"We are the real countries": Space and Identity in British, French, and American

Prisoner of War Cinema

by

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ABSTRACT

While Prisoner of War (POW) films made in the twenty years following World War II are usually panned for their saccharine nostalgia, they are also imbued with the context of their time. That is, they engage with expressions of nationality, patriotism, gender, and various other markers of identity that are set during World War II, but very much reflect their respective postwar national climates.

This thesis focuses on the dramatization of camp spaces in these films and the relationships and ideologies they foster. Spatial theorists like Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja, and Michel Foucault's biopolitical scholarship, ground my research into three distinctive national cinemas, Britain, France, and America. I argue that British films like *The Captive Heart* (1946), *Albert, R.N.* (1953), *The Colditz Story* (1955), *Very Important Person* (1961), and *The Password is Courage* (1962) exemplify British POW cinema's practice of reimagining what Britishness entails while building a broader community. In contrast, French films like *A Man Escaped* (1956) and *Le caporal épinglé* (1962) dramatize pessimistic views of postwar French identity and suggest that community is overrated and that independence is the best way forward. American POW films like *Decision Before Dawn* (1951), *Stalag 17* (1957), *36 Hours* (1964), and *King Rat* (1965) point out flaws in exceptionalist attitudes and highlight the virtues of other ways of moving through conflict. Finally, my examination of *The Great Escape* (1963) and *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957) looks at how these films use camp space to reinforce expected, and even stereotypical, ways of asserting identity. These films draw attention away from the binary ally/enemy, good/bad, masculine/feminine assertions of identity seen in combat films and instead dramatize culture-reflecting shifts in those values using the prison camp space.

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INTRODUCTION

"We are the real countries—not the lines drawn on maps or the names of powerful men."
—*Katharine Clifton,* The English Patient *(1996)*[1]

In Jean Renoir's great anti-war film *Grand Illusion* (1937) there is a scene in which

French prisoners of war team up with their English counterparts to perform a follies act for the

German guards. The Englishmen rambunctiously high-step their way across the stage singing

"It's a Long Way to Tipperary" while the show's star makes his way down a set of stairs toward

centre stage for his solo. The camera cranes in for a close-up as he bats his false eyelashes,

emphasizing his dramatic and delightfully silly falsetto. Suddenly, Maréchal (Jean Gabin), a

French prisoner, bursts onto the stage with news that France has retaken Douaumont, a fort that

in the previous scene had fallen to the Germans. That earlier German victory had led to a rousing

chorus of "*Die Wacht am Rhine*" in the German mess hall. But now, in a dramatic gesture of

Allied pride, the British star of the follies act snatches off his curly blonde wig, turns to the band

and commands in a deep voice — "the Marseillaise, please!" We then see a medium shot of the

British soldier, still in drag, wig in hand, now less exclusively a British soldier and more a

general resister of German military authority, proudly leading those in the room in singing the

French national anthem. The shot cuts again and suddenly we see the stage from the rear of the

theatre and watch the soldiers stand and sing in unison, brought together by shared defiance of

their wartime enemy.

After seeing this film multiple times, I became fascinated with the cinematic prisoner of

war (POW) camp as a space in which this sort of strange performance can happen. By making

the camp a place in which men can dress as women, English soldiers can sing the French

national anthem, and German guards can look on as part of an audience, *Grand Illusion* suggests that within the POW camp, a soldier's sense of identity — the host of beliefs and assumptions that define who they are — can shift, encouraging a greater sense of community with others in the camp and, as we see later in the film, even with guards who do not quite exemplify the wartime "enemy" label. Crucially, while my reading of space and spatiality in this thesis involves some analysis of physical spaces (tunnels, barracks, walls, wires, etc.), I also investigate characters' experiences of psychological, philosophical, sociological, and even spiritual spaciality that come about as they navigate these physical camp spaces.

As a result of my obsession with how *Grand Illusion* — a critically acclaimed film about World War I — uses camp space to explore expressions of identity, I began to study other POW films made following World War II. I re-watched popular films like *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), *The Great Escape* (1963), and *Stalag 17* (1953), and dug further into the history of the genre to discover *The Captive Heart* (1946), *Very Important Person* (1961), *Le caporal épinglé* (1962), and others. I was compelled not only by each film's use of the camp space to dismantle, rebuild, or reinforce the identities of those held captive, but by the clear national ideologies that most of these films articulate because of the national and international contexts in which they were made. These films present plots and themes relative to their countries of origin, but also grapple with the wartime reality of threats to familiar patterns of everyday life, and with the assumptions about the nation and its citizens, that war brings about. Moreover, because these films are set during World War II, but were made after its outcomes had been realized, relationships between characters often echo the bonds and animosities of that era while at the same time reflecting the new allegiances and fears springing out of the Cold War context.

The homosocial settings of these films also provoke reflection on the meanings of the very personal identities we see interacting in these same-sex camps. Follies shows like the one in *Grand Illusion* are ubiquitous throughout the genre and suggest that prison camps are spaces where characters literally and figuratively try on different gender and social identities without fear of ridicule or retribution. Sometimes these shows are celebratory, sometimes they exist to pass the time, and sometimes they are strategic. Regardless, these films are intentional about crossing gender boundaries, even if in one short scene, which is a genre characteristic too fascinating to ignore.

My thesis concerns cinematic prison camp space — how it comes into being, how it is occupied, and if and how it is left. After all, the POW camp wouldn't exist if not for the nomination of temporary prison space where people are held against their will, not because they've broken a law, but because they are enemy combatants. The people who have theorized space most helpfully for me are Henri Lefebvre, Edward Soja, and Michel Foucault.

Spatial theorist Henri Lefebvre's work is crucial to my understanding of prison camp liminality. Lefebvre defines space through a trialectics of spatiality: perceived or presupposed space; conceived or expected space; and lived or representational space, "which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate" (Lefebvre 39). Representational space is the lived experience resulting from the other two forms, and in it presuppositions and expectations of space — the POW camp as a space of war and segregation, for example — are met with practical understandings of space that consider everyday experiences and relationships. These three models therefore operate concurrently, meaning that all three kinds of space exist at the same time, in the same site. Lefebvre's theory supposes that we understand space as something constantly changing according to how we think of it and operate within it. According to

Lefebvre, "a space is not a thing, but rather a set of relations between things" (83). Because of this, space changes according to how we think of and relate to one another. We re-appropriate space as needed, shaping it to best accommodate us. This is extremely useful to my research, as I see cinematic POW camps as spaces produced by conflict, and yet they also offer relief from the combat that necessitates them. However, they also serve as springboards for repatriation, as they are often spaces in which prisoners develop tricks and tools to facilitate escape. The camps in these films often look less like prisons and more like summer camps in which those staying can explore different national, gendered, and wartime identities without scorn or judgment before they find their way back to the fight.

