'What you have to do is remember':

Representations of Women's Experiences of

Second World War Clandestine Warfare in

Fiction, Life Writing, Film and Television

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Abstract

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Representations of women's experiences of working for the Special Operations Executive F Section and at Bletchley Park during the Second World War predominately convey a conservative view of the war. This depiction of the conflict is the result of the reliance within works of fiction and life writing on the recognisable narratives provided by hegemonic discourses of both war and gender. I use the term hegemonic war discourses to refer to the enduring symbols, language and imagery of the British experience of the Second World War as it presents in later eras, and hegemonic gender discourses to refer to cultural gender norms. The majority of the texts do not question these narratives, an adherence evident in a variety of recurring tropes and patterns, including eroticised torture scenes, the use of the stereotype of the 'Good German', female characters who must have sex as part of their war work, and an emphasis on heteronormative romance. These hegemonic discourses serve two purposes; they assist the author to negotiate the complexities of representing the past, negating anxieties about the reality of conflict and women's sexual agency, and for the reader facing tumultuous political times they create a comfortable escape into a world which gives them the vision of the past they expect. There are, however, a few deviations in both life writing and fiction. The implications of these shifts are that women's voices and reclamation of narrative agency through life writing can lead to transformations in hegemonic discourses, as the women reach for existing linguistic frames and mould them to their own experiences. Significantly, these changes also occur in a few of the fictional works, illustrating how women's continued occupation of previously male gendered spaces has the potential to change how we think about conflict, gender and narrative norms.

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[1] Odette Sansom, 'SOE Agent Captured in France', in *Forgotten Voices of the Secret War: An Inside History of Special Operations During the Second World War*, ed. by Roderick Bailey (London: Ebury Press, 2008), p. 355.

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Contents

Introduction

Representations of women's experiences of Second World War clandestine warfare in fiction, life writing, film and television are shaped by hegemonic discourses of war and gender. The majority of the texts adhere to the recognisable tropes and patterns provided by these mainstream narratives in a bid to negotiate the complexities of representing the past, as well as to attempt to allay anxieties about women's changing roles in wartime and the corruptive power of conflict. This endeavour is further complicated by the very nature of their subject matter – war – and thus the texts maintain a predominantly conservative view, offering a comforting vision of history to their readers.

This thesis seeks to investigate the possible reasons for and implications of the success of the vision of the past conveyed in texts about the female agents of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) F Section, and the women who worked at Bletchley Park and its outstations during the Second World War. The texts under discussion include bestsellers such as Sebastian Faulks' *Charlotte Gray* (1991) and *Enigma* (1995) by Robert Harris, a popularity which implies that the representation of history they offer is an attractive one. However, hegemonic discourses are not upheld across all of the texts, suggesting that new discourses are possible, particularly when women's voices speak their own war story.

The texts considered in this thesis were published between 1985 and 2016. I chose 1985 as the starting point of my analysis because it is forty years from the end of the Second World War. The decision to explore material with this temporal distance from the conflict enables an investigation into how the war has been remembered at both the end of the twentieth century and the start of the twenty-first, a watershed historical period. This time period was also chosen because it is sufficiently removed from the end of the Second World War to escape the concerns of the immediate postwar period, whilst having the advantage of many of those who fought in the war still being alive to tell their stories through life writing.

Forty-five texts about Bletchley Park and the SOE are examined in this thesis. This number is made up of twenty-two works of fiction, including texts aimed at young adults and adults. Life writing is also an integral part of my research, and I have

explored twenty-three works of life writing, including memoir, autobiography and biography. Fiction and life writing, despite their undeniable differences, are nonetheless similar, in that representations of historical events in both genres engage with questions about how we remember and textually depict the past. I have chosen to discuss such a breadth of material, in terms of subject matter and genres, in order to explore how these representations of women's experiences of clandestine warfare engage with hegemonic discourses, and the implications of the ways in which their female characters are depicted for the maintenance of these narratives. The enduring anxieties and fantasies about war and gender which have become part of cultural memory are the building bricks of hegemonic discourses; studying the texts' engagement with these narratives enables an insight into the elements of the Second World War 'war culture' and in particular concerns about women's sexuality, which continue to shape how the war is remembered decades later.

To date, there has not been any critical work carried out on biographies written since 1985 about the women of the SOE, and only very minimal analysis of the fictional representations of the women who filled these roles. Life writing and fiction about Bletchley Park have also been critically neglected apart from studies of Christine Brooke Rose's autobiographical novel *Remake* (1996), which includes an account of her time at Bletchley. This thesis will address this gap in the study of the representation of the Second World War. Focusing on the engagement with hegemonic discourses, this thesis will show how representations of women who were involved in clandestine warfare have both been shaped by and perpetuate cultural anxieties about women's roles and sexual agency, as well as wider concerns and fantasies about the Second World War and the very nature of warfare.

The reliance on dominant and recognizable narratives leads to the creation of a certain view of historical events, one which clearly continues to sell. This ongoing popularity is particularly intriguing in a literary market in which texts such as Sarah Waters' *The Night Watch* (2007) and *Day* (2008) by A. L Kennedy offer alternative perspectives on the war. In contrast, the texts about the SOE and Bletchley Park under discussion in this thesis predominately adhere to a conservative world view in their depiction of the enemy and the female characters. The implication is that the comforting vision of the past they create continues to be attractive, despite, or perhaps as a result of, its repetition of old and familiar themes. It is perhaps unfortunate that the representations of female characters and historical figures are part of this reliance on

known ideas and patterns when, as authors such as Waters show, it is possible to create bestselling, alternative views of the past. Whilst some of the texts about the SOE and Bletchley Park discussed in this thesis do attempt such an endeavour, they are in the minority. This weighting must lead us to question why it is that traditionalist views of the past, and particularly expectations for women's narrative arcs, continue to endure in a world in which much has changed since 1945. Although perhaps it is this change which is the very cause.

Hegemonic War Discourses

The term 'hegemonic war discourses' is used throughout this thesis to refer to the reoccurring symbols, motifs and ideas of the British experience of the Second World War which have become part of popular culture and commemorative practices. The most well-known elements of hegemonic war discourses about the British experience of the Second World War include key events and ideas such as the 'Blitz spirit', Dunkirk, and D-Day, the idea that the British can 'take it', and that it was a 'people's war'. Sonya Rose refers to these aspects of the memory of the Second World war as 'signal events', leading to a situation in which: 'World War II is remembered as Britain's "Finest hour" – when people, both the "ordinary people" and the privileged put aside their everyday involvements and individual concerns, joined hands, and came to the nation's defence'.[1] This theme of unity is particularly significant, as it is the repeated, key aspect of these 'signal events' (for example - Dunkirk – the notion of the pleasure boats and steamers coming to rescue the troops, for the Blitz spirit, the idea of everyone suffering the same, and working together). These emotive, enduring elements form what I refer to as hegemonic war discourses, narratives about the Second World War which endure and shape how the past is remembered. Hayden White argues that 'historical narratives are not only models of past events and processes', but 'also metaphysical statements which suggest a relation of similitude between such events and processes and the story types that we conventionally use to endow the events of our lives with culturally sanctioned meanings'; this interpretation of the use and formation of historical narratives illustrates how they are constructed from dominant, repetitive elements of the past which endure because they give meaning, resolve anxiety, and put

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[1] Sonya Rose, *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Britain 1939-45* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 1-2.

a recognisable pattern on the chaos of history.[2] Consequently, as White observes: 'viewed in a purely formal way, a historical narrative is not only a *reproduction* of the events reported in it, but also a *complex of symbols* which gives us directions for finding an *icon* of the structure of those events in our literary tradition' (p. 88). Understanding historical narrative in this fashion emphasises the connection between symbol, coherent narrative and an attempt to make sense of the past through text.

From these reoccurring themes and signal events has formed a historical narrative and phenomenon that has come to be termed the British 'war myth'. Angus Calder, in his seminal work *The Myth of the Blitz,* applies the term to the Blitz because: 'the account of that event, or series of events, which was current by the end of the war has assumed a "traditional" character, involves heroes, suggests the victory of a good God over satanic evil, and has been used to explain a fact: the defeat of Nazism'.[3] These mythological elements can be extended to other 'signal events' such as D-Day and Dunkirk, events which have become part of a wider narrative. Calder also uses the term 'myth' in line with Barthes' work on mythology, '*it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves'*, to emphasize the way in which certain elements of the war have been painted into a seemingly meaningful narrative, referenced as a way of making sense of the past.[4]

Referring to a British war 'myth' has led to a critical discussion in which the 'truth' of the situation has attempted to be divined. As Mark Connelly observes: 'many commentators on the British and the Second World War have argued that two war experiences exist'.[5] These are split into 'a real one, and by this they normally mean a history based on evidence of argument, dissent, division and suppression of truth' and 'the imagined one, created by government-controlled propaganda agencies which painted a rosy view of Britain of war and has become the basis of popular memory since 1945, thus ensuring a false, nostalgic view of the conflict' (p. 8). Against these arguments, Connelly suggests that the situation is rather more complicated: 'the real war – whatever it actually constituted – was being imagined and mythologised as it

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[2] Hayden White, 'The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality' in *The Content of Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. 1-25 (p. 88).

[3] Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991), p. 2.

[4] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, qtd in Calder, p. 3. Original italics.

[5] Mark Connelly, *We Can Take It! Britain and the Memory of the Second World War* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2004), p. 8.

happened by its participants, both great and small, which meant it was always being recast, reframed, reinterpreted even as it continued' (p. 8). These theorizations about the way in which the war has been remembered illustrate how hegemonic war narratives were both being constructed during the war and ever since, a mixture of past and present in which certain elements endure because of their emotive pull.

Reading the texts under discussion in this thesis alongside established notions of the nature and foundation elements of the British war myth is actually somewhat complicated, as the texts do not for the most part use these 'signal events'. The majority of the fictional works about the SOE are set in Occupied France, and the texts based at Bletchley at times refer to life on the home front, but tend to focus on the Bletchley world itself, rather than the Blitz, Dunkirk or D-Day, for example. I therefore approach the texts' engagement with hegemonic war discourses by focusing on two main areas of the war experience – the depiction of the enemy in Chapter 2, 'Unstable Enemies', and the representation of the romantic relationships and sexual agency of female characters and historical figures in Chapter 3, 'Romancing the Past'. I should state here that I am choosing to use the term 'hegemonic war discourses' in the plural, because British cultural memories of the Second World war are not monolithic, made up of multiple elements.

The Endurance of Hegemonic War Discourses

Understanding how and why these hegemonic war discourses continue to exist is vital to exploring representations of the women who worked for the SOE and at Bletchley Park. Indeed, it is this process by which the war is remembered and how it translates into text which lies at the centre of this thesis. It has therefore been highly useful to refer to a range of critical theories about how the war has been recalled, and why certain elements endure. As Lucy Noakes argues: 'the war is remarkably resonant in British culture, apparent not just at times of anniversary but recurrently in books, newspapers, television and radio, museums and family histories', noting: 'stories from the war are told and retold time and time again, appearing in many different sites of memory and permeating just about every level of national, local and personal culture'.[6] This cultural obsession with the war, focusing around Rose's 'signal events', is one of the

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[6] Lucy Noakes, *War and the British: Gender, Memory and National Identity* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1998), p. 3.

constitutive pillars of hegemonic war discourses. As Lucy Noakes and Juliette Pattinson observe, 'despite it receding further into the distant past with that generation's passing', the Second World War 'continues to have a lingering and very vivid presence in British popular culture', leading to a situation where 'even those who were born in its aftermath have particular "memories" of it'.[7] The longevity of these events and imagery, formed into what can be referred to as the 'British war myth', creates hegemonic discourses in which the war that is culturally remembered had certain distinctive qualities, happened in a certain way. In the texts under discussion in this thesis, the war is predominately represented in line with these discourses, illustrating their enduring power. I argue that this pervasive attraction is caused at least partly because these discourses offer a comforting reference point, an expectation of how the past was, which both closes down any potential anxieties about how the war was lived and carried out, as well as making an easily recognisable past for the reader. Handed the parcel of these themes and well known elements, the reader can easily unwrap the past they expect – they do not have to try to piece together what they are being shown in the way a postmodern text might present historical events, for example. Of course, to create such an accessible past, the fictional works under discussion here must rely on recognisable narrative tropes and patterns; I consequently argue in this thesis that the ways in which the female historical figures and characters are written in these texts into, for the most part, normative narratives regarding love and romance and the female gender, are part of the overall endeavour to present a familiar and understandable past. It is a vision of historical events which in the process serves to dispel any anxieties caused by more disruptive elements of the war experience.

Henry Rousso argues that 'memory is by definition selective, unfaithful, and changeable', illustrating how it is not the consistent, trustworthy source some might assume it to be.[8] Shared memories are of course by their very nature even more complicated. Throughout this thesis, I use the term 'cultural memory' to refer to shared memories of the war. This concept is highly useful for an exploration of how these texts are shaped by their use of the narrative frameworks provided by hegemonic war

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[7] Lucy Noakes and Juliette Pattinson, 'Introduction: "Keep Calm and Carry On": The Cultural Memory of the Second World War in Britain' in *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War*, ed. by Lucy Noakes and Juliette Pattinson (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), p. 2.

[8] Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944,* trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (London: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 160.

discourses; it is via cultural memory that the constitutive elements of these narratives endure. Noakes and Pattinson argue that 'cultural memory' is 'present in family stories, in popular and material culture and in acts of commemoration in Britain between 1945 and the present', and 'includes both *personal* memories and narratives of war as well as *publicly* produced war memories'.[9] The interaction of personal and public memories in the formation of cultural memory creates a conceptualisation of memory which can be symbolically imagined or represented as a network of sources, drawing on both individual and shared recollections of past events. Conceiving of memory in this way serves as a reminder that it is constituted of multiple strands, and that it is only the strong ones which survive. This longevity is distinctly worthy of discussion, as it reveals the enduring concerns and fantasies which in turn form hegemonic war discourses, shaping how the past is remembered through text.

Astrid Erll supports the interpretation of cultural memory as a composite web, arguing that cultural memory can 'broadly be defined as the sum total of all the processes (biological, medial, social) which are involved in the interplay of past and present within sociocultural contexts'.[10] Erll's reference to the 'interplay of past and present' is particularly important here, as it foregrounds the ways in which cultural memory is formed from the connection between the past and the present. Noakes and Pattinson interpret cultural memory in a similar fashion, arguing that cultural memories are 'produced in the present, and are not a direct representation of events of the past; they have to be understood within the historical context of their creation and articulation'.[11] Both theorisations of cultural memory emphasize that it is a form of memory constructed retrospectively, the past viewed from the present.

However, as well as being influenced by cultural memory, literary texts are also themselves part of it. Erll argues that 'from movies and TV series to radio-plays and Internet role play games – literary media assimilate, embody, alter, and transmit patterns for encoding experience'.[12] As a result: 'they thus reinforce existing structures of cultural schematization, but also generate new ones; they pre-form experience (of war and revolution, but also of graduation and marriage) and guide recall into certain

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[9] Noakes and Pattinson, p. 3.

[10] Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture*, trans. by Sara B. Young (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 101.

[11] Noakes and Pattinson, p. 4.

[12] Erll, p. 170.

paths' (p. 170). This analysis of the interaction of literature and cultural memory is crucial to examining how the texts studied in this thesis engage with the narratives provided by hegemonic war discourses; such an approach emphasizes the ways in which literature can be shaped by how historical events are remembered, whilst also being part of the system which perpetuates existing memories and constructions of the past.

Alison Landsberg's seminal work on 'prosthetic memory' should be mentioned here, as it is also key to understanding how history, memory and cultural items interact. Landsberg's understanding of memory is that 'in the broadest possible sense, memory in its various forms has always been about negotiating a relationship to the past'.[13] This interaction between present and past is crucial to understanding how the texts under discussion in this thesis engage with hegemonic war discourses. Landsberg uses the term 'prosthetic memory' to refer to 'a new form of public cultural memory', which 'emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theatre or museum' (p. 2). She argues that 'in this moment of contact, an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself into a large history' (p. 2). It is this understanding of memory which leads to the use of 'prosthetic', as the individual takes on artificial memories through interacting with cultural media or heritage sites.

For Landsberg, it is popular culture which has enabled this form of memory to exist: 'the turn to mass culture – to movies, experiential museums, television shows, and so forth – has made what was once considered a group's private memory available to a much broader public' (p. 11). Thus: 'in this process, memories have ceased to belong exclusively to a particular group and instead have become part of a common public domain' (p. 11). The creation of prosthetic memories can be viewed as a positive phenomenon, as 'prosthetic memory creates the conditions for ethical thinking precisely by encouraging people to feel connected to, while recognizing the alterity of, the "other"' (p. 9). Indeed, Landsberg argues: 'by bringing people into experiential and meaningful contact with a past through which neither they nor their families actually lived, prosthetic memory opens the door for a new relation to the past, a strategic form of remembering that has ramifications for the politics of the present' (p. 152).

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[13] Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 4.

Landsberg offers an optimistic perspective on the relationship between memory and popular culture; the theory of prosthetic memory implies that through engaging with mass media, readers and viewers can take on memories of a past to which they have no known connection, thereby enabling them to engage with others' voices and experiences.

However, this function of prosthetic memory is also potentially problematic, if the prosthetic memories created through an individuals' encounter with popular culture convey a vision of the past which is created in line with hegemonic war discourses, rather than being a reflection of the known events of history. In many of the texts under discussion in this thesis, the obedience to hegemonic war discourses is upheld by what will be referred to as hegemonic gender discourses; a conservative view of gender relations and stereotypical female behaviour – for example the female SOE agents using their sexuality to reach their goals, rather than in the case of Pearl Witherington Cornioley, training the *Maquis* how to use guns. A world vision in which women do not transgress too far is created through this emphasis on women using their 'feminine wiles'. The resulting prosthetic memories of the women of SOE formed from an encounter with such textual representations would be of women who were highly sexualised, and whose lives focused primarily around romance, rather than the experience creating prosthetic memories of the Second World War which emphasized the unusual behaviour of the female SOE agents. As a result, in these texts, the use of hegemonic war and gender discourses has the potential to create problematic prosthetic memories of the women of the SOE. Thus, whilst I agree with Landsberg that the prosthetic memories which become possible from interactions with mass culture could create a new, ethical way of thinking about historical events by drawing an empathetic window into the past, one must also be wary, as always, that a popular memory of historical events and groups could be created which might highlight certain elements of the past, and bury others.

Marianna Torgovnick's theory of the existence of a 'war complex' is also particularly useful when considering the tenacity of hegemonic war discourses, how some stories have more attraction than their counterparts. Torgovnick uses this concept to theorize why and how particular memories of a conflict are kept, and others ignored. She defines this theory as 'an unresolved and perhaps unresolvable attitude towards mass death caused by human beings wielding technology in shorter and shorter periods

of time', suggesting that the ravages of mass warfare are the cause of these anxieties.[14] The theory of the existence of a 'war complex' raises the idea of a culture obsessed with war and unable to ever escape the fascination, which I believe is central to understanding the longevity of hegemonic war discourses.

Torgovnick argues that 'the holes in the archive, the ellipses constitutive of cultural memory, exemplify the war complex at work, forming patterns that make a certain intuitive sense' (p. 7). For example, she observes: 'most of us do not dwell upon what enemy civilians experienced […] events terrible to contemplate', during the bombing raids carried out by the Allied forces, as 'they resemble the Holocaust, with the significant twist that the victims were enemy civilians and that we, rather than Nazis, made them happen' (pp. 7-8). Whilst Torgovnick's comparison here of Allied bombing raids to the Holocaust is extreme and somewhat problematic, her argument that there are elements of the Second World War which are ignored in favour of more psychologically comfortable events is evident in the emphasis given to memories of, for example, D-Day, which continue to dominate narratives of the Second World War told from the Allied perspective. In Chapter 2, I investigate this conflict about how the war is remembered, particularly regarding the nature of the opposing forces. I argue that these 'holes' in the archive are not universal; some of the texts discussed in this thesis continue the literary work begun in earlier conflicts, with for example, the empathy expressed towards the opposing forces in First World War trench poetry. These attitudes are shown be the result of women's occupation of new spaces, which in turn create altered discourses of war as they voice their unique experiences. In contrast, the fictional representations of the SOE discussed in Chapter 2 are reliant on competing hegemonic war discourses for their depiction of enemy characters; formed from stereotypes intended to create an easily recognisable past for the reader, the use of these tropes has the secondary effect of exposing the cultural concerns which encircle the enemy figures in representations of conflict.

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[14] Marianna Torgovnick, *The War Complex: World War II In Our Time* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. xi. Ebook.

Gendering War

Judith Butler defines gender as 'the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being', leading to the existence of gender 'norms', which are 'phantasmatic, impossible to embody'.[15] My methodological approach in this thesis has been informed by Butler's interpretation of the construction of gender and the enforcement of gendered behaviours, which despite being 'a fabrication' (p. 158), can be nonetheless felt in these texts: I argue that there is an enforcement of heteronormative gendered behaviours against the transgressions to traditional notions of feminine behaviour offered by the women of the SOE and Bletchley Park, deviations which these texts seek to nullify, to diffuse. In the process, the texts uphold a hegemonic war discourse which offers a comforting view of the past, in which disruptive presences and voices are placed back in line.

Butler advocates for an understanding of gender as performative: 'acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality' (p. 158). This interpretation of the construction of gender illustrates how it is an essentially ephemeral process, as one's gender is 'an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts'* (p. 162). The implication is that identity is not singular or stable, rather one's identity is constructed through the repetitions of certain gendered behaviours and norms, to create the image of a coherent whole, with the result that 'the "I" that I am finds itself at once constituted by norms and dependent on them'.[16] Understanding the creation and enforcement of gender in this way reveals its potential problems, as 'the "I" becomes, to a certain extent unknowable, threatened with unviability, with becoming undone altogether, when it no longer incorporates the norm in such a way that makes this "I" fully recognizable' (p. 3). Viewed in this light, gendered behaviours and cultural expectations of 'feminine' and 'masculine' become dictatorial, with the alternative, invisibility. Butler consequently advocates for parody as the solution to the restrictions of gender discourses, arguing: 'practices of parody can serve to reengage and reconsolidate the

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[15] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*: *Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Florence: Taylor & Francis Group, 2002), p. 62 and p. 162.
[16] Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 3.

very distinction between a privileged and naturalized gender configuration and one that appears as derived, phantasmatic, and mimetic', with the result that 'the parodic repetition of gender exposes […] the illusion of gender identity as an intractable depth and inner substance'.[17] This understanding of the functioning of gender as mimetic behaviour is particularly relevant to the female SOE agents discussed in this thesis; both historical figures and fictional characters are depicted overtly mimicking feminine behaviours in order to pass through German check points, aware that by boosting their femininity they fit into the stereotypical expectations for this mode of behaviour, rather than being perceived as a threat.

Understanding the performance and construction of femininity is key to an exploration of how women's experiences of clandestine warfare are represented. The matter is complicated somewhat by the nature of the material under discussion, as it includes both life writing and fiction. However, both genres respond to hegemonic discourses about women's war work, behaviour and sexual agency, and so it becomes particularly useful to view the two genres alongside each other, to explore the variations and the similarities. I will therefore briefly outline femininity norms during the war, before illustrating how the women who worked for these two clandestine organizations were somewhat specifically unusual.

Cultural expectations for women were a contested issue during the Second World War. Women were expected to remain within traditional norms for femininity, but also undertake war work. These tasks included working in anti-aircraft command batteries and factories making munitions, as well as doing fire-watching and farming, amongst myriad other jobs. Women were thus, as Penny Summerfield observes: 'required both to be at home, keeping the fires burning as they watched and waited for their menfolk to return from the front, and they were required to "do their bit" in the war effort, in a paid or voluntary capacity'.[18] These expectations led to a situation where, as Noakes argues: 'although they may have been working in areas that were previously believed to be exclusively male, women were still expected to be "feminine", not really changing their situation in relation to men.[19] Margaret and Patrice Higonnet refer to this phenomenon as the 'double helix', using this terminology

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[17] Butler, *Gender Trouble,* p. 168.
[18] Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 14.
[19] Noakes, p. 19.

as 'the double helix permits us to trace the continuity behind the wartime material changes in women's lives'.[20] They argue that 'this continuity lies in the subordination of women's new roles to those of men, in their symbolic function, and more generally in the integrative ideology through which their work is perceived' (p. 39). This analysis suggests that despite the changes to gender discourses around women's behaviour, the relative status of men and women remained the same, with nothing gained from the changes in circumstances. For example: 'women were not in fact fully integrated into a gender-free labor force during the war. Rather, they were hired in certain sectors that were temporarily reclassified as appropriate for women' (p. 35). As a result: 'they were barred from highly skilled and supervisory positions and were, ostensibly because of the duress of the war, given incomplete training and made to work without proper safety precautions' (p. 35). This situation arose because, as Rose observes: 'gender difference was both essential to the nation and disruptive of its imagined unity'.[21] Expectations for the female gender were not transformed as much as it might at first glance appear. The study of Second World War gender norms by Summerfield, Noakes, Rose and Higonnet and Higonnet demonstrates clearly how prevailing expectations of women's roles during the war were caught between cultural anxieties about their behaviour and the needs of a changing society, in which women were required to both fit and disrupt traditional gender stereotypes.

The female agents of the SOE were particularly disruptive, as their war work required them to go behind enemy lines, undertaking tasks such as blowing up bridges and railway lines, conveying wireless messages back to Britain and working as couriers between Resistance networks. The women of Bletchley Park, in contrast, were working on the home front, for the most part doing tasks which could be classed as clerical, as Sinclair MacKay refers to them: 'grindingly tedious yet crucial roles of filing and archives'.[22] Indeed, even most of the work that was part of the codebreaking exercises involved repetitive tasks which would most likely now be done by machines. However, it should also be noted that the women who were actively involved in the codebreaking were mathematicians, going against the traditional academic bias in which maths was

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[20] Margaret and Patrice Higonnet, 'The Double Helix', in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. By Margaret Higonnet et al. (London: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 31–50 (p. 39).

[21] Rose, p. 149.

[22] Sinclair McKay, *The Secret Life of Bletchley Park: The History of the Wartime Codebreaking Centre and the Men and Women Who Were There* (London: Aurum Press Ltd, 2010), p. 20.

viewed as a 'male' arena, particularly in the 1940s.

It is therefore useful to explore texts about these two groups alongside each other, and how their femininity and gendered behaviours are represented. Such an undertaking is particularly relevant given the liminal position in which the Bletchley Park women stood – doing tasks which fitted into traditional notions of women's work in terms of its secretarial nature, yet their very presence also undermined traditional notions of intelligence work, previously a 'gentleman's game'. In this sense, they too were disruptive to hegemonic discourses about both conflict and women's roles.

In order to explore this unsettling of traditional gender norms, it has been useful to take into account the theories of Simone de Beauvoir and Helene Cixous regarding how women and men are expected to behave and are viewed differently by society. It must be acknowledged here that there is a major difference between the work of de Beauvoir, Cixous and Butler in this regard, as the former argue for an understanding of gender relations in which men and women stand in opposition to each other as part of a binary social construction. In contrast, Butler advocates for the disconnection of gender and sexual difference: 'if gender is the cultural meaning that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way'. [23] Thus: 'taken to its logical limit, the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders' (p. 10). This theorisation of the connection between sex and gender closes down the idea of the existence of two polar states of men and women, male and female, straight and gay, if all is a performance in line with cultural expectations. However, in order to better understand the texts under discussion in this thesis, approaching gender discourses as existing in reference to a binary of male/female has been particularly useful, as the women of the SOE and Bletchley Park challenged traditional notions of female behaviour; the theoretical framework provided by Cixous and de Beauvoir allows an insight into how such gender discourses are constructed, even if as Butler argues, they have no substance or material basis.

Simone de Beauvoir argues that 'humanity is male, and man defines woman, not in herself, but in relation to himself; she is not considered an autonomous being'.[24] Thus: 'she determines and differentiates herself in relation to man, and he does not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject, he is the

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[23] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 10.

[24] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,* trans. by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (London: Vintage, 2011), p. 6.

Absolute. She is the Other' (p. 6). Viewing the relationship between men and women in this fashion sets them up in opposition, the one prioritised over the other, expected to behave very differently. Helene Cixous' work on how language imposes this split is also useful here, as Cixous declares: 'thought has always worked through opposition', giving examples such as 'sun/moon', 'activity/passivity' and crucially, 'man/woman'.[25] Her work interrogates the categorization of society evident in language, arguing: 'organization by hierarchy makes all conceptual organization subject to man. Male privilege, shown in the opposition between *activity* and *passivity*, which he uses to sustain himself' (p. 64). Consequently: 'traditionally the question of sexual difference is treated by coupling it with the opposition: activity/passivity' (p. 64). This understanding of gender discourse is particularly useful to the texts under discussion in this thesis, as the women of the SOE (and one might argue the women of Bletchley Park who were active in their work – away from home and contributing to the war effort in entirely new roles such as manning the bombe machines), were active in their war work, and in many of the fictional texts under discussion, also sexually active, even discovering their sexuality and losing their virginity as part of their training. There would therefore appear to be a cultural correlation between active behaviours and active sexuality which Cixous' theories about gender discourses and cultural binaries help to unearth. Despite their critical differences, approaching these texts with this combination of feminist theories from De Beauvoir, Cixous and Butler is particularly useful; it allows a focus on how the female historical figures and characters in these texts are treated depending on whether they stay within the lines of accepted feminine behaviour, or move outside of them, as well as how the gender performativity of femininity can be subverted when necessary.

Obeying expectations of female behaviour and femininity was interlinked with good citizenship during the Second World War. As Rose notes: 'in World War II Britain women and men could enact good citizenship in numerous ways, but for women, sexuality and motherhood were fundamental'.[26] Consequently: 'even if she were an excellent machinist working on airplanes, or a cooperative and loyal member of the ATS, or an efficient tractor-driver in the Women's Land Army, a woman would not be a "good citizen" if she was thought to be sexually promiscuous' (p. 118). This state of

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[25] Hélène Cixous, 'Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays', in *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. by Betsy Wing (Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), pp. 63-132 (p. 63).

[26] Rose, p. 118.

affairs, in which women's status as citizens was dependent on their sexual behaviour, led to a contradictory situation where 'on the one hand, the war opened up new opportunities for women to exercise their obligations as citizens and to demand equal rights', but 'on the other hand, however, gender difference continued to be a fundamental principle of wartime policies and their application, re-enforcing the centrality of gender difference to the nation' (p. 122). As a result: 'regardless of the nature of her patriotic contribution or how she enacted femininity, she was problematic' (p. 122). Rose's analysis of women's situation regarding the expectations of femininity during the Second World War reveals how their behaviour was policed, particularly their sexual agency – any attempt to stray outside gender norms was viewed as transgression, even when the deviation was for the war effort.

Concerns about women's sexuality and their ability to be 'good' citizens during wartime were particularly pertinent for women who were involved in clandestine warfare. The women who worked for the Special Operations Executive and at Bletchley Park had access to government secrets, a source of anxiety because of fears about women's abilities to keep information to themselves arising from gender stereotypes. This specific concern is evident in the propaganda posters of the official 'war culture', a cultural angst which has become part of hegemonic war discourses. Noticeably, beyond the general emphasis to stay quiet promoted by the official war culture, some of these posters paint women as the weak link in the chain, or as an outright danger, an emphasis which has endured. As Petra Rau observes: 'five of the eight posters for Fougasse's (Cyril Kenneth Bird) striking 'Careless Talk Costs Lives' series depicts gossiping men across a range of social spaces and classes: in a pub, a gentleman's club, a train, outside a house and in a telephone box', noting that 'therefore it is all the more striking that only two of the eight posters are consistently used in academic publications on Fougasse, namely the two representing gossiping women having tea and chatting on a bus'.[27] Rau's observations suggest that despite the intention of the Ministry of Information to aim their instructions about secrecy at both men and women, it is women who have come to be remembered as the passers on of secrets, the real risk.

Indeed, there were also posters which specifically implied that women were

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[27] Petra Rau, 'The Common Frontier: Fictions of Alterity in Elizabeth Bowen's *The Heat of the Day* and Graham Greene's *The Ministry of Fear*', *Literature and History*, 14:1 (2005), 31-55 (pp. 52-53).

more of a danger. These include the famous 'Keep mum she's not so dumb' series of posters, which feature attractive and sexually alluring women listening to men:

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The posters are clearly designed to suggest that women are a threat, cast as dangerous figures because of their seductive abilities. Other examples include a poster which shows a man in Navy uniform talking to an attractive woman, with the caption: 'Tell NOBODY– not even HER'.[31]

© IWM (Art.IWM PST 13910)

Women here are clearly set up as the weak link in the chain of information sharing.

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[28] Harold Forster, 'Keep mum she's not so dumb!' poster, Imperial War Museums Collections
    <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/9732> [accessed 10/08/16]

[29] A.S., 'Keep mum – she's not so dumb' poster, Imperial War Museums Collections
    <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/23598> [accessed 25/01/19]

[30] A.S., 'Keep mum – she's not so dumb' poster, Imperial War Museums Collections
    <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/23600> [accessed 25/01/19]

[31] Author unknown, 'Tell NOBODY, not even HER' poster, Imperial War Museums Collections
    <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/31825> [accessed 15/08/17]

Rau analyses a poster with the caption: 'TELLING a friend may mean telling the ENEMY', which expresses this intimation even more clearly.[32] This poster contains four images, which when read from left to right, show a soldier talking to a woman, then two women talking, then another two women talking, and finally a woman talking to a man:

© IWM (Art.IWM PST 13927)[33]

As Rau observes, 'they become increasingly glamorous, from the innocent blonde to the impressionable brunette with the pearl necklace to the seductively heavy-lidded, black-haired *femme fatale* who passes on vital information to the thin-lipped, stern traitor' (p. 36). Subsequently: 'the power of betrayal and the potential for action clearly lies with the men as the starting and end points in the chain of whispers and casual remarks; but it is the women who are the leaking vessels of gossip' (p. 36). Rau's analysis suggests that this poster, as well as the ones which instruct men to 'Keep mum', reveal an anxiety within the official 'war culture' about women passing on secrets. The implication is that while there were worries that men might pass on information carelessly, it was women who were thought to be the ones who could pass it on to the enemy, the true danger. Wartime secrecy is revealed to have had a gendered emphasis, if women were viewed to be a specific security risk. This anxiety stemmed from a general concern about women's places – out of their traditional roles in wartime, women became an unknown quantity, whom the government felt an especial need to attempt to control.

The women who worked for the SOE and at Bletchley Park consequently stand

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[32] Author unknown, 'TELLING a friend may mean telling the ENEMY' poster, in Rau, p. 35.

[33] Ibid., Imperial War Museums Collections <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/31839> [accessed 25/01/19]

at the intersection of two particular forms of concerns about Second World War secrecy, as they also encountered government secrets on a regular basis. I argue in this thesis that it is this unsettlement of traditional gender norms which leads to both fictional works in which the female characters' transgressions are neutralised through their narrative arcs, and life writing texts in which the female historical figures' lives are represented in such a way as to place them back within the confines of hegemonic gender discourses. The disruption of the broader idea that war and particularly clandestine work are men's worlds is neutralised through placing the female characters and historical figures into traditional 'feminine' roles and narrative paths; they instead become lovers, girlfriends, wives. Representing women in this way diffuses any potential anxiety about their actions and their disruption to hegemonic discourses by painting a comforting, conformist vision of the past. As will be discussed in the rest of this thesis, the real question here is why such resolution sells, what anxieties it answers about the position of women, and how the ways they are represented as acting in history can be part of a wider endeavour to create a conservative view of the past in a changing world. These questions are particularly pertinent in a literary market where these works of historical fiction must fight against more challenging and postmodern texts which seek to destabilize such notions, even the very idea of the possibility of a coherent past.

Writing War

It is intriguing that the Second World War continues to be a subject of interest. Petra Rau argues that the majority of authors of contemporary fiction about war did not live through the war, and therefore 'do not remember it in any straightforward way', but rather 'second or third hand through the memories, stories and artefacts of earlier generations, and through popular war films, museum visits, pulp fiction, memoirs, TV documentaries, or history books'.[34] This lack of first hand memories of the conflict when writing fiction about the Second World War results in authors who are part of what Rau terms a 'post-memorial generation', reliant on source material from the period and the often conflicting memories of the war which have become part of the cultural memory of the Second World War (p. 207). As a result of the need to write from this

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[34] Petra Rau, 'The War in Contemporary Fiction' in *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of World War II,* ed. by Marina MacKay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 207-219 (p. 207).

network of disparate sources and the unstable memories of others, the fictional representations of the war produced by members of this 'post-memorial generation', convey a version of the conflict which is reliant on hegemonic war discourses, heavily laden with anxieties and fantasies about the war and women's behaviour. I explore these concerns and idealisations about the Second World War in detail across this thesis, revealing the ways in which they shape the representation and memorialization of the lives of historically significant women.

As Kate McLoughlin observes, writing about war is not a simple endeavour. She argues that war 'resists depiction, and does so in multifarious ways', noting that often 'war writers "swerve"'.[35] This disruption is 'an acknowledgement of a complex set of problematics relating now to authorial powers, now to the nature of the subject matter, now to the medium of representation, now to the reader's response', as well as 'other intangible variables' (p. 6). McLoughlin's analysis illustrates the broader challenges faced by those who would seek to textually represent conflict, which are further complicated by the particular anxieties and preoccupations about the war experiences being depicted. I explore this intersection in detail in Chapter 2.

McLoughlin also reminds us why war representations matter. She argues that this is because 'conflict demands it' (p. 7). This statement is explained in more detail: 'the reasons that make war's representation imperative are as multitudinous as those which make it impossible' (p. 7). These include 'to give some meaning to mass death', 'to memorialise', 'to inform civilians of the nature of battle so as to facilitate the reintegration of veterans into peacetime society' and 'to impose discursive order on the chaos of conflict and so to render it more comprehensible' (p. 7). These reasons can also be seen as purposes for writing, particularly as the list includes 'to provide cathartic relief; to warn; and even, through the warning, to promote peace' (p. 7). Read in this light, the reasons McLoughlin gives to explain why people write about war omit what I consider to be some vital points. Firstly, people choose to write about wars because of the popularity of conflict (particularly the Second World War) in popular culture, and secondly, and perhaps connected, writing about war is often commercially successful.

This commercial element to war writing cannot be ignored, as the necessity to sell these war representations has a major impact on the portrayal of the conflicts they

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[35] Kate McLoughlin, *Authoring War: The Literary Representations of War from the Iliad to Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 6-7.

convey. The majority of texts discussed in this thesis are aimed at the mass market, and could also be described as popular fiction, or genre fiction. Fred Botting argues that 'bestsellers have two functions. The first is straightforwardly commercial: to make money', an element of these texts which serves as a reminder that they are designed to work to a certain set of expectations, which their publishers and editors believe will be successful in the literary market.[36] Botting also defines another key aspect of bestsellers: 'the second function is, loosely, 'ideological', reinforcing prevailing attitudes and assumptions, reassuring existing norms and values to the point of indoctrination', although 'very occasionally, subverting those norms and values' (p. 163). In the works of popular fiction under discussion in this thesis, this ideological work is crucial – I argue that these texts, for the majority, maintain and uphold hegemonic discourses regarding war and gender, and that it is in only a few of the texts in which they are even questioned. In this sense, the texts would seem to be performing the expected work of popular fiction, an intriguing adherence for what it suggests about why people read bestsellers and why these particular narratives - the implication is that they read these texts because they want to encounter a specific version of the past, one which is easily recognisable and obeys their expectations for how the world should be.

As works of popular fiction designed for a mass audience, these texts uphold mainstream narratives through the use of certain narrative patterns which their readers are expecting, for example a successful romance resolution, or on a broader level, the success of the protagonist. In addition, narratives about the success of the Allied soldiers over the Nazis, as well as that the Allied forces behave honourably, are particularly relevant to these texts. Whilst it is impossible to say how much any given author will have these overarching narrative resolutions in mind, the effect that an attempt to write a commercially successful product has on the text cannot be ignored, particularly if the genre itself has specific expectations that go beyond the need for a simple, enjoyable narrative resolution. This understanding of the functioning of popular fiction is supported by Botting, who argues: 'maintaining established social-political ideas, the bestseller also remains comfortably recognisable in its pursuit of mass sales or responding to changing and anxiety-provoking historical circumstances through the use of stereotyping and familiar forms' (p. 163). His analysis illustrates how such texts

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[36] Fred Botting, 'Bestselling Fiction: Machinery, Economy, Excess' in *The Cambridge Companion to Popular Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 159–174 (p. 163).

function by adhering to an expected structure the reader can easily recognise. The connection between the use of known narrative structures and ideologies here is crucial, as it illustrates how the texts are able to convey their intended world view through the supporting framework provided by certain tropes and patterns. These narrative structures, as I argue in Chapter 3 in reference to romance plots, are part of the mechanisms through which the texts create a world in line with hegemonic discourses, providing a depiction of the past which predominantly fits with conservative views of both the war and women's roles.

The endurance of these hegemonic discourses, and why they sell, and continue to sell, is important. Whilst popular historical fiction has traditionally been excluded from the academic canon, I would argue that it offers a valuable space to gain an insight into the way society remembers the past, and why certain narratives continue to exist.[37] As Jerome De Groot observes: 'how a society consumes its history is crucial to the understanding of contemporary popular culture, the issues at stake in representations itself, and the various means of self- or social construction available', as 'consumption practices influence what is packaged as history and work to define how the past manifests itself in society'.[38] This relationship between the past, society and popular culture is a central element for both life writing and fiction; historical events are packaged a certain way and reach a specific audience through these mediums. It is therefore vital to our understanding of how women's experiences of Second World War clandestine warfare have been remembered culturally that the ways they have been transmitted via text are studied, particularly given the popularity of some of the fictional representations. Indeed, as De Groot argues: 'the fact that history pervades contemporary culture demonstrates the keen importance for the scholar in understanding the ways that it is manifested and in which it is conceptualised'; these texts 'contribute to the historical imaginary, both in their diegetic content and also in the modes of narrativization, knowing, and articulation that they deploy' (p. 249). This interpretation of the historical novel and its role in popular culture highlights the importance of studying a genre which has the potential to give an insight into how the

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[37] The fictional texts under discussion in this thesis fall under both the categories of popular and historical fiction, and so will be referred to as 'popular fiction', 'historical fiction' and 'popular historical fiction' as appropriate.

[38] Jerome De Groot, *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 2.

past is being recreated, how history is being transformed by its encounter with popular culture.

The works of fiction under discussion in this thesis which most strongly adhere to these hegemonic war discourses include texts such as *Enigma, Charlotte Gray* and Ken Follett's *Jackdaws* (2001) - all bestselling novels. I have been unable to get exact sales figures from the publishers, so I have used Total Consumer Market (TCM) figures provided by Nielsen BookScan to gain an insight into the popularity of these texts.[39] Whilst the data provided by Nielsen has limitations, as the figures are for specific ISBNS from UK print sales figures and only go back as far as 1998, the data is also incredibly useful as it provides a clear illustration of the relative sales success of the texts under discussion in this thesis, alongside works of contemporary fiction about the Second World War which provide more unusual perspectives.

Over the period of 1998 – 2016, *Charlotte Gray* was the most successful fictional text included here, selling 228,362 copies in 1999, the year after it was first published. As these are the figures for the first edition of the book, it is noticeable that it is not until 2004 that the figures for the year fall below ten thousand, illustrating how sales remained healthy. Indeed, even in 2016, there were still over a thousand copies sold of this first edition of the novel, a trend that suggests the text maintained a fairly healthy audience size over the period, supported by a total sales figure of 526,687 print copies sold. *Enigma* ranks second, with its best year according to the Nielsen data being 2001 with a sales volume of 31,671 copies. 2001 was also the year in which the film adaptation was released, a likely explanation for this peak in sales. Over the period, *Enigma* sold a total of 176,754 copies, which whilst significantly lower than just the best year for *Charlotte Gray*, illustrates how the text was still commercially successful. Both of these texts offer a conservative world vision, particularly in regards to the representation of the female characters, as they adhere to hegemonic gender discourses and have traditional gendered narrative arcs. It is therefore highly significant that both *Charlotte Gray* and *Enigma* sold more copies over the period than *The Welsh Girl* (2007) by Peter Ho Davies and Kennedy's *Day*, both of which offer a more unusual look at the war (*The Welsh Girl* focuses around a German soldier who surrenders and is then captured, with whom we are meant to feel empathy, *Day* the experiences of an

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[39] © Nielsen BookScan. Data provided by Nielsen on request 23/01/19.

RAF bomber destroying German cities – a subject which tends not to be mentioned in hegemonic war narratives because of the potential controversy). However, Waters' *The Night Watch* ranks second only to *Charlotte Gray,* with a total sales figure for the period of 194,424, not falling to under ten thousand copies a year until 2010. This relative ranking is intriguing – one might expect *The Night Watch*, whose author Sarah Waters is highly successful, to either come in much above Faulks and Harris for the quality of her work and the way she unearths new voices, or to come in noticeably lower for offering an alternative vision of the war, if narratives such as those cast in *Charlotte Gray* and *Enigma* are what sells, rather than the reverse chronological war including homosexual war workers of *The Night Watch*. Whilst it must be acknowledged that out of the three, Waters is second and not top, I feel it is significant that her text is commercially successful and in the same arena as the other two – it suggests that rather than it being a simple case of readers always wanting the conservative historical texts of Faulks and Harris, actually both forms of history, the conventional and the questioning, sell (indeed, *Day* and *The Welsh Girl* outrank many of the works of popular historical fiction discussed here). Thus, the question arises – who is reading these texts, and for what purpose? It would seem, from these sales rankings as well as the work undertaken in this thesis, that in a world in which people are starting to get bored of the same old war narratives, these narratives also maintain a pervasive attraction; they paper over the cracks which form when previously hidden voices and events of the war, such as the bombing of Dresden, and how minority groups experienced the conflict, start to come to light. The implication is that on some level people crave a narrative resolution (particularly in historically tumultuous times – the Iraq war, Brexit), an easy past that they get in these texts, which use the narrative patterns provided by hegemonic discourses because they know they work. It is an adherence which in the process ensures its own survival, fortifying the status of these discourses as convincing, recognisable narratives.

De Groot argues that this conformity is a characteristic of '"genre" historical fiction', which 'often tends to be extremely rigid in its underwriting of dominant cultural ideologies'.[40] It is a self-perpetuating process whereby certain world views are reinforced via the deployment of recognizable narrative tropes. The use of these patterns is highly significant; White argues: 'far from being a neutral medium, in which

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[40] Jerome De Groot, *The Historical Novel* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), p. 51.

events, whether imaginary or real, can be represented with perfect transparency', narrative 'is an expression in discourse of a distinct mode of experiencing and thinking about the world, its structures, and its processes'.[41] It is therefore important that we examine these narratives for what they suggest about the ideological world view being conveyed by the text, for, as White observes: 'narrative is not only a *means* of ideological production but also a *mode* of consciousness, a way of viewing the world that conduces to the construction of an ideology' (p. 277). This thesis seeks to expose the connections between the narrative patterns and the corresponding ideology and view of the past created, to reveal how and why the women of the SOE and Bletchley Park are represented as they are in the texts under discussion.

