frame that 'was not the most suitable one for the recognition of Jewish suffering ... the most prominent recognition was that British suffering in the area would come to an end'.⁶¹ British film-makers, unlike newspaper journalists or novelists writing for a primarily British audience, also potentially had to consider the sensitivities of various European audiences. For example, while discussing the possibility of *Odette's* production team using *The Wooden Horse's* reconstructed POW camp, Dalrymple wrote: 'I personally would not like the job of persuading the Germans that a film based on *Odette Churchill* would be much in their interest'.⁶² These are all pertinent contexts for understanding the adaptation of *The Wooden Horse*.

Williams' first novel, *Goon in the Block* (1945), other parts of which he later incorporated into *The Wooden Horse*, covers Peter's capture when his plane is shot down. The policeman who spots him mistakes his identity. Peter realises 'Christ, he thinks I'm a Jew!', to which he retorts 'Nicht Jude!'⁶³ There is a fleeting, minimal acknowledgement here of Nazi anti-Semitism. The latter part of *The Wooden Horse* includes a brief conversation between Peter and two Danish resistance

fighters, one named Hans, and the other granted less individuality by only being described as Jewish:

‘My father was shot,’ the Jew said. ‘They shot him because he was a Jew. My mother got away and is in Sweden.’

‘We got five hundred Jews to Sweden last month,’ Hans said.

‘How do you take them?’ Peter Asked. This was what he wanted. What he had been waiting for.⁶⁴

This conversation is excised in the film, where the only indirect reference to Nazi anti-Semitism is a line of dialogue, delivered in broken German, by the Dutch captain Petersen, when German soldiers carry out a routine check of a boat in which Peter and John are hiding: ‘Im diesen Schiff nicht finden keine Juden und keine Kontraband’. Petersen was played by a non-professional, Johannes Johannsen, described by Dalrymple as ‘master of the Tuborg private harbour, from which he got away 1000 people in the war and didn’t lose one’.⁶⁵ Brought to London for the film’s royal premiere, Johannsen was commended in the press for helping ‘many US and British soldiers and Jews to escape’.⁶⁶ However, although Peter and John use the same route as Jewish refugees to escape to Sweden, neither the novel nor the film explore the dissimilarities between the respective stakes involved in, and their different reasons for escape. Peter’s and John’s interactions with a range of different European characters, after they escape from the camp, and their observations of everyday life in Germany and other countries under occupation, testify to the potential of the British POW film to broach the issue of Nazi anti-Semitism. In this respect, *The Wooden Horse* has slightly more in common with *The Captive Heart* than the two POW films which immediately followed it. Yet this potential is mired in what we now see, but was not seen then, as a false analogy between prison camp escapees and persecuted Jews.

Reconfiguring the canon

The alternative approach to *The Wooden Horse* outlined here opens up different perspectives on the 1950s and early-1960s cycle of British POW films set in Europe. *Seven Thunders* is in one sense the latter part of *The Wooden Horse* writ large. Set entirely in Marseilles, it focuses more extensively than any other British film of the period on the relationship between escaping POWs and members of the Resistance. Intersections between the resistance and the criminal underworld are also touched upon. However, the most sensitive topic, from a French perspective, namely the Vichy government and its role in supporting German occupation, is skirted. *Seven Thunders* also invokes the Nazi extermination of Jews, in an indirect and unusual manner. It belongs to a small group of British films and television programmes, from the mid-1950s onwards, that raised issues relating to the Holocaust, before the 1961/2 Adolf Eichmann trial renewed and refocused international media interest in this topic.⁶⁷ From an auteurist perspective, *Seven Thunders* can be related to common themes in itinerant Argentinean director Fregonese’s work, ‘the uprooting of characters’ lives’, and ‘characters on the run’,