Postmodern political geographer Edward Soja builds on Lefebvre's work in his theorizing of our relationship with space, and his conception of Thirdspace is particularly important to my work here. Soja claims that spaces embody both the concrete and the imagined, and that these qualities merge into what he calls "Thirdspace." Soja insists that the merging of reality and imagination creates "a distinct mode of critical spatial awareness that is appropriate to the new scope and significance being brought about in the rebalanced trialectices of spaciality—historicality—sociality" ("Thirdspace" 57). As mentioned, some POW films depict uniform switching, removing the costumes that denote a specific national identity and replacing them with those that denote another, as a means of escaping imprisonment and, in some cases, the war. Some films portray the inclusion of Axis soldiers into the Allied fold, demonstrating the soldiers' resistance to allegiances and behaviours dictated by their national identities. Some of these films involve abject isolation and detail the change in a character from patriotic soldier to disillusioned citizen of nowhere in particular, national affiliation having lost its psychological and spiritual force. Because these changes occur within the confines of the cinematic prison camp, and

because so many films take great care to draw attention to the details of their respective camps, my dissertation is informed by an intense exploration of those spaces. After all, each prison camp is informed by, yet physically removed from, both combat and domestic life, making them liminal spaces. This liminality, when combined with the merging of whimsy and tragedy within each space — of imaginings of home and the reality of wartime circumstance — allows the cinematic POW camp to serve as an apt example of Thirdspace. These "third spaces," these temporary zones of war that are neither home nor the front lines, provide new perspectives on allegiance, sociality, and the wartime imperative of side-taking, that is, taking up a position (whether an armed one or not) against or for the Allied or the Axis cause in World War II.

Social theorist Michel Foucault's explanation of institutional spaces in *Discipline & Punish* as those that act upon bodies, "mark[ing] places and indicat[ing] values" (148) applies well to militaristic and nationalistic systems of rank and identification as they operate before someone enters the cinematic prison camp. Prisoners can be considered as "docile bodies" bound to a greater object of power in prison spaces, which engages in constant observation to exercise control over these bodies in the form of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon. Through the panopticon, space is regulated and bodies are segregated for disciplinary rigor. For Foucault, bodily imprisonment and punishment consists of disciplinary spaces acting upon bodies. Yet, the films I discuss in this dissertation suggest that bodies act in turn upon disciplinary spaces, "carv[ing] out individual segments and establish[ing] operational links" (148), as imprisoned identities — prisoners and guards alike — become less connected to the intended military discipline of these spaces. They prioritize prisoners', and sometimes guards', individual goals, requiring different manifestations of discipline to be enacted within them and different connections — even between Ally and Axis member — to be established.[2]

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While theorists like Lefebvre, Soja, and Foucault have significantly informed the direction of this dissertation, human geographers Dominique Moran and Jennifer Turner have helped me focus on space in specific prison contexts, and on prisons as "carceral" spaces that Moran tells us are spaces of incarceration that are "spatial, emplaced, mobile, embodied and affective" (*Carceral Geography* 1). Moran claims that work from biopolitical theorists like Foucault and Georgio Agamben underpins human geographical scholarship as it regards carceral spaces. But, while Foucault says that "Isolation provides an intimate exchange between the convict and the power that is exercised over him" (*Discipline and Punish* 237), the prisoners in cinematic POW camps are very rarely isolated from one another. Rather, prison spaces in POW films involve different, and often diverse, bodies among whom power is exchanged, gained, and lost. Moran writes that "Whatever we think about the past and future, we do that thinking or have those impressions in the present, and in the context of what the present is like" ("Doing Time" 310), which must inform critical spatial awareness. She further suggests that imprisoned bodies and prison spaces act upon one another, producing and reproducing the space both psychologically and physically (*Carceral Geography* 3). This is in keeping with Soja's work and can be applied to the cinematic prison camps I discuss and the ways in which identities change and shift in those spaces. These imprisoned bodies are affected by the space they're in, and they in turn also reproduce that space to their advantage as much as they can.

Jennifer Turner builds on Moran's work in her discussion of mobility in carceral spaces. Turner, along with Kimberley A. Peters, notes that "carceral spaces evoke a visual trickery — an illusion of immobility, where instead spaces of incarceration are often underscored by mobilities. These are mobilities that are simply different than those that might 'normally' be associated with our understandings of movement and motion" (*Carceral Mobilities* 2). Turner's work focuses on

how incarceration affects movement. Like Moran's, Turner's work fits well in my study of cinematic carceral spaces, as the films I discuss here are, of course, as contingent on the characters' movement within and outside of the confines of the wire that demarcates the prison camp as they are on the setting of the camp itself. How this movement of both prisoners and guards is controlled and contained in these films is crucial to the ways identities and spaces are defined and redefined.

Turner's studies of prison boundaries and prisoner mobility are important to my work, especially because some of the prisoners I discuss sometimes work beyond the physical borders of the prison camp, and yet remain bound by the same rules that govern more traditional prison spaces. This is particularly true of Karl Maurer in *Decision Before Dawn* (1951), whose body is imprisoned, and yet is used beyond the border of the camp to gather intelligence from his own people. Turner also discusses the permeability of the prison boundary as it relates to prison guards, who must regularly negotiate the inside/outside binary associated with prison life. She notes that the hybridity of living by both inside and outside rules "complicates their existence on the boundary between prison and society" (*The Prison Boundary* 45). This is certainly true for many of the guards depicted in the movies I study here. While they are in charge of the prisoners, they are also technically residents of the camps they preside over, complicating both their roles as guards and the boundaries they enforce while in those roles.

Crucially, while all of these scholars inform my study, none focusses specifically on POW camps. So, while much of their work is relevant, it is important to keep in mind the vital fact that while traditional prisons are meant to discipline/punish, POW camps are meant to contain. As POW camps and as cinematic creations, the dynamics of the prisons I study here are in many ways vastly different from what the above scholars work on. Still, there are also many

ways in which studies of carceral geography and biopolitics are essential to my understanding of the function of these camps and the identities crafted within them. So, Foucault informs the biopolitics of my study, and Soja, Moran, and Turner, the geopolitics. While "docile bodies" are important to the consideration of cinematic POW camps, in that the camp spaces render prisoner identity, it is crucial to realize that the prisoners in these movies also act upon their prison spaces, manipulating boundaries and rules and reforming and remaking the identities that the war called into being.