Indeed, what is particularly important here is the role played in this game by the depiction of the female characters and historical figures, whose lives are written into certain narrative paths which fit the expected model, rather than allowing them space to breathe. It should be acknowledged that the historical novels under discussion in this thesis are written by both male and female authors (although predominately male), and that most of them have female protagonists as a result of their subject matter, an unusual trend for the sub-genre of war fiction. This phenomenon is part of my rationale for studying these works of historical fiction with such a focus on their female characters and particularly their narrative arcs – an endeavour to understand how this aspect of the text fits into their wider representation of the war. Through the work of this thesis, I have arrived at the conclusion that including female characters who predominantly stay within stereotypically expected narrative arcs for women, helps the texts maintain an overall conservative world view. Creating this depiction of the past consequently works to assay anxieties about how the war was experienced by those other than the Allies, and the particular concerns caused by women's new forms of war work and resulting occupation of new spaces.

However, the adherence to hegemonic war and gender discourses is not uniform across the texts, and noticeably variations occur primarily in texts with female authors or in works of female authored life writing. The implication is that it is the challenge to hegemonic discourses caused by the unusual nature of women's war experiences, and the need for new discourses to describe them, that leads to the disruption of mainstream

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[41] Hayden White, 'Storytelling: Historiographical and Ideological' in *The Fiction of Narrative: Essays on History, Literature and Theory 1957 – 2007* ed. by Robert Doran (London: John Hopkins University Press, 2010), pp. 273-292 (p. 274).

narratives. As Alison Light argues, historical texts written by and for women (even those which might otherwise be judged as conservative because of their emphasis on romance – *Light of the Moon* (1991) by Elizabeth Buchan is a good example), can be revolutionary by 'giving femininity, which usually has a walk-on part in the official history of our times, the lead role in the national drama'.[42] As authors such as Sarah Waters have already proven, people are interested in new narratives and particularly the voices of previously marginalised women, experiences which can reach a popular audience through the medium of the historical novel and which have the potential to challenge mainstream historical discourses. Viewed in this light, the conservative work undertaken by most of the fictional works studied in this thesis becomes particularly intriguing, as it implies that this view of the world is still appealing, leading to the question of why. I argue that it serves to appease cultural anxieties about the nature of warfare, constructing a vision of the past which comes at the cost of the continuation and reinforcement of constrictive narrative paths and depictions of female characters and historical figures. However, in a few of the fictional texts there are deviations from these tropes, indicating that there is some scope for change and movement away from the restrictive confines of the British war myth.

Life Writing

Significantly, in the texts under discussion in this thesis, it is in the works of life writing where hegemonic war discourses are most commonly challenged, leading to the implication that it is women's voices, previously largely excluded from the sphere of warfare, that are forging these shifts. It is therefore useful to explore how these women's personal memories interact with wider cultural memories, as they attempt to voice their experiences and join wider stories of the war. At this point it is important to note that the life writing available about the Special Operations Executive and Bletchley Park is quite different because of the women's circumstances – only a few women who worked for the SOE survived the war, and there is as a result only limited life writing available, most of which is biographical.[43] In contrast, the women who worked at Bletchley's testimonies have been collected in published works, and many of the

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[42] Alison Light, 'Young Bess: Historical Novels and Growing Up', *Feminist Review,* 33, pp. 57–71 (p. 60).

[43] Only two female agents wrote autobiographies – Anne-Marie Walters (1947) and Nancy Wake (1985).

women have also written memoirs. As a result, whilst the Bletchley women's narrative agency was blocked until the 'Ultra secret' was officially revealed in 1974, they have since been able to have more agency over the textual inscription of their lives than the female SOE agents, whose experiences have tended to be written by others into stereotypical narrative patterns for women's lives, with an emphasis on romance, for example. As Chapter 1 will show, this issue of agency is particularly pertinent in the case of Noor Inayat Khan, as her minority heritage has also resulted in her life being written into Orientalist narratives.

Life writing offers the opportunity to explore the intersection of personal and cultural memory. As Paul Antze and Michael Lambek argue: 'personal memory is always connected to social narrative as is social memory to the personal. The self and the community are the imagined products of a continuous process'.[44] This relationship ensures that individual life stories are never unaffected by the cultural memories with which they come into contact. Lara Feigel and Max Saunders support this understanding of personal narrative, advocating: 'our memories are mediated not just by our minds, but by our culture', and that subsequently 'our personal memories are shaped by our cultural contexts'.[45] Following this argument, the implication is that whilst those who give their testimony via life writing cannot be described as 'post-memorial', they still feel the effects of cultural memory; their individual memories of their experiences are shaped in a similar fashion by both their personal context and the longstanding shared memories of the war with which they have come into contact. This understanding of the interactions between personal and cultural memory underlies my decision to read life writing and fiction alongside each other. Both forms, despite their obvious differences, feel the effects of cultural memories of the Second World War. They offer up a valuable space to explore the enduring fears and fantasies about war which have become part of cultural memories of the conflict, and which in turn inform the texts' engagement with hegemonic war discourses.

It should be noted here that I am choosing to use the term 'life writing' to cover biography, auto/biography and memoir. Zachary Leader defines 'life writing' as 'a

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[44] Paul Antze and Michael Lambek, 'Introduction: Forecasting Memory' in *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, ed. by Paul Antze and Michael Lambek (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. xi-xxxviii (p. xx).

[45] Lara Feigel and Max Saunders, 'Writing Between the Lives: Life Writing and the Work of Mediation', *Life Writing,* 9:3 (2012), 241-248 (p. 242).

generic term used to describe a range of writings about lives or parts of lives, or which provide materials out of which lives or parts of lives are composed', an umbrella term which I use for the sake of coherence and clarity unless referring to a specific genre such as biography.[46] Marlene Kadar supports the use of this term, arguing that 'life writing has always been a more inclusive term, and as such may be considered to have certain critical advantages over "biography" and "autobiography"'.[47] Consequently: 'life writing, put simply, is a less exclusive genre of personal kinds of writing that includes *both* biography and autobiography, but also the less "objective", or more "personal" genres such as letters and diaries' (p. 4). Both these theorisations of the term 'life writing' have been highly useful in constructing my own approach to this material, as they create a simple terminology to discuss a range of non-fictional texts about life experiences.

Critical approaches to life writing also emphasize the degree to which such texts are narrative constructions despite being non-fiction, an important factor to bear in mind when analysing the version of the past they attempt to portray. As Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson argue: 'self representations and acts of self-narrating are always located, historical, subjective, political and embodied'.[48] In consequence: 'stories don't just "come" from a life, although readers imagine that autobiographical narrators just tell life stories that articulate unified coherent selves. Rather, storytellers rework and improvise upon established forms […] to compose identities' (p. 357). This weaving together of identity via the process of writing an autobiography is discussed in Chapter 1, where I compare the autobiography of Nancy Wake to biographical accounts of her life. In the process, it becomes apparent that she framed the events of her life in different ways in order to assimilate potentially problematic memories and behaviour. Approaching the texts from this angle illustrates how the sense of identity and events conveyed through life writing are narrative constructions.

The narrative re-workings of a life involved in the process of life writing are

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[46] Zachary Leader, 'Introduction', in *On Life Writing*, ed. by Zachary Leader (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 1-6 (p. 1).

[47] Marlene Kadar, 'Coming to Terms: Life Writing – From Genre to Critical Practice' in *Essays On Life Writing: From Genre to Critical Practice*, ed. by Marlene Kadar (London: University of Toronto Press, 1992), pp. 3-16 (p. 4).

[48] Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, 'The Trouble with Autobiography: Cautionary Notes for Narrative Theorists' in *A Companion to Narrative Theory*, ed. by James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 356-371 (p. 357).

particularly relevant to a discussion of biography, as this form involves the attempt to place a coherent structure on the events of the existence of another individual. As Hermione Lee argues: 'biography is a form of narrative, not just a presentation of facts', with the effect that 'even a biography that appears to be omitting nothing', has rather 'emerged from a process of choices'.[49] These decisions are important, affected both by the context of the author: 'we write from a certain position, constructed by our history, nationality, race, gender, class, education, beliefs', as well as by the need to form a coherent narrative (p. 12). Michael Benton supports this argument, observing: 'narrative imposes a shape on real life that, compared with the messy unpredictability of real life, is both necessary and illusory'.[50] It is also important to take into consideration the ways in which this process of casting another's life into a coherent narrative form can remove their voice and agency; this effect is particularly relevant in the case of the female SOE agents who died in concentration camps and who have been unable to make their own contribution to the historical record. In Chapter 1, I explore through a series of case studies how the women of the SOE's experiences have often been co-opted by hegemonic discourses.

Read with the narrative element of life writing in mind, examining this genre alongside fiction takes on a deeper level of significance, as although they have distinct differences, both forms are shown to be essentially similar – textual re-workings of events which are narrative constructs affected by authorial choices. Of course, one cannot ignore the obvious differences between texts written from personal memory and by those from 'post-memorial generations', yet the remaining similarities are, I believe, vital to exploring representations in both fiction and life writing of the experiences of women engaged in clandestine warfare; they all bear the scars of cultural and gender anxieties, as well as being hostage to the flaws of memory, both personal and cultural.

The Special Operations Executive (SOE)

As one of the two clandestine warfare organizations under discussion in this thesis, it is necessary to give some historical and literary context to the Special Operations Executive (SOE). The women who worked for the SOE were unusual, as was the

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[49] Hermione Lee, *Biography: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 5.

[50] Michael Benton, 'Literary Biography: The Cinderella of Literary Studies', *Journal of Aesthetic Education,* 39:3 (2005), 44-57 (p. 49).

organization itself. The SOE was set up in July 1940, tasked by Churchill to 'set Europe ablaze'.[51] The organization stood separate from the British secret services, and was intended to recruit both men and women with either dual nationality, or those who were British citizens but bilingual. It operated across Europe, including Holland, France and Italy, and its purpose was to infiltrate its agents behind enemy lines to assist the local Resistance networks. SOE operatives undertook a range of missions, including committing acts of sabotage such as blowing up railway lines, bridges and important factories. Agents also worked as couriers, provided Resistance networks with weapons training, and acted as wireless operators to send messages back to Britain.

There is only a small critical field of material available about the Special Operations Executive, which includes both histories of the organization as well as research on postwar biographies of the agents. It is noticeable that the early historical work on the SOE ignores the particularity of the experiences of the women who worked for the organization out in the field. Perhaps the best known historical account is M.R.D. Foot's *SOE in France* (1966). In this first, official history published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO), Foot writes: 'SOE, the Special Operations Executive, was an independent British secret service, set up in July 1940 and disbanded in January 1946. Its main business was the ancient one of conducting subversive warfare'.[52] E.H. Cookridge offers up more details about the intentions for the SOE in *Inside SOE: The Story of Special Operations in Western Europe 1940-45* (1966): 'the main task of an SOE agent was to organize and instruct Resistance groups from which at a given time the secret armies would emerge to assist the Allied invasion forces', by 'disturbing and destroying the enemy's lines of communications, by disrupting railway roads and road systems, telephone and telegraph communications, by hampering his supplies, and finally by open attack at his rear and flanks'.[53] Both these histories of the SOE are just that, however, accounts of its main tasks and targets, without any analysis of the effect of specific aspects of the identity of the agents such as their gender or race. This lack of a focus on gendered experiences of warfare is particularly evident in *SOE in France*, when Foot notes that women 'made excellent wireless operators, and far less

[51] Winston Churchill, qtd. in David Stafford, *Secret Agent: The True Story of the Special Operations Executive* (London: BBC Worldwide Limited, 2000), p. 12.

[52] M.R.D. Foot, *SOE in France: An Account of the Work of the British Special Operations Executive in France 1940-44* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1966), p. xvii.

[53] E.H. Cookridge, *Inside SOE: The Story of Special Operations in Western Europe 1940-45* (London: Arthur Baker Limited, 1966), pp. 78-79.

obtrusive couriers than men, and in a resistance organization courier work was essential', but does not offer any comment as to why this might be, or how their existence in the organisation was unusual.[54] There is a lack an awareness in both accounts about how the experiences of the women of the SOE were shaped by the intersection of their war work with their gender, crucial factors to consider when discussing how their experiences have been represented.

There have, however, been several critical studies since Foot's work which explore the gendered aspect of working for the SOE from both an historical and literary perspective. The most prominent of these is Juliette Pattinson's *Behind Enemy Lines: Gender, Passing and the Special Operations Executive in the Second World War* (2007). Pattinson uses an historical approach to explore the experiences of both women and men of working for the SOE, with a particular emphasis on the impact of their gender to their work. She focuses specifically on the idea of 'passing', which is defined as 'the term used to refer to the process whereby individuals of one race, gender, class, religion or sexuality attempt to appropriate the characteristics of the "Other" and desire not to be recognised as different'.[55] This definition is particularly useful for analysing the work of SOE agents, as 'there were a number of identity borders, including occupation, nationality, religion, gender, class and sexuality, that agents crossed in their attempts to distance themselves from their clandestine identity and which enabled them to carry out their undercover work' (p. 15). Pattinson's analysis of how the female agents attempted to 'pass' as female French citizens fills in the gaps left by Cookridge and Foot; this approach enables an investigation of the ways in which female agents played with assumptions about identity, both in terms of their gender and their nationality.

In Chapter 1, I explore how Nancy Wake, a well known female SOE agent, has both written about how she tried to 'pass' in Occupied France, and how this element of her experiences has been used in biographies about her life. This comparison suggests that for Wake, 'passing', which took the form of emphasizing her femininity and flirting with German soldiers to get through checkpoints without being searched, was actually a process with which she was not entirely comfortable, as her deliberate manipulation of gender assumptions was largely omitted from her autobiography. However, the biography *Nancy Wake: The Inspiring Story of One of the War's Greatest Heroines*

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[54] Foot, p. 47.

[55] Juliette Pattinson, *Behind Enemy Lines: Gender, Passing and the Special Operations Executive in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 15.

(2001) by Peter Fitzsimons contains a recollection by Wake in which she describes herself behaving in this fashion. Given the time difference between the publishing dates of her autobiography (1985), and the biography (2001), the implication arises that this variation occurred because Wake felt that the later audience would be more accepting of her actions and her deliberate manipulation of gender stereotypes. The cultural context of life writing is consequently shown to shape the memories an historical figure wishes to share about their life. It is an example of the effects of the nature of the writing process on these representations, elements of their construction as texts which combine with their engagement with hegemonic discourses; the resulting depictions of the past are laden with the weight of the cultural occupations and assumptions contained within.

In addition to Pattinson's seminal work, there have been several other studies of the SOE, based in the historical and geographical studies disciplines. Elizabeth Kate Vigurs' unpublished PhD thesis, 'The Women Agents of the Special Operations Executive F section – Wartime Realities and Post War Representations' is a study of the female SOE agents which aims to 'rectify the perception of the SOE women agents and to show them in a true light', as Vigurs believes: 'the women of the SOE F section appear to have become the subject of myth'.[56] This approach leads her to discuss the training and tasks undertaken by the female SOE agents, before exploring fictional depictions, attempting to emphasize the differences in how these women have been remembered culturally. Whilst Vigurs focuses primarily on postwar depictions of Odette Sansom and Violette Szabo, she also explores fictional films about SOE women, including a brief discussion of the film adaptation of *Charlotte Gray* (2001) directed by Gillian Armstrong, and the Granada series *Wish Me Luck* (1988-1991) directed by Gordon Flemyng and Bill Hays. Both of these texts are discussed in this thesis. However, Vigurs' approach to this material differs from my own, as she compares the biographies and films about SOE agents to historical source material such as National Archive files and interviews, in an endeavour to delineate the differences between the real agents and how they have been represented textually. In contrast, I explore the depiction of the female agents in these texts in detail, both within and across genres. Whilst Vigurs seeks to highlight the differences between fictional and factual accounts,

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[56] Elizabeth Kate Vigurs, 'The Women Agents of the Special Operations Executive F section – Wartime Realities and Post War Representations' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2011), p. 1.

to show how the fictional historical narrative has deviated from what she views to be the 'truth' of the situation, I explore the historical narrative that has formed about the female agents, delving into its constitutive elements and examining the possible reasons for creating such representations. Following the theories of Hayden White, that 'a historical narrative is thus necessarily a mixture of adequately and inadequately explained events, a congeries of established and inferred facts', which is 'at once a representation that is an interpretation and an interpretation that passes for an explanation of the whole process mirrored in the narrative', my work emphasises how the historical narrative that has formed about these women is an amalgam of what happened, how it has been remembered, how it has been written about and how it has been fantasised about.[57] My approach subsequently reveals the cultural anxieties and preoccupations which inform both fictional and non-fictional representations of women's experiences of clandestine warfare, texts which I show to be part of a continuum of narratives about the female agents and the war as a whole.

The transgressive position in which the female SOE agents were situated in terms of cultural expectations of female behaviour is crucial to understanding how they have been represented. In the article 'I do not know about politics or governments...I am a housewife': The Female Secret Agent and the Male War Machine in Occupied France (1942-5)' (2006), Deidre Osborne examines representations of Odette Sansom and Violette Szabo, through a focus on *Odette: The Story of a British Agent* (1949) by Jerrard Tickell and *Carve Her Name With Pride: The Story of Violette Szabo* (1956) by R.J. Minney. Osborne emphasizes the fact that both texts had male authors, a factor which she argues has a definite effect on the portrayal of the two SOE agents in these biographies. She declares that Minney and Tickell attempt to suppress the transgression of both Sansom and Szabo, to 'reclaim their authority […] by producing depictions of wartime femininity that reinforce it as temporary and exceptional so that male social primacy can be reasserted, linguistically, visually and ideologically through cultural representations'.[58] As I show in Chapter 1, where I discuss the portrayal of Noor Inayat Khan as an object of male fantasy in *All That I Have* (2004) by Laurent Joffrin, a work

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[57] Hayden White, 'Interpretation in History' in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 51–80 (p. 51).

[58] Deidre Osborne, 'I do not know about politics or governments...I am a housewife': The Female Secret Agent and the Male War Machine in Occupied France (1942-5)', *Women: A Cultural Review,* 17:1 (2006), 42-64 (p. 60).

of biographical fiction with a male author and male protagonist, and Chapter 3, where I illustrate how the women of SOE have become sexualized in fiction as a result of their transgressive war work, these concerns are still relevant to texts written over a decade later. The existence of these similar patterns in both the postwar texts and the texts under discussion in this thesis, illustrates how anxieties about transgressive femininity are an ongoing cultural concern. This persistency is troubling; it suggests that attitudes towards women have remained fixed despite the passing of time, indicating that they are deeply entrenched in our society.

Shompa Lahiri provides the only critical work on how cultural preoccupations with ethnicity can shape how SOE agents are remembered. In 'Clandestine Mobilities and Shifting Embodiments: Noor-un-nisa Inayat Khan and the Special Operations Executive, 1940-1945' (2007), Lahiri discusses how Noor Inayat Khan, an SOE agent from a Sufi Muslim background, has been memorialized, with a particular emphasis on her ethnicity. Lahiri argues: 'the hybrid materiality of Khan's body and the geographic conditions of her history enabled and delimited the way her racial, gendered and national identities were performed, remembered and constructed during and after the Second World War'.[59] This observation emphasizes the significance of taking these elements of an individual's identity into account when exploring how they have been represented. Whilst Lahiri does include Jean Overton Fuller's biography of Inayat Khan, *Madeleine: The Story of Noor Inayat Khan* (1952) in her analysis, her focus is not predominately based on textual representations. In contrast, in this thesis I explore how Inayat Khan's ethnicity and cultural heritage have been treated through the medium of biographical fiction as well as biography. Focusing on these elements of an individual's identity is shown to have both positive and negative connotations. For example, multiple biographies about Inayat Kahn contain a scene based on a recollection by a Gestapo officer in which Inayat Khan is depicted in animalistic terms when she is captured. There is a particular emphasis on clawing and biting, including a final image which occurs in several biographies in which Inayat Khan is purported to have clawed the air in frustration like a tiger. This imagery, which has become one of the famous myths about Inayat Khan, most likely stems from her cultural heritage; the

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[59] Shompa Lahiri, 'Clandestine Mobilities and Shifting Embodiments: Noor-un-nisa Inayat Khan and the Special Operations Executive, 1940–44', *Gender & History*, 19:2 (2007), 305-323 (p. 318).

Gestapo officer who wrote the report casts her as the animalistic and enigmatic Oriental Other. The work of biographical fiction *The Tiger Claw* (2004) by Shauna Singh Baldwin, however, explores Inayat Khan's life through biographical fiction. As a result of this focus and genre choice, Baldwin is able to depict the war from the perspective of an Indian citizen, whose country during the Second World War was still under British colonial rule. British behaviour in India is consequently compared to the behaviour of the German forces occupying France. Lahiri's observations about how Inayat Khan's ethnicity has shaped her memorialization are shown to hold true for a range of textual representations of her life, demonstrating how cultural preoccupations with race continue to affect the portrayal of an historically significant figure across numerous mediums. This issue is particularly significant when the woman in question is from a minority background, lacking in agency due to her early death and therefore unable to challenge the Orientalist narratives into which she has been written.

Indeed, comparing biographical accounts of historical figures reveals how life writing is inevitably shaped by a multitude of factors, including those deployed in fiction. Victoria Stewart compares postwar biographies of female SOE agents in 'Representing Nazi Crimes in Post-Second World War Life Writing' (2015). In addition to examining *Odette* and *Carve Her Name With Pride*, Stewart looks at a biography of Noor Inayat Khan, *Madeleine* (1952) by Jean Overton Fuller, and *Death Be Not Proud* (1958) by Elizabeth Nicholas, a biography of Diana Rowden. Through comparing the approaches of these biographies, Stewart is able to investigate how the authors handle their source material. It becomes apparent that the authors of *Odette* and *Carve Her Name With Pride* turn to fictionalization to fill in the unknown parts of their subject's histories, whereas Overton Fuller and Nicholas are content to leave absent the unknown material. Stewart observes that the resulting biographies are significantly different, as: 'Nicholas's and Fuller's refusal to attribute feelings or emotions to their subjects means that their narratives have gaps, but it also means that the particularity of what Khan, Rowden and others experienced is respected'.[60] In Chapter 3, I compare biographies about the SOE agent Pearl Witherington to show the effects of this fictionalization on the representation of a life. The biography *She Landed By Moonlight: The Story of Agent Pearl Witherington: The Real "Charlotte Gray"* (2013)

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[60] Victoria Stewart, 'Representing Nazi Crimes in Post-Second World War Life Writing', *Textual Practice*, 29:7 (2015), 1311-1330 (p. 1327).

by Carole Seymour-Jones, fills in the gaps in Witherington's experiences through adding narrative elements in such a way as to emphasize her relationship with Henri Cornioley, including internal thoughts for Witherington which are distinctly fictional. In contrast, the editorial sections written by Kathryn Atwood in *Codename Pauline*: *Memoires of a World War II Special Agent* (2013) by Pearl Witherington Cornioley, only briefly discuss Witherington's relationship with Henri Cornioley, yet in the process cast Witherington as a chaste heroine, denying the complexity of her lived experience. Neither narrative framework is entirely satisfactory, illustrating the constrictive effects of hegemonic discourses of both war and gender on representations of women's lives.

Bletchley Park

The other organization which conducted clandestine warfare under discussion in this thesis is Bletchley Park and its outstations. Bletchley has not received as much attention to date as the Special Operations Executive, perhaps because the work it carried out was of a less adventurous nature than the tasks undertaken by the SOE in Occupied countries. This does not mean that it was less important to the war, however. As the official guidebook perfectly states: 'Bletchley Park has global significance. It is where the World War Two Codebreakers broke seemingly impenetrable codes and ciphers, and it is where the world's first electronic computers were installed and operated', adding: 'the intelligence produced here contributed to all theatres of World War Two'.[61] The role Bletchley played in the Second World War was clearly a pivotal one.

The existence of Bletchley Park was also a better protected secret than knowledge of the Special Operations Executive. In the case of the SOE, as Christopher Moran argues in *Classified: Secrecy and the State in Modern Britain* (2013): 'its responsibilities (sabotage, guerrilla actions, black propaganda, etc.) had been readily reported in Fleet Street and fitted the popular swashbuckling impression of British intelligence', and there was a general awareness about its work from the 1950s onwards.[62] However, because the code breaking which had been undertaken at Bletchley involved the invention of new processes and technologies which the British government did not want other governments to know about after the war, the 'Ultra

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[61] Bletchley Park Trust, *Bletchley Park, Home of the Codebreakers: Guidebook* (n.d.), p. 1.
[62] Christopher Moran, *Classified: Secrecy and the State in Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 283.

Secret' and the other codebreaking carried out at Bletchley was only officially revealed to the public in 1974, when *The Ultra Secret: The Inside Story of Operation Ultra, Bletchley Park and Enigma* by Frederick Winterbotham was allowed to be published.

Since 1974, several histories have been written about Bletchley Park. These range from texts which focus on the technical side of the work carried out at the Park, including Gordon Welchman's *The Hut Six Story: Breaking the Enigma Codes* (1982) and *Enigma: The Battle for the Code* (2000) by Hugh Sebag-Montefiore, to histories which seek to give a broader picture of life at Bletchley Park, for example *The Secret Life of Bletchley Park: The WWII Codebreaking Centre and the Men and Women Who Worked There* (2010) by Sinclair MacKay, and Michael Smith's *Station X: The Codebreakers of Bletchley Park* (1998). It should be noted that Bletchley Park has recently received a surge of interest due to the 2014 biopic of Alan Turing, *The Imitation Game* directed by Morten Tyldum, significantly raising the profile of the Park in popular culture.

However, until 2015 there had not really been a focus on the women who worked at Bletchley; before this there were only memoirs written by the women themselves, the majority produced through small publishers with often only a minimal readership. This balance was redressed in early 2015, when two collective biographies were published: *The Bletchley Girls: War, Secrecy, Love and Loss: The Women of Bletchley Park Tell Their Story* (2015) by Tessa Dunlop, and Michael Smith's *The Debs of Bletchley Park and Other Stories* (2015). These two collective biographies have done much to raise cultural awareness of the role played by the women who worked at the Park, who actually outnumbered the men. There were a variety of tasks assigned to the women, which ranged from administrative jobs, to running the bombe machines and helping with the decoding itself. The women were often very young, and although recruitment initially came via the route of a personal recommendation for women from wealthy backgrounds, they were also recruited via the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNs or Wrens) and other women's services. This thesis will redress the lack of critical attention towards representations of the women who worked at Bletchley Park; the works of life writing are particularly significant as they stand as a symbol of the reclamation of narrative agency which becomes possible when women write their own lives. Significantly, across the corpus, it is in works of life writing and fiction about Bletchley Park where the shifts away from hegemonic discourses are most visible,

indicating that it is women's stories entering mainstream narratives that can change how we think about gender and conflict.

Conclusion

This thesis contains three main chapters, which are designed to explore the hegemonic discourses which inform representations of women's experiences of clandestine warfare. I approach this material from a variety of angles, focusing on the intersections of the complexities of historical representation and the mainstream narratives which shape these texts. As a result, I have been able to investigate the cultural anxieties, preoccupations and fantasies about war and specifically women's place in conflict, which lie at the heart of these discourses. The three thematic chapters are: 'Writing the Past', 'Unstable Enemies' and 'Romancing the Past'.

'Writing the Past' explores the effects of the texts' negotiation of the intersections of the complexities of historical representation and their engagement with hegemonic discourses. Through an examination of how *Remake* by Christine Brooke Rose, *The Tiger Claw* by Shauna Singh Baldwin, *Staying Alive* (2006) by Alexander Fullerton, *Codename Verity* (2012) by Elizabeth Wein and *Tightrope* (2015) by Simon Mawer engage with the process of writing the past, it becomes apparent that the narrative structures which shore up fictional and non-fictional representations of the past are at times remarkably similar. This parity serves as a reminder of the constructed nature of all representations of historical events, an element of their production which creates an innate fragility. It is this internal instability which often leads to the dependence on the familiar tropes and patterns of hegemonic discourses, as the texts seek to construct a convincing, coherent narrative.

Life writing written about and by the women who worked at Bletchley Park illustrates how the language of the war, particularly in relation to keeping secrets, was internalised. The women who worked at Bletchley had to sign the Official Secrets Act (OSA), an additional level of secrecy whose restrictions they had to bear. As a result, even after the restrictions of the OSA were lifted, many of the women who worked at the Park were only able to speak about their war experiences much later in life, and some recollected colleagues who had never been able to discuss their time at Bletchley. Whilst it is true that the same situation applied to the men, the precarious position occupied by the women in their presence in the traditionally male gendered sphere of

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warfare results in wartime secrecy being particularly detrimental to the telling of women's war stories, another barrier to be overcome in their bid to join mainstream war narratives. The works of life writing discussed here stand as a reclamation of narrative agency by these women who were previously denied the ability to write themselves into history.

Undertaking a case study of representations of two female SOE agents, Noor Inayat Khan and Nancy Wake, reveals that similar issues regarding agency are present here too. Indeed, these issues are particularly relevant for Inayat Khan as her execution during the war meant that she was unable to contribute to any textual shaping of her life. As a result, her life has been written into romantic and Orientalist narratives which place her experiences into easily recognisable frameworks, denying the reality of her lived experience in the process. Even for Wake, who did survive the war, these issues are also shown to be pertinent; exploring representations of her life between autobiography and biography reveals how the transition of lived events into narrative leads to transformations in how her life is depicted, even by Wake herself. Reading life writing and fiction together exposes how both forms are shaped by similar factors, reliant upon the recognisable tropes and patterns provided by hegemonic discourses in order to negotiate the difficulties of historical representation. As a result, the texts tend to produce a predominately conservative view of the past. However, there are challenges to mainstream narratives present in some of the works of life writing discussed here and a few of the fictional texts, as women's unique voices and experiences push at the edges of these discourses.

'Unstable Enemies' focuses on the representation of the enemy in these texts, revealing how the figure of the opposition forms the nexus for a range of anxieties and cultural obsessions about war. In life writing by and about the women who worked at Bletchley Park, there is a noticeable absence of direct references to the enemy. These gaps are caused by the lack of interaction with the opposition forces beyond responding to the deaths of loved ones killed in the war. The language of the official 'war culture' is used to negotiate these absences, with the phrase the 'war effort' being particularly notable. The repetition of this phrase, and the way the women frame their experiences by emphasizing their contribution to the war rather than expressing hatred towards the enemy, reveals how the hegemonic war discourse in these texts has shifted, formed from the language of the official 'war culture', but used here with a new emphasis. This impression is supported by the empathy expressed towards the enemy in Brooke Rose's

Remake, the film *The Imitation Game* and the collective biography *The Bletchley Girls*. The implication is that women's existence in the traditionally masculine spaces of warfare both forms and requires alternate discourses of war.

In contrast, fictional representations of women's experiences of clandestine warfare predominately perpetuate hegemonic war discourses about the enemy, reliant on flawed stereotypes which echo the inconsistencies of the official 'war culture'. *Into the Fire* (1995) by Alexander Fullerton, Follett*'s Jackdaws* and *The Girl Who Fell From The Sky* (2012) by Simon Mawer all use the stereotype of the sadistic Nazi. However, because of the nature of these scenes which include sexual assault, rather than creating a simple opposition between the evil enemy and the brave protagonist, instead a sense of erotic fascination appears, breaking down this divide. These sexualized torture scenes are problematic, attempting to titillate the reader through a flirtation with sadomasochism. Reading these scenes in the light of Freud's famous essay 'A Child is Being Beaten' (1919) reveals that there are multiple imagined reader positions at play here – a choice of erotic fantasy should the reader be so inclined. The texts perpetuate a phenomenon Susan Sontag refers to as a 'fascination' with fascism, an ongoing cultural obsession with the darker elements of war which these texts are unable to escape.[63]

Analysing the torture scenes in texts about the SOE also reveals how hegemonic discourses can compete against each other to be the most dominant narrative. The female characters in these representations are shown to be willing to undergo torture and shoot fellow Resistance members who have become traitors, forgoing their bodily and mental integrity in the process. This depiction of their actions illustrates how the texts are not using the hegemonic war discourse that women cannot be trusted with secrets; instead, as representations of war in Occupied territory, they obey a stronger narrative pattern, in which the valiant protagonist Allied soldiers cannot be shown to give way under the tyranny of the Nazis and give up their information. In consequence, these texts adhere to a hegemonic discourse about secrecy where secrets are kept at any cost, but from which the anxiety about women and information access is absent. It has been superseded by a broader war narrative of Allied vs Axis forces, in which the Allied forces must win out, their valiance unquestioned.

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[63] Susan Sontag, 'Fascinating Fascism', in *Under The Sign of Saturn* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1980), pp. 73-108.

Jackdaws, the television series *Wish Me Luck,* and Buchan's *Light of the Moon* also resort to stereotypes in their construction of enemy characters, for example the figure Petra Rau terms the 'Good German', yet these characters contain inherent flaws which the texts are unable to resolve. *As Time Goes By* (1994) by Ted Allbeury and Wein's *Codename Verity* extend the notion of the innocence of the Wehrmacht inherent in this figure further, to portray a rather idealistic vision of characters who belong to the Schutzstaffel (SS) and Sicherheitsdienst (SD), both of whom were notorious Nazi paramilitary organizations. In the process, the texts create an idealised depiction of the war, riddled by the flaws inherent in the character of the 'Good German' and the attempt to create antagonists who are members of the German military intelligence and indeed Nazi paramilitary services, yet who are also essentially innocent. These unstable enemy characters are the result of the competing ideas about the nature of the enemy circulating in hegemonic war discourse, flawed stereotypes which endure despite this lack of internal consistency because of their adherence to deep cultural anxieties about the nature of war to corrupt.

Through focusing on the interpersonal relationships in these texts, 'Romancing the Past' reveals the degree to which representations of women's clandestine warfare are influenced by gender stereotypes and cultural expectations and anxieties about sexually active women in wartime. These concerns are evident in texts such as *The Girl Who Fell From The Sky* and *Charlotte Gray*, where the protagonist becomes sexually active during the course of her SOE training, including losing her virginity and discovering masturbation; through this sequence of events the texts reveal their adherence to a cultural correlation in which women must be sexually active if they are to be active in their war work. This connection is taken even further in three texts, *Fall From Grace* (1985) by Larry Collins, *The Lavender Keeper* (2012) by Fiona McIntosh, and *Light of the Moon*, as the female SOE agents undertake sex work as part of their war work. In two of these texts the female protagonist is also later symbolically cleansed, slotted back into the role of war heroine, her actions forgotten in the same way that killing in war is not classed as murder. These texts therefore demonstrate how female SOE agents are caught between the paradigms of sexy spy and chaste war heroine, a source of tension because they are outside of the traditional expectations for women.

Hegemonic gender discourses also shape life writing about women's experiences of Second World War clandestine warfare. Examining the presentation of

romantic relationships in life writing about Pearl Witherington, *She Landed by Moonlight: The Story of Agent Pearl Witherington: The Real "Charlotte Gray* by Carole Seymour-Jones and *Codename Pauline*: *Memoires of a World War II Special Agent* edited by Kathryn J. Atwood, uncovers the difficulties authors face when writing about a female historical figure. They are shown to be caught between either dramatizing their subject's life, and in the process writing it into a love story, or portraying the female historical figure as a chaste heroine, but denying their full lived experience.

The romance plots in the fictional texts are equally significant, as the majority maintain standard romantic arcs in which the heroine's narrative culminates in either marriage or death. These texts, including Collins' *Fall From Grace*, both *Charlotte Gray* by Sebastian Faulks and its film adaptation of the same title directed by Gillian Armstrong (2001), *Violins of Autumn* (2012) by Amy McAuley and *The Dandelion Years* (2015) by Erica James, amongst others, illustrate how cultural expectations for narratives with female protagonists are part of the patriarchal system which upholds gender norms, perpetuating the correlation between women and romance which often permeates fiction with female protagonists. As a result, rather than foregrounding the major historical contribution made to the Second World War by the women who worked for the SOE and at Bletchley Park, these texts create a version of the past in which the women who worked for these services become lovers and girlfriends, rather than historical actors in their own right. Following Erll's theory that literature is part of the materials from which cultural memories are formed, the conservative vision of the war portrayed in these texts takes on a deeper level of significance, as it contributes to cultural memories about women who participated in clandestine warfare during the Second World War.

As discussed in Chapter 3, there is a hegemonic discourse, evident in propaganda posters from the Second World War, that women were a particular security risk. This anxiety about women's abilities to keep secrets is persistent, demonstrated by the construction of the character Claire Romilly in *Enigma*. Whilst Harris does try to subvert this trope by setting Claire up as the 'sexy spy', but later showing that she is working for the British government, the use of the character of Hester as a foil to Claire indicates that the text still relies on these anxieties for narrative coherence at a deep inner level. The ITV series *The Bletchley Circle* (2012-2014), in contrast, rewrites this connection; here it is women who expose how men cannot be trusted with controlled

knowledge or the mechanisms used to protect it.[64] Significantly, the second series even contains a female antagonist whose characterisation would be the perfect opportunity for the text to indulge in any anxiety about women sharing secrets because of their proclivity to seduce or be seduced. Yet, instead, the female antagonist is simply that – an opposition to the female protagonists. This rewriting of the tropes of hegemonic discourses of war and gender illustrates how women's continued occupation of previously male gendered spaces can change how we think about conflict, narrative and gender norms.

This thesis will reveal how representations of women's experiences of clandestine warfare are shaped by hegemonic discourses, which are themselves constituted from persistent anxieties and fantasies about women and war. These mainstream narratives provide recognisable patterns and themes to which these texts predominately adhere in their attempts to negotiate the complexities involved in representing history, and the particular difficulty of depicting war. Crucially, the conservative vision of the past conveyed in the majority of these texts is shown to be strengthened by the supporting system of the texts' obedience to hegemonic gender discourses. The texts consequently produce a comforting vision of the past, an escape into a recognisable and familiar world for the reader faced with tumultuous political times such as the Iraq wars and the rise of terrorism, which in the process functions to write the women of the SOE and Bletchley Park predominately as romantic heroines, lovers and girlfriends. However, across the corpus discussed here, there are a few works of fiction and multiple instances of life writing where hegemonic discourses have begun to shift. This transformation stems from the reclamation of narrative agency by these women, as well as their disruption to traditional notions of warfare.

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[64] *The Bletchley Circle*, Series 1 and 2, dir. by Andy De Emmony, Sarah Harding and Jamie Payne (ITV, 2012-2014) [Amazon Video]

Chapter 1 - Writing the Past

Introduction

The pervasive narratives provided by hegemonic discourses are as much an integral part of representations of women's experiences of Second World War clandestine warfare as their source material, forming a framework which is used to negotiate the complexities of depicting the past. The adherence to these paths is particularly significant for the works of life writing discussed in this thesis, serving to reduce the female subjects' narrative agency as their lives are written into romantic or Orientalist patterns. All the women's lives discussed in this chapter are vulnerable in this regard: the women of Bletchley Park's voices were supressed by secrecy; Inayat Khan was executed during the war; the ways in which Nancy Wake has both written about herself, and been written about, illustrate the cultural forces at play when a transgressive woman dares to add her voice to the fray. This chapter exposes the shaping factors which impact these texts, revealing how representations of women's lives are inherently altered by the engagement with hegemonic discourses and the endeavour to create a coherent, marketable product.

As will be discussed in relation to memoirs written by the women who worked at Bletchley Park, the inability to talk or write about their war stories until decades after the war had a distinct effect, to the extent that many were never able to break their silence, or felt uncomfortable doing so. For others, the restrictions being lifted was felt as a release, as they were finally able to talk about their lives and their contribution to the war. Writing these texts consequently offered an opportunity to stake a claim to mainstream war narratives, an attempt to be remembered by women whose voices had been silenced for too long.

A close analysis of life writing texts about two female SOE agents, Noor Inayat Khan and Nancy Wake, illustrates the nature of the specific obstacles faced by biography and autobiography. These include negotiating a lack of information about a life, as well as the weaving together of myriad historical sources into a coherent whole. Formed from this web which is also hostage to the vagaries of memory, these texts rely on the familiar tropes provided by hegemonic discourses for stability, perpetuating them in the process. The authors of these texts consequently write the lives of their subjects

into the recognisable patterns provided by romantic and Orientalist narratives, removing their narrative agency.

The question of how to depict an authentic vision of historical events is key to contemporary historical fiction, which is particularly self-conscious about its processes. This engagement with the complexities of historical representation has its basis in an awareness by authors who belong to a 'post-memorial generation', of the constructed nature of all representations. As a result, *The Tiger Claw* by Shauna Singh Baldwin*, Staying Alive* by Alexander Fullerton, *Codename Verity* by Elizabeth Wein and *Tightrope* by Simon Mawer all attempt to achieve a semblance of authenticity through deploying techniques such as mimicking the structures of non-fiction texts. *Remake* by Christine Brooke Rose, an autobiographical novel, uses similar techniques to engage with the complexities of historical representation. The parallels between fiction and non-fiction become clear, highlighting the inherent difficulties of representing the past in both genres. It is the bid to counter this fragility which often leads authors to a reliance upon the narrative frameworks provided by hegemonic discourses.

Writing Wartime Secrecy

The women who worked at Bletchley Park were not able to talk or write about their experiences for decades after the war ended. This situation arose because their work came under the remit of the 1911 Official Secrets Act, which meant that if any information regarding their work were to be leaked, the person in question could be imprisoned. As a result, they could not record or even discuss their war stories for many years, and some never did. Exploring the life writing now available written by and about these women allows an investigation of how this secrecy was experienced. It is particularly important that these women's war stories have been able to be told, because it is this process which ensures their lives, and their unusual nature, are not forgotten. As Micaela Maftei argues, 'if we understand living as a process by which we create a narrative identity', then 'autobiography is survival', a 'process by which we create a narrative identity'.[1] Reading the autobiographical process in this fashion illustrates how it is an exercise in longevity, a bid to stake a claim on history. G. Thomas Couser supports this interpretation of the importance of life writing,

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[1] Micaela Maftei, *The Fiction of Autobiography: Reading and Writing Identity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 28-29.

particularly memoir: 'memoir puts on record lives that would otherwise be transient, evanescent'.[2] His analysis foregrounds how this form can bring previously excluded voices and experiences into mainstream narratives. Viewed from this angle, the ban placed upon the women who worked at Bletchley can be seen as a restriction on their narrative agency, their ability to speak for themselves and ensure that their voices and experiences were not forgotten.

In addition to the legal threats specific to speaking about their war work, government commands about the risks of accidentally sharing information circulated as part of the official 'war culture', adding a second layer of secrecy to be negotiated. Patrick Deer uses the term 'war culture' to 'refer to work and practices produced during wartime and also those that actively constitute part of the war effort'.[3] It is therefore a helpful term to apply in reference to the dominant and lasting elements of culturally circulating ideas, messages and symbols during the war (p. 4). Particularly relevant to the discussion of how the women who worked at Bletchley Park experienced secrecy, Deer outlines the bargain undergone between citizen and state during the war in regards to knowledge. He describes it as a situation where 'fabricated under threat of invasion and aerial holocaust, overshadowed by official secrecy and censorship, this was a war culture that claimed to defend, sustain, and enlighten its citizens', noting: 'in return, the culture of the Home Front would require voluntary blackouts – both literal and metaphorical – of the British people and the subjects of its Empire'.[4] In this model of the relationship between state and individual, personal rights to keep, know and share secrets are removed, suspended for the duration of the 'war effort'. Deer's explanation of how the official 'war culture' exchanged security for the right to control information reveals the cultural emphasis placed upon knowledge. This situation is a likely reason for why the women who worked at Bletchley often did not even question the ban placed upon their voices.

Propaganda posters produced during the war provide useful examples of how keeping secrets was intertwined on a cultural level with being a good citizen. These messages included showing the direct consequences of not obeying the instructions to guard information. Two perfect examples of this threat are a poster divided into two

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[2] G. Thomas Couser, *Memoir: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 181.

[3] Patrick Deer, *Culture in Camouflage: War, Empire and Modern British Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 4.

[4] Deer, p. 110.

halves with the text 'THEY TALKED …. THIS HAPPENED'[5] and one entitled: 'AND THE ENEMY WERE COMPLETELY SUPRISED – BECAUSE NO ONE TALKED:[6]

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Perhaps the best-known posters about secrecy produced during the Second World War are the series of 'Careless Talk Costs Lives' posters by Fougasse, which show a range of situations. These include two women talking on a bus with two enemy soldiers on the bench behind them (the suggestion is that they are Hitler and Goering) and the tagline: 'You never know who's listening',[7] as well as two men at a bar, with all the bottles behind the bar bearing Hitler's face and the tagline: 'Be careful what you say and where you say it':[8]

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[5] Author unknown, 'THEY TALKED …. THIS HAPPENED' poster, Imperial War Museums Collections <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/31819> [accessed 30/01/19]

[6] B. Messor, 'AND THE ENEMY WERE COMPLETELY SURPRISED – BECAUSE NO ONE TALKED!' poster, Imperial War Museums Collections <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/19099> [accessed 15/08/17]

[7] Fougasse, 'You never know who's listening' poster, Imperial War Museums Collections <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/9810> [accessed 10/08/16]

[8] Fougasse, 'Be careful what you say and where you say it' poster, Victoria and Albert Museum, London <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O76740/be-careful-what-you-say-poster-fougasse/> [accessed 30/01/19]

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All these posters are clear examples of the pressure placed on the individual not to share information, suggesting that any secrets that were leaked could have wider consequences. This deconstruction of the division between information belonging to individuals and to the government, demonstrates how the official 'war culture' sought to eclipse its citizens. It cast its shadow over their entire lives in a bid to co-opt them into the war effort, to entice them to act for the state rather than as individuals.

Victoria Stewart supports this reading, arguing that through these posters: 'the individual, and what the individual does or knows, is constructed as inextricably enmeshed in the workings of government, or, more amorphously, "the war effort"'.[9] How individuals responded to this emphasis, particularly those who were subject to an even tighter security due to their clandestine war work, is evident in life writing by the women who worked at Bletchley Park. Although there was a slow leak of knowledge among historians of the 'Ultra secret', it was not officially revealed until 1974. These governmental restrictions meant that the women who worked at Bletchley Park held official secrets which were inextricably entangled in their personal lives, becoming almost a part of their identity. As a result, many were unable to talk or write about their war work for a long time, and some even took at least another decade after the ban was lifted to publish their own accounts about this period of their lives.

In the context of the present day in which secrets are constantly being leaked and shared, it is particularly remarkable that the women who worked at Bletchley Park

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[9] Victoria Stewart, *The Second World War in Contemporary British Fiction: Secret Histories* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 3.

appear to have accepted the need for secrecy without question. In her memoir *Cracking the Luftwaffe Codes* (2006), Gwen Watkins writes: 'we needed no reminder that we must never speak of the work we had done at the Park. We had been too deeply indoctrinated for that'.[10] Her use of 'indoctrinated' is crucial, as it demonstrates the degree to which secrecy was ingrained in these women. It is a word which also has connotations of fascist regimes, an ambiguity which indicates the restrictive nature of the official 'war culture' on this matter. Watkins adds: 'silence soon became a habit, and, like other habits, it was difficult to break', as well as that 'it had never occurred to us, either, that this silence could ever be broken' (p. 20). Watkins' words support her description of the imposition of secrecy being tantamount to indoctrination, evidencing the degree to which the need for secrecy went unquestioned.

The women interviewed in *Bletchley Girls: War, Secrecy, Love and Loss: The Women of Bletchley Park Tell Their Story* edited by Tessa Dunlop, echo Watkins' sentiments. Dunlop writes how: 'talking to them decades later the degree to which that need for confidentiality was drummed in remains startlingly apparent'.[11] She supports this statement by anonymously quoting phrases from the women who worked at the Park: 'we knew we must not say a word', and: 'you couldn't say anything. That's just how it was' (p. 100). Their words display a simple acceptance, supporting the image of a world in which secrecy for the 'greater good' was not questioned. Indeed, these attitudes recur across the accounts of life at the Park. Muriel Dindol (née Bogush) declares: 'I just would never blab. I just didn't and you couldn't and you wouldn't, it was imprisoned in your mind'.[12] The use of 'imprisoned' further supports the impression of the need for secrecy having been deeply ingrained in these women. Cynthia Waterhouse (née Kidd), quoted in *We Kept the Secret: Now It Can Be Told* (2002) even directly connects the emphasis on secrecy with the war effort, stating: 'I cannot remember it being in any way difficult to keep silent. There was only one thought in everyone's minds, which unified the country – and that was to defeat Nazi Germany'.[13] Her words demonstrate the connection between the governmental, wider

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[10] Gwen Watkins, *Cracking the Luftwaffe Codes: The Secrets of Bletchley Park* (Barnsley: Frontline Books, 2012), p. 19.