as Santiago and Andrés Rubín de Celis put it.⁶⁸ The film also resonates with popular (mis)understandings of Theodor Adorno's statement in *Prisms* (1955): 'To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric'.⁶⁹ An incident in the film, not in Rupert Croft-Cooke's source novel, involves an elderly man, Heinrich Schlip (Martin Miller), who identifies himself as Jewish earlier in the narrative, desperately seeking the assistance of Dr Martout (James Robertson Justice) to escape wartime Marseille. Martout, who is actually a serial killer, modelled on Marcel Petiot, drugs Schlip. As Heinrich slips out of consciousness, Martout, his imposing presence framed in a series of low-angle, tightly framed shots, ending with a distorted optical effect from the drugged man's point of view, tells him he will end up in quicklime in the basement. Martout also says 'Dachau, Belsen, Auschwitz, the gas chambers? Compared to that, I'm doing you a favour'. The banalities of conventional melodramatic villainy are contrasted with an almost unspeakable fate that was not directly represented in mainstream British or American feature film or television for many years to come.

In his *Picture Post* article on the filming of *The Wooden Horse*, Kee noted time would probably be structured differently to how he had shaped it in his ruminative *A Crowd is Not Company*: 'Films apparently have to be crisper, more dramatic, more tight-lipped than real life'.⁷⁰ *Era Notte a Roma* (Roberto Rossellini, 1960), by contrast, deals extensively with the hiding and waiting experienced by three escaped prisoners of war. As Peter Brunette says, it is characterised by '*temp morts* that refuse the shortcuts of conventional film grammar', albeit not to the same extent as some other films Rossellini directed.⁷¹ Although an Italian production, it is related to the British POW film cycle insofar as its protagonist, Michael Pemberton, is played by Leo Genn, star of *The Wooden Horse*.⁷² It also resembles *The Last Chance*, in that the three escapees represent different nationalities; not only British and American but Soviet as well. *Era Notte a Roma* differs from *The Wooden Horse* in its representation of suffering and vulnerability in occupied Europe. Pemberton finds himself forced to kill an Italian informer near to the end of the film. He is ashen-faced and subdued thereafter, leading Brunette to argue: 'In most conventional films ... only women are allowed to be horrified after they have killed someone, and it comes as something of a shock to realise just how deeply disturbed Pemberton is'.⁷³ This contrasts with the triumph over vulnerability achieved by the character played by the same actor in the interrogation sequence in *The Wooden Horse*. However, the gender reversal in *Era Notte a Roma* is only partial. Esperia (Giovanna Ralli), the Italian woman who has sheltered Pemberton and his fellow escapees, is equally affected by the killing, and the film ends with a lengthy close up of her distraught face.

The Password is Courage initially combined the public school spirit with a more direct attempt to represent the Holocaust. The theatrical release version included eyewitness sketches by the Dutch artist Henri Pieck representing Auschwitz inmates. *The Monthly Film Bulletin* reviewer considered these 'appallingly inappropriate' in a film whose POW protagonist, John Coward (Dirk Bogarde), Penelope Gilliatt likened to 'a wily small boy putting a bucket of water on top of the door when a despised senior boy is about to come in'.⁷⁴ The Pieck sketches, however inappropriate within this context, can at least be seen as another attempt, following Adorno and *Seven Thunders*, and in the wake of the Eichmann trial, to grapple

with the challenges of representing the Holocaust within the British POW film. Yet, in line with the dominant, more light-hearted interpretation of this film cycle, and in view of the fact that black and white war films were broadcast to far wider audiences on British television than during their initial releases, the Pieck sketches were excised from the version of *The Password is Courage* screened from the late 1960s onwards (first broadcast BBC1, tx. 9 November 1969).⁷⁵

The Great Escape (John Sturges, 1963), described by Cull as the 'ultimate POW film', took the cycle to a new level, with its use of colour, Panavision and Hollywood stars.⁷⁶ The film initially attracted some dismissive commentary that negatively evoked Dilys Powell's approach to *The Wooden Horse*. Gilliat referred to 'prankish Anglo-Saxon ingenuity for which we never stop patting ourselves on the back', and 'grown men behaving like fatuous public schoolboys'.⁷⁷ It is also worth recalling, however, that *The Great Escape* includes representations of Soviet prisoners of war and European resistance activity, albeit in sequences that can be seen as evocative of public schoolboy pranks. The different treatment meted out to Soviet prisoners, and the dependence of escapees on assistance from resistance movements, are acknowledged, but these sequences are played in a more overtly comic mode than is the case with similar ones in *The Wooden Horse*. The British POW comedy *Very Important Person* (Ken Annakin, 1961) had already taken the humorous aspect of this film cycle to its logical extreme a couple of years earlier.