While the foundation of my study is space, the work of political scientist and historian Benedict Anderson on "imagined communities" is also important to my exploration of nationalism within the prison camp space. Anderson claims that the "imagined community" of a nation is a socially constructed group of people who choose to include and govern themselves (6–7). I see the cinematic prison camp as a space that facilitates just that. For example, in *Le caporal épinglé* (1962) Ballochet (Claude Rich) is a working-class French POW who can no longer abide Parisian classism. So, rather than clamber to escape the prison camp, he claims an area of the camp as his own, and lives happily there among his captors, inventing a community that works for him in the space the prison camp offers. Corporal King (George Segal) does something similar in *King Rat* (1965). He makes himself the central power of the prison camp community by constructing a society in which he is somebody, as opposed to the nobody he feels he is in the United States.

Because cinematic prison camps focus mainly on men in homosocial situations, and because of the instability that characterizes identity in these films, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* is essential to my study. Butler's work will help me to parse scenes that implicitly or explicitly trouble expectations of masculinity and fits nicely with Soja's theories of bodies acting

on spaces to facilitate change. These theories are particularly helpful to considering the various drag shows put on in these films, and particularly in one scene in *Stalag 17* (1953) when one prisoner, Harry (Harvey Lembeck) dresses as a woman to jokingly woo his friend, Animal (Robert Strauss). But Harry quickly realizes that the camp's homosocial environment has proven too much for Animal, and he must resist Animal's advances when Animal believes Harry is Betty Grable.

There is to date no monograph study of POW films. This is not because the films do not warrant examination. On the contrary, these films depict camp spaces as paradoxical ones that can facilitate personal, and sometimes political, change, and that also reflect popular postwar mentalities of the postwar period leading into the Cold War. They are cocoons that soldiers enter, and then leave, changed after a metamorphosis of personal significance that resonates throughout the genre. Of the few critics who have paid attention to these films, historian Nicholas J. Cull offers crucial insight into the British films I discuss here and the context in which they were made, as does film scholar Michael W. Boyce. In his article, "'Great Escapes': 'Englishness' and the Prisoner of War Genre," Cull connects *The Captive Heart*, *The Colditz Story* (1955), *Albert, R.N.* (1953), *The Wooden Horse* (1950), and other British films in the genre, to notions of Englishness and to the English model of "muddling through" the war while maintaining a stiff upper lip. His work connecting the genre to matters of Englishness has allowed me to see the importance of British films considered in their historical context and has paved the way for me to examine other national cinemas for their own contextual traits. In *The Lasting Influence of the War on Postwar British Film*, Boyce pays particular attention to *The Captive Heart* and connects it to the general ennui and feelings of confusion and disappointment felt in Britain after the war. His work provides important contextual considerations regarding British national cinema of the

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postwar period, and I build on his reading of *The Captive Heart* by using a spatial theory approach.

Cultural historian Wendy Webster's work contributes as well. *Englishness and Empire 1939–1965* provides ample postwar British historical context for my reading of these films, and her article, "'Europe against the Germans': The British Resistance Narrative, 1940–1950" offers insight into anti-German sentiment and the restoration of European relationships with Germany, which film critic Martin S. Dworkin discusses in "Clean Germans and Dirty Politics." Dworkin's article highlights the difficulty of making World War II films that accurately represented the Germans as enemies, in a now-allied Cold War context. Film historian Martin Stollery's recent article regarding escape, Nazism, and POW cinema is also useful in its call to expand the historical contexts "in relation to their representations of wartime Europe, beyond the confines of camps for prisoners where the Geneva Conventions applied" (539). Stollery's attention to POW cinema is helpful, not only in that he agrees that these films warrant more consideration, but also because he acknowledges the genre's internationalism.

Film and television historian Margaret Butler's work is also useful to my work. Her *Film and Community in Britain and France: From La Règle du Jeu to Room at the Top* offers a comparison of British and French postwar cinema, an examination of British "carrying on" and the postwar identity crisis in France. Her work is crucial for my studies of both national cinemas. French film philosopher Colin Davis also provides important contextual information, especially for my reading of Jean Renoir's *Le caporal épinglé*. In "Renoir and the Vichy Syndrome: *This Land is Mine*, *Carola* and *Le Caporal épinglé*," Davis discusses how *Le caporal épinglé* criticizes French reactions to World War II, and he includes a discussion of Henry Rousso's "Vichy Syndrome" that supports my examination of Bresson's and Renoir's films. Critic Gavin

Lambert's "French Cinema: The New Pessimism" also proves useful to my discussion, as he looks closely at how postwar France showed its dissatisfaction with the period through cinema. Film philosopher Brian Price's *Neither God nor Master: Robert Bresson & Radical Politics* also draws on this theme and looks at Bresson's work through a political lens that handily lends itself to my work here, while Georges-Henri Soutou's study of France during the Cold War also provides important political information.

James Chapman uses his cinema studies scholarship to provide significant grounding for situating these films in the overarching war genre in his book *War and Film*. While his focus is largely on combat films, Chapman's work explores audience fascination with the war genre and provides important scholarship on its dominant narratives, from tragedy to heroism. American historian John Bodnar's *The "Good War" in American Memory* narrows the scope further and situates American war narratives in historical and social context. Bodnar's work illuminates American disagreement about entering World War II, as well as conflicting narratives of heroism and disillusionment that worked to eke out postwar American identity. He is particularly interested in how the war is remembered in American memory, which fits well with postwar POW films and their look back at the war from a Cold War production context.

Many of the films I discuss have been ignored, and when they have been noticed, have been mercilessly panned. Despite what I see in the films as valuable reflections of national postwar attitudes, much of the criticism they've received has been quite scathing. *The Spectator* film critic Isabel Quigley notably accused *Very Important Person* of sending one "into a state of acute embarrassment of the soul," and cantankerous *New York Times* reviewer Bosley Crowther offered equally derisive things to say about the films' settings and escape-based storylines. About *The Colditz Story*, Crowther writes that the drama "makes the adventures of British

prisoners in Colditz Castle, a famous Nazi prison camp, look like the pranks of boys in boarding school" (*New York Times*, October 25, 1957).