[11] Tessa Dunlop, *Bletchley Girls: War, Secrecy, Love and Loss: The Women of Bletchley Park Tell Their Story* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2015), p. 100.

[12] Muriel Dindol qtd. in *Bletchley Girls,* p. 285.

[13] Cynthia Waterhouse qtd. in *We Kept the Secret: Now It Can Be Told,* ed. by Gwendoline Page (Wymondham: Geo. R Reeve Ltd., 2002), p. 9.

emphasis on secrecy in the name of the country, and the 'war effort' on Waterhouse's personal experience of the war. This element is noticeably missing from other references to staying silent by the Bletchley women. The implication is that Waterhouse has tried to, with retrospect, find a reason for her secrecy, to explain this restriction of her voice, and why she continued to obey it. In contrast, the other women quoted here just seem to accept that that was what they did, content not to question their actions. It is a reminder that, as Leigh Gilmore argues: 'autobiography wraps up the interrupted and fragmentary discourses of identity (those stories we tell ourselves and are told, which hold us together as "persons") and presents them as persons themselves'.[14] This analysis illustrates how the life writing process can be an attempt to make sense of past decisions. For Waterhouse this was by linking her personal story specifically to the war, and for the women who did not enquire into their motivations, a way of smoothing over any doubts about why they kept silent, by simply following the wider narrative that this was just what happened.

As one might expect, keeping secrets for so long had a major impact. In her memoir *My Road to Bletchley Park* (1998), Doreen Luke (née Spencer) recalls: 'I think that secrecy was so instilled into us about what we were doing, seeing and hearing that for me anyway, and now I know it happened for others, that a mental block occurred for so many years'.[15] Luke's words demonstrate the effects of this secrecy on her war memories, how it became part of her identity. She refers to Bletchley as 'the most secret of secrets' (p. 4), explaining how 'the secrecy had been ultimate' (p. 41). Luke adds: 'it wasn't only the location that was so secret, it was the attitude of the people who worked there' (p. 45). For Pat Davies (née Owtram), speaking in *Bletchley Girls,* the secrecy at Bletchley had an enduring effect. She declares: 'I think it made me secretive for the rest of my life'.[16] Her words are a clear statement regarding the long-term impact of her war work. For Charlotte Webb too, the secrecy surrounding the Park made it hard for her to tell her story: 'it has not always been easy to talk about Bletchley Park, even after the veil of secrecy was lifted in July 1975. It took until 1994 for me to open up about my experiences, when a friend suggested I give talks'.[17] Webb's words

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[14] Leigh Gilmore, *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 17.

[15] Doreen Luke, *My Road to Bletchley Park*, 5th edn. (Cleobury Mortimer: M & M Baldwin, 2002), p. 31.

[16] Pat Davies qtd. in *Bletchley Girls,* p. 105.

[17] Charlotte Webb, *Secret Postings: Bletchley Park to the Pentagon* (Redditch: Book Tower, 2011), loc. 733. Kindle ebook. In 1975 government files relating to Ultra started to be released to the Public Record Office. David Owen also made an announcement in the House of Commons on 12th January

reveal the lasting impact of the secrecy of the war years, and the difficulties it caused in relation to voicing and writing about her war memories.

It is perhaps not surprising that for many of the women who worked at the Park, the lifting of the secrecy ban was uncomfortable, indicating how deeply ingrained it had become. In Michael Smith's *The Debs of Bletchley Park and Other Stories,* Marigold Philips declares: 'it was horrible. We hated it. We didn't like the secret coming out', to the extent that 'it was like having a bit of skin that had grown over something peeled off'.[18] This almost visceral reaction indicates the deep level to which Philips had internalised the restrictions placed upon her. Philips' later words support this impression: 'the secrecy was so engrained that even now talking about it still feels like you're gossiping to someone. I still hate talking about it' (p. 263). Maggie Broughton-Thompson had a similar reaction, describing how when the story started to be released: 'I was so absolutely horrified. It was such a shock, I was jolly nearly sick'.[19] Similar language and views are voiced across the texts. In *Bletchley Girls,* Lady Jean Fforde echoes this sentiment, declaring: 'I was horrified when I saw there was a book on Bletchley Park. Horrified!'.[20] This reaction is echoed by Pat Davies: 'when the books started coming out in the seventies I was appalled!'.[21] The repetition of attitudes and language such as 'horrified', 'shocked' and 'appalled' illustrates the reactions felt by these women who had been sworn to secrecy about their war work, only to suddenly have it announced on the world stage without any warning. Indoctrinated in secrecy from an early age, keeping secrets became a part of their identity. To have that injunction suddenly lifted would have required a reassessment of their relationship to the information they had held onto for so long, a reconfiguration of their own life stories.

However, for some of the women who worked at Bletchley, the lifting of the secrecy ban became the motivation for writing their story, suggesting a need to voice and share a history previously suppressed. Doreen Luke's repeated references to the

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1978, stating that those who had worked on intercepted radio messages in various capacities could now tell people that this had been their war work, although they were still not allowed to divulge all the details. <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/written_answers/1978/jan/12/official-secrets-enigma-and-ultra#S5CV0941P0_19780112_CWA_200> [accessed 15/11/17]

[18] Marigold Philips qtd. in Michael Smith, *The Debs of Bletchley Park and Other Stories* (London: Aurum Press, 2015), p. 263.

[19] Maggie Broughton-Thompson, qtd. in *The Debs of Bletchley Park*, p. 265.

[20] Lady Jean Fforde, qtd. in *Bletchley Girls*, p. 288.

[21] Pat Davies, qtd. in *Bletchley Girls*, p. 288.

secrecy of Bletchley in *My Road to Bletchley Park* reveals how much it impacted her life. She even admits about the Park: 'now it has started to dominate my life after the fifty-year ban on secret information has been lifted and can now be told. Hence the writing of this book', as well as declaring: 'it was the notoriety of Bletchley Park, that secret of secret stations being unveiled after all these years that prompted me to write what I have'.[22] Quoted in *We Kept the Secret*, Jenny Conduit Stanmore (née Davies) experienced a similar release to Luke. Conduit Stanmore reminisces how: 'when F.W.Winterbotham's book *The Ultra Secret* was published in 1974 and the story exploded on television and in the newspapers, I found that I was unable to stop chattering about it for days'.[23] She explains further: 'all this knowledge with which I had expected to go to the grave came bubbling up to the surface' (p. 101). Both Luke's and Conduit-Stanmore's words clearly indicate the desire to speak about their past once the restrictions had been lifted, a freeing up of controls which finally allowed them to voice their experiences, thereby joining mainstream narratives about the Second World War. As Gilmore argues: 'for many writers, autobiography's domain of first-person particulars and peculiarities offers an opportunity to describe their lives and their thoughts about it'.[24] They are subsequently given the ability 'to offer, in some cases, corrective readings; and to emerge through writing as an agent of self-representation, a figure, textual to be sure but seemingly substantial, who can claim "I was there" or "I am here"' (p. 9). This chance was very much seized by the women whose memoirs are discussed here; official secrecy took over their personal life stories, denying them the chance to make a textual, or even verbal claim about their place in history. As a result of this impetus to remain quiet, Rozanne Colchester declares: 'I had no war story! No war story!', illustrating how being included in the collective memoir of *Bletchley Girls* allowed her to write about her past, to finally create her war story so long after the end of the Second World War.[25] Whilst it must be acknowledged that the men who worked at the Park had similar problems, to the extent that some were never able to tell their parents what they did in the war before their parents died, the women's situation bears particular note because of their already marginalised position as female war workers in

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[22] Luke, p. 28 and p. 39.

[23] Jenny Conduit Stanmore qtd. in *We Kept the Secret*, pp. 100-101.

[24] Leigh Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 9.

[25] Rozanne Colchester, qtd. in *Bletchley Girls*, p. 286.

the traditionally masculine sphere of warfare.[26] They were therefore further excluded from mainstream war narratives by the need to keep the official secrets surrounding their war work, a banishment that their works of life writing discussed here have begun to redress.

Fictions of Authenticity

Issues of how history should be written, who gets to speak, and the implications of how it is depicted are central to the texts under discussion in this thesis. Faced with the complexity of representing the past, and the particular challenges of writing war, the historical fictions studied in this chapter foreground the ultimate impossibility of authenticity inherent to the genre. Brooke Rose's *Remake*, an autobiographical novel, also directly engages with the difficulties of textually representing a life. By exposing the challenges of their task, the texts emphasize how the past can never truly be known, only ever glimpsed through the words of others; the resulting vision is a construct shaped by hegemonic discourses as well as the very nature of the writing process.

The techniques used in these texts in their exploration of the nature of historical representation include protagonists professing to be writing to an implied reader, and who either openly express a knowledge of the problems of writing about the past, or who 'write' narratives with multiple layers. In addition, some of the texts deploy paratexts, a narrative choice which mimics the paratextual framework used by non-fiction texts. Through the claim that fictional characters are historical figures, as well as by making historical figures into characters, these works of fiction foreground the parallels between the two forms, illustrating how they are dependent on similar techniques in order to create a coherent narrative.

The Tiger Claw and *Codename Verity* both feature protagonists who claim to be writing the text themselves. This device functions by mimicking the narrative structures of life writing, casting these texts as historical testimonies rather than fiction. Both texts are consequently able to question the divide between the two genres, as well as engage with problems of writing about the past. *Codename Verity* opens with the line: 'I AM A COWARD'.[27] It is a declaration the protagonist, Verity, makes because she has made a deal with SS-Hauptsturmführer von Linden 'to give you everything you

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[26] McKay, p. 311.

[27] Elizabeth Wein, *Codename Verity* (New York: Hyperion, 2013), p. 3.

ask, everything I can remember' (p. 3). In return, 'von Linden sold my clothes back to me piece by piece' (p. 4). Verity had been sent into France by the Special Operations Executive, but was caught soon after her arrival 'because I'd looked the wrong way before crossing the street' (p. 7), rescued from being run over by 'that obliging agent of yours' (p. 6). Imprisoned, Verity makes her deal with von Linden, telling her story both to him and the reader through her writing. *The Tiger Claw* also opens with the protagonist imprisoned, writing from her cell. The text is a fictional biography of Noor Inayat Khan, using many of the real names but departing quite heavily from the known details of Inayat Khan's life. In Pforzheim prison, the fictional Noor asks her jailer, Vogel, for paper, offering to write fables for his children, but with the hidden intent of writing down her own story.[28]

In addition to claiming that the protagonist is the author of the text, creating an implied author, both *The Tiger Claw* and *Codename Verity* write to an implied reader, further complicating the literary exchange being undertaken. The texts use this figure of an implied reader to engage with the problems of establishing an authentic historical narrative. For *The Tiger Claw*, the use of an implied author and reader allows Baldwin to explore ideas about writing memories of the past and the border between life writing and fiction. In *Codename Verity,* Wein uses this trope to similar purposes by engaging with problems of historical representation and narrative truth. The choice of codename, and indeed title, should be remarked upon here; it is perhaps a tongue in cheek gesture by Wein, a nod to the questioning of the possibilities of authentic narrative explored through the text. Both authors expose the devices through which non-fictional narratives are constructed, an undertaking which reveals their attempt to cast their narratives as authentic history, whilst highlighting the flaws inherent in this very proposition.

The initial layer of narrative in *Codename Verity* is Verity's confession. During Verity's imprisonment, she is asked to 'cough up everything I can remember about the British War Effort', given two weeks and 'as much paper as I need'.[29] She details how, because of her deal with von Linden: 'the pullover cost me *four sets of wireless code* – the full lot of encoding poems, passwords and frequencies' (p. 4). In addition to the code she is asked for other information, including the locations of the British airfields

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[28] For the purposes of clarity, the historical figure will be referred to as 'Inayat Khan' and the fictional character as 'Noor'.

[29] Wein, p. 4.

and aircraft types. On this last subject, Verity writes: 'I will tell you all the aircraft types I know, starting with the Puss Moth. That was the first aircraft my friend Maddie ever flew' (p. 7). Verity adds: 'if I tell you about Maddie you'll understand why we flew here together' (p. 7). On the premise of giving von Linden information about British planes, Verity actually tells the story of her friendship with Maddie, the central narrative of the text.

Verity's writing enables Wein to tell the story of Verity and Maddie from a dramatic setting, foreshadowing that something will go wrong for Verity to end up in prison. It is significant that the same device, that of the implied reader (or in this case implied readers), functions both to create a sense of authenticity, and to question the very possibility of writing an authentic narrative. This tension between attempting historical veracity whilst knowing that such an endeavour is ultimately impossible haunts the text, a conflict which serves to destabilize its representation of the past.

Codename Verity continues this textual layering with the addition of another written account. This second narrative is written by Maddie, whose plane, which was carrying Verity, crashed. Maddie is then rescued by the Resistance as Verity had previously parachuted out of the plane. Maddie writes in her ATA Pilot's Note Book to tell her story, using the process to help herself organise her memories: 'can't think straight unless I write it' (p. 212). Her narrative is established as another historical testimony, framed as a comforting device, yet one which also functions on a narrative level to give the reader more information about events outside of Verity's perspective.

Through Maddie's narrative we learn that the Resistance group she has joined are planning to rescue Verity, but that the mission goes wrong and they are unable to free her. However, Verity recognises Maddie's crying and calls out a prearranged code: 'KISS ME, HARDY! Kiss me, QUICK!' (p. 285). The code meant that if one of them were to be in dire circumstances, the other would shoot them. Having failed to rescue Verity and aware that as a result she would be tortured and taken to a concentration camp, upon hearing the code words Maddie shoots her friend, killing her. When Maddie is recovering from the shock of Verity's death, she receives a 'huge pile of paper' – Verity's writings (p. 293). Maddie reads them and realizes: '[Verity] could have told them *so much*, she knew SO MUCH, and all she gave them was fake code' (p. 294), coming to the epiphany: 'she never told them ANYTHING' (p. 295). In fact, it turns out that Verity was using the text to write a code giving the network the necessary information to destroy the Gestapo HQ and rescue the prisoners. Verity had enlisted the

help of Engel, her female guard, who underlined the instructions and information about the building hidden inside the text. These hints include statements such as: 'there was an air raid and everybody scrambled to the shelters as usual … for two hours,' and 'the Gestapo use the ground floor and two mezzanines for their own accommodation and offices' (p. 299). Reading her friend's words, Maddie is gifted with a plan of attack and vital knowledge about the building, which means that the Resistance group can rescue all the prisoners and destroy it.

Verity's manuscript has multiple functions. It serves as information and instructions for the mission of destroying the Gestapo HQ, and allows Verity's story to be told against a dramatic background. The text also has a third purpose – to tell the story of Verity and Maddie, the friendship at the heart of the narrative. Reading Verity's script, Maddie realizes: 'although it's riddled with nonsense, altogether it's *true* – Julie's told our story, mine and hers, our friendship, so truthfully. It is *us*' (p. 297). In addition to recounting their friendship, for Maddie, the text helps her to remember her friend: 'with her words in my mind while I'm reading, she is as real as I am' (p. 297). The text serves as a memorial for Verity: 'she's *right here*. Afraid and exhausted, alone, but *fighting*. Flying in silver moonlight in a plane that can't be landed, stuck in the climb – alive, alive, ALIVE' (p. 297).

The text Verity 'writes' purports to tell secrets, but actually gives a whole different set of information, as well as the story of the relationship between Verity and Maddie. This interplay between truth and lies, coded messages and texts written with multiple purposes is typical of the historical fiction genre. De Groot argues that historical fiction 'undermines the totalizing effects of historical representation and points out that what is known is always partial, always a representation', and that subsequently, the historical novel 'raises questions about the virtue of representation and the choices made by both author and reader in interrogating and understanding the world'.[30] Through techniques such as creating narratives with multiple layers, as well as protagonists who themselves profess to be writing and textually reconstructing their pasts, Wein is clearly tapping into the capacity of the historical fiction genre to play with these questions of truth and authenticity. Significantly, this is an undertaking she attempts whilst simultaneously claiming that the narrative her text tells is authentic. A

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[30] Jerome De Groot, *Remaking History, The Past in Contemporary Historical Fictions* (Milton: Taylor and Francis, 2015), p. 14.

conflict is created between an awareness of the impossibility of her task and the need for the narrative to be realistic, a dilemma which lies at the heart of the endeavour of historical representation.

The Tiger Claw uses the figure of the implied reader to engage in a similar questioning of the possibility of coherent historical representation and the difficulties of writing when memory is involved. Noor's narrative takes the form of a memoir, or autobiography. It is therefore useful to apply theories about life writing to the text. As Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury and Penny Summerfield argue: 'autobiography is to do with recovering a past (as well as with the projection of a future) and depends on the deployment of an often shifting, partial and contested set of personal or collective memories'.[31] This understanding of autobiography emphasises how life writing texts are formed from competing memories, a narrative pattern mimicked and indeed foregrounded in the fictional autobiography told by *The Tiger Claw*.

Noor is seeking to remember her lover Armand, declaring: '*I write so you can see me, so Armand will appear again by the telling*'.[32] In addition to this attempt to textually memorialize her lover, Noor is also writing to her unborn child, '*for you, ma petite, my unborn audience of one*' (p. 267). Crucially, Noor also asks herself: '*do I remember for the sake of shedding my past or to hold on to it? Do I truly remember my actions or do I tell only the stories I wish you to know of me?*' (p. 273). Noor's words highlight a well-known problem with the autobiographical form – the manipulation of material so that events are presented in a positive light. Through creating a character who is writing about her past and who foregrounds this awareness of the complicated nature of testimony and the degree to which it is a construct, Baldwin challenges the line between fiction and life writing; the fictional text is cast as life writing, yet even this form is unable to accurately convey the past. As a result, Baldwin's attempt to claim authenticity by suggesting that *The Tiger Claw* is a memoir is undermined, if the difficulties of creating this sense of reality in traditional life writing are also highlighted.

The subjective natures of memory and life writing narratives are emphasised throughout *The Tiger Claw*. In a similar fashion to Maddie's decision in *Codename*

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[31] Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury and Penny Summerfield, 'Introduction', in *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories, Methods*, ed. by Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury and Penny Summerfield (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 1-22 (p. 4). Ebook.

[32] Shauna Singh Baldwin, *The Tiger Claw,* 2nd edn. (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2005), p. 6. Original italics here and all other instances.

Verity to write to try to remember and understand what is happening to her, Noor declares: *'I write, not because this story is more important than all others, but because I have so great a need to understand it'* (p. 5). She adds: *'what I say is my truth and lies together, amalgam of memory and explication'* (p. 5). This mix of material echoes Verity's written narrative constructed from both fake and real secrets. The use of written testimonies which are overt about their own status as constructed narrative demonstrates Wein and Baldwin's awareness of the problems involved in attempts to represent the past typical of the historical fiction genre. They endeavour to negotiate these obstacles through highlighting them, but instead reveal the innate fragility which such an endeavour creates within the text.

As De Groot observes, this tension and awareness of the text's status as both fiction and attempt to be 'truthful' is an integral aspect of the historical novel: 'the contract made with the audience is one of trust, the reader or viewer allowing the untruths that are being presented'.[33] Consequently: 'the reader acknowledges their fictive quality while, at some level, "believing" in the realism and authenticity of the text' (p. 13). Thus, historical fictions 'allow a culture to think in new ways about what historical engagement, and the writing of the past, might actually be, and to rethink the terms of historical understanding' (p. 2). De Groot's analysis illustrates how the historical fiction genre is the ideal space in which to explore problems of historical representation, issues which these texts engage with through their mimicry of the narrative structures of non-fiction.

One of the key literary devices used by these works of historical fiction is the framing material deployed by authors to assert their authority to construct their version of the past. De Groot notes: 'a key site for this articulation is the material historical framework – the author's note, introduction or explanatory section appended to all historical fiction since Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814)'.[34] *Codename Verity* follows this trend, finishing with an 'author's debriefing'.[35] Wein uses paratexts to try to gain at least a glimmer of authenticity for her representation of the past. She includes details about her research process, describing how she 'started with research' (p. 334), as well as a bibliography which contains biographical texts such as *A Life in Secrets: The Story of Vera Atkins and the Lost Agents of SOE* (2005) by Sarah Helm and *Mission*

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[33] De Groot, *Remaking History*, p. 13.
[34] De Groot, *Consuming History,* p. 217.
[35] Wein, p. 334.

Improbable (1991) by Beryl Escott.[36] These paratextual elements are crucial. As De Groot observes: 'historical novels are obsessed with paratexts: footnotes, additions, acknowledgements, bibliographies, author information, maps. From these materials we can garner a huge amount of information about the text itself, how it is being presented and represented'.[37] Such information 'legitimises' the author, and 'ensures that the reader feels a sense of authority and authenticity' (p. 63). These paratexts are integral to the author's attempt to cast their text as authentic, mimicking the construction of traditional life writing and academic narratives.

However, whilst almost seeming to resist acknowledging the fictional nature of her text, Wein is also overt about it, declaring: 'this book is not meant to be a good history, but rather *a good story*'.[38] She adds: 'that's all I ask – that my details be plausible', as well as that 'there's a real story […] behind just about every detail or episode in the book' (p. 336). Wein's words contain a tension, between being open about the fictional nature of the text and a desire to foreground its historicity through a discussion of its source material. De Groot describes this phenomenon as 'the artful mimicry of the historical novelist. They cleave to actuality and real events while at the same time acknowledging that the novel *must* disavow such reality'.[39] This observation about the nature of historical fiction illustrates the ways in which such texts play with traditional concepts of truth and fiction, conscious of their status as textual construct whilst simultaneously trying to hide it.

These questions raised by historical fictions about veracity and authenticity are also engaged with from a different angle by two texts about the SOE, which purport that a fictional character is a historical figure - *Staying Alive* by Alexander Fullerton and *Tightrope* by Simon Mawer. The texts attempt to claim that they are non-fictional narratives rather than fiction, openly deploying the same devices which might be used by a biography, such as National Archive file references, to prove their authority on the subject. The status of what we might class as 'genuine' non-fictional narratives is subsequently questioned. This exploration is particularly troubling given the often already precarious position occupied by female historical figures in mainstream history.

Staying Alive is the fifth and final book in a series about Rosie Ewing, an SOE

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[36] Ibid., pp. 338-339.
[37] De Groot, *The Historical Novel*, p. 63.
[38] Wein, p. 344.
[39] De Groot, *Consuming History,* p. 217.

agent. The text opens with a meeting between Fullerton and Rosie: 'still can't believe it – that I'm sitting here with you. With Rosie – *the* Rosie'.[40] Fullerton confirms that this is the same Rosie who was the protagonist of the other novels in the series, 'about whose exploits in German-occupied France during World War II I'd written several novels' (p. 1). Rosie tells Fullerton she has read his texts, after which he assumes she must have not had too many objections, 'or she'd hardly have invited me to meet her here in Toulouse to hear from her the story I had *not* written, that of her first mission, which I'd had no way of researching' (p. 1). To make a bid of authenticity for his novels, Fullerton claims that Rosie is a real person. This blurring of the line between fiction and life writing is made more realistic due to the secretive nature of the world in which Rosie is said to inhabit – if it is a world of shadows, in which Rosie had 'vanished in Australia quite some while ago', then the possibility that she is real becomes more believable, a play on the limits of knowledge of lives surrounded by secrecy (p. 1).

Fullerton is clearly aware of the impact of clandestine activities on questions of truth and knowledge, exploiting such epistemological uncertainty in an attempt to imply that his fictional text has an historical base. It should be noted that unlike Wein, Fullerton does not include an author's note in the text, and does not give an acknowledgement to its status as fiction, beyond the legal disclaimer in the front matter: 'all characters and events in this publication, other than those clearly in the public domain, are fictitious'.[41] This lack of authorial comment either before or after the text discloses a desire to deny that the text is fiction, moving away from the traditional nod of historical fiction to its own inauthenticity. There is even a mini biography of Fullerton provided at the start of the book, which notes: 'after service in submarines in WW2, Alexander Fullerton learnt Russian and was employed in Germany as a naval liaison officer with units of the Red Army'.[42] This account of the author's life gives him clear Naval and Military credentials.

The absence of an outright declaration that *Staying Alive* is a work of fiction, coupled with the suggestion that it is entirely possible that Fullerton could have known Rosie, reveals a distinct disinclination to admit its genre. In addition, through omitting the paratexts which are commonly used in historical fiction to serve as evidence for the

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[40] Alexander Fullerton, *Staying Alive*, 2nd edn. (London: Sphere, 2007), p. 1.
[41] Ibid., front matter.
[42] Ibid.

author's research ability, Fullerton implies that he did not need to do any research, supporting the impression that he really did interview Rosie. He attempts to deny the fictional status of the text in the process, only refraining from doing so completely because of legal imperatives. The status of non-fictional narratives in relation to fiction is subsequently scrutinised. It is an investigation of the limits of genre, which becomes possible because of the combination of the secrecy surrounding the clandestine world portrayed by the text with the implied suggestion that Rosie is a real historical figure.

This trope of mimicking the narrative structures of non-fiction is also used in *Tightrope*. The claim is made, in the fictional text, that Marian Sutro, the protagonist of a previous book, *The Girl Who Fell From The Sky*, is an historic individual. Mawer attempts this process by mimicking the textual evidence historical accounts use to stake academic authority, as well as associating his fictional character with genuine historical figures. The reliability of life writing narratives and the text's status as fiction are both called into question as the result. This suggestion is problematic, as it probes at the authenticity of the life stories of genuine female historical figures.

Tightrope opens with the narrator, Samuel, the niece of Marian Sutro, going to visit her at her house in Switzerland. The text refers to characters from *The Girl Who Fell From The Sky*. These include a photo of Benoît Bérard: 'the man with whom she had dropped into France in the autumn of 1943', as well as 'Clément Pelletier', a childhood friend of Marian's.[43] The references to the earlier text serve to reaffirm the link between them for the reader, reinforcing the message that this elderly woman Samuel is visiting is the same one who was dropped into France in the first. Through implying that Marian is a real historical figure, Mawer is able to claim that both texts recounted historic events, rather than being fiction. This attempted manipulation of genre indicates an authorial awareness of the porous nature of the line between fiction and non-fiction, a knowledge of the forces at play in textual reconstructions of the past which Mawer exploits in an attempt to write his own version of history.

Samuel's purpose in visiting Marian is to 'close the file' for the security services on what happened to her after she was taken to a concentration camp (loc. 152). Mawer attempts to back up Marian's claims to reality through Samuel thinking, in reference to Marian's early career: 'the story was well known enough, cropping up in books and newspaper articles whenever there was a rush of interest in the French Resistance –

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[43] Simon Mawer, *Tightrope* (London: Little, Brown, 2015), loc. 112. Kindle ebook.

when that film *Odette* came out, for example' (loc. 139). This reference to the film *Odette* (1950), places Marian alongside real SOE agents such as Odette Sansom and Violette Szabo, claiming authenticity through this fictional association with historical figures. Marian also has a fictional National Archive reference for her personnel file, 'HS/9/1089853/2' (loc. 1126). The file reference cleverly mimics that of the real agents, as Noor Inayat Khan's file reference, for example, is HS/9/836/5.[44] The combination of the association with famous historical figures and the fake National Archives file reference sets up Martian as a genuine SOE agent, one who knew the real women but who disappeared: 'Marian Sutro had vanished for good this time'.[45] Mawer is clearly trying to create a space for Marian alongside Inayat Khan and Sansom through the deployment of these techniques, attempting to claim that the fictional text is based on historical reality. However, the troubling consequence of this bid towards authenticity for the fictional characters is that the known events of the lives of Marian's historical counterparts are questioned.

In a similar fashion to Fullerton, Mawer seeks to support this claim for historical authenticity for *Tightrope* by omitting the paratexts which might remind the reader about the text's status as fiction. The known historical narratives about Odette Sansom and Violette Szabo are consequently undermined; already in a vulnerable position due to nature of their work for the clandestine organisation of the SOE, the implication is that the existing textual record of their life stories could also be fictional, or at least contain some made up elements. An example of this querying of women's war experiences is evident in M.R.D. Foot's initial refusal to believe that Odette Sansom had had her toenails pulled out while being interrogated by the Gestapo; Foot claimed that she was making it up due to 'a state of nervous tension so severe that she had considerable trouble for many months in distinguishing fantasy and reality'.[46] Foot was sued by Sansom, and was forced as a result to rescind his comments and issue a second edition of *SOE In France* without this accusation (1968). Foot's disinclination to believe Sansom illustrates how because of their position as women in a world where secrecy reigned, the female SOE agents occupy a precarious space. Mawer's suggestion that Marian could have been one of the agents seeks to exploit this

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[44] The National Archives online catalogue <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C8944942> [accessed 19/11/17]

[45] Mawer, loc. 6098.

[46] Foot, p. 431.

epistemological uncertainty, a depiction of her character which has the potential to undermine the historical position of the genuine female agents.

Mawer is mimicking the narrative devices a biography might deploy in order to assert its status as a non-fictional narrative, but in a fictional setting, hoping through copying the narrative structures of life writing to be able to convince the reader that the text presents history, rather than fiction. The use of these techniques functions to expose the narrative structures through which non-fictional texts are created, revealing the instability of the supports which shore up recreations of the past. With such fragility at their core, the implication is that historical representations are open to shaping by a range of cultural anxieties and obsessions.

The opposite technique to that deployed by Fullerton and Mawer is used in *Remake* as well as in *The Tiger Claw*. Here, the textual forces at play in the construction of narratives about the past are foregrounded through the decision to transform historical characters into fiction. This device functions in a similar fashion to those used by Mawer and Fullerton, questioning the reliability of non-fiction narratives through emphasizing the ways in which the narrative structures of life writing and fiction are interchangeable. The similarity leads both genres to rely on hegemonic discourses in an attempt to counter the innate difficulties involved in creating a coherent, marketable representation of the past.

Baldwin casts Noor Inayat Khan as a fictional character through the use of the genre of biographical fiction, and Brooke-Rose rewrites herself as 'Tess' in order to write her story. Both authors give justifications for their decisions. For Baldwin, the choice to write an alternative, fictional narrative for Noor Inayat Khan stemmed from reading non-fiction about her, and finding that 'these non-fiction accounts raised more questions about Noor than their facts could answer'.[47] As a result, Baldwin decided to create a portrayal of Inayat Khan which 'begins from fact but departs quickly into imagination, bending time, creating characters around her, rearranging or inventing some events to explore as if through her eyes, to feel what may have been in her heart'.[48] Baldwin's words express a desire to explore Inayat Khan's life and feelings outside of the limits of traditional life writing, leading to the journey into narrative non-fiction. These technical choices are a reverse of those used by Fullerton and Mawer, yet

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[47] Baldwin, Authors Note.
[48] Ibid.

raise the same questions about truth and authenticity, and whether it is possible to ever know what really happened and why in a world surrounded by secrets.

In Brooke-Rose's autobiographical novel *Remake,* which covers her time at Bletchley Park, she deals with these problems of telling and truth through recasting herself into the role of Tess, amongst other techniques. As a result of Brooke-Rose's experiences at Bletchley: 'Tess acquires a reverence for knowledge', which is 'soon transformed into an awareness of the power knowledge gives'.[49] Armed with this understanding of the possibility of controlling what is written about an historical life, Brooke-Rose visibly controls the memory of herself conveyed to the present through *Remake*.

Brooke-Rose declares 'bifografy is always part fiction', asking 'is the portrayal a betrayal? Always is'.[50] This statement is a clear example of her deliberate, self-conscious engagement with the problems of accurate narrative representation via this openness about *Remake*'s status as unreliable text. Aware of these intrinsic difficulties involved in life writing, when writing *Remake,* Brooke-Rose decided 'to scrap all personal pronouns and all possessive adjectives', not wishing just to recount the events of her life as they happened.[51] The choice for the name 'Tess' as the character who represents Brooke-Rose in the text was made 'as a play on *text* (which gave *textile* and *tisser* in French, and *tessitura* in Italian, the quality of a voice) and a further play on *tessellate*, to build up with small tiles' (p. 60). The other people in her life are also renamed as they become characters, with Brooke-Rose deciding: 'all the people who most influenced me from childhood on, who "made" me, those I call the mentors, must be called John, or a variation' (p. 60). For example, Brooke-Rose writes: 'I call my mother Jeanne, my sister Joanne, my favourite aunt Vanna (Giovanna), a cousin Jean-Luc' (p. 60). Consequently, as Michela Canepari-Labib argues: 'the author's rehandling of that raw material produces something – and someone – quite different from the person who actually had those experiences', illustrating the impact of these decisions on the text.[52] As well as keeping Brooke-Rose 'interested', they create

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[49] Christine Brooke-Rose, *Remake* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1996), p. 107.

[50] Ibid., p. 11 and p. 165.

[51] Christine Brooke-Rose, *Invisible Author: Last Essays* (Columbus: Ohio University State Press, 2002), p. 57.

[52] Michela Canepari-Labib, *Word-Worlds: Language, Identity and Reality in the Work of Christine Brooke-Rose* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2002), p. 262.

another layer between the events of her life and the events as retold in *Remake*.[53] The line between life writing and fiction is blurred through the decision to foreground the problems of autobiographical writing. The degree to which autobiography is still dependent on the imposition of a coherent narrative becomes an integral part of the text, reminding the reader that all texts are constructs, however much they might appear to be formed from unmediated memories.

Remake, *The Tiger Claw*, *Codename Verity*, *Staying Alive* and *Tightrope* all engage with the problems of historical representation. Mimicking the devices used by traditional works of life writing to prove their validity, these texts expose the narrative structures deployed by non-fiction narratives. However, through this very process they reveal the impossibility of their project; demonstrating the degree to which the line between life writing and history and fiction can be blurred and crossed, they emphasize the difficulties involved in creating an 'authentic' narrative. This resistance to depiction is highly significant, as it creates an innate fragility which many of the texts under discussion in this thesis attempt to counter by using the recognisable and familiar narrative patterns and tropes provided by hegemonic discourses.

Negotiating the Traces of a Life

The question of how to create the image of a coherent and authentic past is also relevant to life writing. Issues these texts must negotiate include a lack of verifiable information about an event, as well as how the information an individual shares about their life can change according to the context in which it is told. In their navigation of these challenges, the texts are reliant on the frameworks provided by hegemonic discourses to achieve narrative coherence, with the result that their constituting anxieties and obsessions have a strong influence on the texts. Marita Sturken's insight that 'biographies and autobiographies mark the moment where personal stories are imbued with cultural meaning', supports this argument; it illustrates how the transition from lived experience to text cannot escape the shaping provided by these wider narratives and the cultural concerns and fantasies contained within.[54]

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[53] Brooke-Rose, *Invisible Author*, p. 57.

[54] Marita Sturken, 'Personal Stories and National Meanings: Memory, Reenactment and the Image', in *The Seductions of Biography*, ed. by Mary Rhiel and David Suchoff (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 31-41 (p. 31).

The effects of the negotiation of the complexities of representing a life become clear when one examines life writing accounts of two important historical female figures - Nancy Wake and Noor Inayat Khan. Both women worked for SOE, although they did different jobs in the field, as Wake was a courier and network organiser who worked with the *Maquis*, whereas Inayat Khan was a wireless operator in Paris. However, the main difference in how their lives have been written about is that Wake survived the war, whilst Inayat Khan was executed in a concentration camp. Wake was consequently able to contribute to the textual shaping of her life, whilst Inayat Khan's life has been constructed through the recollections of others, a variation which has a deep impact on the texts as she is denied any semblance of narrative agency. Her life as a result is written into Orientalist and romantic narratives, a shaping into familiar patterns which also happens in biographies about Nancy Wake, although to a lesser extent. Both women are still mentioned regularly in the media and life writing, Wake as a feminist role model and Inayat Khan due to the recent upsurge of interest in minority experiences of the Second World War.

There is a wide range of texts available about both agents, rendering them perfect examples for exploring the ways in which women's experiences of clandestine warfare have been shaped by both textual imperatives and cultural concerns and preoccupations. These texts range from biographical fiction, to biography aimed at both adults and children, as well as Nancy Wake's autobiography. Focusing on the different ways in which these two women's lives have been written about allows for an exploration of how works of life writing negotiate the challenges of transforming a life into text. In the navigation of the complexities of trying to place a narrative coherence on an individual's lived experience, the reliance on the narrative patterns and tropes provided by hegemonic war and gender discourses becomes apparent.

Repeated Stories: Noor Inayat Khan's Arrest

Across biographies about Noor Inayat Khan, there are repetitions of the same incident. As this chapter will show, this version of events stems from the report of one man, a single account which has since become an integral part of the web of stories that surrounds Inayat Khan. This endurance is important, as it illustrates how representations of a life in biography are dependent on the narratives provided by others, which are themselves hostage to a range of cultural anxieties and obsessions.

Such shaping is particularly relevant in the case of Noor Inayat Khan: because of her minority heritage, her life has been written into one particular narrative – an Orientalist narrative in which she is cast as a tiger, becoming the enigmatic Other. Exploring representations of her experiences across multiple texts offers up the perfect ground to investigate how a life can be written into certain paths by the voices of others, who would seek to remove a woman's agency. Inayat Khan's life has unfortunately been particularly vulnerable in this regard because of her execution during the war.

The circumstances of Noor Inayat Khan's arrest by the Gestapo are told in a more or less consistent way across biographies of her life. In *Women Heroes of World War II: 26 Stories of Espionage, Sabotage, Resistance, and Rescue* (2011), Kathryn J. Atwood describes how: 'one day when Noor opened her apartment door, a French man named Pierre Cartaud, who was working for the Gestapo, was there to meet her'.[55] Both this element of the encounter, as well as Inayat Khan's actions when Cartaud tries to arrest her, remain uniform across the life writing texts which go into the incident in detail, conforming to a version of events which would seem to all stem from one source. In *Real Lives: Noor Inayat Khan* (2013), Gaby Halberstam describes how Inayat Khan 'in a fury of biting, scratching and kicking […] hurled herself at [Cartaud]. Again and again, she sank her teeth into his wrists. She spat his blood back at him'.[56] Once threatened with a gun, Inayat Khan is described as having stopped attacking Cartaud, instead yelling: '*Sales Boches!* Filthy Germans!', whilst 'hissing and clawing at them' (p. 83). Atwood depicts a similar version of events: 'if Cartaud thought it would be easy to arrest this slim, petite woman, he was very wrong. She fought him violently, clawing and biting at his wrists until he was bleeding heavily'.[57] Beryl E. Escott's telling of the encounter in *Mission Improbable: A Salute to the RAF Women of SOE in Wartime France* also bears a strong resemblance to these two accounts. She describes how Inayat Khan 'fought like the "Tiger of Mysore", a name given to her ancestor Tipu Sultan. She fought so viciously, biting his wrists and clawing at his eyes, that despite his gun he was forced to summon more help from Gestapo headquarters'.[58] The two key, repeated elements of these reports are the biting and clawing, both means of

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[55] Kathryn J. Atwood, *Women Heroes of World War II: 26 Stories of Espionage, Sabotage, Resistance, and Rescue* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2011), pp. 173-174.

[56] Gaby Halberstam, *Real Lives: Noor Inayat Khan* (London: A & C Black, 2013), p. 83.

[57] Atwood, p. 174.

[58] Beryl E. Escott, *Mission Improbable: A Salute to the RAF Women of SOE in Wartime France* (Sparkford: Patrick Stephens Limited, 1991), p. 77.

fighting which are animalistic.

Shrabani Basu in *Spy Princess* (2008) depicts a similar scene again: 'a violent struggle followed. Cartaud seized Noor by her hands, but she fought back savagely and bit his wrists. As Cartaud tried to free himself, Noor continued to struggle and bit him harder, drawing blood'.[59] Whilst this version of events does not depict Inayat Khan clawing Cartaud during the fight, Basu does include a statement by Ernst Vogt, one of the German officers who arrested Inayat Khan: 'Madeleine sitting bolt upright on the couch, was clawing the air in her frustrated desire to get at him, and looked exactly like a tigress'.[60] This statement originates in a report included in Jean Overton Fuller's 1952 biography of Inayat Khan, *Madeleine*, republished and revised in 1957 as *Born for Sacrifice*, an account which predates the others. It should be noted that Vogt's choice of language was likely fabricated to make Inayat Khan appear more exotic in the retelling, a particularly relevant twist given her Indian heritage; his report becomes an attempt to place an Orientalist narrative on this unusual woman whom he probably felt a need to categorize, to explain, reaching as a result to this easily accessible framework.

The repetition of the motif of Noor Inayat Khan clawing and biting like a tiger across the life writing accounts demonstrates how an embellished statement by a German officer has become part of the version of her life which has passed into posterity. It is an image which carries a central role in the textual memorialization of her life, yet, as I have shown, it is a story that was most likely exaggerated by a Gestapo officer wanting to explain why Inayat Khan was not easy to capture. Indeed, as Inayat Khan was a slightly built female who reportedly made several mistakes during her time as an active agent, it may have been important to Vogt that she would be written into history as a more formidable antagonist, a retelling which, through the use of the tiger symbolism, casts her as the exotic, enigmatic Other.[61] The reoccurrence of this scene in life writing about Inayat Khan illustrates the degree to which such key character defining events in life writing accounts are themselves narrative constructs, strengthened by each re-use. Just as fictional representations involve the weaving together of material into a coherent whole, so life writing works in a similar way, particularly when, as demonstrated in this instance, there can be convenient, lazy

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[59] Shrabani Basu, *Spy Princess* (London: The History Press, 2008) loc. 3258. Kindle ebook.

[60] Ernst Vogt, qtd. in *Spy Princess,* loc. 3262. One of Inayat Khan's code names was Madeleine.

[61] Despite many reservations from her trainers, Inayat Khan survived much longer in the field than expected, even against the usual standards for wireless operators.

narratives at hand such as Orientalist stereotypes. This parity with the construction of fiction is significant, illustrating how life writing texts have the same need for narrative coherence, and are therefore reliant on similar frameworks which provide familiar and easily recognisable tropes and narrative patterns.

'We cannot know the past except through its texts': Noor Inayat Khan's Death[62]

As Linda Hutcheon argues: 'we cannot know the past except through its texts: its documents, its evidence, even its eye-witness accounts are *texts*'.[63] This observation is particularly relevant to a discussion of life writing about Noor Inayat Khan; her early death means that anyone trying to reconstruct her life is denied even the text of personal testimony, reliant only on those produced by other people. As a result, the events surrounding her death have been constructed from a web of texts, her agency removed in terms of being able to write her own story; Inayat Khan's life is inscribed instead through others' voices and the enduring narratives about gender and race with which they engage.

Noor Inayat Khan was executed in a concentration camp, and there is therefore an absence of definitive information about her death. Even the place of her execution has been disputed, as she was first thought to have been killed at Natzweiler, before the mistake was realized and her death at Dachau concentration camp confirmed. There are only two documents which purport to give the full information about what happened to Inayat Khan, and some of her biographers even contest the validity of these letters, which are based on eye witness accounts. Examining how her death has been portrayed in traditional life writing and biographical fiction allows an interrogation of how this lack of information is navigated by the authors; as a result of the need to weave together the (at times questionable) source material, the texts are reliant on the narrative frameworks provided by hegemonic discourses to fill in the gaps.

All the texts about Inayat Khan under discussion here follow the confirmed, second version of events, in that her death occurs at Dachau. However, there are also two versions of events at Dachau, a variation which unveils the hegemonic gender discourses which have shaped the textual memorialization of Noor Inayat Khan. The first is, as described by Sarah Helm in *A Life in Secrets*, 'perhaps a comforting and

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[62] Linda Hutcheon, *Poetics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 16.
[63] Ibid.

heroic one, telling of how the four women, holding hands, went to their deaths bravely, from a single shot to the head'.[64] This is the only tale of events given in *A Quiet Courage: Women Agents in the French Resistance* (1990) by Liane Jones: 'they were told to kneel down; they knelt in pairs, holding hands and were shot one by one in the back of the neck'.[65] *Women Heroes of World War II* includes a similar story, declaring only: 'she was taken from the prison that night and moved to Dachau with three other female British agents. They were all shot the next day and their bodies burned so that there would be no trace of them', a very minimal description of her death.[66] It is intriguing that this version of Inayat Khan's death appears in multiple texts, and that for some accounts it is the only story included; it indicates a desire to write Inayat Khan into a narrative in which, whilst she does die, it is in as clean and honourable a fashion as possible. She is cast in the mould of a stereotypically feminine heroine, one who dies as a martyr for her cause without suffering. This depiction illustrates how, in their attempt to negotiate the dearth of information about Inayat Khan's death, these texts rely on hegemonic gender discourses for their representation of events, obeying cultural expectations about women which do not associate them with violence, except as its victims.

The second version of events, which is now believed to be the most accurate, is that Inayat Khan was stripped and savagely beaten, before being shot alone. *Spy Princess, Women Wartime Spies* (2011) by Ann Kramer, *A Life in Secrets* and *Mission Improbable* all include both forms of Noor's death. For *A Life in Secrets*, *Spy Princess* and *Women Wartime Spies*, the story of Noor being beaten before her death is presented as an accurate account.[67] In contrast, *Mission Improbable* questions this sequence of events. Escott declares: 'an uncorroborated account relates that when the girls were separated on arrival, [Inayat Khan] was deprived of many of her clothes, badly beaten and then chained overnight', adding: 'next morning, after the other three had died, she

[64] Sarah Helm, *A Life In Secrets: The Story of Vera Atkins and The Lost Agents of SOE*, 2nd edn. (London: Abacus, 2006), p. 329. The four women were Yolande Beekman, Madeleine Damerment, Elaine Plewman and Noor Inayat Khan.

[65] Liane Jones, *A Quiet Courage*: *Women Agents in the French Resistance* (London: Bantam Press, 1990), p. 321.

[66] Atwood, p. 175.

[67] It should be noted that *A Life in Secrets* also reports: 'Vera [Atkins] believed that not only had Nora been appallingly beaten but she had also been raped', a version of the story which does not appear elsewhere (p. 417).

was shot alone in her cell, her final word being *Liberté*'.[68] Escott's use of 'uncorroborated' indicates that she distrusted the source of this version of events, an intriguing attitude given that both come from eye-witnesses; the implication is that Escott had a certain vision for Inayat Khan's life story, which was disrupted by this alternative account.

Helm and Basu reveal that this 'uncorroborated account' came from two letters 'received by Jean Overton Fuller's publishers after her book appeared in 1952'.[69] The first of these letters was from Colonel Wickey, who worked on war crimes investigations for the Canadian military.[70] Wickey was investigating the 'Nora Baker' case, and came into contact with a German officer who was able to connect him with a member of the Dachau staff.[71] The camp staff member told Wickey that the 'three French women' with Inayat Khan were 'handled very roughly', 'slapped', and 'kicked several times before being shot' (p. 416). He then described how: '"the Creole" was kept outside, chained and almost naked. She was subjected to ridicule, was slapped and kicked several times'.[72] Inayat Khan was apparently 'left all night long lying on the floor in a cell'; the next day: 'they gave her some more rough handling' (p. 416). He finishes: 'finally in a cell they shot her with a small pistol and dead or half dead she was carried by some other inmates and thrown into the furnace', adding: 'that the person was the unfortunate Inayat Khan is well nigh 99 per cent certain' (p. 416). This letter reveals the source of the version of Inayat Khan's death in which she is savagely beaten, one of the key documents which has become part of her life story.