Recognition of other aspects of the POW film cycle, apart from comic public schoolboy pranks, has however surfaced in critical writing from time to time. Lem Dobbs, writing in 1997 about why he considers *The Great Escape* a classic, said 'for a movie that is commonly thought of *only* as slam-bang entertainment, *The Great Escape* is also extremely moving...Some of the people in the film die – and don't come back to life'.⁷⁸ The sequence to which Dobbs refers, where captured escapees including Roger Bartlett (Richard Attenborough), are summarily executed, has been seen by some commentators, such as Glen Lovell, as foreshadowing the 'downbeat endings' that became more common in later 1960s films such as *Cool Hand Luke* (Stuart Rosenberg, 1967) and *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, 1969).⁷⁹ However, it can also be related back to Peter's interrogation in *The Wooden Horse*. The mass murder is shocking and surprising, for viewers unfamiliar with the source material, partly because of the convention that male protagonists in POW films will not be as physically vulnerable as women in 1950s resistance films, and that their mental agility and public school boy ingenuity will keep them one step ahead of their German antagonists. The expression on Bartlett's face, after chatting amiably to a colleague, in the shot where he realises he and his comrades will be murdered, suggests he did not see it coming. This deftly sets up a productive tension between the light-hearted and more serious aspects of the POW film cycle. The shock is mitigated, however, by not showing the bodily impact of the execution. The sequence concludes with an elegiac long shot of the truck the escapees have just vacated and the sound of machine gun fire. It is shortly followed by the conclusion of two successful escapes. Nevertheless, the murder sequence's impact was such that it resonated in newspaper coverage of the West German government's grant, in 1964, of financial compensation for British victims of Nazism. The coverage frequently cited *The Great Escape*, foreclosing public discussion of whether compensation should be paid to Holocaust survivors living in Britain.⁸⁰

Future discussion of the British POW film cycle, both within its commonly accepted temporal boundaries, *The Wooden Horse* (1950) to *The Great Escape* (1963), and consideration of its prehistory, would benefit from drawing upon insights developed by Jacobs and Swallow, as well as Powell, and from a more nuanced approach to genre history. Otherwise, there is a danger of overstating the extent to which this cycle of films inevitably represented an escape from wartime Europe into an insular myth of Englishness.

Disclosure statement

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Notes

1. Dilys Powell, *Sunday Times*, July 30, 1950.
2. Nicholas Cull, 'Great Escapes: "Englishness" and the POW Genre', *Film History*, 14, no. 3–4 (2002): 287; Jeffrey Richards, *Happiest Days: The Public Schools in English Fiction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), demonstrates this literary tradition is more diverse than is usually assumed. Discussions of British prisoner of war films and literature, however, typically operate with reductive assumptions about this tradition.
3. Matthew Norgate, *Tribune*, August 4, 1950; *Sunday Dispatch*, July 30, 1950.
4. Dilys Powell, 'Films – A Classic Escape', *Britain Today* 174 (October 1950): 34.
5. Cull, 'Great Escapes', 283.
6. *Ibid.*, 283.
7. Gill Plain, 'Before the Colditz Myth: Telling POW Stories in Postwar British Cinema', *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, 7, no. 3 (2014): 273, 279–81; Andy Medhurst, '1950s War Films', in *National Fictions*, ed. Geoff Hurd (London: BFI, 1984), 35, describes *The Colditz Story*, rather than other films within the cycle, as 'a Billy Bunter story where Mr Quelch is a Nazi'.
8. Mark Rawlinson, *British Writing of the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 187.
9. Pat Reid, *The Colditz Story* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1952), 18ff.
10. Jerrard Tickell, *Odette* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1949), 312.
11. Robert Kee, *A Crowd is Not Company* (London: Sphere, 1990), 30.
12. *Ibid.*, 228.
13. *Ibid.*, 229.
14. Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughter-House Five* (New York: Delacorte Press), 93, 96.
15. I agree with Nicholas Pronay, 'The British Post-bellum Cinema: A Survey of the Films Relating to World War II made in Britain between 1945 and 1960', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 8, no. 1 (1988): 48–51, that British war films set in the Far East fall into a separate category involving different historical considerations.
16. Arthur Jacobs and Norman Swallow, 'Foreign Policy and Cinema', *Sight & Sound* 15, no. 59 (1946): 103.
17. *Ibid.*, 104.
18. *Ibid.*, 105.