It is certainly true that many of these films can be read as almost mechanical tales of obstacle courses through which characters are driven by an overriding desire to escape and rejoin the battlefield. Most are, after all, genre films, which abide by well-established, predictable formulae. But, as veteran genre and popular culture scholar John G. Cawelti argues in "The Question of Popular Genres," genre texts "have made possible more complex critical, historical, and evaluative approaches to the vast output of the modern mass media," and studying their development "is a way of tracing changes in an artistic tradition" (56). While I am not here to defend the genre, which can seem shallow and frustratingly trite in its approaches to war, Cawelti's understanding of genre as form suggests that Prisoner of War films are worth studying. Further, in *Film/Genre*, genre scholar Rick Altman suggests that "Genres must be understood discursively, i.e., as language that not only purports to describe a particular phenomenon, but that is also addressed by one party to another, usually for a specific, identifiable purpose" (121). Like Cawelti's, Altman's work on the discursive function of genre cinema suggests that the Prisoner of War genre has been far too easily dismissed through one-dimensional reviews like Quigley's and Crowther's. Their reviews have missed what Cultural Studies scholar Andrew Tudor calls genre's "exploration of the psychological and sociological interplay between filmmaker, film, and audience" (7) and they ignore how the films use generic staples like camp spaces to test the form and limit of identity.

I'd like to look at the films in a new way, in terms of how they answer cultural needs. This dissertation is about the contexts in which three different countries produced their takes on the Prisoner of War genre, and my work is ultimately about what makes the films distinct, not

the same. I will therefore take up the challenge of Quigley's presumed embarrassment and argue to the contrary that cinematic POW camps are crucibles in which new identities are formed.

The prison camps in these films are, for better or for worse, communities that offer more than merely enemy/ally perspectives on war. The genre's attention to community, rather than to divisiveness, is important if we ask how we as audiences might engage with war, gender, and national allegiance as problematic, and, at times, even nonsensical, concepts. Further, the importance of these films is even more palpable when we consider that historically, POW camps were very much about the segregation of national communities. The 1929 *Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War* — the convention followed by the majority of World War II participants — stipulates that "belligerents shall as far as possible avoid bringing together in the same camp prisoners of different races or nationalities" (Article 9). Thus, one's time in a POW camp was spent subject to reinforced national identity. Further, each prisoner was required under interrogation to declare his "true names and rank, or his regimental number" (Article 5), suggesting that a man's military identity was all that was important within the camp in which he was detained.

Indeed, these men, who were otherwise independent individuals, were imprisoned only as the result of their — often conscripted — national military participation, rather than their commission of crimes. Still, as archeologists Harold Mytum and Gilly Carr explain in their book, *Prisoners of War: Archaeology, Memory, and Heritage of 19th- and 20th-Century Mass Internment*, "the unusual pressures that these circumstances create can evoke reactions that include increased or reformulated gender and nationalistic identities, reinforce or overturn class and ethnic divisions, and reveal previously hidden talents and skills that could be released through leisure and the training that some PoWs could offer to others" (7).

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Of course, it is important to remember that being an actual POW also involved starvation, coping with psychiatric disorders, homesickness, and various cognitive impairments,[3] which are often left out of the often more comfortable communities presented on film in favour of more palatable narratives. In the case of Slavic prisoners during the actual World War II, their national identities alienated them not only from their German captors, but also from their allied inmates, as a scene in *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1972) depicts. Since Japan accepted, yet never ratified, the Geneva Conventions, prisoners in Japanese camps were subject to treatment that was prohibited in those of other nations, something we see dramatized in *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. German and Japanese prisoners also experienced horrors at Allied hands, and inhuman treatment within the camps was a possibility everywhere. Still, some more recent films like *Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence* (1983) and *Katyn* (2007) have managed to emphasize that, while these camps were "sufficiently removed from the fighting zone[s] for [prisoners] to be out of danger" (*Geneva Conventions*, Article 7), they also provided very real dangers within their borders before ending with peace and unity, as *Mr. Lawrence* does.

We can see evidence of both danger and unity in POW camps depicted in various national cinemas in the twenty years following the end of World War II, from English films such as *The Captive Heart* and *Albert, R.N.*, to America's *Stalag 17* and *36 Hours* (1964), to the French cinema's *A Man Escaped* (1956) and *Le caporal épinglé*. Each of these films, and many like them, brings together assertive national — and individual — identities in the spaces of their respective prison camps, and reforms them, revealing the limitations of propagandistic ideologies, and the social damage done by inequality in the world outside the literal or figurative barbed wire. Away from the chaos of combat, these identities, once broken down, are often re-formed to reflect a somewhat unified community within the camp that defies the dualistic enmity

imposed upon combatants by the war and by the boundaries that war enforces between self and other.

For this project I have chosen to compare three major national producers of POW cinema: Great Britain, the United States, and France. Beyond their prolific film production, I am fascinated by their different attitudes toward postwar national community. As England, the United States, and France took part in establishing the new international community that the end of World War II brought about, so they each also went their separate ways, isolating themselves from one another as they attempted to establish their philosophies of nationhood within the postwar context. Thus, like the cinematic POW camps, England, the United States, and France were nations based in the real experiences of the past, but had to contend with the establishment of unwelcome, uncomfortable, or unexpected communities in the postwar period. Moreover, Anderson notes that "nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind. To understand them properly we need to consider carefully how they have come into historical being, in what ways their meanings have changed over time, and why, today, they command such profound emotional legitimacy" (4). My contention here is that we see traces of this effort to construct new forms of Anderson's "nation-ness" in the interactions of the cinematic POW camp.

James Chapman writes this about war cinema and the determination of war narratives by national contexts:

> Whereas a memory of the First World War is shared across different societies, suggesting
> that the historical experience of the war is to some extent international, films of the
> Second World War tend to be nationally specific. Whereas the dominant Anglo-American
> view of the war against Nazi Germany characterizes it as the 'good war,' German and

Polish films, for example, offer a much more complex and ambiguous response,

determined largely by specific national political and cultural circumstances. (13)

Chapman's assessment is compelling, especially in regard to Ally-centric combat films that

portray exceptionally heroic and patriotic protagonists ridding the world of vile, inhuman

enemies. However, while many World War II POW films at first seem to adhere to this model,

and to other stereotypes of national identity, as their narratives unfold they frequently muddy

once-clear national divisions, joining enemies to allies, as in *Decision Before Dawn*, *The Wooden

Horse*, and *36 Hours*, or setting up an entirely new social structure, as in *The Bridge on the River

Kwai* and *King Rat* (1965).[4]

As we see in *Grand Illusion*, gender identities are also destabilized in these films. Many,

including *Albert, R.N.* and *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, include at least one scene that shows

otherwise exceedingly "manly" soldiers cross-dressing to facilitate their escape, or prancing

across a stage in drag in order to entertain their cohort. Still others, like *The Password is

Courage* (1962) and *Le caporal épinglé,* involve men's abject reliance on women — rather than

on themselves, or on the strength of their national forces — for their identity and/or survival.

Thus, part of understanding how various national cinemas present what I claim are non-

national wartime communities in cinematic POW camps includes understanding the contexts in

which they are created. Through this understanding I hope to present films made as part of these

national cinemas as not only because they demonstrate how nationality, nation-ness, and

nationalism can be difficult to define during wartime, but also because these films dramatize

problems of post-war national rebuilding.