There is also another letter, known as the 'Gibraltar letter', which describes Inayat Khan being beaten, adding in the detail of Khan's final word being 'liberté'. This letter came from a 'man in Gibraltar who said he had been a prisoner in Dachau. […] He said he had been told by another camp officer, Yoop, how Noor had been killed and described it as "terrible"'.[73] His letter describes how Inayat Khan 'had been stripped, kicked and abused all night by an officer called Ruppert', and that 'when Ruppert got tired and the girl was a "bloody mess", he told her that he would shoot her'

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[68] Escott, p. 81.

[69] Basu, loc. 3732. The book by Overton Fuller referred to here was the first biography of Noor to be published, *Madeleine*. It was republished and revised in 1957 as *Born for Sacrifice*.

[70] Helm, p. 414. Following quotes are from the letter unless otherwise specified.

[71] Inayat Khan was also known as Nora Baker.

[72] Helm, p. 416. The 'Creole' was believed to be Noor due to her Indian heritage.

[73] Basu, loc. 3744. Following quotes are from the letter unless otherwise specified.

(loc. 3745). Finally: 'he ordered her to kneel and put his pistol against her head. The only word she said before dying was "*liberté*"' (loc. 3745). Given the similarities between these two letters and that their versions of events exist in a physical format rather than being hearsay, it is significant that Escott chooses to question their authenticity, suggesting that she preferred the more sanitized version of events.

Through casting aspersions on the validity of the letters, Escott's attitude illustrates how for a biographer, even textual sources will not necessarily be trusted if they do not fit with the author's own preconception of the historical figure they are depicting. Basu demonstrates a similar disinclination to trust blindly, as although she does seem to believe the version of Inayat Khan's death in which she was beaten, Basu makes sure to state: 'whatever did happen on the night of 12/13 September 1944, the only truth was that Noor and her colleagues died a horrible death in Dachau' (loc. 3768). Read together, the biographical depictions of Inayat Khan's death serve as a reminder that life writing is formed from the weaving together of myriad texts and stories into a coherent narrative. The version of historical events which emerges from this textual web is vulnerable to shaping by hegemonic gender discourses, as well as the author's assessment of the veracity of eye-witness accounts and historical documents.

Both works of biographical fiction about Inayat Khan include the sanitised version of the story of her death, using it to emphasise her gallantry and strength of character. In *All That I Have* by Laurent Joffrin, Noor is made to kneel next to another woman. We are told: 'the young woman started to cry' and 'Noor took her hand' to comfort her.[74] The other woman is shot, and then 'Noor straightened herself, bit her lip and cried out loudly: "long live freedom!" Her words were interrupted by the second shot and she fell to the ground with a bullet in the nape of her neck'.[75] This description of Noor's death highlights her determination and empathy with others right to the end of her life, placing her firmly in the heroine role. Read in the light of the life writing texts about Inayat Khan, this description of her death illustrates how Joffrin has chosen a specific version of the past, one which leads to a dramatic and noble death for Inayat Khan, rather than the violence and horror that may have actually happened. Her death

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[74] Laurent Joffrin, *All That I Have*, trans. by Adriana Hunter, 2nd edn. (London: Arrow Books, 2004), p. 341.

[75] Ibid. The choice of words for 'Noor's' final phrase, 'long live freedom', rather than '*liberté*' may be a matter of translation from the original French text, rather than a desire to change this aspect of Inayat Khan's story.

is sanitized in the transition to fictional text, rewritten in such a way as to create a satisfying narrative resolution.

The Tiger Claw contains a very similar version of events. Noor holds hands with a fellow SOE agent, Yolande, and kneels. She thinks: 'not in the back. Not to be shot in the back like prey run to ground. She must turn, turn and face her enemy, look him in the eye'.[76] Her words emphasize Noor's courage in the face of imminent death. However, rather than Noor's last word being '*liberté!'*, here her last thought is '*Armand, I wait for you always'* (p. 540). This change to her story shifts the representation of Noor from a courageous heroine, whose last thoughts were about the importance of freedom, to a stereotypical feminine woman, obsessed with her love for a man to the last. While this element of her death scene does contribute to the romantic plot which runs throughout the text, it also changes the emphasis from the history of a brave woman to a love story, arguably trivialising it. In both *All That I Have* and *The Tiger Claw*, Noor's character is shaped by the narrative concerns of the text, such as the need to create a satisfying narrative resolution and continue the wider themes of the plot, changes which occur because the texts are works of biographical fiction.

Comparing the depiction of Inayat Khan's death in works of life writing and between life writing and biographical fiction reveals the ways in which accounts of key events in biographies of an historical figure's life are both constructed from other texts, and transformed through the transition to literary product. This crossover suggests that life writing and fiction function in similar ways as texts; in order to achieve coherence for their particular reconstruction of historical events, the author must select their preferred version of the past, which is itself constructed from other narratives and sources. Understanding this layering is crucial to an investigation of how these texts engage with hegemonic war discourses; the subject's lives become in consequence written into recognisable and convenient narrative patterns, casting them into familiar stereotypes rather than allowing space for the entirety of their lived experience.

The Shifting Sands of Memory: Nancy Wake's Bike Ride

Personal testimony also involves weaving a coherent narrative, in this case from memory. As part of her work with the Resistance in Occupied France, Nancy Wake undertook a four hundred kilometre bike ride. Significantly, Wake's recollection of her

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[76] Baldwin, p. 540.

behaviour on this trip is different in her autobiography, compared to when it is quoted over a decade later in a biography. This variation is important, as the event in question is how Wake acted when she encountered German sentry points; in her autobiography, she just mentions them in passing, but in the quotations in the biography, she describes how she exploited her awareness of her own femininity to easily get through the checkpoints. The variance between the two accounts demonstrates both the importance of historical context to the representation of a life, as well as how even the memories of an event voiced by an individual can change; a reminder that personal testimony is a form of narrative construction, open to shaping by hegemonic discourses. Marie-Francoise Chanfrault-Duchet supports this reading of autobiography, observing: 'the autobiographical process uses not only facts and events, but also social representations and cultural values'.[77] As a result: 'a tension exists between self and society, which is resolved by the narrative presentation of a unique self which can also be recognised by society' (p. 61). This reading of the nature of the construction of personal testimony illustrates how the self one writes is an identity formed in line with social values; in Nancy Wake's case this shifts with the context in which she writes, as to whether flirting with German soldiers, parodying the mechanisms of the feminine gender in order to get through a checkpoint, was socially acceptable. In the era of the later text, in which feminist theories about the dislocation of gender from sex, such as those espoused by Butler, allow the argument that via parodying gender norms, one can *'displace* the very gender norms that enable the repetition itself', Wake's actions become subversive, a subtle feminist cheer, whereas they might have been viewed somewhat otherwise in 1985.[78]

During an attack by German forces, the Resistance group's radio operator, Denis Rake, buried his radio and codes to stop them being captured. However, the group survived and were left without a radio and any ability to contact London for more supplies. Luckily, Rake had heard of where another operator could be found, so it was decided that Wake would cycle there to avoid road blocks, although she did not have any passable identity papers or a license for the bicycle. Across the texts, the reasons given for Wake being the one to make this trip differ. In *Nancy Wake: The Inspiring Story of One of the War's Greatest Heroines*, Peter Fitzsimons describes how Nancy

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[77] Marie-Francoise Chanfrault-Duchet, 'Textualisation of the Self and Gender Identity in the Life-Story', in *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories, Methods*, pp. 61–75 (p. 61).
[78] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 69.

was chosen for the mission. Some of the other Maquis leaders tried to dissuade her, but Fitzsimons declares: 'none, however, could mount a serious argument against Nancy's two central points'.[79] These were 'that without a radio […] they weren't too far north of being just a bunch of French ferals in the forest' and, more importantly, 'that she was the one who had the best, if not the *only* chance of getting through' (p. 236). This belief was because: 'for though her situation on this bike ride would be precarious in the extreme, they all knew her very sex would be an enormous advantage' (p. 236). Fitzsimons goes into more detail: 'Nancy's past experience had taught her that not only does sexual attraction not recognise national boundaries nor political divisions', with the result that 'she had often been ogled by the very guards supposed to check her', but it had also shown her that 'the innate warmth and intimacy of that attraction was a great soother of possible suspicions' (pp. 236-7). Thus: 'if she got it right, it had to seem beyond the range of possibilities for the Germans between her and her destination', to even conceive of the idea that 'such an attractive young woman could be on a mission specifically devoted to bringing them carnage and destruction in the very near future' (p. 237). Fitzsimons's words imply that Wake was highly aware of her sexuality and how she could flirt with the German officers in order to disguise her true intentions.

This view of Wake, as conscious of how playing up to stereotypes of femininity could get her through the German checkpoints, is also voiced in Atwood's *Women Heroes of World War II*. In response to the argument that Wake 'would be alone and unprotected for all those miles' and therefore should not go, we are told that Nancy replied: 'that was precisely the point […] She was a woman'.[80] In contrast: 'if any of the men tried to pass a German checkpoint, they would be immediately identified as a member of the *Maquis* and arrested, or possibly shot, on the spot' (p. 181). However: 'as a single woman, alone on a bike, Nancy could easily pose as a housewife, simply out shopping for her family. And as Nancy knew from past experience, a pretty woman had ways of getting past German soldiers without any trouble' (p. 181). Both texts create a picture of Wake as being fully aware of the potential of emphasising her femininity to disguise herself, playing into wartime stereotypes in which women were not the aggressor.

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[79] Peter Fitzsimons, *Nancy Wake: The Inspiring Story of One of the War's Greatest Heroines,* 2nd edn. (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002), p. 236.
[80] Atwood, p. 181.

In Nancy Wake's autobiography, this awareness regarding the potential benefits of playing up her femininity to avoid the checkpoints is missing. In comparison to the two biographies, in *The Autobiography of the Woman the Gestapo Called the White Mouse*, Wake only states: 'Denden knew there was an SOE radio operator in Chateauroux', and that 'he gave me as much information as he could remember and it was decided I would leave as soon as I could make myself presentable, even though it was 200 kilometres away'.[81] There are no other references to why she was chosen for the job, or allusions to why being 'presentable' might work against the German sentries. Wake does make a reference to 'hoping that I would pass for a housewife out shopping', conscious of the respectability implied by this social position, but does not appear to think further about why this might work, beyond giving her a reason to be on her bike (p. 134). The absence of an awareness of the proposed deliberate exploitation of gender stereotypes as the reason for choosing Wake, and her success, implies that this element of the biographies is something which has been written in by the biographers, rather than an attitude Wake held herself.

However, Wake's quoted words in Fitzsimons's biography suggests that this lack of self-awareness about the deliberate manipulation of gender stereotypes may not have actually been the case. During the journey, Fitzsimons describes how: 'sometimes, if trucks of passing German soldiers waved at [Nancy] and called something out, she would wave back in a demure fashion',[82] although, 'as she says, "I longed to break their fucking necks"'.[83] The discrepancy between Wake's actions and her thoughts shows that she understood that behaving in a feminine or friendly manner was an effective approach to take towards the German soldiers. This impression is supported by Pattinson in relation to the same incident: 'this example illustrates that there is a fissure between Wake's performance that affirmed gender divisions and the significance of her enactment for the accomplishment of the clandestine tasks in which she was engaged', adding: 'it was in her mobilisation of gender norms that her resistance to them becomes apparent'.[84] Wake is shown to be deliberately exploiting gender norms for her own benefit, a significant variation from the earlier autobiographical absence of such self-awareness.

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[81] Nancy Wake, *The Autobiography of the Woman the Gestapo Called the White Mouse* (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1985), p. 131.

[82] Fitzsimons, p. 239.

[83] Wake, qtd. in Fitzsimons, p. 239.

[84] Juliette Pattinson, 'Passing Performances: The Gendering of Military Identity in the Special Operations Executive' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Lancaster University, 2003), pp. 249-250.

Wake's deliberate use of her femininity is also demonstrated by another reference in the Fitzsimons biography. Wake is quoted, describing how, if she were stopped: 'I would just look over to the officer, flutter my eyelashes and say "Do you want to search *moi*" and they would laugh flirtatiously, "No Mademoiselle, you carry on"'.[85] This story is repeated in both *Nancy Wake: World War Two Secret Agent "The White Mouse"* (2006) by Lucy Hannah, and *Women Heroes of World War II*, becoming part of the lore around her.[86] In Wake's autobiography, however, the only references to German soldiers are: 'one German patrol was checking on the opposite side of the road but they waved me on when they saw me hesitate', and that she was 'able to by-pass the road-blocks'.[87] These differences between Wake's autobiography and her quoted recollections in the biographies illustrate how there were elements of her wartime behaviour which she may have at first been reticent about, as flirting with German soldiers is an action which might have been frowned upon. With the passing of time, however, (the autobiography was written in 1985, and the biography in 2001), she may have felt more comfortable talking about such actions in an environment more understanding about the idea of manipulating gendered behaviours for a certain purpose. The shifts in Wake's recollections of events illustrate how life writing narratives based on personal testimony lack an innate stability, open to shaping both by the whims of the teller as well as the wider narratives which inform the text.

'Narrative imposes a shape on real life': Nancy Wake's Nighties[88]

Indeed, the story of how Wake took 'frilly nighties' with her to France demonstrates how the attempt to make a convincing narrative out of the events of a life can create a sense of coherence which perhaps did not exist at the time. Benton supports this argument about the role of narrative in life writing, arguing: 'narrative imposes a shape on real life that, compared with the messy unpredictability of real life, is both necessary and illusory'.[89] This transformation from lived events to life writing text is clearly evident in how Nancy Wake's choice to bring frilly nighties to France with her is depicted across the texts; through writing about this decision in her autobiography,

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[85] Wake, qtd. in Fitzsimons, p. 239.
[86] Lucy Hannah, *Nancy Wake: World War Two Secret Agent "The White Mouse"* (London: Short Books, 2006), p. 85, Atwood, p. 182.
[87] Wake, p. 134.
[88] Benton, p. 49.
[89] Ibid.

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Wake is able to resolve her internal conflict about bringing them with her, and in the biographies, this choice is presented as a perfectly logical decision for a woman who just parachuted into Occupied territory.[90]

In *Nancy Wake: World War Two Secret Agent "The White Mouse"* by Lucy Hannah we are told that when Wake was dropped into France, she took 'a smart leather hand-bag stuffed full of French francs for emergencies, her favourite Chanel lipstick, and two frilly nighties'.[91] In contrast to this depiction of events, both the fictional *The White Mouse* (2014) by Jack DuArte and Fitzsimons' biography *Nancy Wake: The Inspiring Story of One of the War's Greatest Heroines* suggest that Wake was adamant about bringing the nighties, rather than just happening to have them with her. In *The White Mouse,* DuArte refers to 'a pair of nightdresses that were hand-embroidered that she had insisted on bringing with her',[92] and Fitzsimons writes that Wake took with her to France 'two hand-embroidered nightdresses she'd insisted on bringing'.[93] Through the use of 'insisted', both texts imply that the nighties were important to Wake; the resulting depiction is of a woman who wished to remain feminine in a distinctly masculine world. *Nancy Wake: World War Two Secret Agent* supports the impression of a lack of internal conflict about the co-incidence of these two worlds. The text includes the image of Wake 'with silk sheets made out of her parachute', describing how she 'pulled her regular sleeping partner towards her - a Sten gun'.[94] These images balance the two areas of her life perfectly.

However, in contrast to this portrayal of events, in her autobiography, Wake merely states: 'somehow or other I'd managed to have with me a couple of pretty nighties, leftovers from another life'.[95] This turn of phrase implies that she almost brought them by accident, rather than the importance placed on the nighties in the biographical texts. The sense of a lack of internal coherence on this issue is supported by how the initial, almost casual mention of the nighties in Wake's autobiography sits at odds with the reasons she then gives for wanting the nightdresses. She declares: 'no

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[90] Every item the agents took with them would have been closely scrutinised, so the only reason Wake would have been able to pack the nighties would have been that they were French and would support her story. Items would not have been packed accidentally.

[91] Hannah, pp. 7-8.

[92] Jack DuArte, *The White Mouse* (Cloud 9 Press, 2014), loc. 2154. Kindle ebook.

[93] Fitzsimons, p. 192.

[94] Hannah, p. 92.

[95] Wake, p. 137.

matter how tired I was, after a day in a male world, wearing trousers, I'd change into a frilly nightie' (p. 137). Her words indicate a desire to balance her masculine daytime world with her own sense of femininity, to create a sense of continuity from her previous life as a wealthy woman in Marseilles. Yet her lack of voiced intent about bringing the nightdresses implies that on some level she was not completely psychologically comfortable with the tension between the two areas of her life. The nighties were consequently first mentioned almost as if it were a surprise that she had brought them with her to Occupied France. As Maftei argues: 'writing about […] events as testimony thus becomes a method of attempting to understand, or expressing a search for understanding'.[96] This interpretation of autobiography supports the sense that through writing about aspects of the past that did not quite make sense at the time, Wake was able to assimilate them into other memories.

These variations between the autobiographical and biographical texts demonstrate how contested elements of an historical life can be assimilated easily in biographical accounts; through the imposition of a coherent narrative structure on lived events it becomes possible to pave over the cracks and inconsistencies present in autobiographies. Read together, this material illustrates how lived events are transformed into a coherent narrative through the transition to text. In this instance the process is positive, allowing Wake to resolve internal tension about bringing the nighties. The biographies also weave a vision of Wake's life which presents her choice as a logical decision, balancing the potentially conflicting elements. However, this narrative shaping should be taken with a hint of caution, as the ease with which coherence is crafted about this element of Wake's life illustrates how potentially disruptive and conflicting stories can be smoothed over, particularly when they easily coincide with mainstream gender discourses; Wake's choices to cling on to her femininity whilst also leading a band of *Maquis* fits neatly within traditional notions about women's behaviour in which they do not stray too far from normative gender expectations.

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[96] Maftei, p. 26.

<u>Post-colonial Explorations</u>

Hegemonic narratives are not always so neatly imposed in these texts, however. *The Tiger Claw* is a work of biographical fiction, a genre which enables the text to question hegemonic war discourses, particularly Imperialist narratives, through the rewriting of historical events. The text takes a post-colonial approach to Noor Inayat Khan's life, foregrounding her Indian heritage and known interest in the cause of Indian independence. As a result of this decision to write against the grain, the actions and behaviour of the German forces in France are compared to those of the British in India, an aspect of Britain's behaviour in the Second World War which is often excluded from mainstream narratives. Through the use of the biographical fiction genre, alternative experiences of major historical events can be explored, adding to, and in some cases, challenging the established narratives surrounding Noor Inayat Khan. However, despite this contestation, the text overall adheres to hegemonic war discourses, revealing the strength of these ways of framing the war.

Questioning of hegemonic discourses is evident in how British colonial actions are compared to those of the occupying forces. In *The Tiger Claw,* we are told that, upon hearing about the round ups of Jews in France, Noor was reminded of how: 'the number of Indians gaoled in the past year of civil disobedience against the British Raj had risen to thirty-six thousand. Arrests and persecutions were continuing daily in every city'.[97] Noor makes the direct comparison to people who 'were no less in gaol, without trial, and still wasting away there like her poor Armand and Madame Lydia'.[98] Crucially, Noor then observes: 'such repression and persecution had been carried out by Europeans with impunity for centuries in the East, but never had it happened in Europe. Had a karmic madness afflicted the continent?' (p. 108). It should be noted that Inayat Khan is reported to have been passionate about the cause of Indian independence, suggesting that Baldwin's choice to emphasize the colonial actions of the British stemmed from a desire to bring out this side of Inayat Khan's character, which has not been given much prominence elsewhere. Creating space for this aspect of Inayat Khan's life is a key aspect to consider in terms of the text's wider engagement with hegemonic discourses; Baldwin's inclusion of this element challenges mainstream war narratives, which have traditionally excluded the voices and experiences of minorities

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[97] Baldwin, pp. 107.

[98] Ibid., p. 108. Armand and Madame Lydia are arrested for being Jewish, and are taken to a ghetto and then a concentration camp.

and those from previously colonized countries such as India.

These interpretations of life in Occupied France show the war in a new light, illustrating how occupation of a country was not as unprecedented as it might appear. In *The Tiger Claw,* when Noor goes back to her family home, she discovers that the road had been renamed. She thinks: 'she should have expected this. Renaming was ever the colonizer's ways in India too; the Germans were simply extending the "favours" of colonization to Europe' (p. 403). Through the presence of this theme in the text, Baldwin is able to challenge the hegemony of mainstream war narratives, opening them up to include the experience of millions of Indians whose country was occupied by Britain.

Comparisons between the German occupation of France and the British colonial presence in India continue across *The Tiger Claw*, in references for example to 'streets marked "Germans Only", like streets in India marked "Europeans Only"' (p. 155). We are also given Noor's thoughts upon being told that her friend Monsieur Hoogstraten has been arrested without trial: '*Occupiers – German, English, French, Dutch – consider trials for the colonized a singular favour to be suspended at will for civil disobedience*' (p. 432). In contrast, whilst Basu's *Spy Princess* does give details about the situation in India, including how: 'by the end of 1942, over 60,000 people had been arrested in India', the portrayal is factual, and does not stress the colonial element of events, or draw the same parallels between occupiers evident in *The Tiger Claw*.[99] These variations illustrate the impact of genre on the text, and the capacity for historical fiction to 'open up discursive spaces where ideas about the past, desire, time, horror, nationhood, identity, chaos, legitimacy, and historical authority are debated'.[100] Given its subject matter, *The Tiger Claw* serves as a great example of this generic capacity to read against the grain and reveal previously excluded voices. The comparison of the portrayal of this element of Inayat Khan's life illustrates the ways in which fictional retellings of events can include alternate narratives and voices often excluded from mainstream discourses, challenging their hegemony in the process.

However, despite this thread regarding imperialism which runs throughout *The Tiger Claw*, Noor does also state: 'German repression went beyond British disparagement and suppression of the indigenous in India', thereby maintaining

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[99] Basu, loc. 1198.

[100] De Groot, *Remaking History*, p. 2. *The Tiger Claw* can be classed as both historical fiction and biographical fiction.

mainstream narratives about the Second World War regarding the nature of the enemy.[101] Her words reveal a tension in the text, between a wish to offer a new insight into the occupation of France by comparing it to the experience of colonised India, and the inclusion of an acknowledgment that the German occupation was worse than that of the British or other European forces in India. This conflict demonstrates the text's inability to stray too far from hegemonic, Western-centric narratives about the war, despite its evident desire to question them, or at least offer a new insight. The post-colonial aspect of this text should still be acknowledged, however, as Inayat Khan's experience as an individual with a minority heritage is an aspect of her life which Baldwin is able to explore as a result of the choice of genre; the contribution of the Empire to the Second World War which is so often missed in texts about Inayat Khan is instead foregrounded here. *The Tiger Claw* serves as an example of the ways in which multiple factors can impact a text's engagement with hegemonic war discourses, as demonstrated by the intersection of the treatment of race and the choice of genre on the representation of Noor Inayat Khan's life.

The Pull of the Romantic: Noor Inayat Khan's Relationships

Indeed, the effects of the intersections of genre and hegemonic gender discourses on the representation of historical figures are particularly pertinent to discussions of texts about Noor Inayat Khan, as she features in two works of biographical fiction. These two texts, *The Tiger Claw* and *All That I Have*, are consequently able to fictionalise Inayat Khan's life without the need to stay close to the reality of her lived experience. As a result, the texts both create romantic plots for Noor, narrative devices which transform her from a brave, historical heroine into a romantic figure with alternate motivations and desires. Whilst one could argue that the creation of such plots is principally a narrative imperative, it remains notable that both texts foreground this romance, rather than it featuring as a sub-narrative. The choice of both Baldwin and Joffrin to include major romance plots in their biofictions, illustrates the effect of the cultural and narrative expectations of hegemonic gender discourses on the representation of important female historical figures.

In its depiction of certain aspects of her character, *The Tiger Claw* portrays Inayat Khan as a strong, decisive woman. She is shown to be a confident markswoman,

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[101] Baldwin, p. 113.

a proficient agent who is only captured because she is betrayed by another member of the Resistance network. However, Noor is also given a romantic plot which serves as her main motivation for joining the SOE, thereby placing her into the role of romanticised heroine. The man Noor is in love with is Armand Rivkin, a Jewish pianist. As a consequence of his religion, as well as her family's intention that she marry someone of their choosing, Noor's family is against the match and they have to meet in secret. Noor writes about their relationship while she is imprisoned by the Gestapo. She remembers their first meeting, and how: *'something in his voice said I was expected, that he'd been waiting for me a very long time, and it made me give him my unequivocal trust, as if I were a bottomless well. I blushed, tongue-tied'*.[102] Commencing their relationship with love at first sight adds a level of romantic drama to the relationship, transforming Noor into a romantic heroine. She remembers the secret meetings with Armand, memories which rescue her from the pain of her present: 'when I close my eyes in this dark hole, I do not feel my chains but feel his lips again, lips on mine' (p. 65). Their relationship is recounted gradually in all its details, including that 'we married, though no synagogue or mosque sanctified our nuptials. We married, though no one witnessed it but the stars over Paris' (p. 66).

Eventually Noor gets pregnant. Scared of the consequences and the expectations of her family, she has the baby aborted: 'I told myself the time was not right, that when Armand and I were married by law and in the eyes of our families, I could ask Allah to send you again' (p. 75). Noor is never brave enough to go against her family's wishes and be with Armand without their approval, as well as being counselled by Armand that 'this is no time to marry a Jew' (p. 55). It is a decision she comes to regret, with the result that her motivation for joining the SOE primarily becomes to get back to France so that she can get a message to Armand. She writes: *'as I flew towards Paris in the Lizzie from Tangmere, laden with admonitions, instructions and directions from the* SOE, *I also went determined to make amends'*, adding: *'I told myself that I was no longer a trembling kind of woman, that I claimed my life and body as my own. This time I would not fail Armand'* (p. 81). Noor even rents a room near Drancy concentration camp so that she can be near Armand and pass a message to him, a major divergence from the known events of Inayat Kahn's time in France. Her life is thereby placed through its fictional recreation into the mould of a romantic drama, in

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[102] Baldwin, p. 74.

which the heroine searches for her lost love, rather than focusing on the work Inayat Khan carried out during the war.

Apart from *Spy Princess*, the biographical accounts about Inayat Khan do not include any pre-war relationships. *Spy Princess* mentions Inayat Khan's relationship with a Jewish musician called Goldberg, and that 'although the family did not approve, they became engaged'.[103] It is therefore highly likely that Inayat Khan's relationship with Goldberg is the inspiration for Armand in *The Tiger Claw*. The similarities even extend to the strain placed on Inayat Khan, caught between her love for her family and Goldberg. As Basu observes in *Spy Princess*: 'it was true that Noor was under great strain, trying to balance her love for her family and love for her fiancé' (loc. 714). This aspect of their relationship is echoed in *The Tiger Claw:* 'so I was given love, that rarest, most precious spark that can ignite between man and woman, and I had not the courage to accept its demands for fear of losing my family's love'.[104] However, in *Spy Princess* we learn that Inayat Khan broke off her relationship with Goldberg 'because she wanted to be free to go into action or serve as a nurse on the front line if the need arose'.[105] Inayat Khan's reasons for ending the relationship in *The Tiger Claw* are transformed from a desire to be independent and undertake active war work, into an inability to break free from the role of loyal and obedient daughter. Through the inclusion of the romance plot, Noor's motivations and actions are recast in a way which aligns her behaviour with hegemonic gender discourses of femininity, rather than emphasizing her bravery and freedom of spirit.

The Tiger Claw takes an alternative path for Noor, exploring the impact a major relationship could have had on Inayat Khan's war experiences, 'to feel what may have been in her heart' as Baldwin declares in the introduction to the text.[106] Whilst it must be acknowledged that a major reason for this choice may have been due to the requirements for a plot in fictional texts, Baldwin's decision to feature Noor's relationship with Armand so prominently unveils the gender expectations at play in the textual recreations of female historical figures. *The Tiger Claw* portrays Inayat Khan as a strong woman who is not afraid to shoot Nazis, yet also places her in the role of romantic heroine, motivated by love to go to Occupied France. These two elements of

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[103] Basu, loc. 700.
[104] Baldwin, p. 81.
[105] Basu, loc. 925.
[106] Baldwin, 'Author's Note'.

her character exemplify the complexities of writing about transgressive historical women, of the tensions between showcasing their lives, and the tenacity of traditional gender roles. The image of Noor which enters cultural memory through this work of biographical fiction is heavily shaped by hegemonic gender discourses about women's behaviour.

All That I Have features two love plots involving the character Noor, although the men in question are completely different to Armand Rivkin in *The Tiger Claw*. In Joffrin's version of events, Noor begins her mission engaged to a man called Donaldson, whom she met at Arisaig during training. According to *Spy Princess,* Inayat Khan did tell her family she was engaged before she left for France. She informed them: 'her fiancé was someone she had met at the War Office and they would be married when she returned', but 'would not reveal the young man's name or address to her family'.[107] This incident is also included in *Churchill's Angels* (2012) by Bernard O'Connor*:* 'on [Noor's] final visit to her mother, she shocked her by informing her of her engagement to a British Officer. The officer was not identified'.[108] It is probable that Donaldson is modelled on this mystery officer, an aspect of Inayat Khan's past which Joffrin is able to explore further through the use of the biofiction genre. Whilst this authorial decision might not seem problematic, the emphasis placed on Noor's relationships in *All That I Have* demonstrates the narrative pull of adhering to hegemonic gender discourses, particularly the cultural correlation of women with romance.

Noor tells her companion, John Sutherland, that Donaldson is 'very strong. Like you. And he's good looking. Like you'.[109] Noor's words suggest that despite being engaged, she is also attracted to Sutherland, an impression supported by her declaration: 'I like you very much' (p. 129). She even goes as far as to posit that 'if we had met earlier', things might have been different, but that as they stand, she loves Donaldson and had promised to marry him after the war: 'I love him and I want to keep my word. It only seems fair' (p. 129). Noor is depicted as a woman who is able to moderate her sexual urges and remain loyal, casting her as the chaste heroine.

Things change when Donaldson subsequently dies and a romance blossoms between Noor and Sutherland. The text is narrated by Sutherland, so we see the

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[107] Basu, loc. 1934-2223.

[108] Bernard O'Connor, *Churchill's Angels*, 2nd edn. (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2014), p. 118.

[109] Joffrin, p. 129.

relationship develop through his eyes. At their first meeting, he describes Noor as 'a Middle Eastern beauty', with 'smooth dark skin, a graceful mouth' and 'huge dark eyes' (p. 1). These sexualised descriptions continue. As they leave the plane, Sutherland describes how: 'as I turned and held out my hand to Noor I saw two lovely legs thrust forward', and watching her cycle: 'I could see Noor standing up on her pedals, her hips swaying rhythmically, her golden calves alternately tensed with effort, her legs lengthened by the wooden-heeled sandals provided by the SOE' (p. 5). Noor's body parts are constantly focused upon, changing her from an important historical figure into a sex object.

Sutherland continually makes advances towards Noor. On their first night in an apartment belonging to the Resistance, he kisses her on the cheek to say goodnight, 'taking a fraction of a second too long. Then I put my arm round her shoulder and she escaped with a giggle' (p. 81). Sutherland's approaches extend to a declaration of love, after which he 'pulled her gently towards me to kiss her. She let me. But at the last moment she turned her head', saying: 'I can't. I've given my word, do you understand?' (p. 168). The impression of Noor as a principled young woman, able to control herself, is emphasised.

However, when she discovers Donaldson has been killed, it is Noor who initiates sex with Sutherland. He describes how: 'she kissed me with a sweetness and a passion I could never have imagined', and how she 'undid the buttons of my shirt. Her fingers became forceful, imperious […] as she revealed each part of my body she kissed it slowly and stroked it lightly with her hand' (p. 173). This description of the encounter depicts Noor as a sexually active woman, able to take command of her sexual desires once her responsibility to Donaldson was removed. Noor is cast as an attractive woman who is able to be both loyal and sexually active, the 'woman of [Sutherland's] dreams', a significant portrayal given that she is shown through the eyes of a male narrator and written by a male author; she is designed to satisfy heterosexual masculine desires, sexualising her and transforming her into an object of fantasy (p. 168). Apart from Jean Overton Fuller's disputed theory that 'a romantic attachment developed' between Inayat Khan and an SOE colleague, Antelme, in the life writing about Inayat Khan's time in France there is no indication that she had any relationships or sexual dalliances.[110] The implication is that the creation of Sutherland is almost entirely

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[110] Basu, loc. 2781.

fictional, a significant choice given that Joffrin's decision to make the relationship between Sutherland and Noor such a major part of the text detracts from the known achievements of Inayat Khan's time in France. Instead, she becomes an erotic figure, viewed through the male gaze of her narrator, rather than the emphasis being placed on her lived experience and character as it is in other texts about her life.

Both fictional accounts of Inayat Khan's life add in a romantic plot, a decision which stems from an adherence to narrative norms which correlate women with romance.[111] It is significant that the romantic involvements with Armand and Donaldson do arguably have a factual basis, or at least stem from rumours about Inayat Khan, demonstrating how elements of a historical life can be foregrounded with the intention of making a fictional reconstruction more engaging for the reader. However, the effect on the portrayal of Inayat Khan of emphasising these romantic dalliances must not be ignored: through focusing on these relationships, her independent achievements are side-lined, changing her from an important historical figure into just another woman in love in wartime. This shift demonstrates the tension within the texts of aiming to showcase an historic woman, yet being unable to escape hegemonic gender discourses about women which demand that romantic interests take precedence over other elements of their lives.

'The past is like the scene of a crime': Conclusion[112]

Annette Kuhn argues that 'the past is like the scene of a crime: if the deed itself is irrecoverable, its traces may still remain', an observation about the complexities of historical representation which emphasizes the difficulties inherent in the task.[113] Aware of these problems, the historical fictions and autobiographical novel discussed in this chapter display a tension between attempting to cast a glimmer of authenticity over their narratives, whilst simultaneously being aware of the flaws of such a proposition. Autobiographies and biographies face similar challenges in their attempts to reconstruct a life, as they must negotiate a range of problems, including a lack of source material and the vagaries of memory, to construct a coherent narrative. As a result of this fragility, both fictional and non-fictional representations of women's experiences of

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[111] This argument will be explored in more detail in Chapter 3.

[112] Annette Kuhn, *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination*, 2nd edn. (London: Verso, 2002), p. 4.

[113] Ibid.

clandestine warfare are open to shaping by the enduring and familiar tropes and narrative patterns provided by hegemonic discourses. This effect is particularly problematic when women's agency over their own narratives is at stake – for example in the case of Noor Inayat Khan whose early death meant that she was not able to challenge the Orientalist narratives being created about her, as well as for the women who worked at Bletchley Park, whose narrative agency was restricted by official secrecy.

The historical fictions studied in this chapter deploy a range of techniques to try to create a veneer of authenticity. Primarily, this endeavour involves mimicking the structures of life writing narratives, foregrounding the narrative devices used by non-fiction texts to support their own truth claims. Through this act of mimesis, the texts question the construction of life writing narratives, if the same structures can be used to write both fiction and non-fiction. This exposure of the divides between the two genres is problematic, as it has the potential to call into question the lived experience of historical female agents, suggesting that the known events about their lives could also be fictional constructions. It also betrays the innate fragility which lies at the heart of the endeavour of historical representation, a state which as the following chapters will illustrate, often leads to a reliance on the familiar tropes and narratives of hegemonic discourses.

Works of life writing face similar challenges to the attempt to reconstruct the past, both in personal testimony and biography. Exploring life writing by the women who worked at Bletchley Park, as well as fiction based on their lives, reveals the restrictive presence of secrecy on their existence, a pressure so strong that some women never wrote or even spoke about their war experiences. Even for the women who did write memoirs or contribute to collected testimonies, the secrecy both circulating generally during the war, and also the specific regulations pertaining to their work, had a heavy impact, resulting in their voices being excluded from mainstream narratives. In many of the testimonies the feeling is created that writing was a release, a chance for these women to construct an identity for themselves through the process of writing about their experiences that allowed their war time lives to enter their sense of self, as well as for their voices to finally become part of the British war narrative.

A close analysis of multiple texts about Nancy Wake and Noor Inayat Khan reveals that biography, autobiography and biofiction are all shaped by their negotiation of a range of factors, including a lack of source material, shifts in personal testimony

and the choice of genre. Faced with these challenges of the writing process, which inevitably complicate the endeavour of historical representation, these texts must weave together the most coherent narrative that they can, all the while faced with the awareness of the impossibility of ever knowing and recreating historical events and lives. As a result of the need to navigate the complexities of the life writing project, these texts turn to hegemonic war and gender discourses, which serve as narrative frameworks in these texts, shoring up their representations of the past by offering familiar tropes and narrative patterns. In the process, the narrative agency of the female subjects is removed, their lives instead written into the easily recognisable shapes offered by Orientalist and romantic narratives.

The following chapters will further explore the implications of the texts' reliance upon such hegemonic discourses by focusing on the depictions of the enemy characters and the romantic relationships of the female historical figures and fictional characters. It becomes apparent that the primary effect of the use of these narratives is to paint a conservative vision of the Second World War, serving to create a comforting representation of the past in tumultuous political times. However, as these chapters will also show, these discourses have begun to shift slightly. One of the reasons for this change is the reclamation of narrative agency through the life writing of women whose voices and experiences of warfare had previously been excluded from mainstream war narratives.

Introduction

In fiction and life writing about Bletchley Park and the Special Operations Executive, the enemy is either absent, depicted as an evil yet still fascinating figure, or based on flawed stereotypes. Kate McLoughlin argues that 'war, in other words, resists depiction', a possible cause of these difficulties in representing an element as major as the oppositional forces.[1] As a result of these intrinsic complexities, the texts are reliant upon hegemonic discourses in their attempts to depict the conflict. However, as this chapter will reveal, these narratives echo the instabilities of the official 'war culture', faults caused by the cultural fears and fantasies which encircle the major issue of how to conceive of the enemy in times of both war and peace.

There is a notable absence of references to the enemy in life writing by the women who worked at Bletchley Park. This is perhaps not surprising, as their war took place on the Home Front, far away from the front lines. Even when the women do mention that the deaths of their loved ones were caused because of the actions of the enemy forces, the recollections still do not include any particular hatred or fear, instead framing the experience as spurring them on to contribute to the 'war effort'. This phrase was used heavily in the official 'war culture', evident in propaganda posters from the Second World War. Its predominance across the life writing accounts illustrates the tenacity of this phrase, as it continues to inform the language used by these women to frame their experiences. However, these discourses are transformed in the process, creating a vision of war told from the perspective of women, in which their war work was the most memorable element of their experience of conflict.

Where the opposition are directly mentioned in these life writing accounts, empathy is often expressed by the author. In this regard, these texts echo the work of First World War trench poets such as Wilfred Owen. These attitudes are the result of the specific nature of the war work carried out: the women in question were tasked with listening to the enemy's signals, or in the case of Christine Brooke Rose, indexing all the elements of the opposition forces which were learnt from the messages. Undertaking these jobs gave them a level of insight and connection with the enemy which lead to the creation of new war discourses, as they reached out to the linguistic frames surrounding them and altered them in line with the own experiences.

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[1] McLoughlin, p. 6.

Sources from the official 'war culture' such as Churchillian speeches and propaganda posters, as well as popular media including broadcasts by J.B. Priestley, cartoons by David Low and the writings of Lord Vansittart, all present a vision of the enemy as bestial and evil. This vision of the war informs the hegemonic war discourses about the enemy evident in fictional representations of the Special Operations Executive, including *Into the Fire* by Alexander Fullerton, *Jackdaws* by Ken Follett and *The Girl Who Fell From The Sky* by Simon Mawer, which show evil Nazis torturing the brave and valiant protagonist. However, these texts also belie a flirtation with sadomasochist and masochistic fantasy, as the reader is invited into the torture. This presentation of fascism is an example of what Susan Sontag terms 'fascinating fascism'.[2] These scenes reveal the instabilities which lie at the heart of this construction of the enemy; caused by an ongoing fascination with the darker elements of the war which combines with a narrative expectation for women to be sexualised, the result is a transformation of the protagonist's pain into erotic spectacle.

The hegemonic war discourses about the enemy in these fictional representations are informed by the inconsistencies in the attitude of the official 'war culture' towards the opposition. These conflicts about how to depict the enemy are evident in the material produced by the Ministry of Information (MOI), which switched between presenting the war as being caused just by Nazism, or the German people as a whole. This lack of consistency combines with the echoes of the figure Petra Rau terms the 'Good German', which arose as a result of the war crimes trials of the 1950s and the media depiction of famous Wehrmacht leaders such as General Erwin Rommel;[3] they come together into a hegemonic discourse laden with fears about the potential of war to corrupt. Engaging with these narratives, the authors of the texts try to paint the members of the Abwehr as having clean hands in the Granada series *Wish Me Luck* directed by Gordon Flemyng and Bill Hays, *Light of the Moon* by Elizabeth Buchan and *Jackdaws*. This trope is extended to the depiction of certain members of the Schutzstaffel (SS) and Sicherheitsdienst (SD) in *As Time Goes By* by Ted Allbeury and *Codename Verity* by Elizabeth Wein, as these characters are also portrayed somewhat idealistically. The texts are unable to fully balance their representations of the opposition, trapped by the enduring anxieties and preoccupations which haunt
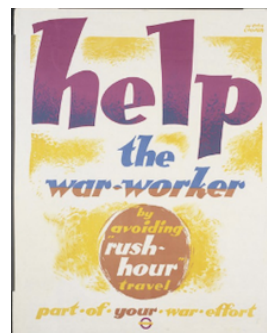
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[2] Sontag, title page of essay.

[3] Petra Rau, *Our Nazis: Representations of Fascism in Contemporary Literature and Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p. 128.

hegemonic war discourses. These concerns continue to shape how the war is represented and remembered, contributing to mainstream war narratives riddled with internal flaws. Yet they are seemingly still somehow attractive, indicating the comforting or perhaps uncomfortable, unavoidable pull of these narrative patterns.

Absent Enemies

The figure of the enemy is noticeably absent from life writing by the women who worked at Bletchley Park. Instead, these gaps are filled by repeated references to the 'war effort', language from the official 'war culture' which these women use to express how they reacted to the deaths of their loved ones. This continuation is a perfect example of how the language of the official 'war culture' has become part of hegemonic discourses about the conflict, used to frame these women's war experiences in later eras. Crucially, however, only selected elements of these discourses are used, illustrating how women's war experiences can disrupt traditional notions of warfare.

The phrase 'war effort' occurs on multiple war posters and was a key phrase in the official Second World War 'war culture'. Examples include a poster used to discourage people from travelling at rush hour, which reads 'help the war worker' in large letters, with the message 'by avoiding "rush hour" travel' underneath.[4]

© Transport for London

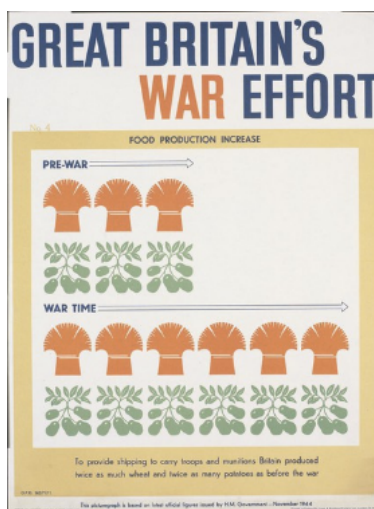The act of avoiding rush hour travel is successfully intertwined with the wider duties of the citizen in periods of war; at the bottom of the image, the darker font for the text 'your' of 'part of your war effort' makes it stands out.

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[4] Transport for London, 'Help the war worker' poster, Imperial War Museums Collections
<http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/5551> [accessed 23/07/15]

A similar poster directly connects increased agriculture with the war, reading in large letters: 'GREAT BRITAIN'S WAR EFFORT', with the text below stating: 'FOOD PRODUCTION INCREASE'.[5] The poster is completed by diagrams to show how food production had successfully risen as a result of the new war production levels:

© IWM (Art.IWM PST 14915)

These messages regarding the importance of daily activities to the 'war effort' indicate the regularity with which this phrase was used, effectively connecting the citizen to the wider events of the war. As Peter Darman observes: 'the poster was a simple yet powerful psychological aid to mobilize the nation. Cheap, accessible, and ever-present, the poster was an excellent method of reaching every citizen'.[6] The phrase 'the war effort' is used frequently in life writing by the women who worked at Bletchley Park, suggesting that the posters had their desired effect: to enable these women who did not have direct contact with the enemy to remain engaged with the war.

The extent to which 'the war effort' was part of the language of Second World War 'war culture' is also evident in the frequency with which it reappears in contemporary newspapers. A search of the Times Digital Archive (1785-1985) for the dates of the Second World War and this phrase brings up six thousand, nine hundred

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[5] Author unknown, 'Great Britain's War Effort' poster, Imperial War Museums Collections
    <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/32353> [accessed 23/07/2015]
[6] Peter Darman, *Posters of World War II* (London: Windmill Books Ltd, 2011), p. 6.

and forty-six entries.[7] The articles are on a myriad range of subjects. For example, an article dated 8th September 1939 entitled 'carry a newspaper in black-outs', asks its readers to do just that to avoid needless deaths caused by pedestrians not being visible.[8] The article quotes the National Safety First Association, who issued the following statement: 'every accident, whether on the roads, in industry, or in everyday pursuits, interferes with national efficiency and the effectiveness of the war effort'.[9] In a similar fashion to the messages inscribed on the posters, this article efficiently connects the civilian and the wider events of the war.

However, articles including this phrase were not just aimed at co-opting civilians into new models of behaviour, demonstrating the degree to which 'the war effort' was part of the discourse circulating in both official and unofficial culture during the war. On 26th August 1942, an article was published entitled 'T.U.C's council powers. Wide extension to be sought'.[10] The article discusses the new powers requested by the T.U.C council, declaring: 'the Constructional Engineering Union will demand the taking over by the Government, as far as practicable, of all industries and staffs vital to the war effort'.[11] The inclusion of the phrase 'war effort' indicates that it had become common parlance when referring to any extra services or demands necessitated by war.

Indeed, as Diego Lazzarich argues: 'modern war has always been preceded and accompanied by a discourse: a set of narratives and images capable of imposing, on the public sphere, a historically specific concept of war in order to attain popular support'.[12] This analysis of the relationship between war and the language used to depict it, clearly

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[7]*The Times* Digital Archive 1785-2009, GALE Cengage Learning
    <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy3.lib.le.ac.uk/ttda/advancedSearch.do;jsessionid=E2BDF2EA3CF
    1F8A73DD19C3F025712A1> [accessed 23/07/2015]

[8]*The Times* Digital Archive, 'Carry a Newspaper in Black-Outs', 08 September 1939
    <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy3.lib.le.ac.uk/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&us
    erGroupName=leicester&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&docId
    =CS51328296&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0> [accessed 23/07/2015]

[9] Ibid.

[10]*The Times* Digital Archive, 'T.U.C.'s Council Powers. Wide Extension to be Sought', 26 August 1942
    <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy3.lib.le.ac.uk/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&us
    erGroupName=leicester&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=CS1
    34953754&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0> [accessed 23/07/2015]

[11] Ibid.