19. Charles Barr, *Ealing Studios* (London: Studio Vista, 1993), 73.
20. *Ibid.*, 63–4.
21. Plain discusses *The Captive Heart* partly as a romance.
22. Cull, 'Great Escapes', 283; Christine Geraghty, *British Cinema in the Fifties* (London: Routledge, 2000), 183.
23. *The Times*, January 26, 1955.
24. See the *Radio Times* listing at <http://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/f87b20e7bb01403abcbac26508ca6ef2> (accessed May 8, 2015).
25. Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI, 1999), 40–2.
26. Lincoln Geraghty and Mark Jancovich, eds, *The Shifting Definitions of Genre* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008), 7.
27. J Arthur Rank, letters to Ian Dalrymple, November 8 and 16, 1948, Ian Dalrymple collection MS. Eng. C. 2046, files 6.76–7, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
28. Dalrymple letters to Derek Twist, October 14 and 24, 1949, Dalrymple collection, files 3.34–5.
29. *The Wooden Horse* was also serialised on the BBC radio Light Programme. Six episodes of thirty minutes duration were broadcast between 26 May and 14 June 1949.
30. Dalrymple letter to Mssrs Collins, March 27, 1949, Dalrymple collection, file 2.26.
31. *The Scotsman*, July 29, 1950.
32. Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 173–7, survey Angel's career.
33. S.P. Mackenzie, *The Colditz Myth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 5.
34. Juliette Pattinson, Lucy Noakes, and Wendy Ugolini, 'Incarcerated Masculinities: Male POWs and the Second World War', *Journal of War and Culture Studies* 7, no. 3 (2014): 182.
35. Ken Worpole, *Dockers and Detectives* (London: Verso, 1983), 52.
36. Dalrymple letter to Twist, 2 November 1949, Dalrymple collection, file 3.37.
37. Geraghty, *British Cinema in the Fifties*, 183.
38. George Orwell, 'Arthur Koestler', in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters and of George Orwell: Volume Three* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1968), 235.
39. Dalrymple letter to Twist, October 14, 1949, Dalrymple collection, file 3.34.
40. Box office statistics are cited in Vincent Porter, 'The Robert Clark Account: Films released in Britain by Associated British Pictures, British Lion, MGM, and Warner Bros., 1946–1957', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 20, no. 4 (2000): 492; 'The Front Page', *Sight & Sound* 19, no. 10 (1951): 389.
41. Wendy Webster, 'Europe against the Germans': The British Resistance Narrative, 1940–1950', *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 4 (2009).
42. Robert Murphy, *British Cinema and the Second World War* (London: Continuum, 2001), 208, 214.
43. Eric Williams, *The Wooden Horse* (London: Collins, 1949), 234–5.
44. *Daily Telegraph*, July 28, 1950; *Sunday Chronicle*, July 28, 1950; *Evening Standard*, July 27, 1950.
45. Ewart Hodgson, *News of the World*, July 30, 1950.
46. The editing here is a prime example of enhancing the source material's brisk rendering of the interrogation dialogue. For further discussion of this general issue see Martin Stollery, 'Transformation and Enhancement: Film Editors and Theatrical Adaptations in British Cinema of the 1930s and 1940s', *Adaptation* 3, no. 1 (2010).