My first chapter, "Little Pieces of England: Changing Britishness in postwar Prisoner of

War cinema," features films that span the postwar period. Made immediately after the end of the

war, *The Captive Heart* explores the idea of replacing "bad" Britishness with "good," and depicts camp space as one in which all prisoners might get a fresh start. The films made in the 1950s are more established in their divisions of what is and is not British, and yet *The Wooden Horse*, *Albert, R.N.*, and *The Colditz Story* each take up the mantle *The Captive Heart* initiates, discussing issues of inclusion, and of looking for allies among perceived enemies, instead of doubling down on isolationism. I see this trend continuing into the films of the early 1960s, even amid more self-critical understandings of Britishness. *Very Important Person* offers that even the most aristocratic Englishmen must change to be more "of the people," and *The Password is Courage* also defies social hierarchy in favour of a broader understanding of identity. This chapter arguest that collectively, these films use camp space to offer stories of British persistence by restructuring the idea of what constitutes Britishness in the first place, and that these stories reflect the British postwar struggle for a unified identity.

"Raising the rifle butt: French postwar identity and the new pessimism," my second chapter, offers a discussion of two POW films essential to a cultural understanding of the French postwar experience: *A Man Escaped* and *Le caporal épinglé*. Unlike the British and American genre films that I use in other chapters, Bresson's *A Man Escaped* and Renoir's *Le caporal épinglé* are part of this study because of the way they present and dramatize prison camp space and spatiality. As Wendy Webster notes in her article, "Shorn Women, Rubble Women and Military Heroes: Gender, National Identity and the Second World War in Britain, France and Germany, 1944–1948," French prisoners of war were referred to derisively as "knights of the raised rifle butts" because a raised rifle butt was the sign of surrender (60). Returning prisoners of war were therefore seen — even by other veterans — as those who gave up on their country. This chapter examines both films as representative of this context and argues that their respective

prison camps reflect prisoners' isolation from their national communities. Unlike the British POW films' depictions of shifts in the camps toward visions of a larger community, I argue that these French films depicting the POW experience shrink away from national community entirely and instead depicts characters who distance themselves from such community in favour of isolated self-reliance.

My third chapter discusses American POW cinema and its resistance to narratives of American exceptionalism. In "'Meat's meat': American exceptionalism in postwar Prisoner of War cinema," I examine how films like *Decision Before Dawn*, *Stalag 17*, *36 Hours*, and *King Rat* depict very little difference between allies and enemies and suggest that there is nothing special in being American. The camps in these films facilitate behaviour that works against attitudes of exceptionalism, including the dismantling of ranking systems and the reformation of allied and enemy groups. These films are not inclusive like the British films are. They do not attempt to bring shiny new Americans into the fold. Instead, these films are quite bleak, and reflect American pre-occupation with Cold War isolation. As a result, American characters are challenged to accept that theirs is not the only way through the war, and that help is required if they are to get through the war intact.

My fourth and final chapter examines the two best-known POW films that are also the most troublesome to my argument. "'This is our show:' Taking up space in *The Great Escape* and *The Bridge on the River Kwai*" argues that these films do not use cinematic prison camp space to explore the possibility of less nationally determined identities, but instead, that these blockbusters double down on national signifiers to set different characters apart as definitely and inarguably American or British. Nevertheless, the camp space remains one of liminality precisely because characters like Hilts (Steve McQueen) in *The Great Escape* and Nicholson (Alec

Guinness) in *The Bridge on the River Kwai* are able to actually reinforce their national identities through the camp spaces they occupy. The films embrace everything that British and American POW films tend to question, at least for most of the story. While *The Great Escape* presents victory as a direct result of American isolation and exceptionalism, *The Bridge on the River Kwai* ultimately suggests that neither collaboration nor resistance can withstand the lethal absurdity of war.

I argue that these cinematic spaces facilitate experiences that reflect the postwar triumphs and frustrations with re-defining national communities and demonstrate attitudes of hindsight with regard to wartime spaciality, historicality, and sociality. Prior to their encampment, the prisoners depicted in these movies are members of exclusive communities, well-established as officers (most often) or members of the rank and file within their respective Allied or resistance militaries. They fight foes who target their national ideals or ways of life, as denoted by the nationalism they adhere to. But, when imprisoned in camps that bring together men of different classes, nationalities, and interests, their understandings of what community they belong to, change. Their prison camps become much like nations unto themselves, created from the very real circumstances of war, but made bearable by the will toward individual freedom of expression and the alliances fostered within the walls and/or wire surrounding them. Soldiers converge in a diaspora of wartime service and live together under a combination of imposed rule and gumption.

Prisoner of war films engage with issues of nationality, patriotism, gender, and various other markers of identity by using the space of the POW camp as a site of dramatic encounter between and among prisoners and their captors. The viewer's gaze is drawn away from combat in these films and focused on the liminal position of the prison camp as a place created by, yet

removed from, the war. My aim in this thesis is to explore and give form to my interest in post-World War II POW cinema as a genre of films that dramatizes the breakdown of disparate identities and the rebuilding of unlikely communities that literally share common ground. These films use the physical and communal spaces of the camps they depict to facilitate these changes in identity and to house alternative communities not necessarily bound by national borders. Because the films I am interested in here were made within the twenty years following World War II, I also want to discover the extent to which postwar national recovery and rebuilding influenced the presentations of these communities removed from combat, but that nevertheless deliver commentary about the violence beyond the barbed wire.

1. *The English Patient* is adapted from a novel set amid World War II tensions. In it, Katharine Clifton writes to her lover, Almásy, "We are the real countries, not the boundaries drawn on maps with the names of powerful men."

2. Of course, this is most often to do with escape. Although, in *The Great Escape* Senior British Officer Ramsey (James Donald) reminds camp commandant Colonel von Luger (Hannes Messemer) that officers are required to try to escape, suggesting that the higher one's rank and the more one adheres to its discipline, the more one must disregard the disciplinary space of the prison camp. Thus, it makes sense that the majority of films in the Prisoner of War genre are about officers, rather than enlisted men.

3. See Polivy, Janet, and Sharon B. Zeitlin, C. Peter Herman, and A. Lynne Beal. "Food Restriction and Binge Eating: A Study of Former Prisoners of War." *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, Vol. 103, No. 2 (1994), pg. 409.