[12] Diego Lazzarich, 'Discourses of War' in *Selling War: The Role of the Mass Media in Hostile Conflicts
    from World War 1 to the "War on Terror"*, ed. by Josef Seethaler et al. (Bristol: Intellect, 2013), pp.
    37-56 (p. 39).

illustrates its intended usage for ensuring that all members of the public felt connected to the wider events of the conflict, however far they might be from the opposing forces. The recurrence of the phrase 'the war effort' in these life writing texts reveals the success of this enterprise, how this discourse has remained; it has transitioned from the language of the official 'war culture', to become an integral element of hegemonic war discourses used to frame these women's war experiences retrospectively.

In *Bletchley Girls,* Rozanne Colchester (née Medhurst), describes how she was motivated by the personal impact of war to join the women's services. However, she does not make a direct reference to the opposing forces as the cause of the death of her loved one; instead she couches the experience in the language of war. Colchester's boyfriend David was killed in 1940 when his ship was torpedoed. She declares: 'after David and the Blitz I was longing to be involved. Not to be just a bystander; from then on one was longing to be old enough to get into the Services'.[13] Her words demonstrate clearly the connection she creates between David's death and the desire to act, but she does not express any specific antipathy towards those who caused it.

Colchester recollects that as well as 'the immediate shock and sadness', there was the feeling 'that there is a war on, one must not indulge oneself. He had been killed on duty, a sort of noble death' (p. 60). Colchester is using the traditional language of war: 'a semantic field, made of concepts such as death, danger, suffering, blood and heroism', which functions to remind the individual of their place in the wider picture.[14] The continuation of this lexicon, which stems both from traditional, symbolic ideas about war as well as the messages of the official 'war culture', demonstrates its pervasive attractiveness of a way of framing the conflict. Enabling the individual to feel part of the war even when they were far away from the front lines, the recurrence of this language across the texts indicates that it has become part of hegemonic war discourse, a narrative framework used by these women to express their experiences.

Whilst the acceptance of death as a necessary aspect of war is not universal in these texts, it is shared by several other women who worked at Bletchley Park and suffered similar losses. This repetition across different testimonies implies that the internalisation of the language of the official 'war culture' enabled the individual to cope with the impact of wider concerns on their own small worlds. For Kathleen

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[13] Rozanne Colchester qtd. in *Bletchley Girls,* p. 60.
[14] Lazzarich, p. 50.

Kinmouth Warren (née Godfrey), the loved one in question was Ralph, 'our favourite uncle'.[15] Ralph was killed in the Battle of Britain, 'shot down over Croydon, South London. He stayed at the controls until his plane was near an open space in order not to crash into houses' (p. 61). Unfortunately: 'by that time, it was skimming over treetops, too low for his parachute too open' (p. 61). Kinmouth Warren declares: 'after Ralph's heroic death, I decided that I too would join up' (p. 61). Given the nature of Ralph's actions, it is not surprising that Kinmouth Warren refers to his demise as 'heroic'. However, in a similar fashion to Colchester connecting the death of her boyfriend and her choice to join up, here the focus is on Kinmouth Warren's decision to contribute to the war, rather than on feelings of anger or hatred towards the enemy, who is indeed absent. As a result, the potentially troubling aspects of this memory are reframed through an emphasis on her decision to join the women's services. This rearrangement relies on the narrative framework provided by hegemonic war discourses, the language and the imagery of the official 'war culture' which endures into later eras, although used here with a different emphasis. Its tenacity in these life writing accounts suggests that it offered up a way of viewing the war which created a degree of psychological comfort, a merging of the individual into the embrace of something wider.

Lady Jean Fforde (née Lady Jean Graham) also fits into this pattern of being motivated to join the 'war effort' after the death of a loved one. During the war, she fell in love with a Commando, Johnny. She reminisces: 'yes, we were in love and we would have married'.[16] The union was not to be, however, as Johnny was killed in action. Lady Fforde was 'devastated', and 'longed' to '*do* something. It would have been awful if one had done nothing during the war'.[17] It is noticeable that the sentence following Lady Fforde's declaration is voiced by the collector of her testimony, Tessa Dunlop, who claims about her subject: 'her hunger to be an official part of the military effort had been exacerbated by Johnny's death'.[18] Dunlop has paraphrased Lady Fforde's words, placing her wish to take action as a result of her lover's death into the wider narrative of the war, in a way that perhaps Lady Fforde did not intend. Dunlop's choice of words sets Lady Fforde's reaction into a preconceived narrative, demonstrating the tenacity of such attitudes, if they are used by later authors

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[15] Kathleen Kinmouth Warren, qtd. in *Bletchley Girls*, p. 61.

[16] Lady Jean Fforde qtd. in *Bletchley Girls*, p. 64.

[17] Ibid., pp. 64-65. Original italics.

[18] Dunlop, p. 65.

reconstructing events as well as by individuals recounting their memories.

Throughout the memoirs of the women who worked at Bletchley Park and its outstations, the phrase 'war effort' is repeated frequently, framing their war in such a way as to remove the traditional focus from the oppositional forces. In *We Kept The Secret: Now It Can Be Told*, a collection of the testimonies of the Wrens who worked at Bletchley, Winifred Stokes reminisces: 'I'm glad I was given the opportunity of being such a vital contribution to the war effort and also of serving in the WRNS'.[19] This sentiment is echoed by Kay Pickett (née Harrison), a fellow Wren. She recounts: 'I had two uncles who were in the army – both serving in the desert in the North African campaign. One was badly wounded and I think it was that happening which triggered my desire to do something positive to contribute towards the war effort'.[20] Jenny Conduit Stanmore (née Davies) uses the same phrase in her recollection: 'in 1942 I was seventeen and after a rather narrow middle-class childhood was contemplating with some excitement what part I would play in the war effort'.[21] This phrase is also used by Doreen Luke: 'everyone was thinking up schemes to respond to helping the "War Effort", as the posters requested', a repetition which illustrates the connection between propaganda posters and this approach to being part of the war.[22] The women's words indicate a lack of hatred of the enemy as a motivating factor, suggesting that they viewed the war rather as a cultural event in which they could participate. Their distance from the front lines resulted in a different view on the war, demonstrated by how direct references to the enemy in these texts are replaced by a focus on the 'war effort' and the new opportunities it brought. The implication is that women's occupation of new wartime spaces contributes to the formation of altered war discourses, in which the language of the official 'war culture' is still present, but with a different emphasis. In consequence, it is the importance of the 'war effort' which frames these women's experiences, rather than a focus on the figure of the enemy, as one might perhaps expect.

The phrase 'war effort' is also used in relation to expressions of pride in the contribution to the war made by these women, emphasizing the degree to which the

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[19] Winifred Stokes, qtd. in *We Kept the Secret,* p. 28. WRNS stands for Women's Royal Naval Service, also known as Wrens.

[20] Kay Pickett qtd. in *We Kept the Secret*, p. 77.

[21] Jenny Conduit Stanmore, qtd. in *We Kept the Secret,* p. 100.

[22] Luke, p. 5.

opposition really was not the focus of their wartime memories. Irene Young, in her memoir *Enigma Variations* (1990) sums up her experience of life at Bletchley: 'I had gone to Bletchley in excitement and trepidation, had been very content there, in congenial company, and with the satisfaction of knowing that I was employed on work essential to the war effort'.[23] Mary Moore (née Davies) in *We Kept the Secret* expresses a similar summary of her time working in one of the Bombe outstations of Bletchley: 'our time at Eastcote had been a very strange period in our young lives but we had made some very good friends, felt we did contribute something to help the war effort'.[24] Both Young and Moore's words indicate a pride in their work for its role in the overall success of the war, making a distinct connection between the two. The war, rather than being invoked in reference to the enemy, is instead associated with the work they did as part of it; indicating that most of the women saw the war as a moment when they had a chance to take on an active role and become part of society, instead of something which happened due to hatred and fear. Allowed to participate in the war yet still denied access to the front lines, their war work was the element of their war experience that changed their lives the most, and it therefore takes precedence in their war memoirs. The reliance on the language of the official 'war culture' demonstrates its strength as a way of framing the war; yet it is revealed to be altered in these texts, the emphasis shifting as this linguistic framework is used to negotiate the gaps left by their absent enemies. This reaction demonstrates how hegemonic discourses are transformed by the disruptions to traditional notions of conflict caused by women's presence in the sphere of warfare.

Closer Enemies

Significantly, in texts about Bletchley Park which do mention the enemy, there is an expression of empathy. Betty Gilbert (née Quincey) and Pat Davies (née Owtram) worked as Y-Service listeners, intercepting messages which were then passed on to Bletchley Park. This role of listening to enemy signals enabled them to have a closer connection with the enemy forces than many of the women who worked in the Bletchley world. As Dunlop describes: 'when they did pick a signal up, Y-station listeners Betty and Pat were suddenly directly connected with the enemy through their

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[23] Irene Young, *Enigma Variations* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing Company, 1990), p. 133.
[24] Mary Moore, qtd. in *We Kept the Secret*, p. 86.

headsets'.[25] They were consequently, as observed by Davies, 'hearing the war all the time from the German side'.[26] Intercepting Morse did not require German language skills, so despite the language barrier, Davies was able to construct 'a mental image of the Morse operators at the other end of the radio waves'.[27] Gilbert recounts: 'I often wondered, "well, what are you like?" I pictured them as great big bull-headed Gomorrahs'.[28] The implication from her words is that Gilbert did not envisage the enemy as a fellow human, assuming them to be monsters. However, Gilbert does also show sympathy towards her opposite member, as when the German forces started retreating, she recounts: 'they came out with one or two plain language words and we knew then they were getting a bit panicky' (p. 239). As a result, Gilbert 'did feel sorry for them' (p. 239). Gilbert and Davies's role as Y-Station listeners enabled them to have much more involvement with the enemy, albeit still from afar, than women who had other roles within the Bletchley Park world. It is therefore understandable that their testimonies are among the few about this subject that do include direct references to the opposition, indicating a strong correlation between the nature of their war work and attitudes towards the enemy. Gilbert shifts from an assumption that her opposite number is animalistic, to showing empathy for the opposition. The change is a direct result of the nature of her war work, suggesting that it is her experience of the enemy which overcomes any other images and language she might have been given to envisage them.

   The Imitation Game contains a character who has a similar role to Gilbert and Davies, Helen Stewart.[29] In an attempt to flirt with Helen, Hugh Alexander claims that Alan Turing supports Bletchley's policy against men and women 'working side by side', as 'such proximity will necessarily lead to romance'. Hugh declares that he disagrees, however, as: 'if I were working alongside a woman all day long, I could appreciate her abilities and her intellect without taking her to bed', and then proceeds to ask Helen her opinion. She replies that she agrees with Alan. Helen's reasoning is: 'I work beside a man every day, and I can't help but have developed a bit of a crush on

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[25] Dunlop, p. 151.
[26] Pat Davies, qtd. in *Bletchley Girls,* p. 151.
[27] Dunlop, p. 152.
[28] Betty Gilbert qtd. in *Bletchley Girls*, p. 152.
[29] *The Imitation Game*, dir. by Morten Tyldum (Black Bear Pictures and Bristol Automotive, 2014) [on DVD].

him'.[30] When asked the identity of the man, Helen replies: 'well there's no need to worry, it's been chaste. We've never even met', revealing finally: 'he's a German'. Helen explains what she means: 'each of us intercepts messages from a specific German radio tapper. So, we've a counterpart on the other side, tip-tapping out the messages. Everyone types a touch differently, so you get to know the rhythm of your counterpart'. This connection is to the extent that she divulges: 'it's strangely intimate. I feel as if I know him so well', even declaring: 'I'm in love with a co-worker of sorts, and we've never even met'. Whilst it is important to bear in mind the context of this (fictional) conversation, as Helen is flirting with Hugh, the claims she makes illustrates for the viewer the connection with the enemy that women who performed this job would have felt. In a similar fashion to Gilbert and Davies, Helen has a direct link to the opposition, creating a sense of empathy rather than division. It is important to note that the conversation is also a plot device, providing a revelation for Turing about Enigma. Yet the content of the discussion remains relevant, indicating that despite being far away from the front lines, it was still possible for female war workers to have a close relationship to the enemy, almost as if they were actually sat next to the soldier in question. This disruption of the traditional spaces of war results in the formation of new war discourses, which enable a depiction of the war in which empathy can be shown. These texts serve as an example of how counter narratives to hegemonic war discourses can exist, in this instance stemming from the challenges to traditional ideas of warfare and women's work as a result of their occupation of new spaces. Whilst it should be noted that these narratives are not mainstream, and the texts are nowhere near as highly read as the majority of fictional works discussed in this thesis, the implication is that women's life writing offers up a space in which to question why and how we have come to remember and represent the Second World Wars in the set ways which have become part of cultural memory.

Feeling empathy with the opposition as a result of undertaking similar war work also occurs in the autobiographical novel *Remake*. Brooke-Rose describes how because of the nature of her work in the Index at Bletchley Park, she had the experience of 'reading the whole war [...] from the enemy viewpoint, the British being the enemy,

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[30] During the war this job would have been done at a Y-Station, but has clearly been moved to Bletchley Park for the purposes of the film.

like the hysterical sympathy with the enemy felt by soldiers suffering in the trenches'.[31] Wilfred Owen's poem 'Strange Meeting' is a perfect example of this sensation of empathy with the opposition. The line: 'I am the enemy you killed, my friend' encapsulates the porous divide between the two states, an impression strengthened by the connections and similarities between the speaker poet and his fictional German poet subject.[32] Brooke-Rose remarks: 'the writer does that, learning to imagine the other. All human beings should, in fact, but don't always', an insight she gains through her war work which challenges traditional models of warfare.[33]

Brooke-Rose's reference to the experience of First World War trench warfare and the sense of solidarity with their opposition felt by many of the soldiers, demonstrates an awareness of the echoes and impact of the First World War on the experience and textual framing of the Second. It is of particular note that historical women such as Brooke-Rose, Gilbert and Davies, and fictional characters such as Helen, are all doing jobs which they have been assigned because of their gender, war work which also enables them to feel sympathetic towards the enemy. The implication is that the very presence of women in the traditionally male space of war service can alter existing discourses, which have indeed already begun to transform how we talk about war.

The Inconsistent Enemy in Official 'war culture'

Whilst the official 'war culture' was tenacious, it also contained inconsistencies in terms of how the enemy was represented, leading to the creation of similarly flawed hegemonic war discourses. The opposition was depicted as evil and bestial in both official and unofficial sources, representations which did not divide the actions of the Nazis from those of the German people as a whole. Yet the policies of the Ministry of Information about this element of how to portray the enemy shifted over the course of the war, indicating a lack of consistency about how to view the opposition forces during the conflict itself. This variation stemmed from anxieties about the corruptive potential of war, lasting concerns which are reflected in the construction of the enemy characters

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[31] This job involved recording all the known pieces of information about the war on index cards, and filing them. Brooke-Rose, *Remake,* p. 108.

[32] Wilfred Owen, 'Strange Meeting', in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, 5th edn., ed. by Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter and Jon Stallworthy (London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2005), pp. 1389-1390 (l. 40).

[33] Brooke-Rose, p. 108.

in many of these texts. The endurance of these preoccupations implies that such deep anxieties about the nature of warfare cannot be ignored, despite their disruptive potential to the homogeneity of mainstream war narratives.

The attempt by the official 'war culture' to draw clear lines between the Allied and Axis forces is evident in a range of both official and popular culture material. Voices of the official 'war culture', including Winston Churchill and J.B. Priestley, broadcast their version of the war to 'over 50 per cent of the adult population'.[34] Thus, as Jochen Hellbeck argues: 'Churchill and Priestley's patriotic appeals provided templates through which ordinary Britons came to experience their wartime lives'.[35] Their representation of the enemy is vital to understanding the images of the opposition which circulated in Second World War 'war culture', as they inform the hegemonic war discourses about the conflict evident in the representations of the SOE discussed in this chapter. In addition to these official voices, unofficial sources also reveal the ways in which the German military machine and people were viewed during the war. These sources include the cartoons of David Low and the writings of Lord Vansittart. Taken together, these materials demonstrate multiple techniques through which the world was divided into the enemy and those defending against them, a clear-cut division of good versus evil.

The simplest way to cast someone as your enemy is to vilify them. This attitude towards Germany is clearly evident in two posters produced during the war. The first example discussed here was produced by the Ministry of Labour and National Service, date unknown. The poster exhorts the 'WOMEN OF BRITAIN' to 'ARM HIM', with a large black arrow pointing to the picture of an Allied soldier who appears to be fighting a Nazi soldier:[36]

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[34] Deer, p. 133. BBC radio was censored by the Ministry of Information, with the result that Priestley's *Postscripts* can be argued to have been officially sanctioned. Indeed, Priestley was eventually taken off air when his talks were deemed to be too socialist. The BBC was one of the central voices through which wartime propaganda was distributed.

[35] Jochen Hellbeck, 'Battles for Morale: An Entangled History of Total War in Europe, 1939-45', in *The Cambridge History of the Second World War*, Volume 3, *Total War: Economy, Society and Culture*, ed. by Michael Geyer and Adam Tooze (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 329–362 (p. 333).

[36] Author unknown, 'WOMEN OF BRITAIN! ARM HIM' poster, Imperial War Museums Collections <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205132679> [accessed 01/02/2017]

© IWM (MH 6789)

The adversary in the poster is cast as an animalistic figure through the rough features and the way in which he is leaning in a simian fashion with a large swastika emblazoned on his chest. This outward appearance is designed to indicate a lack of humanity to the viewer. The representation of German soldiers as monkey-like figures is also present in another poster:

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In this second example, a pile of skulls is shown on a base of blood, with the words of invaded countries, including 'France', 'Greece' and 'Jugoslavia' coming out of the pool of blood.[37] Five soldiers with simian faces and Nazi armbands genuflect to a leader standing on top of the mountain of skulls, accompanied by a monkey. The text at the

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[37] Author unknown, 'The So Called "Higher Race"' poster, Imperial War Museums Collections
    <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/27734> [accessed 01/02/2017]

top of the poster reads 'the so-called higher race'.[38] Whilst it must be acknowledged that this poster was based on a Soviet design, complicating its position as evidence of British attitudes towards Nazi Germany, it was used as part of a campaign headed by Lord Beaverbrook 'to supply Russia with armaments and to open up a second front against Germany'.[39] The poster was clearly designed to foster hatred towards the enemy and encourage further support for the war effort. Through showing the enemy forces to be monkey-like their humanity was reduced, thereby emphasizing the divide between the two sides.

The use of monkeys to portray the enemy recurs in a David Low cartoon. The piece features the caption: 'he asked for peace', and shows three monkeys with Nazi hats and armbands staring at a cage with humans inside and the plaque: 'unoccupied France':[40]

© Associated Newspapers/Solo Syndication

Low's use of monkeys to represent Nazi soldiers illustrates how this imagery of a vilified, animalized enemy was circulating in both official and unofficial popular discourse. Through casting the enemy as monkeys, it was suggested that they were less evolved than the Allied forces. As Sian Nicholas observes, this was a consistent theme:

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Imperial War Museums, 'Imperial War Museums item description',
<http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/27734> [accessed 01/02/2017]

[40] David Low, 'He Asked for Peace', 20 September 1940, *British Cartoon Archive*
<https://archive.cartoons.ac.uk/Record.aspx> [accessed 01/02/2017]

'the Germans/Nazis were often described explicitly in terms of a kind of arrested mental development, stranded in the psychotic mentality of the evil and sadistic child'.[41] This emphasis on the lack of evolution of the enemy forces illustrates a desire to reduce their humanity, highlighting in contrast the humanity and bravery of the Allied forces.

These themes of German aggression and lack of sophistication are present in Lord Vansittart's *Black Record: Germans Past and Present*, a series of broadcasts which were published as a book in 1941. In *Black Record*, Vansittart painted a clear picture of what he believed to be the evil of the German people. He declared: 'Germans, male and female, are content with servitude, on condition that they are provided with enough of their blindly idolized efficiency to inflict servitude on others', and thus: 'you must never think that Hitler was an unnatural taste forced upon Germany'.[42] Whilst Vansittart does admit: 'of course there have been, and are, Germans who may not have liked executing the programmes of their leaders', he goes on to qualify this statement: 'but with individuals we are not concerned; the fact remains that the programmes of their leaders always *have* been executed' (p. 16). Vansittart's views paint a bleak picture of the German people as a continually warmongering nation who essentially wanted Nazism, undeserving of compassion or pity. This attitude has come to be termed 'Vansittartism'.

Germany as a militarized nation was vilified by Neville Chamberlain, Winston Churchill and J.B. Priestley. In his declaration of war speech on 3rd September 1939, Chamberlain declared: 'it is the evil things that we shall be fighting against - brute force, bad faith, injustice, oppression and persecution'.[43] This view of the enemy is later reiterated by Churchill, in references in his speeches to 'a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime', 'evil-doers' and 'that Nazi ogre Hitler'.[44]

Churchill and Priestley also emphasized the divide between Britain and its

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[41] Sian Nicholas, *The Echo of War: Home Front Propaganda and the Wartime BBC, 1939-45* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 180.

[42] Robert Gilbert Vansittart, *Black Record: Germans Past and Present* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1941), pp. 17-18.

[43] 'Transcript of Neville Chamberlain's Declaration of War speech', 1939 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/ww2outbreak/7957.shtml?page=txt> [accessed 02/02/17]

[44] Winston Churchill, 'Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat', speech in the House of Commons, 13 May 1940, in *Never Give In!: The Best of Winston Churchill's Speeches* (London: Pimlico, 2003), p. 206, Churchill, 'Victory in Europe', speech in the House of Commons and Broadcast, London, 8 May 1945, in *Never Give In!,* p. 387, Churchill, 'The Lend-Lease Bill', speech at Mansion House, London, 10 November 1941, in *Never Give In!,* p. 309.

enemies through highlighting the cultural differences between them, as well as fostering a strong sense of communal identity with which their audiences could identify. In his description of the evacuation of Dunkirk in a *Postscript* broadcast on the 5th of June 1940, Priestley highlighted the essential 'Englishness' of the experience. He claimed: 'to my mind what was most characteristically English about it […] was the part played in the difficult and dangerous embarkation – not by the warships, magnificent though they were – but by the little pleasure-steamers'.[45] Through his praise of the English character, Priestley was able to create a sense of identity, from which a beleaguered people could draw strength.

Priestley described how: 'out of a black gulf of humiliation and despair, rises a sun of blazing glory', arguing 'this is not the German way' (p. 2). Priestley's evidence for this argument was that the German forces 'don't make such mistakes […] but also – they don't achieve such epics', and thus 'there is never anything to inspire a man either in their victories or their defeats' (p. 2). In contrast to the English: 'that vast machine of theirs can't create a glimmer of that poetry of action which distinguishes war from mass murder. It's a machine – and therefore has no soul' (p. 2). A clear division is created, between the English with their 'little pleasure-steamers', who make mistakes but arise victorious because of their stronger character and morals, and the cold German war machine, which by implication will ultimately fail.

Churchill created a similar split in his wartime speeches, casting the battle as one between liberty and oppression. In his speech on the declaration of war, Churchill declared that the country was 'fighting to save the whole world from the pestilence of Nazi tyranny and in defence of all that is most sacred to man', and that 'this is no war of domination […] it is a war […] to establish, on impregnable rocks, the rights of the individual, and it is a war to establish and revive the stature of man'.[46] This division between good and evil, freedom and slavery, recurs throughout Churchill's wartime speeches, as can be seen in his speech to the House of Commons in June 1940. Churchill states: 'if we can stand up to him [Hitler], all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands'.[47] However, Churchill also warned: 'if we fail, then the whole world […] will sink into the abyss of a new Dark

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[45] J. B. Priestley, *Postscripts* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1940), p. 2.
[46] Churchill, 'War', speech in the House of Commons, 3 September 1939, in *Never Give In!*, p. 198.
[47] Churchill, 'This Was Their Finest Hour', speech in the House of Commons, 18 June 1940, in *Never Give In!*, p. 229.

Age' (p. 229). The imagery of light and dark is used to create a clear divide, as well as suggesting that a Nazi victory would lead to a degeneration of the human race.

Both official and popular voices from the Second World War reveal how the enemy was represented by the official 'war culture'. Through vilifying the Axis forces, casting them as evil beings lacking in humanity, as well as by shoring up the sense of unity and shared identity of the Allied peoples, official and unofficial sources created a sense of a struggle between light and darkness, humanity and more bestial forces. It is a division which did not allow for distinctions between the people of a country and ideology. Instead, it functioned on a wider symbolic level to blur the two, thereby making the war more psychologically palatable.

What has come to be referred to as the 'Dunkirk spirit', the power of the united 'few' to succeed against the bestial and evil masses, has become part of Western cultural memories of the Second World War: 'a universal reference point for mythical national cohesion and collective effort'.[48] This use of Second World War 'war culture' to foster a sense of unity against 'them', whoever that may be at the time, is evident in political speeches by President George W. Bush. Torgovnick notes: 'as the sixtieth anniversary of D-Day approached, President Bush made a series of speeches reaffirming the doctrine of pre-emptive strikes', to the extent of 'calling his version of the war on terrorism this generation's challenge and comparing it to World War II "as the storm in which we fly"'.[49] As Noakes observes, Bush also used Second World War hegemonic war discourse to call on national unity for a speech 'marking the sixtieth anniversary of the Japanese assault on Pearl Harbor', in which he 'linked the "good" war of the mid-twentieth century with the "war on terror" of the twenty-first, noting that America's wartime role as "freedom's defender […] continues to this hour"'.[50] British politicians have used this picture of the war to rationalize Britain's participation in other conflicts as well, as they have 'invoked the memory of the Second World War as being fought against oppression and for the rights of small nations, in support of the Falklands/Malvinas War of 1982, and the first Gulf War of 1991' (p. 675). The choice to echo the language and imagery of Second World War 'war culture' by later politicians indicates an awareness of its continued emotional pull, which cynical politicians such as

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[48] Rau, *Our Nazis,* p. 6.
[49] Torgovnick, p. x.
[50] Lucy Noakes, 'Popular Memory, Popular Culture: The War in the Post-War World' in *Total War: Economy, Society and Culture*, pp. 675-694 (p. 675).

Bush and Margaret Thatcher were willing to exploit for their own purposes. The continuation of this way of framing the war illustrates how it has become a hegemonic narrative, a vision of the Second World War as a contest between 'us' and 'them', of good vs evil, which has continued to shape how the war is represented and remembered. The key question here is of course why these narratives persist – the answer is that their use leads to the creation of a vision of the past which is easily recognisable, one which appears logical and orderly, a war fought for the 'right' reasons. Such depictions are perhaps particularly enticing to readers faced with tempestuous political climes such as the Falklands and Iraq Wars or the encroaching threat of terrorism.

However, there were also competing narratives about how to conceptualize the enemy present during the Second World War, instabilities within the official 'war culture' which have led to the formation of similar internal conflicts in hegemonic discourses about the opposition forces. The lack of consistency of the official 'war culture' is evident in the shifts in Ministry of Information policies over the course of the war. This department was set up in 1938 to 'by the dissemination of *truth* […] attack the enemy in the minds of the public'.[51] Its policies provide a vital source of information about governmentally approved portrayals of the enemy.

The Ministry's presentation of the Axis forces was affected by a variety of factors. As Ian McLaine observes: 'as long as the government cherished the forlorn hope that the Germans might overthrow their leaders, the Ministry of Information was unable to tell the British people they were pitted against a ruthless enemy'.[52] However, this situation changed with the coming of Churchill and the events of Dunkirk, and thus: 'the separation of Germans and Nazis ceased'.[53] Consequently: 'by 1941 the MOI had embraced the belief, popularised in Lord Vansittart's *Black Record*, in a perpetual conflict in the German psyche between barbarism and civilisation' (p. 144). This presentation of the entire German people became the prevailing representation in the media. These shifts in policy are crucial, as they reveal a lack of consistency even during the war itself about how to conceptualize the enemy.

The intention not to distinguish between the actions of the Nazis, and those of

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[51] Nicholas, p. 2.

[52] Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale: Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War II* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1979), p. 142.

[53] Sian Nicholas, 'The BBC, British Morale, and the Home Front War Effort 1939-45' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 1992), p. 144.

the German military and nation, was expressed in the 1940 'Anger Campaign'.[54] This MOI policy declared that the British public were believed to be 'harbouring little sense of real personal animus against the average German man or woman [and] accepting with amazing phlegm bitter reverses without overmuch recrimination' (p. 143). As a result, it was argued that 'this placidity must be replaced with "personal anger … against the German people and Germany"' (p. 143). Evidence of this attitude can be seen in 'a short wall text to be issued to millions' written by J.B. Priestley, entitled 'The Secret Beast'.[55] The text of this poster declares: 'the secret people of the Germanys are worse than fools in their folly. When their madness comes upon them, out leaps a primitive, barbarian beast-like instinct', and that 'they kill without pity, rejoicing in blood, as animals kill. […] they are Europe's secret beasts, roused to senseless fury'.[56] This portrayal of the enemy is a clear-cut us/them dichotomy, in which all the German people were blamed for the actions of the Nazis.

However, with the progression of the war and concerns about the postwar world, official attitudes about the solidity of the divide between the German military and people and Nazism shifted once more. As Nicolas observes: 'the BBC ended the war with a plea for restraint towards the German people. Their sin, it was implied, was great, but it was a sin of omission rather than of commission'.[57] Thus: 'they were [seen to be] to blame for the Nazis, but the Nazis were to blame for the war' (p. 163). At the end of the war, the divide between Nazi and German was reinstated, and the official image changed to 'a portrait of a grossly-misled people, nearly but not wholly irredeemable'.[58] These shifts in official policy in regards to representations of the opposition forces demonstrate how the matter of whether the enemy was thought to be the German army and people, or just the Nazis, was a contested one, affected by external circumstances as well as misconceptions of British morale. This lack of consistency in the attitudes of the official 'war culture' towards the figure of the opposition has led to the construction of hegemonic discourses about the war which contain similar internal instabilities, caught between their own anxieties and wanting to

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[54] McLaine, p. 143.

[55] Ian McLaine, 'The Ministry of Information and British Civilian Morale During the Second World War' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 1976), p. 179.

[56] J.B. Priestley, 'The Secret Beast', quoted in *The Ministry of Information and British Civilian Morale*, p. 179.

[57] Nicholas, *The Echo of War,* p. 163.

[58] Nicholas, 'The BBC, British Morale, and the Home Front War Effort 1939-45', p. 143.

fit a certain vision of the past.

As a result of their use of these narrative frames, fictional depictions of the SOE contain enemy characters who are portrayed as stereotypically evil, in line with the bestial imagery of the official war culture. However, there is also a sense of erotic fascination with these figures, which undercuts any divisions the texts were trying to construct between the evil antagonist and the brave protagonist. In addition, the texts portray a rather idealised depiction of the Abwehr, suggesting that they had clean hands, as well as that perhaps not all the members of even the SS and SD served willingly. These internal instabilities in the enemy characters are a response to the inconsistences of the official 'war culture'; flawed hegemonic war discourses form as a result, ridden with anxieties and cultural obsessions about for example the corruptive power of ideology, concerns which continue to shape how the war has been represented. One might ask how hegemonic discourses survive with these internal cracks – the answer is that by invoking certain narrative frames, their constitutive elements offer a resolution to these preoccupations, which yet somehow still poke through if one digs deep enough.

'Fascinating Fascism'[59]

In three fictional representations of the SOE, *Into the Fire*, *Jackdaws* and *The Girl Who Fell From The Sky*, the female protagonist has an encounter with the Gestapo. The protagonist is sexually assaulted, and in two of the texts, also tortured. This series of events creates an image of the Second World War which is in line with the discourse of the Churchillian speeches of the official 'war culture' and Vansittartism, in which the enemy is clearly depicted as evil. However, all three texts also belie a desire to titillate the reader through an engagement in sexual fantasies, hinting at what Susan Sontag, Petra Rau and Laura Frost refer to as the cultural phenomenon of an eroticization of fascism. Reading these scenes alongside Sigmund Freud's famous essay 'A Child is Being Beaten', exposes how the fantasy being offered is the role of either torturer or victim, dependent on imagined reader position. Through representing the Gestapo figures in this way, the texts reveal the instabilities which lie at the heart of their representation of the enemy; they are caught in a fascination with the darker side of the Second World War which hampers their attempt to depict a clear division between their protagonist and the members of the Gestapo they encounter. These scenes are also

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[59] Sontag, title page of essay.

significant because they offer up a perfect example of how hegemonic war discourses are supported by a conformity to gender discourses in these texts; the trope of the evil Nazi combines with the desire to make the female characters into sexualized figures, their pain converted by their male writers into erotic spectacle.

Fullerton's *Into the Fire*, the first novel in a series about a female SOE agent, Rosie Ewing, conveys what at first appears to be a clear, unquestioning hatred for the opposing forces. Throughout, this antagonism is voiced through the protagonist, whose hatred does not distinguish between the Nazi paramilitary organisations and the ordinary soldier. Upon seeing 'two off-duty Boche soldiers', Rosie thinks 'may they all rot in hell'.[60] She adds: 'they would, if there was any justice: and if there was such a place as hell other than the camps, cellars and gas chambers in which they created it for their victims' (p. 76). It is an impression of repugnance, emphasised by Rosie's later thought: 'she was conscious of her own utter loathing of the *bloody* Master Race' (p. 77). By choosing to include this information about the concentration camps, Fullerton justifies his protagonist's attitude; the polarity in the text between Rosie as the protagonist working for the 'good guys', battling the 'bad guys', is increased through referring to the atrocities which were undeniably perpetrated by some members of the Nazi regime. This impression is emphasised further by Rosie's thought about the soldier: 'even if amongst his own people he might be thought of as a thoroughly good fellow', for 'any practising human being he was simply a trespasser in a country where even the pigs were more civilized than him and his compatriots' (p. 77). Rosie's views follow the Vansittart model, as she notes: 'every single one […] was by his mere presence an aider and abettor of practices that were utterly obscene' (p. 77). The line is firmly drawn between good and evil, with no distinctions made.

When a pick-up is betrayed, Rosie is arrested and imprisoned by the Gestapo. Her jailer, Prinz, is described in a negative light: 'badly fitting civilian clothes, mid-forties, flabby-looking, with a large head and mouse-coloured hair. Could have been Heinrich Himmler's nephew – truly, there was a definite resemblance, even the same pig eyes' (p. 278). This description compounds the existing negative impression in the text of the German forces as lacking in humanity, an element which is highlighted by the constant comparisons to animals. Casting the Gestapo enemy as bestial is particularly significant in the context of the text's reliance on hegemonic war

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[60] Alexander Fullerton, *Into the Fire,* 2nd edn. (London: Warner Books, 2002), p. 76.

discourses, as the animalistic references echo the writings of Vansittart, as well as the predominance of monkeys in propaganda posters. This view of the enemy has its roots in the official 'war culture', tropes which have persisted and continued forward into hegemonic war discourses about Nazi operatives.

The Gestapo men torture Rosie. Prinz orders a fellow soldier to inflict the torture, placing a shovel into Rosie's kneecaps. In order to emphasise the horror being inflicted, we are told Rosie's thoughts: 'there'd be worse than this. It didn't seem possible, but she knew there would be' (p. 284). The torture continues, including being drowned. A description of the experience from Rosie's perspective emphasises the horror: 'under. Roaring in her ears, pressure, agony in the damaged side of her head where it was being forced against the bottom of the bath. She'd let her breath go – had to […] She *was* drowning' (p. 288). The inclusion of this level of detail allows the reader to empathise with Rosie, to envisage what being tortured would feel like. It is a potentially troubling moment, breaking down the barrier between reader and protagonist as Rosie's bodily integrity begins to crumble; the reader is placed in Rosie's position, invited to feel what she feels.

In addition to the baseline horror of enduring torture, Rosie's suffering is also depicted as a form of sexual assault, as Prinz touches her breasts without her consent (p. 294).[61] Prinz and his associates thereby reach another level of evil by becoming not just France's oppressors and Rosie's torturers, but also her sexual assailants. Given the level of empathy created between Rosie and the reader, this torture scene becomes problematic. Rather than simply being a way to increase the degree of evil of Prinz's character and thereby emphasize the moral divide between the Gestapo and the Resistance network, the scene verges on erotic fantasy, with the potential to submerge the reader into a sadomasochistic power play. The scene becomes part of a wider cultural 'fascination' with fascism, which Petra Rau refers to as "fascism" in this context, to indicate the distance between the reality and the erotic representation, the 'cultural fantasy'.[62] Laura Frost explores this connection between sadomasochistic fantasy and 'fascism' further, arguing that its roots are an attempt to create a division between the Allies and the Germans through drawing a line between moral and immoral

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[61] I have chosen for ethical reasons not to include the quotations from these scenes of sexual assault, as it needlessly replicates the female characters' suffering.

[62] Rau, *Our Nazis,* p.8.

behaviour, as demonstrated by First World War propaganda.[63] Frost observes: 'German fascism had a strong set of national associations for British, French, and U.S. readers, which developed out of the treatment of German authoritarianism in World War I propaganda' (p. 9). As a result, in the Allied nations, a 'selected form of sexuality – heterosexuality founded on equality, respect, and nonviolence', was 'validated as a reflection of democratic national ideals, while particular sexualities that did not fall into line with this norm were designated "fascist"' (p. 7). Crucially, Frost argues that 'images of sexualized fascism' subsequently 'derive their meaning precisely from the distance mainstream culture puts between itself and deviation, a distance represented as the distance between democracy and fascism' (p. 159). However, as illustrated by the torture scenes in *Into The Fire*, instead of delineating the divide between the Allied and Axis forces, the cultural connection of 'fascism' with a deviant sexuality has had the effect of perpetuating this fascination, the erotic thrill of the forbidden.

The inclusion of scenes which involve torture and searching amounting to sexual assault is a recurring theme, as evident in *Jackdaws* by Ken Follett. Ruby, one of the female agents, is arrested and tortured by a member of the Gestapo, Becker. The torture is clearly designed to mimic rape, with the insertion of a phallic cylinder intended to cause pain and humiliation.[64] Becker and his commanding officer, Weber, are firmly depicted as evil Gestapo members, deviant in both their political and sexual ideologies. Yet, the inclusion of this scene suggests that any such divide is also compromised by the sexual 'fantasy' of 'fascism' which underlies it.

Marian Sutro suffers a similar invasion of her body in *The Girl Who Fell From The Sky*. She is stopped by a female German officer, whose exact affiliations are not revealed. The woman checks her papers and searches her bags before groping Marian both vaginally and anally.[65] Marian's body is violated, placing her attacker firmly into the stereotype of the sexually deviant Nazi. It is also an act designed to indicate the level of power the occupying forces now hold; they can invade any space. However, in a similar fashion to *Into the Fire*, the associations with sadomasochism and the other perceived sexual deviances of the exchange expose an erotic fascination with this figure

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[63] Laura Frost, *Sex Drives: Fantasies of Fascism in Literary Modernism* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 9.

[64] Follett, pp. 539-540.

[65] Mawer, pp. 206-207.

of the female Nazi, which breaks down any attempt to distance Marian from her assailant.

The gender of Marian's attacker is significant, as it emphasises that the enemy could be anywhere; they are not necessarily just in the expected roles. In addition, Mawer's choice to have a female Nazi assault his protagonist plays into the supposedly erotic, often sadomasochistic nature of 'fascism'. The figure of the sadistic female Nazi is, as Frost argues, 'an almost exclusively postwar image. The stock stereotypes of female Nazis […] seem to have been created by the press after the war'.[66] This figure would have been based on the stories which arose about infamous female Nazis such as Ilse Koch and Irma Grese as a result of their war crimes trials. Mawer's decision to create a female antagonist along these lines draws on these postwar images, as well as alluding to the sadomasochistic fantasy of the sadistic female dominatrix. Whilst the intention in *The Girl Who Fell From the Sky, Jackdaws* and *Into The Fire* may have been to create characters who are easily discernible as 'baddies', instead their characterisation serves to emphasize the texts' flirtation with the sexual element of 'fascism', breaking down this distinction.

It should be noted here that due to the nature of Gestapo torture, records were not kept and there are few eye witness accounts, as often those who did observe others being tortured would then have been killed themselves. Significantly, the torture of a female SOE agent that we do know about because she did survive, does not appear to have been sexual – Odette Sansom had her spine burned with a poker and her toe nails removed, but her account of her torture did not mention inflictions of a sexual nature, although it of course possible that such atrocities could have happened to her and she chose not to speak about it.[67] Even in the case of Noor Inayat Khan, whom Vera Atkins is reportedly thought to have believed was raped, there is no definitive evidence due to the nature of these women's imprisonment.[68] With this knowledge of the historical circumstances surrounding the torture of female agents in mind, it is particularly noticeable that in the three texts under discussion here, the torture is predominantly of a sexual nature. This emphasis reinforces the initial impression that the male authors of these texts have seized the opportunity to indulge in sadomasochistic fantasies of punishment for the female characters' transgressive behaviour, or, that they are also

[66] Frost, p. 154.
[67] Jerrard Tickell, *Odette*, 6th edn. (London: Pan Books, 1972), pp. 222-223.
[68] Helm, p. 417.

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offering their reader the chance to engage in a repressed, unconscious masochistic fantasy of being beaten by the forbidden powerful father figure.

To better understand this dual nature of the fantasy torture scenes it is useful to refer to Freud's essay 'A Child is Being Beaten', a seminal text on how fantasy functions. Freud's discussion surrounds what he saw as a common fantasy amongst his patients, of a child being beaten. He deduced that the fantasy was 'invariably cathected with a high degree of pleasure and had its issue in an act of pleasurable auto-erotic satisfaction'.[69] Freud describes the fantasy as having three stages, the first in which the child being beaten is not the fantasizer; it is rather another child being beaten by an indeterminate adult figure, whom Freud argues is the father. For Freud, at this stage, whilst the fantasy would not seem sadomasochistic, it could be interpreted as 'my father is beating the child whom I hate' (loc. 571). There would consequently appear to be at least some element of sadistic enjoyment in this level of the fantasy. With this essay in mind, the sexual torture of the female agents discussed here could be read as an example of this first stage, an enjoyment of the punishment of others presented as an erotic fantasy to the reader.

However, for Freud, the fantasy of a child being beaten had two more stages, and it is the second which is particularly useful here. Freud argues that the second stage of the fantasy involves the child being beaten by its father, noting that 'the phantasy therefore, has become masochistic' (loc. 641). Significantly, this is a repressed fantasy, an unconscious erotic fantasy about the father figure, and therefore incestuous. Patrick Joseph Mahony supports this reading, commenting: 'the underlying message […] is that being beaten is equated with intercourse with father'.[70] Mahony argues that as a result, because of 'the patently incestuous nature of the fantasy it must be repressed,' and it is in actuality not a conscious fantasy (loc. 1346). In the context of the torture scenes under discussion here, applying this second stage of the fantasy as outlined by Freud implies that the torture of the female agents offers the reader the fantasy position, should they wish it, of also being beaten, to take on the masochistic position and indulge in the character's pain as dealt by the powerful figure of the Nazi soldier. The forbidden nature of the torturer makes this a repressed fantasy, which aligns neatly with

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[69] Sigmund Freud, 'A Child is Being Beaten', in *On Freud's "A Child is Being Beaten"*, ed. by Ethel Spector Person (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), loc. 465–937 (loc. 485). Kindle ebook.

[70] Patrick Joseph Mahony, '"A Child is Being Beaten": A Clinical, Historical, and Textual Study' in *On Freud's "A Child is Being Beaten*, loc. 1271-1691 (loc. 1346).

the repression of the incestuous feelings for the father Freud argues exists in this second, unconscious stage of the 'a child is being beaten' fantasy.

The repressed nature of this second stage is indeed key, as in the third stage the fantasizer is again an observer rather than the victim, yet there is now an erotic, masturbatory element to the fantasy, stemming from the second, unconscious stage. Viewed through the lens of Freud's analysis of the 'A Child Is Being Beaten' fantasy, the implication is that these scenes offer two fantasies: a sadomasochistic fantasy, with the female characters being tortured for their transgressions, their activity beyond cultural expectations for the female gender, or a masochistic repressed fantasy of the forbidden, depending on the potential reader position.

It is significant that sexualized torture scenes occur in three separate texts, as it implies an authorial awareness, whether conscious or not, of the wider cultural 'fascination' with 'fascism' as explored by Sontag, Rau and Frost; the nature of these scenes implies a desire to titillate the reader by flirting with sadomasochism, or to offer them the possibility of a masochistic fantasy, stemming from a desire for the forbidden. Obeying the stereotype of the sadistic Nazi, the torturers are portrayed as enjoying the sexualized torture they inflict, casting them as sexually deviant as well as being Nazis and rapists. The erotic elements of these scenes also adhere to hegemonic gender discourses in which women are often cast as sexualized figures. Whilst their inclusion does serve to emphasize the moral gap between the valiant protagonist and the evil Nazis to a certain degree, the sexual elements suggest that the lines are not drawn as strongly as they might otherwise be. Reliant on the stereotype of the sadistic Nazi to depict their enemy characters, these texts reveal the instabilities in their representation of the enemy, which are undercut by their sexual fascination with 'fascism' and the eroticization of female pain.

Keeping Secrets At Any Cost

Analysing the torture scenes in these texts is also fruitful in terms of what it indicates about the ways hegemonic discourses can outrank each other, competing to be the most appropriate or powerful narrative. Contrary to the anxieties about the female figure and secrecy evident in the propaganda posters discussed in the introductory chapter to this thesis (which will be explored further in Chapter 3), the fictional representations of the Special Operations Executive analysed here display a lack of concern about women's

abilities to keep secrets. This variance stems from their setting, as out in the field under torture by the Gestapo or threat of capture, secrecy is no longer depicted as having a gendered emphasis. Instead, the broader narrative of brave Allied soldier who must overcome the Axis forces comes into play, superseding any gendered concerns about the abilities of the female agents to keep secrets.[71]

The protagonists of Catherine Bell's *Angel of Baker Street* (2015), *Violins of Autumn* by Amy McAuley, the television series *Wish Me Luck* and Fullerton's *Into the Fire,* undergo torture to protect the secrets of their network. They surrender their bodily integrity to the war effort, as well as accepting the need to commit murder to keep this information away from the Gestapo. In the process, they sacrifice any personal or moral qualms. These choices are presented as being the only possible option for the success of the protagonist's mission; the reader becomes complicit in the acceptance of this value system, if they are willing the characters to achieve their narrative goals. As these texts are told from the Allied perspective, the promised success of the narrative is presented as being part of the Allied victory, pulling in the reader to the altered value system through the use of this wider narrative frame. In these fictional representations of the SOE, the female protagonists fully obey the injunction of the war posters to 'be careful what you say', any anxieties about their capacity to safeguard information removed in the adherence to hegemonic discourses about the behaviour of Allied soldiers.

In *Angel of Baker Street*, Olivia, also known as Angelique, is sent to France to uncover what has been happening to the Prosper circuit, tasked with finding out if anyone has been passing information to the enemy about the network.[72] Olivia eventually discovers that Jacques, one of the Resistance network members, has been working for the Germans. He is described as 'a threat to every member of the French Resistance that came into contact with him. Jacques was a murderer and a traitor and so far he had managed to get away with it' (loc. 4169). As a result of Jacques 'sending wireless messages from the SD Headquarters back to London', we learn that 'agents

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[71] It should be noted that the torture scenes in *Angel of Baker Street* and *Violins of Autumn* do not have erotic elements, unlike those discussed previously. Both texts have female authors, a possible reason for this decision, particularly if one reads texts such as *Into the Fire, The Girl Who Fell From the Sky* and *Jackdaws* as indulging in erotic punishments of their transgressive female characters. *Wish Me Luck*, as a television series, would have had age-dependent restrictions on its content, a probable cause for the difference in this instance.