47. *The Times*, June 7, 1950.
48. Penny Summerfield, 'Public Memory or Public Amnesia? British Women of the Second World War in Popular Films of the 1950s and 1960s', *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 4 (2009): 949.
49. Webster, 'Europe against the Germans', 981.
50. James Chapman, *The British at War: Cinema, State and Propaganda, 1939–1945* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 178–9.
51. Pronay, 'The British Post-bellum Cinema', 40.
52. Ian Dalrymple, 'Calling South Africa: An Idea for 1943.' BBC African Service broadcast, January 18, 1943, 16.50–17.00 GMT. Censored by J. Grenfell Williams. I am grateful to Douglas Dalrymple for giving me a copy of the text of this broadcast.
53. Tony Shaw, *British Cinema and the Cold War* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006).
54. Williams, *The Wooden Horse*, 157.
55. Dalrymple, 'Calling South Africa'.
56. Eric Williams, *The Wooden Horse* Film Script, ts., BFI Special Collections (London: BFI Library, n.d.), 75.
57. Eric Williams, ed., *The Escapers* (London: Collins, 1953), 13.
58. Cull, 'Great Escapes', 288.
59. Antero Holmila, *Reporting the Holocaust in the British, Swedish and Finnish Press, 1945–50* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2011), 33.
60. Summerfield, 'Public Memory or Public Amnesia?', 957.
61. Holmila, *Reporting the Holocaust in the British, Swedish and Finnish Press*, 153.
62. Dalrymple letter to Twist, October 14, 1949.
63. Eric Williams, *Goon in the Block* (London: Cape, 1945), 21.
64. Williams, *The Wooden Horse*, 231.
65. Dalrymple letter to Twist, 13 November 1949, Dalrymple collection, file 3.38.
66. *Daily Mail*, July 29, 1950.
67. For a discussion of this period see James Jordan, 'And the Trouble is Where to Begin to Spring Surprises on You. Perhaps a Place You Might Least Like to Remember.' *This is Your Life* and the BBC's Images of the Holocaust in the Twenty Years before *Holocaust*', in *Britain and the Holocaust*, eds. Caroline Sharples and Olaf Jensen (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2013).
68. Santiago and Andrés Rubín de Celis, 'The Way of a Gaucho: The Career of Hugo Fregonese', *Film International* 2011, <http://filmint.nu/?p=1375> (accessed April 25, 2015).
69. Theodor Adorno, *Prisms* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1955), 34.
70. Robert Kee, 'Escape from a Prison Camp', *Picture Post*, December 10, 1949, 23.
71. Peter Brunette, *Roberto Rossellini* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 217.
72. The Dutch film *De Overval* (1962), in which resistance fighters carry out a successful raid to free their comrades from prison during the German occupation, can also be related, albeit more tangentially, to the British POW film cycle, by virtue of its British director, Paul Rotha.
73. *Ibid.*, 218.

74. A.Y., 'The Password is Courage', *Monthly Film Bulletin* 29, no. 347 (1962): 169; Penelope Gilliatt, 'Why the Germans Should Have Won', *The Observer*, October 14, 1962, 29.
75. See John Ramsden, 'Refocusing "The People's War": British War Films of the 1950s', *Journal of Contemporary History* 33, no. 1 (1998): 38.
76. Cull, 'Great Escapes', 289.
77. Penelope Gilliatt, 'Married Hate', *The Observer*, June 23, 1963, 27.
78. Lem Dobbs, 'Forever Young', *Sight & Sound* [new series] 1, no. 2 (1991): 31.
79. Glenn Lovell, *Escape Artist: The Life and Films of John Sturges* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 223.
80. Susanna Schrafstetter, 'Gentlemen, the Cheese is All Gone!' British POWs, the "Great Escape" and the Anglo-German Agreement for Compensation to Victims of Nazism', *Contemporary European History* 17, no. 1 (2008): 42–3.

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