4. I will deliver a more comprehensive analysis of these, and other, films in the chapters to come.

CHAPTER ONE
Little Pieces of England: Changing Britishness in postwar Prisoner of War cinema

Approximately halfway through *The Captive Heart* (1946) there is a scene in which Celia

Mitchell (Rachel Kempson) reads a letter from the man she thinks is her husband, Geoffrey

(Michael Redgrave), a British officer taken prisoner in a German POW camp. As the camera

dollies toward her face, she reads aloud the writer's sentiment that the prison camp "is a world

cut off completely from the real world. Time stands still here . The future is revoked, the present

empty. Even the past begins to seem unreal." Despite its brevity, this passage situates the prison

camp as a place of liminality in the midst of war, somewhere neither home nor in a combat zone.

The letter's suggestion that the prison camp is "a world cut off completely from the real

world" evokes sociologist Erving Goffman's critique of the "total institution" of prison, which he

claims is "symbolized by the barrier to social intercourse with the outside that is often built right

into the physical plant: locked doors, high walls, barbed wire, cliffs and water, open terrain, and

so forth" (n.p.). For Goffman, the "inside" of the prison poses a binary opposition to the

"outside" of the wider society. But while the letter Celia reads aloud certainly alludes to this

binary understanding of the space of the prison camp in relation to the world outside, the activity

we see in the camp in *The Captive Heart*, and in the other cinematic camps I discuss here, shows

us that the prison camp is a space characterized not by the either/or, but by the in-between — a

product of the war "cut off" from, but very much informed by, both domesticity and combat. The

cinematic prison camp in *The Captive Heart*, and in other films such as *The Wooden Horse*

(1950), *Albert, R.N.* (1953), *The Colditz Story* (1955), *Very Important Person* (1961), and *The

Password is Courage* (1962) offers a middle space in which identities are produced and

reproduced to create more inclusive — and more exemplary — British identities.

Each of these films features British captives in German camps, and each carefully depicts the ways in which Britishness — the package of assumptions and loyalties that citizenship entails — is enacted. But while enacting Britishness is important to my larger project, this chapter is specifically about how these films use camp spaces not only to enact Britishness, but also to re-make it, bringing new people into the fold of national identity, and discarding old prejudices. Crucially, these films tend to dramatize the POW camp experience as an unrealistically cheery one. However, these films are not about the violence and horrors of war and instead tend to gloss over the more disturbing aspects of the POW experience. Instead, they use the space of the POW camp and the context of World War II to dramatize the need for Britons to unify during the postwar period and to reassure viewers that something good came out of the War.

After discussing how these films depict the production of British identity in the space of the prison camp, I will show how British bodies and other signifiers of identity like uniforms and songs are produced and reproduced in and along with the camp space, to incorporate new ideas of belonging. That is, while the camp space exists to contain prisoners of war, the prisoners' relationship to the space is recursive, and we see the prisoners and their spaces constantly changing in relation to one another. I will also explain how the prison camp spaces in these films encourage the exploration of identity expression through their facilitation of imagination and performance. Finally, I will look at how the liminal nature of these POW camps extends belonging to German captors along with British captives, suggesting that British identities are not the only ones being broken down and rebuilt in camp spaces. I maintain that these camps serve as crucibles that take in war-torn and domestically sponsored identities and reforge them as new, perhaps more idealistic, examples of the postwar Britishness required to carry on in the face of the Cold War.

Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja are essential to this examination of cinematic prison camps as spaces in which domestic Britishness and wartime relationships come together. Henri Lefebvre's understanding of space as something that both produces and is produced is crucial, as it helps us see the POW camp as a space that acts and is acted upon in relation to the prisoner it contains. His understanding of appropriated spaces as possessed spaces resembling works of art (165) fits with my contention that, while constructed as German spaces of war, cinematic prison camps become appropriated spaces in which British characters find new ways to be British, and transform — even beautify — their surroundings by fashioning them into a version of home.

Soja's Thirdspace is the culmination of Lefebvre's trialectics of spatiality: perceived or presupposed space; conceived or expected space; and lived space, "which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate" (Lefebvre 39). Soja sees Thirdspace as a lived space that embodies both the concrete and the imagined, where "issues of race, class, and gender can be addressed simultaneously without privileging one over the other; where one can be Marxist and post-Marxist, materialist and idealist, structuralist and humanist, disciplined and transdisciplinary at the same time" ("Thirdspace" 50).

Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities also works well here, since the imagined community of the British nation persists in the camps. These imagined communities involve considerations of new identities — some springing from necessity and some, it seems, from more personal explorations of what it means to be English. This exploration often involves performances of new and different identities, whether that means swapping one's uniform for enemy kit, or shrugging off the confines of military masculinity by replacing uniforms with women's clothing and participating in a revue. Judith Butler's work on gender performance illuminates how the space of the camp in British POW cinema makes possible the exploration of

gender identity because, as a rough simulacrum of domesticity, the camp space allows for taboo projections and enactments of identity. Michel Chion's theorizing of cinematic sound and his interest in the power of the human voice as a meaning maker also helps me outline how what is imagined in the camp space, becomes part of a new reality for prisoners.

Nicholas Cull's work on enacting Englishness in English POW cinema is also extremely useful here, as his study of the genre provides historical context for, as well as criticism of, many of the films discussed in this chapter. Cull notes that postwar Englishness "is encoded within [the contemporary] memory of World War Two" (282), and that this idea of Englishness is characterized by "improvisation and 'muddling through'" (283), formed as it is by recollections of making do with what was on hand during the deprivations of war. Most of the British films made in the twenty years after World War II depict prison camps as spaces in which prisoners work toward (or, as I will discuss, move away from) idealistic historical projections of their own Britishness and of Britain. New allegiances and ever-more inclusive camp communities allow for new kinds of Britishness to take shape. That is, "ideal" Britishness in terms of birth and social position makes way for piecemeal Britishness that is merit- and/or behaviour-based.

The muddling through that Cull claims characterizes so much of British cinema both before and after World War II seems remarkably typical of the POW genre. Cull says that for England, "as compared to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the war has remained disproportionately central to national identity, if only because England lacks an England against which to define itself" (282). He also credits England's POW genre with a "claim to authenticity," given that many of the films are based on memoirs and count former prisoners of war among their cast and crew.

Cull's suggestion that these films might claim authenticity because they are adapted from first-hand accounts is appropriate. But I offer that "authentic" Britishness as presented in these films can also include the convincing (someone who can pass as British), and the sincere (someone who believes in the ideal of Britishness, and whose behaviour and allegiance reflect this), in addition to the real (British citizenship or heritage). Moreover, these films suggest that "real" British citizens have less of a claim to authenticity than those who are convincing and/or sincere. Most of the films I discuss here show entitled Britishness making way for intentional allyship, cooperation, and inclusivity. The war changed what it means to be British and cinematic camp spaces follow suit. They include those willing to contrive a workable solution to problems out of whatever is at hand and prioritize them over those who hide behind their birthright.