[72] Catherine Bell, *Angel of Baker Street* (Amazon Media, 2015), loc. 716. Kindle ebook.

have been dropped straight into enemy hands', including Olivia's capture and torture (loc. 4615-4619). Having passed secrets to the wrong sources, thereby forfeiting his relationship with the rest of the network, the others decide to kill him: 'make no mistake Jacques is going to pay for what he's done' (loc. 4175). Eventually the network catch up with Jacques, and Olivia shoots him; a set of ethical norms operates in which normal rules are suspended, if it results in an Allied victory. Killing Jacques becomes acceptable, as he has both passed secrets, and put members of the Resistance network at risk by sharing information. In this series of events Olivia is firmly cast as the protector of knowledge, without any suggestion that she might act otherwise.

Female agents are also shown to be able to keep secrets even under torture. This motif occurs in *Into the Fire* and *Wish Me Luck*. In *Into The Fire,* Rosie Ewing, the protagonist, is betrayed to the Gestapo, arrested and interrogated. She knows the torture will not stop until she talks: 'which she could *not* do, ever – irrespective of what they might do to her. It was a law she'd had implanted in her brain for a long time now and couldn't break – at least, not consciously'.[73] Rosie endures horrific levels of torture, including being forced to kneel on a shovel and being drowned. Faced with having her nipples removed with pliers, Rosie becomes scared of talking, feeling 'a virtual certainty that her screams would fuse into outpourings of treachery, self-destruction in the course of destroying everything of the greatest, truest value' (p. 294). Luckily, Rosie is rescued before this happens. It is significant that she fears that her silence will break when her nipples are about to be removed, as it does hint on some level towards the notion that it would be her innate 'womanliness' that would lead her to speak. However, this idea is not fully explored as the torture stops, with the result that Rosie remains the brave Allied soldier, able to resist Gestapo torture.

Elaine Scarry argues that 'the intense pain' inflicted during torture 'destroys a person's self and world, a destruction experienced spatially as either the contraction of the universe down to the immediate vicinity of the body or as the body swelling to fill the entire universe'.[74] Applying this understanding of torture to the scenes under discussion, the suggestion is that in these moments, the individual and the secrets they protect have become one, as the wider concerns of the network and the war collapse into the personal concerns of the individual. As a result, the protagonists keep their

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[73] Fullerton, p. 286.

[74] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 35.

secrets even in the face of extreme pain, willing to do so because they no longer exist as separate entities from the information they carry. However, Scarry's theories about torture also indicate that it is in fact this breakdown of the individual's world which should lead to confession. The implication is that the 'undoing of civilization' (p. 38) caused by the pain inflicted, in which 'world, self, and voice are lost, or nearly lost' (p. 35), is either not fully achieved in these instances, with the individual able to withstand this call to total dissolution, or more likely, that these are not accurate portrayals of torture. This idealised representation illustrates the texts' adherence to the hegemonic war discourse that secrets must be kept from the Axis foe at all costs. The obedience to this narrative pattern somewhat undercuts the historical accuracy of these scenes.

Like Rosie Ewing, Matty Firman in *Wish Me Luck* also remains silent in the force of torture. She is whipped and has water jets pointed at her, amongst other torments. Krieger tries to get her to talk, telling her: 'I can't help you […] unless you help yourself'.[75] In response, Matty denies knowing the names he mentions, refusing to cooperate. She is tortured to the point where she cannot see, before being rescued. Her silence clearly comes at great personal cost and a determination not to betray both the network and her country. Here, too, the ability to keep secrets under extreme torture serves to promote Matty's bravery; an image is created of this process in which she is able to preserve her individual world against the torment, which is perhaps not realistic.

Similarly, in *Violins of Autumn,* Betty is captured by the Gestapo, headed by Joseph Krieger. He tells Betty: 'talk to me now and treatments at the house prison will not be necessary'.[76] The information Krieger wants are the details of the local Resistance network. Krieger shows Betty a photo of her best friend Denise, and Betty knows that 'the best thing I can do to protect her is not to acknowledge her at all' (p. 285). She is aware that to save her friend and the rest of the Resistance network she must stay silent, an action she is prepared to take. Her refusal to talk nearly results in her death: 'I am about to drown. There is nothing I can do about it' (p. 287). Fortunately, Betty is eventually rescued. Denise tells her: 'your courage and silence allowed Resistance activities to continue. It saved many lives, including mine' (p. 307). By not breaking despite considerable pain, Betty is able to save both her friends and her

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[75] *Wish Me Luck*, dir. by Gordon Flemyng and Bill Hays (Granada, 1988–1991) [on DVD].

[76] Amy McAuley, *Violins of Autumn* (New York: Walker & Company, 2012), p. 285.

country. She therefore fulfils the role of brave Allied soldier, without the gender-specific anxieties which often haunt female characters.

It should not be ignored that the inclusion of torture scenes could be an attempt by the authors at historical accuracy. Female SOE agents such as Odette Sansom were tortured and presumably did not give out any valuable information.[77] As she was one of the few agents to return alive it is impossible to know whether other agents did not talk either, but one would presume that as they were sent to prisons and subsequently concentration camps, they kept their silence and were punished in response. However, given that not breaking under torture is a repeated motif in these texts, the implication is that this trope has a symbolic basis as well, serving to foreground the texts' adherence to wider war narratives in which Allied soldiers can withstand any level of pain in order to safeguard the secrets which have been entrusted to them. Hegemonic discourses in which secrecy is paramount are maintained, at the cost of a realistic depiction of torture.

Whilst one might argue that the fictional depictions of female SOE agents who endure torture and shoot traitors are simply attempts at historical accuracy[78] or to add narrative peril, the recurrence of these unquestioned tropes across the texts supports the sense that they fit easily within hegemonic war discourses. With protagonists who are part of the Allied forces, working towards the Allied victory, to present the representatives of these goals as anything but brave soldiers willing to go to any lengths to protect their country would undermine this wider narrative. The texts under discussion in this chapter are not part of such a revolutionary enterprise, falling obediently into line with the wider war narratives of representations of the Second World War told from the Allied perspective. In the process, any potential for anxiety about the abilities of these female agents to protect the information they hold is ignored, as it would disrupt the texts' adherence to this portrayal of the war. The representation of women's ability to keep secrets in these texts demonstrates that there are some narratives which are stronger than others, even able to overwrite tenacious cultural anxieties about women's trustworthiness.

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[77] Our knowledge of this stems from Sansom's testimony about her experiences, and therefore must be read with critical understandings of the nature of life writing in mind.

[78] Nancy Wake is reported to have shot a German spy in order to protect her men (Fitzsimons, p. 256).

The 'Good German'

Alongside the figure of the evil, sadistic Nazi, the stereotype of the 'Good German' is also evident in these texts, including *Wish Me Luck*, *Light of the Moon* and *Jackdaws*. Whilst this figure is, as Petra Rau notes 'largely a product of the 1950s', it coincides with the portrayal by the Ministry of Information at both the start and end of the war as the Nazis being to blame for the war, rather than the German people and military as a whole.[79] The 'Good German' forms an extension of the wartime desire to delineate a division between the actions of the Nazis and those of the Wehrmacht and the German nation, forming a hegemonic war discourse about the enemy which stems from the same essential anxieties about the nature of warfare and the corruptive power of ideologies.[80] The recurrence of these two rather different enemy figures across the texts illustrates how hegemonic discourses about the opposition which have entered cultural memory are inconsistent; under the weight of multiple fears and obsessions about war, competing narratives are created which result in unstable enemy characters.

The figure of the 'Good German' stems from several contextual roots, including 1950s war films about General Erwin Rommel.[81] As Rau argues, contrary to what one might perhaps expect, Rommel's 'soldierly competence was much admired in Britain' (p. 129). This attitude meant that 'the cinematic British Rommel became the paradigm for the decent German officer, and this image survived later revelations of the German military's complicity in the genocidal practices of the regime' (pp. 130). In *Jackdaws*, Follett directly references this cultural image of the 'Good German' as embodied by Rommel, in the construction of Dieter Frank's character. Dieter is a member of the Abwehr, who is reported to be 'a member of 'Field Marshal Rommel's personal staff'.[82] Follett even refers to Rommel directly as 'the Desert Fox', highlighting the connection to this cultural construction (p. 15). These references to Rommel illustrate how his position as a 'Good German' has entered cultural memory, used to indicate an awareness of this divide between the military and the Nazi regime.

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[79] Rau, *Our Nazis,* p. 128.

[80] As Ben Shepherd observes in *Hitler's Soldiers: The German Army in the Third Reich* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016): 'whilst many works employ the term "Wehrmacht" to denote the German army, this is actually incorrect. "Wehrmacht" directly translates as Armed Forces, and technically speaking the Wehrmacht comprised not just the army, but also the air force (Luftwaffe), [and] navy (Kriegsmarine)' (p. viii).

[81] Rau, p. 129.

[82] Follett, p. 17.

The pardoning of senior commanders Field Marshall Erich von Manstein and Field Marshall Albert Kesselring after their convictions at military tribunals is also a contributing factor to the construct of the 'Good German'. Manstein was 'one of the most vaunted of all the German military commanders' who was 'convicted of issuing the "Commissar Order", permitting the killing without trial of suspected Bolshevik party agents attached to Red Army units'.[83] Field Marshall Albert Kesselring, formerly Commander in Chief of the German Forces in Italy, was convicted and 'sentenced to death in May 1947 by a British court in Venice for authorizing the reprisal murder of Italian citizens' (p. 47). However, in 1952 both men were given 'medical parole', a plan which Donald Bloxham argues 'had been devised at the highest levels of the Foreign Office and certainly with the knowledge of Churchill and the British High Commission' (p. 169). The two Field Marshalls were freed for political reasons, including the desire to gain the Federal Republic's allegiance in the Cold War, but also as part of a wider 'psychological need to believe that a fellow European culture had not been totally corrupted' (p. 180 and pp. 171-172). The treatment of senior German Wehrmacht commanders such as Field Marshals Kesselring and Manstein, coupled with the presentation of General Rommel and his forces as a 'decent' enemy, demonstrates a wish to divide the German military from 'true' Nazis in the postwar period. This conception of the enemy is used as a stereotype in these texts, and has indeed become part of hegemonic war discourses about the German forces. Crucially, in a couple of the texts it is also extended beyond a divide between members of the Wehrmacht and the Gestapo, to include characters who belong to the SS and SD. This continuation exposes the attraction of a model of the enemy which creates a rather idealised version of the war; it is a hegemonic war discourse which continues to persist because it chimes with certain preconceptions and fantasies about conflict.

The attempt to write the enemy figures in these texts as 'Good Germans' is achieved through several techniques. These include chapters from the perspective of the enemy character, showing them to be cultured and able to recognise the bravery of the Resistance forces, as well as the use of other characters as foils. However, there are also inconsistencies in these representations which are the result of the idealisations inherent in the figure of the 'Good German', which these texts are unable to quite make
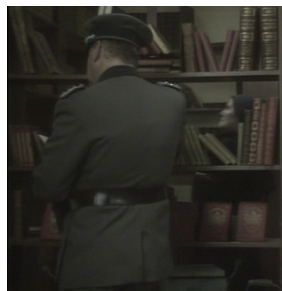
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[83] Donald Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial: War Crimes Trials and the Formation of Holocaust History and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 6 and p. 167.

fit. The hegemonic war discourses which serve as narrative frameworks in these texts echo the inconsistencies of the official 'war culture' and postwar constructions about war, revealing the idealisations and anxieties which shape these representations of conflict.

Out of fifty-three chapters, twenty chapters of *Jackdaws* are either from the perspective of, or focus on, Dieter Frank, a Major in the German military intelligence service. Through these chapters, we learn: 'Dieter was a sybarite, enjoying all the cultural and sensual pleasures France had to offer'.[84] It is revealed that Dieter has 'a wife and two pretty children in Cologne', as well as a mistress in France, Stéphanie (p. 13). Whilst the inclusion in Dieter's narrative of a mistress, in addition to a family back in Germany, could be used to vilify him and indicate a lack of traditional morals, the circumstances of the commencement of his relationship with Stéphanie are designed to cast Dieter as a sympathetic character. We are told that Stéphanie 'had a Jewish grandmother', and had consequently 'spent six months in a French prison, and she had been on her way to a camp in Germany when Dieter rescued her' (p. 15). Subsequently, Dieter 'had fed her, given her new clothes, installed her in the spare bedroom in his apartment and treated her with gentle affection', before proceeding to seduce her and make her his mistress (p. 15). Although it must be acknowledged that the circumstances in which their relationship begins are problematic, as Stéphanie's only other option would have been almost certain death, that Dieter chooses to save her and indeed to sleep with her, is intended to indicate a willingness to break the rules, as well as a degree of kindness in his character.

The head of the Abwehr in *Wish Me Luck*, Colonel Werner Krieger, is given a similar depth of character to Dieter. In episode four of series one, Krieger is shown to be knowledgeable about books and classical music, depicted in a bookshop knowingly perusing the shelves:

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[84] Follett, p. 66.

Krieger also discusses classical music with Claudine, recognising the record she is playing. These clichéd characteristics are designed to suggest that he is a cultured man, not just an evil brute. This impression is supported by Krieger flirting and laughing with Claudine, highlighting that he is a fellow human and not someone to be feared. He appears to lack any particular hatred for the French people, telling Claudine: 'it still embarrasses me to have to impose my soldiers on your chateau in this way'.[85] In addition, he claims that 'if everyone behaves themselves', it will not be a particularly harsh occupation, indicating that he does not wish to exert any violence on the population his country has invaded.

This trope of creating a voice for the enemy figure is also present in *Light of the Moon*. The member of the military intelligence services created by Buchan is Paul von Hoch. We are given Paul's background, including a childhood love of a tale of medieval knights which develops into an adult belief in 'dying gloriously for one's country'.[86] Paul is clearly depicted as an idealist, an impression supported by how, when Hitler took power in 1939, Paul was 'excited and hopeful', believing that 'this man can make our country great again' (p. 31). However, he soon learnt the error of these sentiments, realising afterwards that 'Hitler's dreams were not Germany's salvation' (p. 31). Paul also has a war injury, resulting from his previous career commanding a Panzer tank, lending him an air of vulnerability and disenchantment with the regime.

Dieter, Krieger and Paul are all portrayed as sympathetic men who work for the Abwehr. The repetition of this trope reveals the texts' adherence to hegemonic war discourses about the figure of the enemy, attempting to rehabilitate the members of the German forces by presenting them as cultured men who are able to empathise with the opposition. They stand in contrast to characters such as Prinz in *Into The Fire,* who fit the stereotype of bestial foe. This opposition runs throughout the texts, as in *Light of the Moon*, *Jackdaws* and *Wish Me Luck*, a clear line is drawn between the Nazi security forces of the Gestapo, SS and SD, and the Abwehr, the German military organization for whom Dieter Frank, Colonel Krieger and Paul von Hoch all work. A lack of belief in the Nazi party and consequent dislike of the Gestapo is shared by all three men, creating a clear divide between such Nazi paramilitary organizations and military

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[85] Krieger's men have occupied Claudine's town and are living in her chateau.
[86] Elizabeth Buchan, *Light of the Moon*, 2nd edn. (London: Pan Books, 1995), p. 29.

intelligence in line with the construction of the figure of the 'Good German'.

In *Wish Me Luck,* Thérèse, Krieger's mistress, tells Claudine that Krieger 'hates the Nazis really, the Party, I mean', adding: 'he was just a businessman before the war started'. Whilst these sentiments may not have been entirely truthful, given the context, their inclusion in the text serves to draw the line between Krieger and the Nazis. Krieger himself echoes a similar dislike of the Gestapo when confronting Claudine about her work for the Resistance: 'I would hate to see you in the hands of those Gestapo sadists'. This statement is reiterated at a later discussion between the two, when Krieger claims 'I am not a monster', declaring that he would not have enjoyed turning her over to the Gestapo as 'I loathe those thugs'. His words indicate a dislike and a distancing of himself from the security police, yet it is unclear if he is completely genuine given the situations in which they are voiced, deployed as a threat against Claudine if she does not give him the information he requests. Krieger's words must be taken cautiously.

Dieter is similarly disparaging about the Gestapo. His job is to 'identify key communications targets and assess the ability of the Resistance to attack them', with the text opening on his analysis of the security arrangements of 'a telephone exchange of enormous strategic importance'.[87] Dieter discovers that 'security was infuriatingly lax', and assumes: 'that was probably due to the influence of the Gestapo' (p. 16). This lack of security is given context within the workings of the German war machine: 'the *Geheime Staatspolizei* was the state security service, and men were often promoted by reason of loyalty to Hitler and enthusiasm for Fascism rather than because of their brains and ability' (p. 16). It is a statement which paints a picture of the Gestapo as men who are fighting for belief rather than logic, and who therefore may not be too intelligent or discerning.

The Gestapo services in the area are controlled by *Sturmbannführer* Weber, a senior member of the Gestapo with an SS rank. Dieter and Weber knew each other before the war, as both had previously been policemen in Cologne. However, Dieter was successful, whereas Weber was 'a failure', eventually being fired for accidentally shooting a bystander at the scene of a road accident (p. 18). Yet in the Gestapo, Weber had 'risen swiftly in that community of embittered second-raters', in which the only qualification necessary was a fervent support of the Nazi party (p. 18). Weber and his

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[87] Follett, p. 16.

associates are represented as men who have failed in previous careers, seizing the opportunity of being in the Gestapo to gain power. This representation of the Gestapo through characters like Weber serves to create a sense of brutality and thuggishness. A line is drawn between these barbaric men, and the sophisticated, and at times sympathetic, natures of characters such as Krieger and Dieter.

However, both Krieger and Dieter are shown not to be too far removed from the groups they despise, character constructions which hint at the instabilities inherent in the figure of the 'Good German'. In Krieger's case, this lack of consistency is illustrated through his manipulation of Claudine into betraying the other members of the Resistance network, as well as his role in the torture of Matty. In episode seven of *Wish Me Luck,* Matty is captured and tortured by the Gestapo as a result of Claudine's actions. At first Matty is just questioned by Krieger, who tells her: 'it gives me no pleasure to imprison you here. It would give me even less pleasure to pass you to the Gestapo'. He is attempting the same distancing techniques he used on Claudine. Matty does not answer his questions and is whipped as a result. Her continual refusal to talk leads to her transferral to a Gestapo cell for more torture.

Until this point, the line had been firmly drawn between Krieger as sophisticated, detached questioner and the beatings of the brutal Gestapo. However, the next step in Matty's torture does involve Krieger. She is shown undergoing water torture, whilst being asked questions by Krieger about Gregoire, the leader of the local Resistance network. Krieger stands behind Matty, with his face very blank, staring straight ahead. The camera moves between Matty's torture, showing her handcuffed hands, and the shower dripping, interspersed with close up shots of Krieger's face:

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The implication is that he is not enjoying the process, rather being forced into it to get results. This view of the case is supported by the visits of Krieger's superior officer, Major General Stocker, who threatens Krieger with being sent to the Eastern Front with its notoriously harsh conditions, if he fails. The overall image of Krieger is complicated, as he takes part in Matty's torture, yet also voices a dislike for the Nazi Party and is threatened with almost certain death by his superior officer if he does not do his job. The line between Abwehr and Gestapo is still drawn, yet it is revealed to be a less clear cut divide than perhaps the writers had hoped for.

Follett's representation of Dieter is similarly ambiguous. Whilst Dieter expresses dislike for the Gestapo and saves Stéphanie from being sent to a concentration camp, he is also complicit in the torture and death of many of the members of Flick's team. Dieter's chapters reveal his attitude to the war, including his views on the Resistance. Despite knowing that the members of the Resistance are the enemy, 'a profound threat to the occupying military force', he is able to acknowledge that 'they had been courageous', and that 'these French Resistance people were fighters'.[88] In a similar vein to the creation of Krieger as a character with multiple layers, Dieter's ability to recognise the bravery demonstrated by the opposition draws his character in line with the figure of the 'Good German', a cultured and empathetic enemy figure.

However, Dieter is also shown instigating torture of the Resistance members, removing any sympathy one might have felt for him. His methods are less violent than those of the Gestapo, taking the psychological torture approach, yet one could argue that this form of torture is actually worse than brute force, as every move is calculated. When a member of the local Resistance network, Gaston, is captured, Dieter takes part in his interrogation. Dieter uses Bernard, a younger member of the network, in order to get to Gaston. Dieter tells Becker to blindfold Bernard, so 'every blow comes as a dreadful shock, and every moment between blows is an agony of anticipation' (p. 103). He then instructs Becker: 'remember, the object is to inflict unbearable agony without endangering the subject's life or his ability to tell us what we need to know' (p. 104). He tells him to aim for the 'bony parts' to get the most effect (p. 104). Having given this command, Dieter thinks: 'god forgive me […] for teaching this brute how to inflict pain more efficiently'; yet he continues to instruct him (p. 104). As planned, Bernard's

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[88] Follett, p. 35.

screams encourage Gaston to talk, so he can save the younger man. Dieter is shown to need to switch a part of himself off in order to enact this torture: 'he needed to be completely hard-hearted and calculating. He must not allow himself to be touched by the physical and mental suffering he was about to inflict on human beings' (p. 96). This deliberate detachment indicates that Dieter knows exactly what he is doing, arguably making his character more evil than Becker, who simply deploys brute violence.

Either way, by the end of the text both men have met their comeuppance. Becker has been tortured with the same device he used on the SOE women, and Dieter is stabbed in the eye by Flick. As Becker has an electrode placed in his mouth, it is assumed, although not confirmed, that he dies for his crimes, and Dieter becomes severely disabled. At the end of the text we are shown him being cared for by his wife, described as having a 'vacant expression' and that 'a dribble of saliva hung from his open mouth' (p. 593). Revenge has been exacted, dispensing with any need for further questioning about the lack of coherence between Dieter's voiced opinions and his actions. These conflicting elements combine to create an unstable character, revealing an anxiety about the figure of the enemy in war and the capacity for fellow humans to commit atrocities. Dieter is depicted as both sophisticated and caring, as well as being a member of the Abwehr rather than the Gestapo, elements of his character which should mitigate his behaviour. However, like Krieger, Dieter's participation in torture hinders the attempt to portray him as a 'Good German'. The culmination to Dieter's narrative suggests an awareness of this lack of internal coherence in his character, which Follett attempts to negotiate with a symbolic punishment.

In contrast to *Jackdaws* and *Wish Me Luck, Light of the Moon* creates a more clear cut distinction between the Abwehr and the Gestapo, caused by the text's romance theme. Paul is the love interest for the female protagonist of the text, Evelyn; giving him the same level of darkness as Dieter and Krieger would undermine his suitability for this role. In the process, an idealised vision of the war appears, in which the wider emotive themes of love and war undercut the sense of historical accuracy of the representation. Paul Von Hoch's Abwehr boss, Von Bentivegni, tells him: 'there is a distinction to be made between "positive" intelligence, such as we in the *Abwehr* specialise in – the gathering of information about armed forces and in wartime about foreign political and economic affairs', and '"negative" intelligence, such as monitoring

the activities of the civilian population. Intellectuals, Jews'.[89] Bentivegni finishes with the advice: 'ours, I would say, is the more legitimate work for a German patriot' (p. 36). The implication is that the Gestapo and SD are not 'true' Germans, instead motivated by more sordid desires in their work. This message is reiterated by Paul's paraphrasing of his boss: 'we in the *Abwehr* must beware the SD, the *Sicherheitdienst*, created as the security section of Himmler's SS with particular responsibility for promulgating Hitler's National Socialism in the Third Reich' (p. 36). Paul finishes by adding: 'primarily concerned with controlling the private thoughts of citizens, it acts in conjunction with the Gestapo as a guardian of Germany's moral well-being' (p. 36). The line is deliberately drawn between the organisation Paul works for, the Abwehr, and the Nazi organizations of the SD, SS and Gestapo.

To illustrate this difference further, the stereotypical characteristics of the Gestapo and SD are personified in the character of Sturmbannführer Fleischer, who is a friend of the leader of the SD, 'the ruthless ex-naval officer Reinhard Heydrich' (p. 237). Fleischer is described as a 'man on the make', proud of his Nazi Party membership (p. 238). He declares to Paul: 'I see the operations led by my organisation in Russia are going well' (p. 238). The inclusion of 'my organisation' serves to highlight Fleischer's support for the Party. Paul's thoughts give context to Fleischer's words: 'the gossip trickling in from Russia, and Poland in particular, cited the brutality displayed by the *Einsatzgruppen* (SS Special Units which included members of the SD)' (p. 238). This contextualisation places Fleischer as fully complicit in the darkest activities of the Nazi Party, firmly casting him in the role of the enemy. Fleischer even declares: 'the Jewish problem will soon be dealt with' (p. 238). Such a statement demonstrates that he is aware of these atrocities; there is no doubt about the side to which Fleischer belongs. He conforms fully to the stereotype of evil Nazi member, an impression which is heightened through his very name, which translates as 'butcher'. In a similar contrast to that created between the characters of Dieter Frank and Sturmbannführer Weber in *Jackdaws*, through creating Fleischer in the mould of a 'true' Nazi, Buchan emphasizes the division between Fleischer and Paul. Both examples are attempts to define the gulf between the nature of those who worked for the Abwehr and for the SD and SS. The recurrence of this trope indicates a desire to cling to the idea that the Abwehr, because they were part of the Wehrmacht, involved in military

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[89] Buchan, p. 36.

intelligence rather than being part of the Nazi apparatus, had clean hands. However, as Ben Shepherd argues: 'decades of more recent scholarship have now demolished the image of the "clean Wehrmacht"'.[90] The perpetuation of this idea across the texts illustrates how their representation of the enemy functions to construct an idealised version of the war. It is in the very reliance on these hegemonic war discourses and flawed stereotypes that the anxieties they are trying to hide become apparent.

Good SS and SD Men

In contrast to *Light of the Moon, Wish Me Luck* and *Jackdaws*, which all create a divide between members of the Abwehr and the Gestapo and the SD, *As Time Goes By* and *Codename Verity* suggest that not all SS and SD men fit the stereotype of evil Nazi, despite being part of the Nazi regime apparatus.[91] Crucially, the same techniques are used of portraying the characters in question, Max von Bayer and Amadeus von Linden, as cultured men who are capable of empathy and respect for their opposing numbers.[92] The deployment of these techniques, which are then undercut by how both Max and von Linden are complicit in torture and the demise of SOE agents, indicates that a similar attempt to write these characters into the role of 'Good Germans' is being deployed, despite their affiliations with the SD and SS. The texts create an idealised version of the war which is intrinsically flawed, demonstrating both the difficulties of representing war, and how the version of the conflict they do depict has been shaped by enduring fears and fantasies about conflict.

Max von Bayer in *As Time Goes By* originally belongs to the Abwehr, but does so only to avoid being 'drafted to some infantry unit', informed of the need for this decision to join up by his brother Siegfried, a Wehrmacht captain.[93] Max is then forced to transfer to the SD, a change which is also shown to be involuntary. Despite this resistance, however, he is told by his brother: 'you won't have any choice, my friend. There's a war on and you'll go where you're ordered to go' (p. 60). This disinclination to join the SD or indeed the military machine at all, functions to portray Max as another

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[90] Shepherd, p. xiv.

[91] The Schutzstaffel (SS) and Sicherheitsdienst (SD) were both Nazi paramilitary organizations. The SS were particularly notorious.

[92] Following the nomenclature given in the texts, I will refer to Amadeus von Linden as 'von Linden' and Max von Bayer as 'Max'.

[93] Ted Allbeury, *As Time Goes By* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1994), p. 24.

victim of the war, rather than a believer in the ideology of Nazism. As a result, the cost to both sides is emphasized, a depiction of conflict which sits somewhat oddly when expressed through the character of an SD officer.

Our first impression of Max is of an 'eager young man' horse riding, a member of the German show-jumping team (p. 15). We are told that Max had 'travelled all over Europe. He had friends everywhere. Paris, London, Rome and Dublin were like second homes to him' (p. 15). Max is also described as 'romantic and slightly old-fashioned' (p. 15). Of course, at this point the reader does not know that this man will become part of the SD. It is therefore significant that Allbeury uses the stereotypical connection between being cultured and being 'good', to set up the character of a man who later becomes part of the forces tracking down the SOE members. Max is depicted in a similar vein to the characters of Dieter and Krieger, who are portrayed as essentially 'good' men who are corrupted by the nature of their work. It is an idealistic vision of the war which battles against their position as antagonists, and in the process, exposes a deep anxiety about the destructive capacity of war.

Once part of the SD, Max tries to avoid the brutality traditionally associated with the role. He asks his commanding officer, Schellenberg, for his own unit 'working with the SD and Gestapo but entirely independent' (p. 64). This would have the aim of providing 'accurate details of the British and French Resistance organizations and an effective counter-operation' (p. 64). Max is subsequently able to change his SD job into one resembling his previous work for the Abwehr, with a focus on the collection of intelligence instead of the brutality of the secret police. Rather than torturing suspects, under Max's rule: 'arrested suspects found themselves treated so sympathetically that what would have been formal interrogations were more like chats between people whose philosophies differed' (p. 66). Max is clearly trying to avoid the violence traditionally used by the Gestapo and SD, yet is still working against the protagonists. Somewhat ironically, Max's choice to use more sophisticated tactics actually leads to a higher success rate, as due to his changes: 'over the weeks they built up a picture of SOE, its organisation and its personalities', realizing for 'the first time' that 'there were two Resistance organisations operating out of London'.[94] Max is cast as a sophisticated enemy through his wish to avoid violence, but in the process becomes a more formidable foe, encapsulating the problems inherent in the attempt to write his character

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[94] Allbeury, p. 64. These were the Special Operations Executive and the Free French.

as being essentially innocent, whilst also being part of the SD.

These conflicting elements of Max's character are emphasized further through his treatment of the SOE agents. Max and Jenny Campbell, one of the agents, used to ride together. He consequently recognises Jenny, aware she is British and must be an enemy agent, and that 'I should have her arrested and questioned' (p. 260). Instead, his solution is to offer Cattoir, a man who is part of the Resistance network yet also speaks to the Germans, new papers and permits for Jenny if she could be persuaded to leave. If she refuses: 'I should feel I had done all I could to protect her and that she would have to take her chance with the others' (p. 260). Whilst not willing or arguably able to do anything else to save Jenny, Max tells Cattoir that he would not betray Jenny to the Gestapo: 'how could I do that? We were children together. We loved horses and riding. Our parents were good friends. We spent Christmases together' (p. 260). Cattoir tries to provoke Max, reminded him 'but now she's an enemy' (p. 260). Max disagrees, declaring: 'she's not my enemy any more than I am her enemy. We just happen to be on different sides in a war that was made by other people' (p. 260). He finishes with the statement 'we're just people' (p. 260). Max's attitude perfectly expresses the idealisations about war which lie at the heart of the construction of his character, which then clash against his role as an SD officer.

This figure of the 'Good German', who is nonetheless part of a Nazi paramilitary organization, also appears in *Codename Verity.* The character in question is SS-Hauptsturmführer Amadeus von Linden, who is mostly portrayed from the perspective of Verity, one of the protagonists of the text. Verity declares how von Linden 'resembles Captain Hook in that he is rather an upright sort of gentleman in spite of his being a brute'.[95] She continues this analogy: 'I am quite Pan-like in my naïve confidence that he will play by the rules and keep his word. So far, he *has*' (p. 5). Through this reference to a children's story, von Linden is painted as the sort of villain who exists in such stories – an antagonist who often has the chance of redemption.

The portrayal of von Linden as a 'Good German' is achieved through several methods - showing him to be a cultured man with the consequent stereotypical connotations of humanity rather than barbarity, references to his family and pre-war existence, and his performance as an officer of the SS who must interrogate Verity. Von Linden asks Verity if she has read *Down and Out in Paris and London* by George

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[95] Wein, p. 5. Original italics here and elsewhere.

Orwell, and as a result, they have 'a genial argument about Orwellian socialism' (p. 86). He also sings Wagner, supporting this impression of civility rather than simplistic brutality.[96] Verity learns that von Linden has a daughter, Isolde, and realizes that this is why 'he takes such a clinically distant approach to his work' (p. 137). Verity's thoughts demonstrate clearly the impact of these idealised aspects of von Linden's character, which attempt to show the ironies of war, yet instead function to undermine his portrayal as an SS officer.

In a similar vein to the depiction of Max in *As Time Goes By,* throughout *Codename Verity*, von Linden is shown to be a man doing a job he does not enjoy, although doing it well nonetheless. Verity describes von Linden's behaviour when he interrogates her as being similar to a 'chief engineer', one who is 'dispassionately directing and testing and cutting off the power supply' to a 'wireless set' (p. 87). This impression is heightened by how, when Verity undresses, he is the only one who does not watch (p. 4). We subsequently learn that von Linden has in fact been ignoring official orders to send Verity to Natzweiler concentration camp, 'as a specimen', with the order that 'she be executed by lethal injection after six weeks if she survives the experimentation' (p. 203). This message from SS-Sturmbannfürher N.J. Ferber is attached at the end of Verity's narrative, so that the reader becomes aware that von Linden had been keeping Verity alive by ignoring orders. However, Ferber's threat that 'I will have you shot' if von Linden continues to disobey, does finally work and Verity is removed from the prison. After Verity has been transferred, von Linden commits suicide, suggesting that he cannot live with his actions. Throughout the text, he is portrayed as an unwilling member of the SS, a depiction which is complicated by how he is good at his job, yet also cultured and capable of empathy. These inconsistencies, which the text cannot quite resolve, echo the flaws of the stereotypes and confusion of the official 'war culture' which combine in the figure of the 'Good German'. An anxiety about the potential of war to corrupt becomes apparent, a potential source for these instabilities.

In both *As Time Goes By* and *Codename Verity*, the trope of emphasizing the gap between those who follow the regime willingly, and those who are against it, present in *Light of the Moon, Jackdaws* and *Wish Me Luck*, is used to emphasise how von Linden

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[96] It should be noted Wagner is not sung apart from on stage, indicating the degree to which this is a trope.

and Max Bayer are not stereotypical members of the SS and SD. In *Codename Verity*, the character of Sturmbannführer Ferber is used as a foil for von Linden, demonstrated by Ferber's insistence that Verity be sent to Natzweiler. *As Time Goes By* uses a similar trope through the characterisation of Oberfuhrer Bernd Kraus. After the sabotage planned by the Resistance network is successful, Kraus is sent to take over from Max. Kraus is described as 'an old Gestapo hand who had earned his reputation for ruthless brutality on the Eastern Front', who 'hung his victim's bodies from the gaunt trees of overrun villages'.[97] In addition, Kraus and his regiment, Einsatzgruppe 92, are 'feared and despised even by the Wehrmacht' (p. 243). This characterisation creates a clear divide between the Gestapo and less ideologically involved members of the German military (p. 243). Max knows he can do nothing about the situation, as, if he complained he would be treated as 'an enemy of the state' and executed in a similar fashion to his brother, Siegfried (p. 244). Max is now aware that 'his father's Germany was long gone, and now his Germany was on the way out', adding: 'Knight's crosses but no knights' (p. 244). The distinction is firmly drawn between Max as a German who joined up unwillingly, and dangerous, devout men such as Kraus who are 'true' Nazis and the real enemy. The recurrence of this device across multiple texts demonstrates the authors' desire to create antagonists who have the potential for redemption, if there are worse enemies who acts as foils. However, the instabilities in these characters reveal that this is an idealistic vision of the war; it is shaped by the stereotypes about the enemy and inconsistencies of the official 'war culture' which have formed into hegemonic war discourses. The anxieties about the nature of war to corrupt bound up in these narratives are exposed.

Conclusion

The figure of the enemy in the texts discussed in this chapter forms the locus for a range of anxieties and idealisations about war. To return to McLoughlin's argument about war's resistance to depiction, the implication is that the cultural concerns and obsessions which hover around this figure are particularly troublesome, resulting in absences or unstable characters. The texts turn to hegemonic war discourses for familiar stereotypes and patterns, in the process repeating the very anxieties and concerns about the nature of warfare which complicate the depiction of conflict in the first place.

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[97] Allbeury, p. 243.

Life writing by the women who worked at Bletchley Park reveals how the language and imagery of the official 'war culture' informs the hegemonic discourses used as narrative frameworks in these texts. This connection is evident in the predominance of the phrase 'the war effort', which is relied upon as a way to rationalise both the deaths of loved ones and past decisions to join the armed forces. As a result, new war discourses form, which shift the way the war is depicted from an antagonistic conflict against a bestial foe, to a time where the women who lived through it were able to take on new opportunities and contribute to society in a way they felt previously denied. Significantly, when the enemy is mentioned, there is an expression of empathy. This reaction illustrates how women's existence in the traditionally male gendered sphere of warfare leads to the alteration of war discourses, necessary for the representation of their experiences.

The difference is particularly noticeable when read alongside fiction about the Special Operations Executive, texts which are reliant on hegemonic discourses formed from stereotypes and anxieties about the nature of the enemy. These include the figure of the evil torturing Nazi, who is used in an attempt to create a clear divide between the brave protagonist and their cruel oppressor in *Into the Fire*, *Jackdaws*, and *The Girl Who Fell From The Sky*. However, the endeavour to depict a clear-cut representation of the war where the brave protagonist battles against evil Nazis and wins, is undercut by the erotic fantasy elements of the torture scenes. A fascination with a sexualized version of "fascism" appears as a result. This obsession with the forbidden, fuelled by the desire to make an erotic spectacle of the female characters' pain, unbalances the representation of the war in these texts.

Significantly, texts such as *Violins of Autumn* and *Angel of Baker Street* demonstrate how hegemonic discourses can compete, with the strongest narrative winning out – in these texts any cultural anxiety about women's abilities to keep secrets is superseded by the silence of the female protagonists under torture. This depiction is perhaps at the cost of a realistic representation of such treatment, although one might argue from an ethical standpoint that this is never entirely necessary in fictional texts anyway.

The figure of the 'Good German', who represents both a war and postwar desire to divide the German people, and specifically the Wehrmacht, from the Nazi paramilitary organizations and ideologies, is also evident across these texts, including *Wish Me Luck*, *Light of the Moon* and *Jackdaws*. However, the flaws inherent in this

stereotype become evident through the instabilities in these enemy characters, who are portrayed as simultaneously cultured (with all the consequent connotations of civility) and empathetic, but also work against the protagonists and in some cases even participate in torture. The texts' inabilities to balance these elements stems from the idealisation of and anxieties about war inherent in the figure of the 'Good German'; this figure represents a desire to isolate the war crimes perpetrated under the Third Reich from the military and indeed people of the German nation, an attempt to forget that ordinary humans can commit such atrocities.

Focusing on the depiction of the enemy in the life writing and fictional texts under discussion in thesis exposes how this is a particularly difficult figure to represent, caught in a swirl of anxieties and fantasies about the nature of warfare itself. This complexity results in a reliance upon the familiar patterns and tropes offered by hegemonic discourses. However, these frameworks, echoing the instabilities of the official 'war culture', are shown to be composed of competing stereotypes and themes which vie against each other as the texts attempt to create a convincing past full of recognisable figures and sweeping narratives. These include the flawed figure of the 'good German', as well as idealised representations of torture in which the protagonists do not talk – instead forming an integral part of the broader narrative of brave Allied soldier against evil Gestapo officers.

As a result of their reliance on the tropes of hegemonic discourses, the texts predominately remain caught in a conservative vision of the past which echoes the messages of the official war culture, including its internal inconsistences. However, as the life writing by the women who worked at Bletchley Park illustrates, these narratives are not always up to the task of conveying an individual's war experience, particularly when it was as unusual as that of the women whose life stories have been recorded in the texts discussed here. In these works of life writing, the discourses used to describe the conflict have begun to shift, transformed by the nature of the experiences of the women using them to finally tell their war.

Chapter 3 - Romancing the Past

Introduction

The conservative vision of the war represented by the majority of the texts under discussion in this thesis is upheld by their adherence to hegemonic gender discourses about women, romance and sex. Although the texts are not classed as romances in terms of genre, it is useful to apply critical discussions about the genre in order to explore their romance elements – the predominance of romantic relationships, the characters' sexual developments and sexual activities, the depiction of female sexual agency and the implications of the narrative arcs of the romance plots on the overall representation of women's experiences of clandestine warfare. It subsequently becomes apparent that the texts' adherence to certain narrative and gender norms results in representations in which the female protagonists are cast predominantly as women in love (or using their 'feminine wiles' to seduce men) in wartime, rather than the attention being on their unusual war work. This romantic emphasis is a key device through which hegemonic discourses about both war and gender are maintained.

The foregrounding of romantic attachments and sexual interactions is particularly significant when viewed from a feminist perspective. Janice Radway's seminal discussion of popular romance, which focused on the readers of this genre, came to the conclusion: 'the romance avoids questioning the institutionalized basis of patriarchal control over women even as it serves as a locus of protest against some of its emotional consequences'.[1] This analysis illustrates how even whilst it can be argued that romances offer women a space in which to envisage a better situation for themselves: 'a utopian state where men are neither cruel nor indifferent, neither preoccupied with the external world nor wary of an intense emotional attachment to a woman', ultimately this fantasy stops women from striving to fix their situation in the real world (p. 212). Whilst Radway's reading does depart from the more traditional view that romance is simply damaging to women, 'an oppressive tool of the patriarchy' as defined by Strehle and Carden, Radway's analysis indicates how romance plots still function to maintain the status quo, a trend adhered to in the texts discussed in this

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[1] Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature* (London: Verso, 1987), p. 217.

chapter. [2] They predominately fall in line with Jeanne Dubino's reading that 'romances bolster patriarchal ideology, continuing to reaffirm the centrality of men in women's lives and to harness the desire of both men and women for a gendered other'.[3] Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, similarly, refer to romance plots as a 'glass coffin' for female characters, an analysis particularly relevant to this discussion; the romance arcs overwhelm the rest of the narrative of most of the texts, writing the female characters into the role of romantic heroines rather than foregrounding the war work carried out by the women of SOE and at Bletchley Park.[4]

This chapter will interrogate the predominance of female characters who fall in love for the first time in these texts as a result of their war work. These instances range from beginning romantic attachments with new male colleagues, to the case of Charlotte Gray, who is motivated to go to France for SOE primarily because of her burning love for Peter Gregory. Following these initial romances, many of the female protagonists also experience a sexual development, losing their virginity as a direct result of starting work for SOE. Life writing too, is shown to adhere to a similar gender norm, demonstrated by the treatment of romance in biographies of Pearl Witherington. This correlation between women, romance and sexual development, which occurs across multiple texts, reveals a cultural connection between active women and an active sexuality. In three of the texts it is even taken to the extreme of sleeping with the enemy characters as part of their mission. The implication is that there is a cultural norm by which transgressive women are also necessarily sexual. However, the women are then punished for their transgressions, placing them back into the box of chaste war heroine. This tension within the texts illustrates the complex cultural anxieties that surround active women.

Comparing the depiction of women's access to secrets in two texts about Bletchley Park, *Enigma* and *The Bletchley Circle*, reveals the persistence of the trope that women cannot be trusted with information because of their ability to seduce and be seduced. This hegemonic war discourse can be traced back to images such as the

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[2] Susan Strehle and Mary Paniccia Carden, 'Introduction: Reading Romance, Reading History', in *Doubled Plots: Romance and History*, ed. by Susan Strehle and Mary Paniccia Carden (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2003), pp. xi-xxv (p. xvi).

[3] Jeanne Dubino, 'The Cinderella Complex: Romance Fiction, Patriarchy and Capitalism', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 27:3 (1993), 103-118 (p. 109).

[4] Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 68.

infamous 'Keep Mum She's Not So Dumb' posters of the official 'war culture'. However, as the depiction of the female protagonists and antagonist in *The Bletchley Circle* reveals, these tropes can be rewritten as women take over previously male gendered spaces.

Finally, this chapter concludes by discussing the texts' romance plot arcs, illustrating how they are predominately restrictive for the female characters. This adherence is shown to stem from the easy frameworks offered by these plots, which in the process restrict the possibilities for the female protagonists. Significantly, they are mostly challenged by texts written by female authors, a trend across these texts of women's voices, and the inclusion of female experience, being able to challenge hegemonic discourses because of their unique lives and perspectives. However, for the majority these texts do maintain hegemonic discourses about both war and gender, illustrating how these familiar patterns and tropes offer up a vision of the past which is able to continue because it does not question ideas and norms, creating instead a comforting view of history which enables mainstream narratives to thrive.

(First) Loves
A recurring theme in both life writing and fiction about Bletchley Park and the SOE is that the central character begins a new romantic relationship as a result of their war work. Personal relationships and war work are clearly connected in these texts. One might argue that this is not surprising, as both fictional and life writing traditionally focus on the development and/or life of one particular character or individual, and so the fact that they form new relationships along the way should not be cause for remark. However, the prominence of these relationships in the texts and the impact they have on the protagonist does give cause for further investigation, illustrating the shaping caused by the adherence to hegemonic gender norms which associate women with romance.

In the fictional texts, the romance plots often dominate, rather than the historical figures' unusual war work. The female protagonists therefore either become lovers and girlfriends, or in texts with male protagonists, narrative pawns. This tension between foregrounding work or romance is also present in life writing texts about and by Pearl Witherington, as the texts either take romance as their main theme, and therefore succumb to narrative norms which associate women with romance and sex, or focus on

their work, to the exclusion of their full lived experience.[5] It is significant that this tension between representing the war work of female historical figures and characters and foregrounding romance exists across both genres; it emphasizes the degree to which representations of women's lives are transformed by cultural gender norms.

The trope of meeting a partner through the course of their mission appears in numerous fictional accounts of female SOE agents' experiences in France. Before commencing work for the SOE, the majority of the protagonists are single women. By the end of the novels, all of the women have had at least one romantic liaison. This development, which recurs across the texts, illustrates how romance is a narrative norm for fiction with female protagonists, often taking over any other themes.

The female characters in question begin the novels as self-sufficient, a noteworthy status given that their independence is later subsumed by romance. When we first meet Lisette Forester, the female SOE agent of *The Lavender Keeper* by Fiona McIntosh, we are told that during bombing raids in London 'she didn't fuss', because 'Lisette had no one waiting for her at home and few would mourn her passing'.[6] She is 'happy in her own company', convinced that anyone she loves will be killed just as her parents and her friend Harriet were; another friend would be 'one more loved person she couldn't protect, couldn't hang on to' (p. 102). Similarly, Oliva Drummond in Catherine Bell's *Angel of Baker Street* is reported in dispatches as 'very independent', an 'intelligent girl with the ability to make difficult decisions and stick to them'.[7] She is described as 'aware that men usually found her attractive', but we are told that 'she had never met anyone who she could see herself falling in love with', happy to remain alone for the time being (loc. 615). In *Charlotte Gray* by Sebastian Faulks, the eponymous heroine is described as aloof and unconnected to others. It is not clearly stated that Charlotte is single, but we are informed: 'everything about her attitude discouraged conversation' when she meets men on the train, and that she 'did not want to go to this party, any party', when invited by Daisy, her flatmate.[8] The impression is created of an insular young woman who is independent and content in her own skin.

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[5] I will refer to Pearl as Pearl Witherington, as this is the name most frequently used in reference to her, rather than Pearl Witherington Cornioley.

[6] Fiona McIntosh, *The Lavender Keeper* (London: Allison & Busby Limited, 2013), p. 87.

[7] Bell, loc. 122.

[8] Sebastian Faulks, *Charlotte Gray*, 2nd edn. (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 9 and p. 23.