Film historian Martin Stollery's recent article on British POW film also provides me with useful insight. He, too, believes these films should be considered for more than their depiction of schoolboy antics, noting that their internationalism "has tended to be overlooked" (543). Providing even more historical context is Michael Boyce's *The Lasting Influence of the War on Postwar British Film*, which discusses postwar Englishness and the general struggle for British identity in cinema:

> The profound and lasting impact of World War II affected both day-to-day life and the national psychology of the people of Great Britain. Although the war was won, the victory seemed somewhat pyrrhic. The so-called myth of the Blitz gave way to the economic hardships, social uncertainty, and realities of the postwar period. As Tommy Harrison wrote in *Living through the Blitz,* 'At no time in World War II generally and in

the Blitz particularly were British civilians united on anything, though they might be ready to appear so in public.' (2)

Boyce's work supports my contention that these films convey a shift away from disunity toward a stronger, more unified Britain.

Brief summaries of my primary film texts are in order here. *The Captive Heart* follows Czechoslovakian concentration camp escapee Karel Hasek (Michael Redgrave). Running from the gestapo, Hasek stumbles upon English soldier Geoffrey Mitchell's dead body. He steals the dead Englishman's uniform and papers, and covertly joins an imprisoned British battalion in a German POW camp. Posing as Mitchell, Hasek develops a relationship with the dead man's wife, Celia, through letterwriting. Even though his fellow prisoners know his true identity, they go to great lengths to help Hasek install himself as Mitchell, idealizing him as an exemplary Englishman, and even repatriating him as such, in an effort to protect him from the gestapo.

The film has much in common with *Albert, R.N.*, which depicts a number of allied soldiers plotting their escape by using a dummy, Albert, that one of them has crafted to stand in for an escaped man. While the movie emphasises the differences among the various prisoners, Albert brings them together and becomes the Allied hero of the camp, as the men deal with issues of escape, loyalty, and a diabolical German guard named Schultz (Anton Diffring).

Like *Albert, R.N.*, *The Colditz Story* also deals with tensions between members of the Allied forces, presenting national identity as important, and yet arbitrary. The British citizens in *Colditz* initially measure themselves against everyone else, and are quick to decide who belongs and who doesn't. The film features a group of British prisoners who are imprisoned in the historically impenetrable Colditz Castle, and who have trouble navigating the different Allied identities in the camp as they plan an escape. The various groups step on one another's toes,

much to the chagrin of Pat Reid (John Mills) and "Mac" McGill (Christopher Rhodes), who believe that British plans should be prioritized over Polish or Dutch. Eventually, all differences are put aside in favour of a coordinated escape attempt.

Very Important Person (1961) features Sir Earnest Pease (James Robertson Justice), who uses his self-importance as a Knight of the British Empire to lord it over everyone around him, much to their chagrin. The story is told in retrospect, as Pease enjoys a televised tribute that involves guest appearances from his fellow prisoners. The action flashes back to explain how Pease and his fellow soldiers plan Pease's escape from a German prison led by Kommandant Stamfel (Stanley Baxter), and various hijinks ensue as Pease's upperclass persona clashes with his workingclass compatriots as they learn to work together.

Considered one of the more saccharine films in the genre, *The Wooden Horse* exudes enthusiasm for British unity in its depiction of a group of tightly-knit British soldiers attempting to escape a German POW camp. The men obtain permission to build a wooden vaulting horse to be carried out and used in the yard. In keeping with the title's allusion to the Trojan Horse, the vaulting horse is hollow inside, allowing a man to hide and be carried out to the middle of the yard where he can dig a tunnel under the horse as the others take their exercise above. The horse proves useful for both exercise and escape, and emphasizes the team-like quality attributed to the British soldiers who work at making it through their imprisonment, spurred on by the promise of returning to England and defeating their enemies once and for all.

Finally, *The Password is Courage* follows Sergeant-Major Charlie Coward (Dirk Bogarde), a larger than life enlisted man and POW whose mind is focused intently on escape, and whose antics provide an entertaining, if not irreverent, look at British soldiery. During his stay at various prison camps, Coward exemplifies Cull's description of schoolboy pranks by

setting traps, starting fires, and fast-talking his way through prison life, along with his friend and

fellow inmate, Corporal Bill Pope (Alfred Lynch). Together they are able to cross the literal and

figurative boundaries of barbed wire and soldierly comportment that define prison camps and

Britishness and escape for good.

I turn now to detailed discussion of these films as texts in which the nature and meaning

of British national identity is dramatized and challenged in the involuntary communities of the

POW camp. *The Captive Heart* deals with communally-improvised claims to national

authenticity in terms of postwar British identity. A decidedly optimistic film, *The Captive Heart*

depicts a non-British hero, Karel Hasek. Spurred on as it is by his fellow inmates, Hasek's

replacement of the dead British soldier Mitchell, first in his military role and later, in his

romantic one, suggests that Britishness is tied to strength of character rather than birthright alone.

Hasek-as-Mitchell even takes the place of a second Englishman, fellow prisoner and small-time

criminal Matthews (Jimmy Hanley) in the film: when the Gestapo close in on Hasek, Matthews

substitutes Mitchell's name for his own on the repatriation list. Hasek is then released from the

prison camp and sent to England, where he is officially repatriated as Mitchell. After his

repatriation he comes clean to Celia, and the two plan for a future together in England.

In *The Production of Space,* Henri Lefebvre writes that "a space is not a thing but rather a

set of relations between things" (83). This is true of the prison camp space, since the camp space

is produced via relations between allies and enemies, and is reproduced by prisoner engagement.

However, the cinematic camp space is also one where people can explore these connections as

what Soja calls "active participants in the social construction" of spatiality ("Thirdspace" 49).

For Hasek and his fellow inmates, the space of their camp allows them to explore relations

between one another, between war and home — and reconceptualize who they are as a result of

the war. Hasek's replacement of the dead Geoffrey Mitchell is a rebirth of sorts. By taking

Mitchell's uniform, his identity card, and his identity bracelet, and by throwing the photographs

of Mitchell's wife, Celia, and several other women, onto a fire, Hasek erases Mitchell's past and

reconstitutes his present. Hasek then finds his way to a group of British prisoners bound for a

POW camp, and uses his German language skills to recommend himself as a translator.