It is therefore of particular note that Charlotte's equilibrium is shattered by her meeting with Peter Gregory. She is 'disconcerted by her inability to find a word that expressed the nature of her response to him', feelings which she experiences 'not as single factors but as a single, precipitous anguish' (p. 42). Ten days after their second meeting, 'she had lain in bed and wept', aware that she is 'inconsolable', as 'she did not wish to be consoled: it was more important to have him than to save herself. Was that love?' (p. 44). Her feelings are so strong that she even asks herself: 'how could she once not have loved him?' (p. 44). Charlotte's love is described as 'like an illness. No sane human being should feel like this, so soon, before anything has happened' (p. 53). This choice of language emphasises the deep impact the relationship has had on her character after only a very short period of time

Indeed, Charlotte's relationship with Gregory is one of the motivating factors in her decision to join the Special Operations Executive, casting her as a romantic heroine rather than a brave woman who wanted to contribute to the war. When Gregory does not return after one of his missions as a pilot, Charlotte determines: 'she would complete her training with the greatest assiduity, and when it was finished she would go to France and find him' (p. 120). She believes her love for Gregory to be a 'guiding force' (p. 199), and that to return to London without him would be the equivalent of 'giving up faith in her own life' (p. 219). While Charlotte is also motivated by patriotism, declaring that for her it stems from 'the countryside where you grow up, the towns and villages, the people', it is her need for Gregory that is the inspiring spark (p. 14). Without meeting Gregory, it is possible that she would not have joined the SOE at all, as even one of her reasons for going on the training course 'was somehow to shock Gregory into an increase of feeling' (p. 106). Charlotte is portrayed as a young woman who is fighting for her lover, the whole reason for her war narrative. Her war becomes about the stereotypically feminine search for romance, rather than an exploration of women's new opportunities. The impact of hegemonic gender discourses on the text is clear.

Romance also functions as a plot stimulus in *The Girl Who Fell From the Sky* by Simon Mawer, although to a slightly lesser extent. Marian Sutro, the protagonist, decides to join the SOE because she is excited by the opportunity: 'her mind had been made up long ago […] when she had guessed that something extraordinary might be

about to happen'.[9] However, she is also given a second mission to deliver a microfilm to Clément Pellier, a man she has been in love with since they were children together. She is approached because the secret services are aware of her connection with Clément, and the nature of his work as a nuclear scientist renders her mission vital. Without her previous relationship with Clément, this second mission would not have happened, thoroughly intertwining romance with her war experience. Rather than just finishing her SOE mission safely, Marian must go to Paris to deliver the microfilm, an act which results in her eventual capture by the Gestapo.

Throughout the text, it is clear Marian is infatuated with Clément, despite their relationship having been temporarily cut off. When she is looking in the mirror in her hotel room after deciding to join the SOE, we are told: 'she washed and dressed and put her hair up – Clément always told her she looked older like that' (p. 19). Her thoughts clearly display that he is always on her mind. This impression is supported by a conversation with Ned, her brother, who suggests she gets in contact with Clément whilst she is in France.[10] Marian pretends to be surprised by this suggestion, yet her thoughts reveal: 'she had already thought of Clément, of course she had' (p. 29). The implication is that her feelings for Clément may have influenced her original decision to join the SOE and return to France, although this is not directly stated. It is therefore no surprise that she agrees when Fawley suggests her secondary mission. In a similar vein to *Charlotte Gray*, Marian's narrative has become sexualised and romanticised. The depiction of both Charlotte Gray and Marian Sutro is troubling, as it implies that women are always distracted by romance. Marian and Charlotte are presented as women who require a romantic reason to be in France as well as a patriotic one, suggesting that a woman could not want to take up such dangerous work unless driven by the stereotypically feminine desire for love. A focus on the portrayal of their personal relationships reveals how hegemonic gender discourses directly impact the representation of women's war work in textual reconstructions of the past.

In contrast to fictional recreations of life as a female member of the Special Operations Executive, fiction about Bletchley Park and its outstations gives a less central role to romance. It must be acknowledged that the comparison is made more complex by the variations in material available, as while there is a lot of fiction about

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[9] Mawer, *The Girl Who Fell From The Sky,* p. 10.

[10] Marian tells her brother about her trip to France, despite the secretive nature of her work.

the SOE, a much smaller number of texts focus on Bletchley Park. To complicate matters further, only one of these texts foregrounds the life of a female worker. The romance that does take place at Bletchley Park must, for the most part, consequently be unpicked from its situation within wider narratives. This variance is itself important, as it indicates that there is not such a dominant cultural conception of Bletchley Park as a place where romance happened, whereas the majority of fiction about the SOE has a strong dependency on romance plots and developments of a sexual nature. It is a division which suggests that the women who worked at Bletchley Park have not been sexualised in the same way, because their war work was not quite as disruptive to traditional notions of women's behaviour as the tasks carried out by the female SOE agents in Occupied territory.

Romantic subplots featuring female characters who work at Bletchley Park are present in *Enigma* by Robert Harris, *The Dandelion Years* by Erica James, and *The Imitation Game*. However, in all three of these texts the protagonist is male, and so he is the character from whose perspective the relationship is viewed.[11] In *Enigma*, the relationship in question is that between Tom Jericho and Claire Romilly. Although Jericho's relationship with Claire is an integral plot element of the novel, as it is his infatuation with her which leads him to solve the mystery around which the text centres, it is very much Jericho's experiences and feelings we are given, rather than those of the object of his love. The emphasis consequently shifts from a love story to an obsession which provides narrative impetus. Returning from a leave of absence caused by a mental breakdown after Claire ends their romantic relationship, Jericho strives to see Claire again, only to find that she has disappeared. He even searches her house, finding encrypted messages in the process. The messages place him on a trail to find Claire and to work out what happened to her, and so their meeting serves as the text's inciting incident. Significantly, we are never given Claire's perspective on this relationship, only Jericho's. The inclusion of this romance plot serves predominantly as a narrative device, rendering Claire just an object of desire and narrative pawn, rather than revealing her experience of Bletchley Park. Whilst romance does not predominate here, the text still excludes women's voices and experiences. This absence is problematic

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[11] It should be noted that although the protagonist of the main plot of *The Dandelion Years* is actually female, the protagonist of the subplot which features Bletchley Park is male.

given that 'by the war's end [women] made up between 66 and 75 per cent of the total workforce'.[12]

The Dandelion Years also features a relationship at Bletchley Park told from a male perspective. The text contains two plots, although only one is set at Bletchley Park. The primary plot is set in the present day, focusing around Saskia's relationship with her family and eventually with Matthew, a man who moves into the neighbourhood when he is left a house by an old friend, Jacob. While clearing out Jacob's house, Matthew and Saskia discover two notebooks hidden in Bibles which contain Jacob's account of his time at Bletchley Park and the relationship he had there with Kitty, a fellow worker. Like Claire in *Enigma,* Kitty's voice is largely absent, as her character is only present through the eyes of Jacob. Kitty's experience of life at Bletchley Park is written out of the text, with the result that Kitty, like Claire, functions mostly as a narrative device, rather than as a character in her own right.

However, one could argue that Saskia and Matthew's relationship challenges this trope of relationships set around Bletchley Park ignoring the female voice, as Saskia is the protagonist of the main plot, and the majority of the chapters are from her perspective. The relationship is directly affected by Bletchley, as finding the notebooks is the catalyst for their romantic attachment. Saskia and Matthew's story is also literally written around Bletchley Park on a textual level, as the two narratives are intertwined, and without the secondary narrative the first one would not work. Here, wartime romance, although told from a male perspective, functions to aid contemporary romance. Bletchley Park is subsequently transformed through this emphasis on Saskia's love life; from a place of wartime significance it becomes a site on which romance is inscribed. Viewing *The Dandelion Years* from this angle connects it to novels about the SOE such as *Charlotte Gray,* which seem to use the past as a background to romance almost because the protagonist is female. The reoccurrence of this connection across the texts illustrates its strength and endurance as a narrative framework.

In contrast, *The Imitation Game* focuses around work with a romantic subplot, similar to *Enigma*. The film is based on the life story of Alan Turing, and consequently has certain restrictions not placed on films which are pure fiction. The love story in

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[12] John Lee, 'Station X: The Women at Bletchley Park' in *Women in War*, ed. by Celia Lee and Paul Edward Strong (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Military, 2012), p. 159.

question is that between Alan Turing and Joan Murray (née Clarke). We are shown the development of their relationship, from the success in a crossword competition which leads to Joan being invited to a test to do another crossword in less than six minutes, to the breaking of their engagement because of Alan's homosexuality. [13] Alan reveals that the test crossword takes him eight minutes and that he is interested in the candidates' workings more than anything else. Joan completes it in five minutes and thirty-four seconds. The pair must then navigate the restrictions placed on Joan due to her gender, and Alan makes an especial effort to make sure she stays at Bletchley. Alan tells Joan: 'sometimes it's the very people whom no-one imagines anything of who do the things that no-one can ever imagine'. This is a reference to his school-time relationship with Christopher, a fellow pupil whom Alan was in love with who tells him the exact same words earlier in the film. The two relationships are connected as a result, significant as both also intertwine work and relationships. Christopher introduces Alan to cyphers, and Alan's belief in Joan enables her to become a code breaker at Bletchley, aiding the Allied victory.

Rather than love being the main focus of *The Imitation Game*, it is a subplot connected to the main theme – the work carried out at Bletchley Park. The film is based on a biography of Alan Turing and could be classed as a biopic, and therefore shows the relationship predominantly from Turing's side rather than Joan Murray's. Despite this focus of the film, however, Joan is not just a narrative pawn as Claire and Kitty are: Joan is shown working and she is in the thick of the action:

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[13] For the purpose of clarity, the character of Joan Clarke will be referred to as 'Joan' in reference to *The Imitation Game* and the historical figure as 'Murray'. Similarly, the character of Alan Turing will be referred to as 'Alan', and the historical figure as 'Turing'.

The film closely intertwines romance and work, an alternate reimagining of life at Bletchley Park which is able to highlight the impact the work carried out there had on the progress of the war, rather than using it as a background for romance. It is noteworthy that it is only when a text has a male protagonist that romance and work are combined in this fashion, rather than the focus being on romance. This trend exposes how women are more likely to be recreated as lovers than workers in both historical fiction and life writing; the texts subscribe to cultural gender norms in which women are primarily girlfriends, wives and mothers rather than independent agents.

As a result of the biographical nature of *The Imitation Game,* it is understandable that it focuses on Turing to the exclusion of other characters' experiences. However, the flip side to Joan and Turing's relationship not being a central part of the narrative is that Murray's experience of the relationship is absent. Whilst one might argue that this is a good thing, as it allows her character to be work focused rather than built around a romance plot, the result is that her voice becomes subsumed into Turing's narrative. For example, when they are shown breaking up, Alan explains to Joan that it is as the result of his homosexuality. Joan refuses to listen, however, telling him: 'we'll have each other's minds. That sounds like a better marriage than most'. Alan must then convince Joan that he does not care for her, in order for her to accept the breakup, an action which is taken so that if it were to emerge that he was homosexual, Joan would not be hurt. Her words, rather than showing her side of the relationship, are subsequently revealed to be part of Alan's narrative arc, designed to add to his personal drama and make him look noble. They also have the side effect of making Joan look rather naïve and needy.

Murray never wrote an autobiography and has not been the subject of a full-length biography to date. However, her views about her relationship with Turing are included in collective biographies such as *The Debs of Bletchley Park* (2015) by Michael Smith and the documentary *The Strange Life and Death of Dr. Turing* (1992). Significantly, it is revealed that Turing did tell Murray soon after they became engaged that he had 'this homosexual tendency', information which Murray claims: 'worried me a bit because I did know that that was something which was almost certainly permanent'.[14] Like the fictional Joan, Murray appears accepting of Turing's confession.

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[14] *The Strange Life and Death of Dr. Turing*, dir. by Christopher Sykes (Horizon, 1992) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mOZ-8iE-lTE> [accessed 01/12/15] [YouTube].

Yet her concerns about it are absent from *The Imitation Game* because they do not fit Turing's narrative arc. The fictionalisation of their relationship promotes a certain version of their time together which differs from what we have been told of Murray's experience. Even her inclusion in the documentary is because of Turing, implying that the main way she has been remembered in history is as a disappointed romantic partner, rather than as a result of her own achievements.

Whilst one might argue that her presence as an auxiliary in Turing's life is not too surprising given that he is a figure of historical significance, Joan Murray also deserves that title. Colin Burke refers to Murray as 'one of England's leading female codebreakers whose work went far beyond the clerical', a 'World War II and Cold War crypto-insider'.[15] She became Deputy Head of Hut 8 in 1944 and received an MBE in 1946 'for her contributions during World War II'.[16] An emphasis on Turing in fiction and life writing regarding Bletchley Park functions to perpetuate a view of Bletchley as a space where women were the minor presence, background workers who also occasionally featured as romantic interests, rather than important figures in their own right. This thesis seeks to redress this balance, bringing critical attention to the experiences of the women who worked at Bletchley Park and identifying the narrative structures and cultural emphases which side-line their voices in life writing and fiction.

As demonstrated by the different versions of the relationship between Alan Turing and Joan Murray depicted in *The Strange Life and Death of Dr Turing* and *The Imitation Game*, the same relationship in an historical life can be told in a range of different ways. This variation is particularly important when discussing a female historical figure, as there tends to be an expected connection between women and romance in patriarchal cultures. Laurie Langbauer supports this idea, arguing: 'women and romance: in the tradition of English fiction, as well as in popular culture, these two terms seem inextricably intertwined'.[17] This correlation is also evident in the works of

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[15] Colin Burke, 'From the Archives: A Lady Codebreaker Speaks: Joan Murray, the Bombes and the Perils of Writing Crypto-History From Participants' Accounts*', Cryptologia,* 34 (2010), 359-370 (p. 359).

[16] Kerry Howard, 'Women Codebreakers' < https://www.bletchleyparkresearch.co.uk/research-notes/women-codebreakers> [accessed 05/12/15]

[17] Laurie Langbauer, *Women and Romance: The Consolations of Gender in the English Novel* (London: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 1.

life writing discussed in this chapter, indicating the degree to which it has become a narrative norm to associate women with heterosexual romance.

Tension between focusing on the war work of female historical figures or on the details of their personal lives is evident in the treatment of relationships in two life writing texts about Pearl Witherington: *Codename Pauline: Memoirs of a World War II Special Agent* (2013) by Pearl Witherington Cornioley, and *She Landed By Moonlight: The Story of Secret Agent Pearl Witherington* (2013) by Carole Seymour-Jones. In *Codename Pauline,* Witherington and Henri Cornioley's relationship is told from their first meeting through to their marriage and life together after the war. Witherington recalls: 'my first recollection of Henri was in front of the Madeleine Church', pointing him out to her mother as the brother of her friend Evelyne.[18] We are later informed that they 'started courting – in fact we got engaged – against both our families' wishes', detailing the reasons why neither of their families were happy with the match. *She Landed By Moonlight* tells a similar version of events: 'one day, coming back from the market with her mother and sisters, Pearl caught a glimpse of Evelyne with a tall, dark-haired teenage boy. It was her friend's brother, the sixteen-year-old Henri Cornioley'.[19] The event is transformed from a recollection to a narrative occurrence due to the nature of biography; a reminder that biography is 'a form of narrative, not just a presentation of facts'.[20] The difference that this generic requirement places on the text is evident through Seymour-Jones' inclusion of Witherington's constant thoughts about Henri, narrating her life story in the way one might create a fictional character. For example, when Seymour-Jones depicts Witherington's flight into France, the text states: 'she thought of Henri, of stolen kisses, or whispered promises'.[21] Seymour-Jones could not have known Witherington's thoughts at these moments, with the result that the addition of fictional material on this theme serves to emphasise her romantic involvements. This technique is used throughout the text before they are reunited; when Witherington is in Paris; 'Pearl's thoughts returned constantly to Henri' (p. 30), and later when she is in Portugal during her return to England: 'her thoughts turned constantly to her fiancé, Henri' (p. 45). As discussed in Chapter 1, biography is a genre which requires the

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[18] Pearl Witherington Cornioley, *Codename Pauline*: *Memoires of a World War II Special Agent,* ed. by Kathryn J. Atwood (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2013), pp. 15-16.

[19] Carole Seymour-Jones, *She Landed By Moonlight: The Story of Agent Pearl Witherington: The Real "Charlotte Gray"* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2013), p. 61.

[20] Lee, p. 5.

[21] Seymour-Jones, p. 15.

imposition of a narrative structure on lived events; in this instance, the narrative pattern in question is the cultural connection of women with romance.

In contrast to the focus on Pearl's relationship in *She Landed by Moonlight*, the couple aspect is distinctly secondary in *Codename Pauline,* despite Kathryn Atwood's declaration that the text 'is also the history of a couple'.[22] Pearl Witherington's relationship with Henri played a major part in her life, and it therefore makes sense that it is included in the text, yet the focus remains on Witherington and her war work. In *Codename Pauline,* Witherington states: 'Henri and I didn't see each other for three and a half years, because of the war, until the end of 1943'.[23] She also notes: 'it was nearly impossible for Henri and I to communicate while I was in England, but we managed to do so' (p. 27). Witherington does not, however, mention thinking about Henri constantly. Her relationship with Henri is transformed from a guiding element of Witherington's life, to just another aspect of her wartime experience. This variation in the treatment of the same material illustrates a desire by Seymour-Jones to dramatize Witherington's story in *She Landed by Moonlight*, to make it into a more traditional romance plot where the woman searches for her lost love.

Indeed, *She Landed By Moonlight* even claims that Witherington was 'the real "Charlotte Gray"'.[24] This is a significant attempt to connect the historical figure and fictional character, particularly as *Charlotte Gray* distinctly foregrounds Charlotte's search for her lover Peter Gregory. The implication is that Seymour-Jones (or perhaps her editor or publisher) focused upon Witherington's relationship in order to emphasize the similarities between the biography and the fictional text, in an attempt to increase her readership. These variations illustrate the impact of the intended audience on a biographical text, a reminder that 'even a biography that appears to be omitting nothing', has 'emerged from a process of choices'.[25] Crucially, the decisions made by Seymour-Jones appear to be in response to an assumed cultural connection between women and romance. This choice could stem from either a desire to show a similar version of the SOE to that portrayed in the fictional, bestselling *Charlotte Gray*, or from an awareness of how traditionally texts aimed at women have a strong emphasis on

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[22] Kathryn J. Atwood, in *Codename Pauline*, p. xvi.

[23] Witherington Cornioley, p. 18. Henri was living in Occupied France during this time.

[24] Seymour-Jones, Title page. This connection is also emphasized by the inclusion of a quote from Sebastian Faulks on the front cover.

[25] Lee, p. 9.

romance, and therefore in terms of marketing such a focus could lead to success. The variations between the two works of life writing serve as a reminder of how this genre, particularly biography, does not exist outside of cultural norms and expectations, because of the texts' status as commercial product. These texts are inevitably connected to market forces, which in turn respond to hegemonic gender discourses. In contrast, *Codename Pauline* escapes these narrative traps to a certain extent, as it is not trying to tell a story, instead being a translation of interviews with Witherington and Henri, 'a real testimony told with everyday words'.[26] Whilst it would be naïve to claim that the text remains untouched by the impact of marketing, *Codename Pauline* is able to show Witherington's life in her own words. As a result, the text focuses on her war work, rather than writing Witherington's life into a romantic drama.

   Codename Pauline and *She Landed by Moonlight* also differ on the portrayal of the more intimate aspects of Witherington and Henri's relationship. Seymour-Jones informs us that before going to France, Witherington was a virgin. This situation had arisen as 'despite her long engagement to Henri, Pearl lives at a time when "nice girls don't"'.[27] *She Landed by Moonlight* includes imagined thoughts on the subject from Witherington's perspective. For example, Seymour-Jones describes how, when [Witherington] wakes: '[Henri] kisses her: it is becoming harder and harder to preserve her virginity, as she has promised herself she will do until they are married' (p. 227). The situation develops further after Witherington's Resistance group have a close escape, leading to her being 'newly aware of the transience of life' (p. 309). Seymour-Jones imagines a situation in which Henri has been questioning Witherington about this very issue, asking her: 'why wait for our wedding night? Perhaps that night would never come' (p. 309). As a result: 'Pearl's thirtieth birthday on 24 June had been the night she finally yielded to him' (p. 309). Witherington is quoted, declaring: 'I thought "I don't know what is going to happen", and so I gave way, and that was it'.[28] The incident is reported through a mix of biographical narrative imaginings and Witherington's memories, a combination which changes a private moment into something resembling a scene from a novel. Pearl Witherington's personal life is transformed from lived events into a life story through the writing process; Seymour-Jones adheres to the narrative

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[26] Hervé Larroque, 'Preface', in *Codename Pauline,* p. xvii.
[27] Seymour-Jones, p. 160.
[28] Witherington, qtd. in *She Landed by Moonlight*, p. 309.

patterns provided by hegemonic gender discourses to emphasise Witherington's romantic involvements and developments, increasing the drama of her biography.

The issue of Witherington's virginity is notably absent from *Codename Pauline*. The most likely reason for this variance is the intended audience of the text. In the preface to *Codename Pauline*, Hervé Larroque declares: 'this book is intended primarily for young adults'.[29] Referring to sexual aspects of Henri and Witherington's relationship could therefore be seen as inappropriate. However, it is not just the age group of the intended audience which affects the text, it is also its intended purpose: 'as a source of hope and strength to young people who are confronted with a challenging life' (p. xvii). The implication is that Witherington must be a chaste heroine figure to fulfil the intention that she be a role model in *Codename Pauline*, obeying rules of gendered behaviour in which 'good' women are not sexually active. Jill Nagle refers to a good girl/bad girl binary which comes into play when discussing women's sexual agency: 'good girls, then, stay out of the fray by eschewing any display of sexual intent or autonomy, lest it be used to relabel them bad'.[30] Consequently: 'compulsory virtue, then, is also something that informs and constricts women's every move' (p. 5). This analysis of the expectations placed on female behaviour suggests that to be a 'good' woman, a woman must also be chaste, or at least not advertise her sexuality. For Witherington to be the role model required by *Codename Pauline*, hegemonic gender discourses regarding female sexual agency decree that her sexual activities cannot be included.

Viewed in this light, rather than just romanticizing Witherington's war through the emphasis on her feelings for Henri, *She Landed by Moonlight* actually becomes an emancipatory text, able to show the full range of Pearl Witherington's lived experience in a way *Codename Pauline* is unable to do, due to its editorial intentions. It is a reminder that 'any biographical narrative is an artificial construct, since it inevitably involves selection and shaping'.[31] Both accounts are clearly edited in line with their intended audience, an element of their creation which has a clear impact on their portrayal of personal relationships. The authors of biographical texts about female historical figures are revealed to face a difficult challenge in terms of their treatment of

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[29] Larroque, in *Codename Pauline,* p. xv.
[30] Jill Nagle, 'Introduction', in *Whores and Other Feminists*, ed. by Jill Nagle, 2nd edn. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), pp. 1-18, (p. 5).
[31] Lee, p. 122.

gender stereotypes and expected roles for women. They either focus on the work of a female figure to the exclusion of her personal life, thereby ignoring the cultural correlation between women and romance, or they include these aspects of the figure's life, and risk transforming their life into a narrative which conforms to gender stereotypes.

Across both life writing and fictional accounts of working at Bletchley Park and for the SOE, romance plots predominate. Given that these texts are either about female historical figures or feature female protagonists, this correlation is crucial; it reveals a cultural association between women and romance, as well as the expectation that romance should take precedence over other aspects of the lives of the female characters. In contrast, it is only in fiction which features male protagonists that work is not subordinated to romance. However, because the focus in these instances is on the male lead character, the women become for the most part narrative pawns in their dramas, continuing the side-lining of their war work and experiences. As an analysis of biographical texts shows, this tension between work and romance is endemic to both fiction and life writing about women; the options appear to be either to focus on romance to the exclusion of work, or vice versa and risk denying their full lived experience. The narrative and gender norms which form hegemonic discourses are revealed to be inherently connected, an intersection which is crucial to understanding the longevity of the correlation between women and romance.

Sexual Developments

Perhaps unsurprisingly for texts which feature romantic relationships, these interactions often lead to a first sexual encounter for the female protagonist. This trope occurs in three texts about female SOE agents: Charlotte Gray in *Charlotte Gray*, Marian Sutro in *The Girl Who Fell From The Sky* and Evelyn St John in *Light of the Moon* all lose their virginity in the course of the novels. Given the nature of their war work, this correlation between active war work and being sexually active is crucial, particularly from a feminist perspective. If one follows the theories of Hélène Cixous about the binaries implicit in hegemonic gender discourses as discussed in the introductory chapter to this thesis, the active nature of working for the SOE becomes particularly relevant; in these texts the female protagonists become sexually active during either their training or SOE mission, suggesting that there is an assumed cultural connection between doing active war work and being sexually active. The reoccurrence of this trope across the texts is a

perfect example of how hegemonic discourses about the female gender and sexual agency shape these texts.

Whilst for Charlotte, the eponymous heroine of *Charlotte Gray,* this development in her personal life is before she becomes involved with the SOE, that it forms part of her narrative arc from innocent to post SOE-life renders it still an important part of her war story. Charlotte and Gregory go to her room, and they undress. Just before they begin to have sex, Gregory withdraws, telling her: 'I can't do this, Charlotte'.[32] He has realised that she is a virgin, and even though she tells him: 'it's all right. I want you to. I want you to do it', Gregory stands firm, declaring: 'I'm sorry. You'll be grateful in the end. I'm a useless case. You don't want me' (p. 64). Charlotte reaffirms that she does, yet Gregory still refuses. But Charlotte is determined not to let him go, reaching round to stroke his penis until he orgasms, with the result that Gregory names her 'a very determined woman' (p. 65). She has begun to act on her own desires, with the result that next time he visits they do have sex and she loses her virginity, a status she previously refers to as 'inconvenient' (p. 70). The inclusion of this element before Charlotte goes to France is significant, as it suggests that losing her virginity is necessary for her to become an active participant in war. Charlotte has now stepped outside the role of the 'good woman', and can consequently act in ways outside of the gendered expectations for women's behaviour. She has crossed the barrier between passive and active, both in terms of her war work and her sexual agency.

Marian Sutro also loses her virginity as part of her war story, her actions directly connected to her involvement with the SOE. Whilst on a training mission, Marian is introduced to the concept of masturbation. She is asked by her fellow lodger, Maisie, if 'you got a man?'.[33] When she replies in the negative, Maisie responds: 'don't blame you. It's not worth it nowadays' (p. 77). She then tells Marian: 'I have to make do with my own comfort, if you get my meaning' (p. 77). Maisie justifies her actions with the statement: 'what else can you be sure of these days?' (p. 77). She adds: 'you just got to look out for yourself, haven't you?' (p. 77). Her words construct an image of the war in which gender and sexual relations have been disrupted, a breakdown which allows the

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[32] Faulks, p. 63.

[33] Mawer, *The Girl Who Fell From The Sky,* p. 77.

text to indulge in a certain level of erotic fantasy about active women through referring to, and later describing, female masturbation.

After dinner, Marian considers Maisie's disclosure, admitting to herself: 'once upon a time she had thought such an act to be against the God who looked over her and admonished her', a 'mean-spirited and dishonest act' (p. 78). However, she then thinks: 'Alice Thurrock decided that she had no such inhibitions' (p. 78). Alice Thurrock is Marian's cover name, and this decision implies that she is using her SOE training as an opportunity to explore her sexuality, freeing herself from her religious guilt by imagining herself to be someone else. For Marian, Alice 'was a practical person', who thinks: 'if you wanted a few moments of intense and careless ecstasy, then why not? It was your body, to do with as you wanted' (p. 78). Thus: 'she lay in bed quite without compunction, her legs open and her knees drawn up and her fingers involved in the soft intricacies of her vulva' (p. 78). Marian's discovery of masturbation during her SOE training and use of her SOE identity to allow herself to masturbate, creates a direct correlation between her sexual discovery and her work for the SOE. This connection between her war work and sexual activities implies that to be a successful agent she will need to be more sexualised, subscribing to the stereotype of the 'sexy spy'.

Marian's sexual development progresses along with her preparation for her mission. Once she has finished her training, Marian is sent on leave to await the correct conditions for her flight to France, and invites Benoît, one of her fellow recruits, to stay with her family. During this trip, she confesses: 'I don't want to go to France a virgin' (p. 120). Her words indicate that she would like Benoît to assist her in the removal of this status. After dark, she walks to his room, using skills she has been taught for her SOE work: 'they'd even been taught this at Beaulieu – how to move through a building soundlessly, how to open doors without any noise, how to be unseen and unheard' (p. 120). Referring to their earlier training reinforces the connection between her work for the SOE and her sexual development. Marian gets into bed with Benoît in the dark, but when he calls her name: '*ma p'tite Marianne*', she silences him, asking 'not Marian' (p. 121). This desire is elucidated in her thought process: 'she didn't want any recognition of who either of them might be. She wanted this to happen not to her but to someone else', either 'Alice Thurrock with her […] blunt, practical manner', or 'to Anne-Marie Laroche. To anyone except Marian Sutro' (p. 121). Benoît complies, calling her 'Alice […] My Alice' (p. 121). Marian's repeated use of her SOE identities to achieve her sexual goals emphasises the relationship between her chosen war work and her

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sexuality; the implication is that to be an efficient agent Marian needs to be sexually active, a status she is able to achieve through using the skills she has been taught by the SOE. Her transformation from innocent to sexy spy is complete, indicating an inability to imagine a woman who is transgressive in one particular sphere, who is not also sexually active.

Sexual development through involvement with the SOE appears in a third novel, *Light of The Moon*. This reoccurrence across multiple texts supports the idea that a connection between women engaged in active warfare and female sexual agency exists on a cultural level, for it to be referenced repeatedly. The protagonist, Evelyn St John, is a virgin before she joins the SOE. In a similar fashion to the characters of Charlotte Gray and Marian Sutro, Evelyn is single at the beginning of the text. We are informed that Evelyn had previously had a 'fleeting but intense crush' on one of her cousin's friends, as well as a brief dalliance with a man called Arthur Jayford.[34] Evelyn had 'permitted Arthur to kiss her because she was curious and had imagined she had found a kindred spirit' (p. 9). But 'the feel of his lips and intrusive tongue had been disgusting' and she 'pushed him away' (p. 9). The impression is that Evelyn is a virgin not through a lack of opportunity, but through personal choice. By portraying her as not being sexually active prior to her SOE experience, the effect is to directly connect Evelyn's war work with her loss of virginity; the implication is that the shift to the one must also lead to the change in the other.

However, Evelyn's virginity is not mentioned explicitly until much later in the text. While visiting a fellow Resistance member, Bessy, Evelyn is cornered by Bessy's brother Guy, who has not been informed of his sister's activities because she is uncertain of his loyalties. All Guy knows is that Evelyn is a cousin of the family who is serving as Bessy's secretary, a story he does not quite believe. Guy enters Evelyn's room, drunk, despite her commands to leave. He starts to question her, asking: 'just who are you?' (p. 417). Evelyn knows Guy cannot be trusted, and so begins to assess her options: 'an intimation of what she might be forced to do to neutralise Guy took root' (p. 417). Aware of the stakes, Evelyn acquiesces to Guy's demand to come closer to him. Unfortunately, Evelyn had been having a bath just before this encounter, and is mostly naked under her robe, which has just come undone. Guy tells her: 'girls like you need teaching' (p. 418). This statement makes Evelyn decide on her course of action,

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[34] Buchan, p. 9.

even though 'her skin crawled at his touch' (p. 418). Evelyn removes her robe, and is then further undressed by Guy, before being told to get into bed. Once there, we are shown Evelyn's thoughts: '*this is the oldest trick in the book and it doesn't cost that much*' (p. 418). They then have sex, although Evelyn is only really a passive participant. She 'realised she could bear it', and 'even experienced the faintest, the most fleeting, echo of a response', although she also encountered pain (p. 419). It is only after Guy has finished that it is revealed that Evelyn was a virgin. This series of events intricately connects Evelyn's work and her sexual activities. In *Light of the Moon, Charlotte Gray* and *The Girl Who Fell From The Sky,* the female agent loses her virginity during either her training or SOE mission, an important repetition given that this stage of the heroine's sexual development happens as part of her war story. The reoccurrence of female characters who become sexualised through their war work implies that the texts are responding to hegemonic gender discourses which associate active sexual agency and active behaviour, a connection which stems from anxieties regarding women's shifting roles.

Sleeping With the Enemy

This correlation between sexual agency and active war work is also evident in a repeated trope in *Light of the Moon*, *Fall From Grace* and *The Lavender Keeper*: in these texts the protagonist must use sex as part of her mission, taking on a transgressive role through her war work. Yet, this perceived deviancy is then neutralised, indicating a cultural inability to portray Allied soldiers as anything but honourable when recreating the past in historical fiction. The women of the SOE occupy a complicated cultural space, caught between the paradigms of 'sexy spy' and chaste war heroine.

In reference to Evelyn's decision to sleep with Guy to distract him in *Light of the Moon,* it is crucial to examine her statement: 'this is the oldest trick in the book'. The phrase suggests that women have always, and always will, get what they want through sex. This assumption stems from patriarchal attitudes towards women, which correlate them with sex and romance, rather than allowing them to have value from other sources. It is an indictment of women's lack of official power throughout history, caused by a society in which men are more privileged than women. However, the women who worked for the SOE were not quite so powerless, having been highly trained in skills such as physical combat to the same level as the male agents. The suggestion that the women had to use sex as a tool in the course of their work

perpetuates the image of highly sexualised female SOE agents, who were reliant on their 'feminine wiles' to get the job done. Such a depiction serves as a clear example of the effects of narrative norms and anxieties about transgressive women in these texts.

The phrase 'the oldest trick in the book' creates a resonance with a similar well-known phrase used to describe prostitution – 'the oldest profession'.[35] Prostitution is also referred to as 'sex work', as the work being done is of a sexual nature, has monetary reward, and crucially, is not being done for pleasure. Whilst Evelyn does not receive monetary compensation in direct exchange for sex, her actions are nonetheless undertaken as part of her job, rather than out of personal choice, and could therefore be considered 'sex work'. From a feminist perspective, sex work can be both positive and negative for women. As Belinda Carpenter suggests: 'for western feminists, prostitution seems to engender some of the most difficult, and yet central, issues of feminism', leading to the key question: 'are prostitutes victims or agents?'.[36] Carpenter explains this debate in more detail: 'feminists aligned with the anti-prostitution/moral conservative side of the debate tend to oppose prostitution on the grounds that it is exploitative. This exploitation can take many forms' (p. 117). However, as Maggie O'Neill observes, it also possible to argue that 'in contemporary society, prostitution for many women is freely chosen as a form of work and women working in the sex industry deserve the same rights and liberties as other workers'.[37] In addition, as Eva Pendleton declares: 'when sex workers perform femininity, we purposefully engage in an endless repetition of heteronormative gender codes for economic gain. Using femininity as an economic tool is a means of exposing its constructedness and reconfiguring its meanings'.[38] In relation to Evelyn's sex work in *Light of the Moon*, these arguments are crucial; her actions either become the object of a repressed female, victim of the patriarchy and her circumstances, or an empowering act by a woman who knows the power of her actions and is not afraid to exploit the system for her own benefit. It is a complicated judgement as Evelyn does appear to have agency, aware of the

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[35] This term is thought to originate form Rudyard Kipling. E.R., 'Prostitution: The World's Oldest Profession?', *Naked History* <http://www.historynaked.com/prostitution-worlds-oldest-profession/> [accessed 03/02/19]

[36] Belinda J. Carpenter, *Re-thinking Prostitution: Feminism, Sex and the Self* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2000), p. 1.

[37] Maggie O'Neill, *Prostitution and Feminism: Towards a Politics of Feeling* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2001), p.16.

[38] Eva Pendleton, 'Love for Sale: Queering Heterosexuality', in *Whores and Other Feminists*, pp. 73-83, (p. 79).

consequences and consciously making the decision. However, I believe that any perceived agency she might have is undercut by the war system, which is the very reason she must interact with Guy, thereby denying her full agency and control over her actions. Instead, her sexuality becomes a tool of the war effort. Viewed from this angle, Evelyn's actions demonstrate how stereotypical gender roles constrain the female characters, as their war is depicted as being at least partly fought with their sexuality, rather than purely through their bravery and ingenuity. This representation of the female characters perpetuates a cultural correlation between women and sex and romance.

Evelyn is not the only fictional SOE agent whose work involves sex. Both Catherine Pradier in *Fall From Grace* and Lisette Forester in *The Lavender Keeper* are given missions which involve them having sexual relations with German officers. In *Fall From Grace,* Catherine's initial orders are to join a network in Calais and serve as their radio operator and courier. The network has been tasked with neutralising the Lindemann Battery, 'artillery guns' which guard the Channel.[39] A plan is devised in which Catherine will take on the role of washerwoman to get inside information. Up until this point, Catherine's work is clearly not of a sexual nature. However, once Catherine begins working at the Battery, she realizes that a German officer, Lothar Metz, who carried her bag on the train to Paris and invited her out for a drink, also works there. When Catherine reports this information to the head of her network, Aristide, he suggests that she accept the German's offer. Through Catherine's discussions with Metz and her work at the Battery, the team come to the conclusion that the best way to neutralise the guns would be to insert false fuses, which would blow when the guns were used, taking them out of action. For this to be achieved, a key is required, leading to Catherine being sent on another date with Metz. She tells Aristide: 'I positively loathe the idea of having to go out with [Metz]', yet agrees to the plan (p. 251).

Metz and Catherine have dinner, and Metz walks her home afterwards. However, he then goes to leave, telling her: 'good night, *Fräulein.* I've enjoyed our evening very much' (p. 283). Rather than what Catherine and Aristide had expected, Metz 'was obviously determined to be that rarest of wartime oddities, a faithful husband', ruining the Resistance members' plan (p. 283). Aware that he is about to

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[39] Larry Collins, *Fall From Grace* (London: Grafton Books, 1985), p. 225.

leave, Catherine takes action, shaking out her 'conspicuously blond hair' (p. 283). She knows that this is 'a gesture whose effectiveness she had often been able to measure, and she sensed it assaulting the sensibility of her escort' (p. 284). Consequently, Metz 'placed his hands at her elbows and shyly drew her towards him', to which Catherine 'responded by easing her body against his and offering him a long, cool kiss' (p. 284). This scene is crucial when analysing the ways in which Catherine's character is sexualised, as she is the one who takes the initiative in this instance.

Catherine invites Metz into her house, ostensibly for a 'cup of herbal tea' (p. 284). We are told: 'it took ten minutes of Mozart and five of Bach before he summoned up the will to kiss her again' (p. 284). Further detail is given: 'she offered only a fragile and fleeting resistance to his pawing, then rose, and taking him by the hand, led him to her little bedroom' (p. 284). This sequence of events puts Catherine in the dominant position again, consciously leading Metz into seducing her. Her actions are indeed all deliberate, as she plays to his character. Aware he is shy, Catherine suggests that Metz undress in the bathroom, a seemingly kind gesture which is in fact crucial to the success of her plan as it allows her to make a copy of the key. She subsequently receives her remuneration for sleeping with Metz in the success of her mission.

In the context of debates regarding whether or not sex work is damaging or empowering for women, Catherine's actions and the thoughts of her character suggest that she is not a victim of the system. Whilst she is in a way forced into having sex with Metz as there are not many other options to ensure the success of the mission, it is a decision she consciously makes, aware of the risks and the consequences. Like Evelyn, including sex in her work is something Catherine agrees to do for the war, with the success of her mission her reward for her actions. Both women know, or are persuaded, that performing work of a sexual nature is worth the price and are therefore not afraid to do so. Viewed from this angle, both *Fall From Grace* and *Light of the Moon* portray female characters who have sexual agency, willing to exploit the expectations placed on women to be objects of sexual satisfaction in exchange for the reward of succeeding in their mission. However, this perceived agency is undercut by the patriarchal construct that is the 'war effort', which exploits for its own purposes their situation as women able to seduce the enemy. The past is therefore reconstructed according to patriarchal notions regarding women's behaviour, as to be active is to be transgressive, and thus sexual. To return to Cixous' theories regarding binary discourse constructions around female behaviour, to be a 'good' woman and an 'active' woman are revealed to be

mutually exclusive positions when it comes to reconstructing the women of the past in fiction.

Catherine Pradier is not the only fictional female SOE agent whose war work includes becoming sexually involved with a German officer. Lisette Forester, the female protagonist of *The Lavender Keeper*, is given a similar mission, tasked with seducing a German Colonel, Markus Killian. At Lisette's first interview, Jepson tells her: 'your looks could save your life … Or someone else's. They are part of your arsenal'.[40] The choice of 'arsenal' here is crucial, as it suggests that Lisette's appearance is to be used as a weapon. In the same way that Pendleton argues that sex workers deliberately 'put on the trappings of femininity in order to reap material gain', Lisette is to exploit her appearance in order to succeed in the mission given to her by the SOE bosses.[41]

Lisette is introduced to Kilian by her godfather Walter Eichel. She plans the meeting so that it does not look deliberate, arranging to be 'stood-up' in the same restaurant where she knows Kilian and Eichel will be eating, with the result that she then joins them. Lisette is aware that 'tonight […] it was her looks as much as her language skills and ability to charm that would count'.[42] She dresses with her mission in mind: 'she'd made sure she'd shown off her attributes to their best effect and it had worked' (p. 274). The success of her choices is emphasised by Kilian's thoughts, as we are told: 'Kilian couldn't help but notice how her silk blouse tightened across her breasts – just for a moment – as she stretched' to take off her coat (p. 268). Lisette deliberately alters her behaviour as part of her work: 'she'd made sure she'd shown off her attributes to their best effect and it had worked. Kilian had fallen for all her carefully orchestrated flirtations' (p. 274). Lisette is manipulating Kilian through her mimicry of gendered behaviours.

Lisette is successful as Kilian invites her out for a date. Beforehand he sends her a gorgeous evening gown, soap and perfume. Lisette is at first undecided about accepting his gifts, but then remembers that 'people were counting on her to give the performance of her life because maybe something she did could save lives' (p. 286). Lisette's actions are intimately connected with her war work. She thinks to herself: 'others risked their lives daily to tap out Morse messages or pick up arms and fight with

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[40] McIntosh, p. 107.
[41] Pendleton, p. 78.
[42] McIntosh, p. 264.

the Maquis and some, like her, were required to use other attributes', drawing an exact equivalent between their types of 'work' (p. 286). The repetition of these thoughts suggests that Lisette feels guilty about her actions. She is, after all, flirting with the enemy. She even explicitly reminds herself: 'this is not a date. This is a mission, she repeated in her mind' (p. 292). It is a reoccurrence which serves two purposes – both to rescue Lisette from accusations of 'horizontal collaboration',[43] and to redeem her from the figure of the whore with all its connotations of 'bad women'. However, Lisette's actions are undertaken only because she is following orders; the text thus sets her up as a seductive 'sexy spy', but also tries to rescue her from the implications of such a situation, revealing an inherent anxiety about active women.

Lisette's internal debates are particularly relevant in the context of her attitude towards Kilian. Before they meet, we are told: 'since she'd first been briefed about her curious mission she'd hated him in her mind. It was the only way'.[44] However, Kilian does not fit the category of stereotypical evil enemy, complicating Lisette's mission. He confesses: 'I am indeed a loyal German, Lisette, but I'm far from being a loyal Nazi' (p. 305). Kilian is also revealed to be 'certainly not pro-Hitler' (p. 244). He is sent to a desk job in Paris after disobeying Hitler's orders, as he 'refused for his men to be used as fodder in the Fuhrer's twisted vision of empire' (p. 245). Indeed, Kilian had 'long ago decided that Hitler was a monster', even invited into a plot to assassinate Hitler by his fellow countrymen (p. 248). Kilian is clearly designed to represent the 'Good German', a figure who is fighting for his country, rather than Nazism. In the context of his relationship with Lisette, Kilian's status as a 'Good German' is crucial; it redeems Lisette from the sin of sleeping with the enemy, if the enemy is revealed to be a man who happened to be born in the wrong country. This depiction of the man Lisette must seduce supports the sense of confusion within the text, caught between wanting to cast Lisette as a transgressive woman, but not being comfortable taking the implications of such behaviour to their full conclusion.

This portrayal of Kilian is also important because Lisette begins to develop feelings for him. The attraction is to the extent that Lisette realizes she 'could no longer fool herself. She was no cool professional playing her role in this piece of theatre', as 'she could not force the way her cheeks burned, or deny that her heart was pounding'

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[43] This term was used to refer to women who consorted or slept with the occupying forces.
[44] McIntosh, p. 274.

(p. 303). Contrary to her plans: 'Kilian […] had found a way beneath her shield and, through sheer force of character – his irresistible personality, his lovemaking, always surprising and generous – had navigated to her heart' (p. 396). Lisette knows Kilian is 'her enemy', but is also aware that he is 'a devastatingly attractive man', and that 'there was something inherently decent and fine about him as a person, and everything about him appealed to her' (p. 303). Lisette becomes aware that she is falling for Kilian at the same time that she acknowledges that he is not just 'the enemy', an important coincidence as it creates a narrative in which Lisette can have feelings for Kilian without being a traitor, if he is revealed to be a good man. Lisette's actions are once again mitigated – she is now in love with the man she is tasked with seducing for her country. She commits transgressive acts, but within acceptable behaviour paradigms for women. Lisette is depicted both as the 'sexy spy' and the romantic heroine who cannot help herself falling in love; both are female stereotypes whose use illustrates how these texts are shaped by the frameworks of hegemonic gender and narrative norms which combine in an attempt to resolve the anxiety caused by Lisette's transgressive position.

The potential disruption caused by Lisette's actions is also symbolically defused, as she is captured by the locals and, in an echo of the treatment meted out at the end of the war to women accused of 'horizontal collaboration' in Occupied countries, her head is shaved. She is called 'whore' and 'slut' and paraded in front of a crowd. Significantly, Lisette feels that she 'deserved the crowd's contempt. She had fraternised with a German Colonel, accepted his gifts, become his lover', wishing: 'if only she could explain' (p. 493). It is not emphasized here that he was a 'Good German', however, suggesting that this element of their relationship, designed to mitigate her actions, is irrelevant in terms of the wider boundaries Lisette has transgressed.

The process of Lisette's head being shaved is described in detail: 'she heard the dislocated sound of scissors hacking roughly at her shoulder-length hair', and 'her remaining hair fell away in chunks around her, looking as dead as she felt inside' (p. 494). This action is a symbolic cleansing of Lisette's guilt; she has paid the price of sleeping with a German, even if he was not a bad man. Claire Duchen argues that in the Liberation period in France, this act was carried out because 'women's sexuality provided a necessary scapegoat, allowing society to transfer guilt and blame from the

collective to the designated outsiders and thus exonerate itself'.[45] Through this act:
'French society pointed at its Other, thereby making the Self innocent. By means of *les femmes tondues*, French society could reconstitute itself as a coherent whole, as a Resistant whole, morally and politically virtuous'.[46] As a result, 'their punishment symbolically allowed the reconstruction of the community and the re-establishment of gendered as well as political order' (p. 236). Read in this context, Lisette's head being shaved is as an act designed to represent the punishment of her sexual transgression, which also symbolizes the suppressed guilt of the wider community. This impression is further supported when she is rescued by her French lover, Luc, reinforcing the message that she is no longer involved in sex work and is now part of a standard heteronormative relationship. Despite Lisette's mission being for the good of her country, her war work, it is still transgressive and must be punished in order for normality to be restored and for Lisette to go back to being a 'good woman'.

The figure of the 'Good German' is also present in *Fall From Grace*, used for similar purposes. Metz, the German officer Catherine Pradier is instructed to seduce, is revealed to be 'a gentleman. Lonely, probably, and vulnerable. Not much of a Nazi'.[47] This realisation makes Catherine aware that 'your enemy is human after all' (p. 269). Following her dinner with Metz, Catherine thinks to herself: 'Metz was a perfectly decent man, nicer in fact than she would have liked him to be. He was even good-looking in that dark, unGermanic manner of his' (p. 281). Metz is portrayed as being a 'Good German' both inside and out, rendering Catherine's actions less transgressive than they might at first appear. *Fall From Grace* consequently reveals a similar sense of anxiety about the female protagonist's actions to *The Lavender Keeper.*

These parallels continue; like Lisette, after sleeping with the enemy, (however much of a 'Good German' he may be), Catherine must be redeemed. This cleansing occurs on multiple levels. Metz is punished, sent to the Eastern Front when his superiors realise the role he played in Catherine's mission. The subject of Catherine's disgrace has been removed, cleansing her by association. In addition, in a final symbolic cleansing at the end of the text, Catherine is sent to a concentration camp,

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[45] Claire Duchen and Irene Bandhauer-Schoffmann, 'Introduction', in *When The War Was Over: Women, War and Peace in Europe, 1940-1956*, ed. by Claire Duchen and Irene Bandhauer-Schoffmann (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), pp. 1-9 (p. 8).

[46] Claire Duchen, 'Crime and Punishment in Liberated France: The Case of *les femmes tondues*', in *When The War Was Over*, p. 233-250, (p. 236).

[47] Collins, p. 268.

with the intimation that she dies. This conclusion is as a result of Catherine's second mission, which is part of the deception plan regarding the Allied landing, Operation Fortitude. Unfortunately, Catherine is sacrificed as part of this operation. For the deception plan regarding the Allied landing to work, Catherine had to be captured and tell the Gestapo what she knew, so that they would believe that the landing would be at Calais, rather than Normandy. Through various machinations this occurs, and Catherine is tortured, leading her to try to commit suicide. It is only when she realizes that her suicide pill is a fake that she becomes aware that she was meant to talk and had been set up. Catherine is killed because of her war work, a thoroughly symbolic cleansing. Sacrificed to the Allied cause, Catherine becomes a martyr, the ultimate 'good woman' as any traces of deviancy are removed.

Catherine, Lisette and Evelyn perform sex work as part of their war work, cast as sexually active females because they are outside traditional gender boundaries. Yet they are also redeemed from any accusations of deviancy, because their actions are taken for the purposes of duty to their country. They subsequently fit back into the place of sanctioned soldier who should be honoured for their devotion to their country; their actual actions which might otherwise be frowned upon, ignored in the same way that killing people in war is not classed as murder. These narrative plots for the female protagonists reveal the anxieties about women's sexuality which lie at the base of these narratives; the female characters are transgressive and sexual, but are then punished, a symbolic cleansing which in the process negates any concerns about this active figure.

Evelyn St John, however, differs from the character of Catherine Pradier and Lisette Forester in one major element: as well as having sex as part of her war work, she has a relationship with a German officer, Paul von Hoch, which is voluntary from the outset. In *Light of the Moon*, Evelyn and Paul meet by chance whilst Evelyn is familiarising herself with the local area, and it is only later that she realizes he is German. Her initial impressions of Paul are that 'he was limping a little' and 'this man was not a native'.[48] This combination implies he is not to be feared due to his disability, yet also emphasises that he is an outsider, taking on the role of the romantic mysterious stranger. Evelyn's earlier realisation that 'he was different from the men she was used to' (p. 93) also builds on this impression. Representing Paul in such a way writes a romantic narrative over Evelyn's war story.

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[48] Buchan, pp. 93-94.

It is only when Paul speaks that Evelyn places his accent as German. She knows that 'her reactions should have been along the lines that she had been taught. Yet, she did not move' (p. 96). Evelyn is already, even at this initial meeting, straying away from her training, strengthening the impression that this man will cause her to detour from her mission. This sense of a budding relationship despite his nationality is emphasised by Paul's actions just before they part, as he 'hesitated, reached out and touched her gently in the hollow at the base of her throat', a strangely intimate gesture from a man whose name Evelyn does not even know (p. 96). Evelyn thinks to herself: 'no one had ever done that before - touched her with such a mixture of lightness and sensuality – nor had she ever felt such a response' (p. 96). Her sexual awakening has begun, and it is caused by a man who belongs to the opposition forces.[49] Her war story is written into a traditional romance narrative of love against the odds.

Evelyn's feelings are reciprocated by Paul, demonstrated through his actions. Evelyn is taken in for questioning by Paul's colleague, Sturmbannführer Fleischer. When she refuses to answer his questions, he begins to torture her, including throwing coffee in her face and threatening her with cigarette burns. Paul intervenes, claiming to be in charge of her torture. Evelyn knows: 'without a doubt that Paul had intervened to stop Fleischer because 'he loved her'.[50] This belief is supported by Paul's actions, as he 'cupped her cheek in his hand', an affectionate gesture (p. 325). His words similarly back up this impression, as he declares: 'it doesn't matter to me who you are' (p. 326). Paul asks Evelyn: 'if, after the war is over, I come back for you, what then?', and Evelyn confesses: 'I may not be here' (p. 327). Through this exchange, they acknowledge their feelings for each other, following the familiar arc of the romance plot of forbidden love which as a result takes over the text.

It is notable that like Lothar Metz in *Fall From Grace* and Markus Kilian in *The Lavender Keeper*, Paul von Hoch is shown to be a 'Good German'. Evelyn recognises that 'he was clever, thoughtful … and, she knew somehow, that he was also good' (p. 327). This impression is supported by Paul's dislike for Hitler, as well as for Fleischer, the SD representative in the town, who he views as 'a criminal working for a criminal organisation' (p. 358). Paul is far removed from the evils perpetrated in the name of Nazism, a depiction which renders it acceptable for him to have a relationship with

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[49] The meeting between Evelyn and Paul occurs before Evelyn has sex with Guy.
[50] Buchan, p. 324-325.

Evelyn. Constructing Paul's character in this fashion reveals the competing narratives at play in this text, which manage to co-exist because they are both familiar tropes: Evelyn's relationship with Paul fits the well-known romance theme of forbidden love, and the ways in which she becomes sexually active as a result of her war work follows the cultural, patriarchal connection of active behaviour leading to active sexuality.

The pair have sex in a field nearby, aware that 'we haven't got long', both in the immediate sense, and in terms of their relationship as a whole. Significantly, 'the memory of that other time with Guy, which had haunted her, vanished', erased through Evelyn's experience of real love with Paul (p. 462). In a similar fashion to Lisette in *The Lavender Keeper*, Evelyn is redeemed of any stigma attached to her sex work with Guy, through a heteronormative relationship. Paul also dies trying to save Evelyn, as he tries to warn her that Fleischer knows about her mission. Paul is caught in crossfire, furthering the sense of a return to normality through his death. He may have been the love of Evelyn's life but Paul is still part of the opposition forces; Evelyn must be cleansed of associations with the enemy, however 'good' they might be, in order for patriotic war narratives and gender norms to be maintained.

The female protagonists of *Light of the Moon, Fall from Grace* and *The Lavender Keeper* become sexualised through the nature of their war work, yet are then cleansed of any perceived deviance, placing them back into the category of 'good woman', on behalf of whom wars are fought. This tension around female sexuality suggests that female SOE agents occupy a complicated cultural space, caught between the paradigms of sexy spy and war heroine. To be honoured as the latter they must be chaste, yet the fictional agents perform sex work as part of their mission due to cultural expectations of women, which require them to use their 'feminine wiles' once out in the field. The representation of the female agents in these historical fictions demonstrates clearly the contested historical space occupied by women who were active in their war work, and who thus disrupt hegemonic gender discourses.

Keep Mum, She's Not So Dumb!

Anxieties about female sexuality, and women's ability to both seduce and be seduced, are also evident in texts about Bletchley Park. In these instances, the concerns in question are about women sharing secrets. As *Enigma* demonstrates, the trope of what one might term the 'sexy spy' is a powerful one. It is deployed as a red herring before then being disproved, yet its use in the first place demonstrates its convincing power as

a stereotype. This reliance on hegemonic gender discourses leads to a situation where it is only Hester who is trusted with information, because she is not depicted as sexually attractive, or for that that matter, active. The assumption is that she will not give out information for love, (or gain it via the use of her 'feminine wiles') as it is implied about Claire Romilly. However, the ITV series *The Bletchley Circle* reveals that this trope can be escaped – here, it is men who misuse information. The series also contains a female antagonist, Marta, who, whilst it is true that she uses an Enigma machine to code the records of her criminal activities, is not depicted as the source of any sexually based anxiety. Instead, she serves as a female antagonist to the band of female protagonists, creating a war narrative which is predominantly female. The implication is that women's occupation of the traditionally male gendered sphere of warfare has the potential to change hegemonic war discourses.

The female focus point for anxieties about women's sexuality and information sharing in *Enigma* is Claire Romilly. She is depicted in such a way as to echo the figure of the sexy femme fatale who passes on secrets in the Second World War posters discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, of which the infamous 'Keep Mum She's Not So Dumb!' poster is a perfect example: [51]

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We first meet Claire when she encounters the protagonist, Tom Jericho, on a train journey to Bletchley. In this first meeting we are told that, because of the lack of space on the train 'her thigh is pressed to his', and 'their legs touch. Her stocking rustles against his calf'.[52] This focus on Claire's body parts, particularly the reference to a

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[51] Harold Forster, *'*Keep Mum She's Not So Dumb!' poster, Imperial War Museums Collection
  <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/9736> [accessed 10/01/19]
[52] Robert Harris, *Enigma*, 2nd edn (London: Arrow Books, 2001), p. 127.

stocking, paints her as an object of desire, furthered by how Jericho: 'can feel the warmth of her, and smell her scent'.[53]

Depicting Claire in this fashion is particularly important, given that she actively pursues a relationship with Jericho. After they get off the train, she asks him to attend a concert with her, which eventually leads to an invitation back to Claire's cottage. On the way, they see a couple having sex against a wall, which Jericho refers to as 'very peculiar behaviour' (p. 144). Claire laughs, surprised that he finds the act unusual, creating the impression that she has a greater sexual knowledge. This characterisation is supported by her behaviour when they arrive at the cottage, as Claire begins to unbutton Jericho's coat. She refers back to the couple they encountered after the cinema, telling him: 'in London nowadays the girls all call it a "wall job" […] They say you can't get pregnant this way…' (p. 147). This impression of Claire deliberately seducing Jericho is further strengthened when we learn that he was a virgin before this encounter. Claire is strongly cast as the sexual female seducer, an important depiction given that she keeps asking Jericho about his work, and also commits the act of information sharing around which the plot of the novel pivots.

In addition to asking Jericho seemingly innocent questions such as 'how long has he been here?' and 'surely, *he* does something interesting?', to which she is given evasive answers, one night Jericho awakes to find Claire searching his belongings (p. 138). Claire is open about her actions, telling him to 'go on back to sleep', as 'I'm just going through your things', presenting the situation as entirely normal (p. 157). It is noticeable that at this point 'she is naked except for his shirt', again a sexualised image, which in turn links her actions of snooping to her sexual agency (p. 157). This connection is further strengthened by Jericho's distraction when 'the shirt rides higher', as 'he stares, mesmerised, at the soft triangle of flesh at the base of her vertebrae as she rummages amongst his clothes' (p. 159).

We are told that this incident is the second time they have slept together, and that it was 'at her insistence' that they went to his room, perfectly setting up the scenario to allow Claire to search through his possessions (p. 158). At first, Jericho finds her actions 'amusing, flattering, even', as if they have become normal as a result of the war: 'one further intimacy' (it is observed in reference to their encounter on the train that

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[53] Ibid. As *Enigma* refers to Tom Jericho primarily as 'Jericho', I will follow this nomenclature to avoid confusion.

'such intimacy would never have been tolerated before the war') (p. 158 and p. 127). This language foregrounds how the war has disrupted traditional gender relations; Claire's position as transgressive woman is strengthened by her status as a woman in wartime and the world of intelligence, as well as the way she uses her sexual allure to gain information.

Jericho only becomes upset by Claire's actions when she finds a cheque 'drawn on the Foreign Office Contingency Fund', which Jericho demands she return. She tells him: 'I knew there would be something. Come on darling, what's it for?', a question which implies that she was deliberately trying to get information about his work (p. 159). Eventually Jericho pulls the cheque from Claire's hands, leading to the end of their relationship; having failed to get the information she was looking for, she has no further use for Jericho. This depiction casts her solidly into the role of the dangerous, sexually alluring woman of the propaganda posters, who uses her 'feminine wiles' to get information out of men.

Jericho becomes obsessed with Claire, a reaction which is exacerbated when it becomes apparent that she has disappeared. He tries to discover what has happened to her, and learns that she had stolen encrypted messages and hidden them in her floorboards. In addition to seducing Jericho to see if he would leak any secrets about his work, Claire's access to confidential information through her own work is also shown to be a problem. Jericho tries to find out the exact nature of Claire's job, and learns that she worked in the German Book Room, where all the information about the German forces which had been decoded was filed. Working there, everyday: 'a girl like Claire would probably see more operational detail about the German armed forces than Adolf Hitler' (p. 186). Claire is cast as an even more dangerous figure, with the potential to access many secrets about the war, which she then passes onto Puck, whom she had been sleeping with.[54]

Claire both attempts to gain knowledge illicitly by seducing men, as well as giving the information she sees to men with whom she has romantic attachments, an additional level of untrustworthiness. It is notable that Claire's information sharing is shown to cause the destruction and deaths of the crewmen of Allied Naval vessels and

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[54] Whilst it must be acknowledged that Puck is a man who shares confidential information with the enemy, he is also Polish, a characterisation which is reliant on another stereotype – the dangerous foreigner who cannot be trusted. He therefore represents his own brand of anxieties about information sharing and nationality.

merchant shipping. Her actions also lead to the potential revelation of Enigma to the German forces with all the consequent connotations of the imminent loss of the war. This series of events, and the potential of worse to come, highlights the effect of her actions and the dangers she represents as a seductive figure who cannot be trusted with information.

However, towards the end of *Enigma*, we learn that Claire was a government spy, placed in Bletchley to keep an eye on those individuals who were indeed 'so alien to the tradition of intelligence' (p. 443). In this case, it is shown to actually be the men about whom the government was particularly concerned, wanting to know if they could be trusted as they were not gentlemen.[55] This revelation casts Claire's actions in a whole new light. Rather than Claire being a promiscuous, sexually alluring information leaker, she is instead slotted into the role of 'sexy spy', but one who is working for the right team. As a result, the 'great revolving door of Claire Romilly's men' becomes an exercise by the government to test their loyalty in the face of a beautiful woman (p. 391).

Even Claire's actions of passing the encrypted messages to Puck are shown to have been sanctioned by her controller, Wigram, designed to test Puck's loyalty. It is a problematic representation, as although this aspect of Claire's character suggests that the text is not perpetuating the hegemonic war discourse that women share secrets to the enemy, (particularly knowledge they have gained as a result of their new access to information or via seducing men), the trope of the sexually alluring woman who exploits her 'feminine wiles' to gain access to secrets is still deployed. Whilst the representation of Claire sets up this stereotype and then subverts it, its use points to the pervasive attraction of this image; it is a connection between women and information sharing through seduction which will be believed and accepted as possible, and even potentially expected.

Although one might argue that the correlation between a sexualised femininity and a capacity to share information is only used as a trope that can then be subverted, the depiction of Hester in *Enigma* suggests that the text is actually responding to these anxieties about femininity on a broader narrative level. In contrast to Claire, Hester is described as 'a dark-haired woman, thirtyish, about Jericho's height. She was wearing round spectacles and a thick overcoat and was holding a prayer book' (p. 135). Through

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[55] *Enigma* also contains distinct class anxieties, but there is not space to discuss these here.

these elements, Hester is presented as bookish and religious, almost the polar opposite of Claire with her blonde hair and seductive behaviour. This contrast is also depicted through their bedrooms, as Claire's is described as: 'a room of pinks and creams, crammed full of pre-war silks and furs and feathers, like a large dressing-up box', creating an image of its owner as very feminine and also frivolous (p. 145). Hester's room, in contrast, is described as 'spartan, like a cell: a brass bedstead, a jug and bowl on a washstand, some books piled on a chair' (p. 146). Claire tells Jericho that Hester 'has got a bit of a crush on me', casting her as a lesbian, or at least bisexual (p. 146). Claire's claim is supported by a scene in which she brushes Hester's hair: 'running her brush through it with slow and languorous strokes that made Hester's limbs turn weak' (p. 224). In addition, we are given a flashback where 'in nothing but a pair of white silk knickers and a string of pearls', Claire is 'prancing about the room' and catches Hester watching 'with a smile that was something between an invitation and a taunt' (p. 225). Hester responds to this situation by 'leaning against the wall' where she 'pressed her hand between her legs with shame' (p. 225). This scene is crucial, as it both paints Claire's sexuality in such a light as to suggest that it is so powerful as to be enticing to both men and women, as well as supporting Claire's assertion that Hester is attracted to women.

The representation of Hester created from the combination of all these elements is therefore one which paints her as the opposite of Claire: Hester is depicted as a religious, staid and bookish woman who is not likely to be seduced by men. With this characterisation in mind, it is notable that Hester works with Jericho, and that she is shown to be capable of being trusted with secrets. The suggestion is that because she will not seduce men for their secrets, or likely be seduced herself by them, she is not a security risk. While she does end up having a romantic relationship with Jericho in the film adaptation, their connection is presented as one that has grown up healthily through their ability to trust each other during their work to solve the mystery of the stolen messages, which are shown to have effects on a national level.[56] It should also be noted that in the final scene of the film, Hester is shown without glasses and wearing makeup, and also pregnant; she has transitioned from her earlier staid appearance of a woman who does not appear likely to be seduced, into an image of wholesome femininity. Both characterizations support her position as a foil to Claire:

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[56] *Enigma*, dir. by Michael Apted (Jagged Films and Broadway Video, 2001) [on DVD].

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Hester at the start of *Enigma*

© Miramax

Hester and Jericho at the end of *Enigma*

© Miramax

Whilst Claire's status as a sexually alluring woman who shares confidential information is to a certain extent subverted, the connection is still made, and indeed strengthened through the foil to Claire provided by Hester. *Enigma* is revealed to be unable to fully escape the hegemonic war discourse about women having the potential to leak information, anxieties which stem both from their ability to acquire secrets by seducing men and because of women's changed place in society. This persistence illustrates the longevity of anxieties about uncontrolled female sexuality and women's access to knowledge, concerns which continue to shape how the past has been represented.

In contrast, *The Bletchley Circle* provides a positive portrayal of women's relationships with secrecy, as the series focuses around a group of female characters who work together to combat the misuse of government sanctioned skills and systems by male characters. Crucially, they are not sexualised in any way, and the text does not contain the anxiety surrounding women's ability to be seduced, or seduce, for secrets present in *Enigma*. Indeed, the text rewrites this trope so thoroughly that even though it contains a character who misuses her access to controlled knowledge, she is not presented as doing so via her interactions with men. Although she does fit several other classic stereotypes of the antagonist (she is shown as dressed all in black, and is a foreigner), the implication that her status as the villain of the piece is at least partly because of her sexuality is absent, rewriting this narrative. This shift indicates that although this trope is clearly a powerful one, it can be escaped, particularly when women work together to disrupt hegemonic gender discourses.

The female protagonists of *The Bletchley Circle* use their shared skills to find a murderer, Crawley, who is exploiting the knowledge he gained from his experiences of

clandestine warfare. The murderer is revealed to have worked at Electra House, in a department in charge of 'Misinformation and Deception'. We learn that this department 'trained people to fool the German high Command and get away with it', including skills such as forgery. It becomes apparent that the murder has being planting his killings on other people through these techniques. Susan and her friends (Millie, Jean and Lucy), work to counteract Crawley's negative use of the skills and experiences of clandestine warfare. Rather than the suggestion being that it is women who should not be trusted with information, as it is in other texts and in Second World War propaganda posters, in *The Bletchley Circle,* it is in fact men who misuse their secret knowledge, a rather different rewriting of this trope.

This representation of secrecy is strengthened in the first two episodes of the second series. After a female colleague from Bletchley is framed for a murder she did not commit, the team discover that the man she is accused of killing was going to release information about a government cover up. They realize that what was reported as a 'chemical spill' which accidentally injured some soldiers, was actually the deliberate deployment of a chemical weapon on the men. This incident is based on historical events at Porton Down in which an RAF airman, Ronald Maddison, died from a Sarin experiment in 1953, the same year the episode is set. Maddison thought he was volunteering to help find a cure for the common cold, a detail which is used in the episode of *The Bletchley Circle.* The women track down the perpetrator, Professor Masters, who has been using the security systems of the Army against them, for example planting classified documents on the murdered man so that the case had to go to a closed military court rather than an open criminal court. Through both this plot and that of the first series, *The Bletchley Circle* constructs a world in which it is men (Masters and Crawley) who cannot be trusted with information or the government systems used to control its secrets. Instead, it is female characters who reveal this abuse of official secrecy, subverting the idea that it is women who are to blame. These two narrative plots stand as examples of how it is possible to rewrite women's relationship with secrecy, to break away from the narrative confines of hegemonic discourses.

The events of the latter half of the second series of *The Bletchley Circle* reveal the degree to which this narrative is rewritten in the text: despite containing an oppositional figure, Marta, who uses an Enigma machine to encode the transaction records of her smuggling ring and traffics women from behind the Iron Curtain, the implication that she does so because she has an uncontrolled sexual agency is missing –

she is simply a female antagonist.

Marta's position as villain of the piece is illustrated by the first glimpse we are given of her character, as she is standing in shadows, dressed all in black:

© ITV

She is not represented with an overt sexual agency, and is indeed wearing a conservative suit. Her position as antagonist is solidified by how she employs thugs who beat up those who go against her, and we see her selling the young women who are locked in her building to a group of men.

The female protagonists of *The Bletchley Circle* come into contact with Marta because one of the group, Millie, is kidnapped after dealing on the black market. They look at her transaction book so they can set up a series events to catch Marta. However, the transaction book is in code, and we are later shown Marta encrypting it with an Enigma machine. The group of Bletchley women deduce that Marta must have worked in one of the intercept stations on Malta, and therefore been trained in how to use the machine as well as acquiring one for herself. Thus, whilst the suggestion is that Marta is able to commit her negative acts because of her access to the technologies of clandestine warfare during the Second World War, the text does not imply that this has anything to do with her seductive abilities.

Comparing the depiction of women's access to knowledge in *Enigma* and *The Bletchley Circle* reveals both the tenacity of the trope that women cannot be trusted with information because of their 'feminine wiles', as well as how it can be rewritten. *Enigma* is distinctly less successful; whilst it sets Claire up as the 'sexy spy' and then shows this to be a red herring, the depiction of Hester as a foil to Claire exposes how the text's plot depends on the continuation of this idea, present in the posters of the

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official 'war culture', that it is women's ability to seduce men that makes their access to controlled information a dangerous thing. *The Bletchley Circle,* in contrast, depicts women's access to secrecy rather differently: here the women work together to counter male misuse of information and the official mechanisms used to control it. Even the depiction of a female character in the second series who is also guilty of such actions, which might otherwise fulfil the stereotype of dangerous seductive woman, is simply a female antagonist – no seductive powers demonstrated. Noticeably, the protagonists investigating her are female, demonstrating how war stories which have female main characters have the potential to rewrite such stereotypes, changing how we inscribe women into narratives about the traditionally male gendered sphere of conflict. As explored in the previous chapters in regards to women's life writing about Bletchley Park, the inclusion of women's experiences of war in text can transform hegemonic war discourses, displacing old tropes with new patterns of experience.

Ending the Romance Plot

The effects of hegemonic gender discourses on representations of women should not be underestimated. Rachel Blau DuPlessis is clear about the importance of exploring gender representation in narrative. She argues: 'narrative in the most general terms is a version of, or a special expression of, ideology: representations by which we construct and accept values and institutions', and consequently: 'any fiction expresses ideology; for example, romance plots of various kinds and the fate of female characters express attitudes at least toward family, sexuality, and gender'.[57] This analysis illustrates the pervasive power of narrative norms, emphasizing how they can serve to perpetuate stereotypes and gender norms.

These ideological scripts are highly significant in relation to romance plots. DuPlessis declares: 'as a narrative pattern, the romance plot muffles the main female character, represses quest, valorizes heterosexual as opposed to homosexual ties, incorporates individuals within couples as a sign of their personal and narrative success' (p. 5). These plots often have only two endings: 'once upon a time, the end, the rightful end, of women in novels was social – successful courtship, marriage – or judgemental of her sexual and social failure – death. These are both resolutions of romance' (p. 1).

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[57] Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. x.

Viewed from this angle, these narrative conclusions are clearly problematic, offering female characters only two options, which in the process function to pull them away from their own heroic quests. Whilst DuPlessis's analysis is based on nineteenth and twentieth century texts, I believe her argument is still relevant to the texts under discussion, some of which are twentieth century and some twenty first century, as these two narrative resolutions to the romance plot appear in the majority of fictional texts analysed in this chapter.

The fictional texts with a female protagonist or major character predominately end in a happy relationship which has developed over the course of the plot. These narrative endings include the character of Flick in *Jackdaws*. At the start of the novel, Flick is married to Michel, although she later discovers he is being unfaithful, and by the end of the plot he is dead. Flick is therefore free to marry Paul, a fellow SOE member whom she meets as a result of her work for the SOE. In a similar fashion, Lisette in *The Lavender Keeper* meets Luc during her mission, and by the end of the text the two have declared their love for each other. *Violins of Autumn* follows a similar narrative arc, with the protagonist, Betty, starting alone and then finishing the text in love with Robbie, and by the end of *The Dandelion Years* Sasha and Matthew have declared their love for one another. Alexander Fullerton's series about SOE agent Rosie Ewing can also be put in this category. Whilst each text does not finish with a romantic resolution, over the course of the four main novels, Rosie develops a relationship with a naval officer, Ben, and by the end of the fourth novel Rosie and Ben are firmly united. It should be noted that this trend is evident in *Charlotte Gray* as well. Crucially, even though Faulks' book and the film adaptation directed by Gillian Armstrong have different endings, they both finish with a romantic resolution, with Charlotte happily reunited with the pilot Peter Gregory in the book, and with the Resistance member Julien in the film. The decision to change the ending, yet maintain the narrative culmination of a romantic relationship, illustrates the pervasiveness of this motif in writing which features female protagonists.

The alternative ending to the romance plot identified by DuPlessis is death. This resolution occurs in texts which finish with the death or torture of the protagonist, or with them being arrested or sent to a concentration camp. Catherine Pradier in *Fall From Grace* ends her narrative arc in a concentration camp, with the intimation that orders have been signed for her death. The central female characters of *As Time Goes By* suffer a similar fate, as Paulette is executed at Ravensbruck, Violette is left mentally

traumatised and disabled after her treatment at the hands of the Gestapo, and Jenny, despite initially marrying and having children, later commits suicide. Verity, the protagonist of *Codename Verity,* asks her friend Maddie to shoot her to avoid being taken to a concentration camp, and Marian Sutro finishes her narrative arc in *The Girl Who Fell From The Sky* with being arrested by the Gestapo.[58] Whilst it must be acknowledged that these endings could be an attempt at historical realism, as many of the female SOE agents were arrested and tortured by the Gestapo and did die in concentration camps, I believe that read symbolically it remains significant that these female protagonists who undertake active war work have these endings to their narrative arcs. As DuPlessis argues: 'when social, familial, and internalized restraints lose their force, when the character, for sometimes the most subtle reasons, has been marginalized or herself chooses experimentally to step aside from her roles, death enforces the restrictions on female behaviour'.[59] Read from this angle, the deaths and torture of the female protagonists indicates the existence of a connection between their active war work, outside of traditional gender norms, and their unfortunate endings; they are being punished for their transgressions, the alternate, more dramatic finale to being subsumed back into the traditional narrative ending of marriage. Both narrative culminations attempt to resolve the tension caused by the unusual war work of these women, through either placing them back into the role of girlfriends or wives, or by symbolically removing them from society. These resolutions illustrate clearly the hegemonic gender norms which shape the texts, forming narrative frameworks which maintain the correlation between women and romance.

Against these plots are three texts which rewrite the female protagonist's romance arc. They end instead in an alternative solution, in which 'community and social connectedness are the end of the female quest, not death' (p. 16). It should be noted that all three of these texts have female authors. These texts are *The Amber Shadows* (2016) by Lucy Ribchester, *Light of the Moon*, and *Angel of Baker Street.* Honey Deschampes in *The Amber Shadows* works at Bletchley Park, and starts the text single. Following the traditional romance plot, she meets a man, Felix, as a result of her work at the Park. Felix becomes part of Honey's attempt to solve the mystery of parcels she is sent in the post, which she thinks are pieces of amber containing coded messages

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[58] *All That I Have* and *The Tiger Claw* could also be included here, depending on whether one classed these texts as life writing or fiction. Their position as biographical fiction complicates this allocation.
[59] DuPlessis, p. 16.

from her father in Occupied Russia. The two become closer due to Felix's assistance, and eventually have sex in Felix's truck. However, at the end of the novel we learn that Felix had actually been faking the amber in order to get closer to Honey, as he was involved in an art forgery and smuggling network and had heard that her father might be able to help. Once Honey discovers the truth (after being chloroformed and kidnapped) she breaks off the relationship and tries to escape. Felix threatens her with telling everyone that she had sex with him in his truck if she tells his secret, warning her: 'they hire good girls here'.[60] In addition, the text shows gender norms to be restrictive towards women through Rupert, one of Felix's accomplices, telling Honey that his version of events would always be trusted over hers: 'a Cambridge boy, or a bloody woman typist?' (loc. 4479). In both instances, traditional gender roles are depicted as being detrimental to Honey.

It is therefore highly significant that at the end of the text, it is a community of women who save and accept Honey. When she falls into an ice-covered pond trying to escape from Felix and Rupert, it is Beatrix, a friend from Honey's Hut, who rescues her. Beatrix runs over both men with her Rolls Royce, a symbolic act of female power, deploying a traditionally male object to disrupt hegemonic gender discourses. After being rescued, Honey goes to her Hut to start her shift. As a result, she is able to return to normality, told 'you'd better get to work' (loc. 4576). The Hut and her job offer Honey a sense of community, a safe space to return to after her experiences. This impression is emphasised by the observation: 'the burden they all carry; the names of the dead, the names of the killers, every typist, every secretary will carry them with her to her own grave' (loc. 4582). The emphasis on shared secrets creates a sense of unity amongst the women. Thus, rather than the traditional romance plot in which Honey would have been punished for having a relationship with an anti-hero (Felix deceives her, is part of an art forgery network, kidnaps her and is the reason she ends up in a freezing lake, as well as killing her brother), instead she is rescued by a female friend, and returns to her community of women who are bound together by their war work and shared secrets. *The Amber Shadows* is an example of what DuPlessis refers to as 'writing beyond the ending', creating an alternative narrative resolution which neither buries the female protagonist in a romance plot and affirms traditional gender roles in

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[60] Lucy Ribchester, *The Amber Shadows* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2016), loc. 4440. Kindle ebook.

the process, nor terminates her life as punishment for transgressing them.[61]

Light of the Moon offers a similar rewriting of the traditional romance plot. Evelyn St John's relationship is with a man who can also be classed as an anti-hero in the context of the world portrayed in the text, as he is German. As DuPlessis observes, in traditional romance plots: 'death occurs as the price for the character's sometimes bemused destabilizing of the limited equilibrium of respectable female behaviour'.[62] For example: 'in her acceptance of a wrong man, a nonhero, or in her nonacceptance of a right one' (p. 16). However, in *Light of the Moon* Evelyn does not die. Instead, it is her German lover who dies, and Evelyn is taken by the Resistance network over the Pyrenees and returns safely to England. This resolution is a form of return to community, an alternative to either the expected endings of love or death for the female protagonist.

However, it is also possible to argue that this alternative vision is not entirely convincing. In the 'extract from the diary of Evelyn, nee St John', with which the text commences, Evelyn writes: 'I thought loving someone was simple. It isn't. Glorious, yes. Painful, yes. Unforgettable yes. Simple, no. It took a war for me to find out'.[63] This statement at the start of the book suggests that romance will be the main theme, reinforcing the sense of it being the main priority, rather than the valuable work done by the women who worked for the SOE. In addition, Evelyn writes: 'if I had known I was going to encounter the once-in-a-lifetime kind of love and meet the man who belonged to me, yet who was forbidden, would I have chosen to do something else?' (p. 3). Her words play into the romantic ideals of one true love, as well as the trope of forbidden love overcome, emphasizing the text's foregrounding of romance. Read in this light, the ending of *Light of the Moon* becomes complicated, as it is an alternative rewriting of the romance plot, in that it is the male in the relationship who dies because of the unsuitability of the relationship rather than the woman, yet there is clearly a preoccupation with romance. The text is uncertain in its attitudes, caught by the attraction of the themes of romance in terms of drama marketed towards women, yet also offering an alternate ending where Evelyn does not die for her relationship with a 'nonhero'. She is instead absorbed into the community of the Resistance network.

Angel of Baker Street also treats the romance plot in an alternative fashion.

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[61] DuPlessis, p. x.
[62] Ibid., p. 16.
[63] Buchan, p. 3.

During her work with the Resistance in France, Olivia Drummond falls in love with Louis, a fellow member of the network. However, Louis is revealed to be the traitor she was sent to France to find. The reasons for his treachery are discovered, mitigating his crimes to a certain degree, but not absolving him enough to prevent his death. In a similar fashion to *Light of the Moon*, in *Angel of Baker Street* it is the 'nonhero' who pays for his own crimes and the problematic nature of his relationship with the protagonist, rather than the female character. The text also follows this pattern more broadly, as by the end of the narrative Olivia has a much better relationship with her father than at the start of the text, accepted into the community in the sense of improved family relations.

Angel of Baker Street contains a similar tension to *Light of the Moon*, in that it cannot quite free itself of romantic tropes. During her time in France, Olivia meets a German SS officer, Kleist. He is revealed to fit the 'cultured' stereotype, having studied Art and English at Oxford University before the war, and eventually turns sides and aids the Resistance. Kleist even helps in a Resistance mission towards the end of the text which involves Olivia and Kleist posing as a couple. Crucially, while the two do not start an official relationship, during their mission Olivia notes: 'it was strange how safe she felt in Kleist's arms surrounded by hundreds of Nazis and collaborators', implying that Kleist is someone Olivia thinks can protect her, and with whom she feels comfortable.[64] In addition, at the end of the text Olivia is offered another mission, and we learn that she was specifically asked for by Kleist. The suggestion is that a romantic relationship might develop between Olivia and the reformed SS officer. The inclusion of this narrative arc suggests that *Angel of Baker Street*, in a similar fashion to *Light of the Moon*, is unable to fully free itself from romance motifs and narratives, despite moving away from more traditional, restrictive plot resolutions in which the only alternatives are marriage and death. Both texts illustrate the pervasive attraction of the romance plot in fiction which features female protagonists, even to authors who are able to at least begin to write beyond the ending.

Despite these variations in a couple of the texts under discussion, the majority of fictional representations of women's experiences of the SOE and Bletchley Park adhere to the more traditional endings to the romance plot, caught in a conservative attitude towards gender relations and representation. Through the deployment of hegemonic

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[64] Bell, loc. 4467.

narrative norms, the texts enforce traditional gender roles, in which women's experiences either become overshadowed by romance, or they die as a result of transgressive actions. However, these narrative arcs are not present across all the texts, an authorial act which DuPlessis refers to as 'writing beyond the ending'. These alternative narrative resolutions suggest that authors of historical fiction are beginning to move away from an obedience towards the narrative paths of hegemonic gender discourses, a vital development if the romance plots in these texts are viewed as behavioural scripts. It should also be noted, however, that even in these rewritings there is often a tension between an emphasis on romance and alternate possibilities for women's narratives. This conflict exposes how the texts cannot quite free themselves from the tenacious pull of the traditional gender norms and tropes of patriarchal culture which make up hegemonic discourses about women and war.

Conclusion

Examining the depiction of the female characters' and historical figures' romantic relationships and sexual encounters in these texts reveals a cultural connection between women and romance, which functions to obscure their unusual war work. This shift of focus contributes to the overall conservative world view present in the majority of these texts, as it continues the patriarchal notion that warfare is predominately a male affair. The implication is that traditional heteronormative romance plots are expected in these texts, functioning as part of the framework provided by hegemonic discourses to create an easily recognisable world for readers who come to historical fiction for such a purpose. However, these hegemonic discourses in which women are only involved in war when spurred on by romance, and in which romance takes over the rest of their narratives, are transformed in a few of the texts under discussion here; this alteration is both in terms of the romance plots, and the rewriting of the trope of the woman who cannot be trusted with information because of her seductive capacities.

Analysing the romance elements of these texts reveals that they follow the general trend that has emerged across this material, of a predominately conservative world view being represented, which is however deviated from by a handful of texts. Despite the fact that the texts under discussion here cover over a thirty-year period, challenges or shifts to hegemonic discourses only convincingly occur in texts written in the 2010s. This alteration indicates that whilst we are still some distance away from

escaping the pull of the stereotypes and tropes that constitute hegemonic discourses, there is potential for changes to these narratives, stemming from women's continued presence in hitherto masculine spaces and an increased awareness of their experiences through life writing.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored representations of women's experiences of Second World War clandestine warfare in fiction, life writing, film and television, revealing how they are shaped by cultural anxieties and fantasies about women and war. These concerns and obsessions crystallize in the hegemonic discourses about conflict and gender which act as narrative frames, relied upon by the authors of these texts in their endeavours to negotiate the difficulties inherent in historical representation to create a coherent, marketable product. Noticeably, the texts predominantly create a conservative vision of the past as a result of their use of these familiar patterns and tropes, leading to questions about why such representations continue to attract a strong audience. As the sales figures discussed in the introductory chapter to this thesis indicate, some of these text under discussion here are bestsellers, and most are at least moderately successful. This state of affairs would seem to indicate that they must be producing something that continues to be wanted, despite the temporal distance from the Second World War.

The conservative vision created is a comforting one, deployed to coddle the reader both in terms of the easily recognisable tropes and stereotypes used to construct it, and for its overall representation of history. What we must be wary of, however, are the anxieties and concerns about war and particularly women's situations within conflict, which the narrative frameworks supplied by hegemonic discourses are designed to attempt to quash, yet in the process actually serve to replicate for later generations. The implication is that in a world of political upheaval (be it the fall of the Berlin Wall, terrorism or even the ever-looming spectre of Brexit), readers continue to want a certain vision of the past, which most of these texts offer. However, it should be noted that in life writing and particularly texts written by female authors or based on female experience, new discourses do begin to form, suggesting that alternate narratives are possible when women have agency over their own war stories.

As works of historical representation about clandestine warfare, these texts face a particular set of challenges. Chapter 1 explored the negotiation of these difficulties, illustrating that it is the navigation of the complexities involved in this very process, particularly the bid to create a sense of authenticity, which results in the texts' reliance on hegemonic discourses. The use of these frameworks has particularly negative connotations for works of women's life writing, as the deployment of familiar patterns and tropes serves to remove the women's agency, writing them into romantic and

Orientalist narratives. The women who worked at Bletchley Park are shown to suffer a similar lack of agency, in their case, a lack of narrative agency imposed by governmental secrecy resulting in an inability to share their war experiences. Their voices excluded from mainstream war narratives in consequence, these texts offer a unique space to unearth previously hidden voices and investigate how representations of their lives have been shaped by hegemonic discourses about war and gender.

The work undertaken in this thesis reveals that both life writing and fiction are narrative constructs; examining the fictional texts' negotiations of the problems of historical representation and their bid to create authentic narrative whilst being aware of the impossibility of such a task, and how life writing texts weave together a network of (often unreliable) sources, illustrates how they are both dependent on the supporting shaping provided by the narratives frames of hegemonic discourses in order to achieve coherence. The resulting representations of the past are moulded by anxieties and fantasies about women's roles and the Second World War as a whole, ongoing cultural concerns and obsessions which inevitably affect how historical women are remembered. The persistence of these anxieties, for example about women's sexual agency, suggests that the tropes in question have a certain resonance, explaining their continuation as part of mainstream narratives. The texts adhere to these discourses in a bid to find themes and topics which their readers will find familiar, perpetuating their constitutive stereotypes and concerns in the process. Only a few of the texts deviate from these narratives, indicating the strength of the underlying fears and fantasies about war and gender which continue to shape how we think about the Second World War.

The focus on the depiction of the enemy in Chapter 2 illustrated how the concerns about conflict which coalesce in this figure lie at the heart of war's resistance to representation. The presence of these anxieties and cultural obsessions results in flawed stereotypes which reoccur across the texts, unstable enemy characters whose existence demonstrates the unsettling effects of competing dominant narratives about the Second World War. Anxieties about issues such as the potential of war to corrupt crystallize in the figure of the 'Good German'. Following this trope, the opposition characters are caught between being made to stand in opposition to the protagonist as members of the Abwehr, SD and SS, but they are also written in such a way as to attempt to show a possibility for goodness and redemption, a discrepancy the texts are unable to quite resolve. This lack of internal character coherence illustrates how these representations are haunted by competing narratives and anxieties which continue to

exist despite their differences – their varying strands endure because they tap into concerns about war which are recognisable and familiar enough to persist as narrative tropes and stereotypes.

In addition to these conflicted 'Good German' figures, texts such as *Into the Fire* contain enemy characters who are members of the Gestapo, and who are cast firmly in the role of evil Nazi. However, this attempt to create a simple divide between the brave protagonist and the enemy is undercut by the erotic element of the torture scenes which recur across the texts, in which the reader is invited into the protagonist's pain. Reading these scenes in the light of Freud's seminal essay 'A Child is Being Beaten' reveals how the fantasies offered depend on imagined reader position – ranging from sadomasochistic enjoyment to guilty masochistic pleasure at being beaten by the powerful yet fascinating Nazi figures. This representation of the enemy characters is taken still further in *The Girl Who Fell From The Sky* to also include assault by a female Nazi member, a scene which contains a distinct nod to the figure of the female dominatrix. The inclusion and indeed multiple occurrences of this erotic emphasis, serves to render what could otherwise be read as attempts at historical accuracy (many of the female SOE agents were tortured), or simply to add some narrative peril, as something quite different; the female protagonist's pain is instead turned into an erotic spectacle, a foray into the fantasy of 'fascism'.

Significantly, a focus on how the enemy is referred to in life writing by women who worked at Bletchley Park suggests that the hegemonic discourses which shape these texts can be rewritten. Here, the language used to describe the war has begun to change, foregrounding the women's contribution to the Second World War, rather than a hatred of the enemy or other traditional attitudes. The implication is that women's voices and experiences can transform existing discourses as their unique perspectives of conflict join mainstream narratives. These shifts herald the start of a move away from the old discourses as women assert narrative agency, reshaping these tropes and narrative patterns in the process.

As demonstrated in Chapter 3, narrative and gender norms are inherently connected. This bond leads to an emphasis on romance and sex in these texts, seemingly simply because their protagonists are female. Indeed, approaching these representations of women's experiences of clandestine warfare from this angle reveals the existence of an apparent correlation between women who undertook active war work and being sexually active; the female characters of many of these texts lose their

virginity and discover masturbation as part of their experiences working for the SOE, or in the preparation leading up to it. The implication is that the authors of texts such as *the Girl Who Fell From The Sky* and *Charlotte Gray* are unable to create female characters who are active in their behaviour, and not also sexually active. This connection is taken even further in *Fall From Grace, Light of the Moon* and *The Lavender Keeper,* in which the female protagonist must have sex as part of her war work, but is then symbolically cleansed. Exploring these scenes from the angle of feminist theories about prostitution was particularly useful, as whilst the ways in which the protagonists agree to undertake these acts implies that they do have sexual agency, this is undercut by the patriarchal system that is the 'war effort'. The repetition of the pattern between active behaviour and active sexuality exposes an innate anxiety about transgressive women; the authors of these texts are caught between wanting to indulge the fantasy of the 'sexy spy', yet feeling uncomfortable about her uncontrolled sexuality and transgressive potential.

Crucially, the majority of the fictional texts under discussion in this thesis uphold gendered narrative expectations for female characters. They predominately either culminate the protagonist's narrative arc in marriage or death, two traditional narrative endings for romance plots identified by Rachel Blau DuPlessis. This conformity is vital – it exposes the ways in which traditional expectations for narratives with female characters inevitably shape how the past is represented, leading to the conclusion that if we wished to write new endings for our fictional selves, this connection would need to be rewired. The same concerns also apply for life writing, as female historical figures are either depicted in biography with an emphasis on romance as well, or they are portrayed as chaste heroines, and therefore denied an accurate representation of their full lived experience. In this sense too, then, there is space for new ways of thinking about female historical figures, a challenge to mainstream narratives which could upset traditional ways of representing the roles and experiences of wartime women.

However, as the sales success of the conservative texts under discussion in this thesis would indicate, the changes would need to be in the vision of the past desired by the reader – for the moment, or at least for the majority of the thirty-one year period covered by the texts discussed here, it would seem that a more traditional representation of the past has been popular. It should be noted, though, that there is a slight shift across the texts, with for example *The Bletchley Circle,* which aired in 2012 and 2014,

and *The Amber Shadows*, published in 2016, beginning to challenge some of the tropes so inherent to hegemonic discourses. The implication is that whilst an older, conservative vision of the war has been popular, and seems to be continuing, there are shifts occurring. These changes I believe are, at least to some extent, caused by the increased unveiling of hitherto unknown women's experiences of war through life writing, which have the potential to change how we think about gender and conflict.

Critical work from a range of areas has been brought together in this thesis, including debates about women's experiences of war, romantic and historical fiction, as well as discussions about the functioning of both personal and cultural memory. Weaving together these debates, I have been able to forge a theoretical framework which exposes the competing anxieties and obsessions about women's sexual agency and war that lie at the heart of these texts. This thesis breaks new ground, as apart from Christine Brooke-Rose's *Remake,* the works of life writing, fiction, film and television discussed here have not been the focus of a major study. I have readdressed this balance, bringing these texts to critical attention and exposing the hegemonic discourses which shape how these women's lives have been depicted, standing at the nexus of cultural anxieties and fantasies about conflict, women's sexuality and secrecy.

As this thesis reveals, there are certain expectations about both conflict and female gendered behaviour which last, perhaps because they offer either a comforting depiction, or they tap into underlying anxieties and fears about transgressive women. This conservative vision is evident in the majority of the texts discussed here, indicating that they are creating a representation of the past which offers a comforting escape for the reader, faced by uncertain political times and the threats of chaotic forces such as the Iraq and Falklands wars, the rise of terrorism and for more recent texts, perhaps even the spectre of the disintegration of Europe. Yet it is not just political anxieties such representations seek to appease, it is also concerns about active women. The texts consequently attempt to dissipate the issues surrounding women's occupation of new spaces, leading to a vision of the past in which the predominant adherence to hegemonic discourses maintains traditional attitudes towards women and war. In the process, the texts betray the inherent anxieties and concerns which are a fundamental part of these discourses, perpetuating them as part of this cycle.

It is therefore significant that across this material there are challenges to such mainstream narratives in a few of the fictional texts and in multiple instances of memoirs written by the women themselves. These discourses are very gradually

beginning to shift as the result of women's unusual experiences being voiced through their life writing, as well as the continued decolonizing of previously male spaces. These changes lead to the creation of new narratives which are able to escape the old cultural anxieties about how to represent both women and war; they offer the potential for a new form of war story with women at its centre as active participants, rather than as lovers, girlfriends and 'sexy spies'.

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