Initially, Hasek's mysterious demeanor, inaccurate company information, and fluent

German cause the British prisoners to regard him as a suspicious figure. But, while the entire

film could hinge on exclusion and Hasek's fear of his true identity being revealed to his fellow

prisoners, and ultimately to the Gestapo, Hasek is instead almost immediately welcomed into the

British fold. Hasek reveals his Czech identity to his cohort in a very brief scene near the film's

beginning. In this scene, Martin Stollery notes, *The Captive Heart* "acknowledges Nazi anti-

Semitism, and [also] that Nazism has inflicted more suffering upon Hasek, and in allegorical

terms other European nations, than it has upon the English" (544).

But the film goes far beyond mere acknowledgement. Rather than feeling violated by the

presumption of Hasek's assumed identity, the British soldiers understand his need to pose as

Mitchell, and encourage him to establish a relationship with Celia through frequent

correspondence with her, in order to allay German suspicions. More than simply understanding

his plight, the British prisoners see qualities in Hasek (his bravery for escaping a concentration

camp, and his haphazard journey across war-torn Germany to get to them) that mean more to

them than their suspicions do. They become invested in Hasek's success at passing as British

and, by making Hasek a nominal member of their ranks, they sacrifice their own safety and

freedom to have him repatriated in the name of "Mitchell", their dead comrade.

In his book-length study of postwar British cinema, Michael Boyce links Hasek's acceptance into the British fold to the caché that Redgrave brings to the character. He notes that "as a Czech, Karel should not possess 'Britishness' or an affinity for British values; however Michael Redgrave's Britishness is well established, and so Karel comes to embody those values" (54).[1] Crucially, we never get a good look at the real Geoffrey Mitchell's face, which suggests that we are not meant to recognize the actor playing him as someone we already think of as British. The real Mitchell's facelessness makes him easier to dismiss or overlook as one who does not deserve Britishness, especially given what we learn of his cruelty to his wife and his indifference to his children.

As we see with characters like Price (Peter Graves) in *Stalag 17* (1953) and Gerber (Rod Taylor) in *36 Hours* (1964), using familiar actors to play non-nationals has been an effective way to portray trustworthiness amid a climate of distrust.[2] And yet, I need to push back a bit and suggest that the essence of Hasek's character is not entirely bound up in Redgrave's persona; when we first see Hasek and hear him speak German, we are encouraged to remain dubious of his affiliations, just as the British soldiers do. But, while we come to understand the soldiers' quick acceptance of Hasek for various reasons, not the least of which is his impeccable English (which is explained away by his having spent time in England as a child), the fact remains that Hasek is a stranger and a foreigner who ultimately replaces two Englishmen who represent non-ideal forms of Britishness. Moreover, while all we know of Mitchell is that he deserved to be replaced (indicated by the camera's avoidance of his face, and in his broken relationship to Celia and his children), we know Matthews and his crooked past, and we see him struggle toward personal reform over the course of the film. His sacrifice toward the film's end allows him to fully atone for his former life and nods to two ways of signalling Britishness. One is that he

chooses the noble path with no sign of fuss. The other is that in bowing out (of his film life as a character), Matthews performs a generous recognition of the chosen Britishness that lies ahead for the nation in the aftermath of the war.

The decision to repatriate Hasek is a moral, rather than a military, one, and speaks to the ways the film depicts Britishness as something to be crafted and even earned. After all, Hasek is repatriated as Mitchell, returned to a country from which he did not come, and for which he did not fight. As Matthews breaks into the records office and carefully scrapes the ink spelling out his name off the list so that Mitchell's name can replace it, he is using his criminal talent for good, and crafting a way to becoming a better Englishman by letting Hasek take his place. Matthews's act of removing the ink certifying his existence on that sheet of paper stands as an act of service that strongly parallels the sacrifice of blood and life on the battlefield in the service of patriotism. It also speaks to Lefebvre's understanding of appropriated space as "resembling a work of art" that I discussed earlier (165) in that in scraping ink from paper to add new meaning, Matthews engages in a form of clandestine arts and crafts. Matthews' sacrifice of an unfettered life so that Hasek might live freely redeems him, making Matthews ready to be a proper citizen when he finally returns to England. And, by 'passing' as British, Hasek redeems both Mitchell and Matthews, suggesting that Hasek's otherness establishes a new standard of essential Britishness.

The camp space in *The Captive Heart* therefore becomes a crucible in which Czech Hasek becomes a better, more authentic, version of Englishmen Mitchell and Matthews, with the full support of the Englishmen — including the real Matthews — attending him. The film defies Cull's claim of British insularity in these films by showing us characters who welcome an outsider, immediately making him one of their own, erasing all outward traces of his past, and

establishing a new present and future. If Lefebvre is correct that "a space is not a thing but rather a set of relations between things" (83), the relations among the prisoners in *The Captive Heart* and the production and reproduction of Hasek's identity suggest that the prisoners *are* the camp, and can therefore make it a "new social form" (Lefebvre 78) based on merit.

I have provided an overview of Hasek's journey toward "authentic" Britishness and the "new social form" of the camp space in *The Captive Heart*. But, while *The Captive Heart* suggests that Britishness is open to all who earn it, subsequent films, like *Albert, R.N.* (1953), *The Colditz Story* (1955), and *Very Important Person* (1961), do not take the same position. Instead, they begin with more territorial depictions of Britishness within the camp space, from which emerges an "everyman," who is, like Hasek, welcomed into the fold of Britishness as a more authentic and sympathetic example of British identity.

Albert, R.N. depicts a community whose new forms of cobbled-together British camaraderie and identity also include the synthetic. The film brings together prisoners from various Anglo-centric backgrounds who create a dummy made from bits of their uniforms that will stand in for an escaped man. While the men in the barracks are, of course, fighting for the same side in the war, the film focuses at least as much on personal squabbles among allies as it does on British enmity with Germany. These men discover and live with one another's faults, and determine that, while they are on the same side, they come from very different places. For example, in one scene near the film's beginning, Joe (Eddie Byrne), an Irish naval officer, sits at a phonograph, carefully places the needle onto the record, and listens intently to "Does your Mother come from Ireland?" while watching the disk revolve. The English soldier next to him, Henry (Moultrie Kelsall), turns and asks for another song. Joe turns toward him, his arms crossed over his chest, and defensively asks why, before an argument breaks out among the men about

whose regional song should be played. In the end, Joe gets his way, and Henry responds by spitting out the word "foreigner" before going back to what he was doing before. In a different scene, the two men engage in another scuffle, during which Henry calls the Irish "inhuman."

While perhaps meant as comic relief, these interactions deftly remind us that fighting for the same side — and even the same nation — does not guarantee unanimity. Henry's insulting slurs are troubling, and bring to light long-fought national disputes. However, Henry and Joe's initial discord and ultimate peace also suggest that the community of the camp can be a space in which to address some of these issues — even in jest — while building an international community and breaking down stereotypes created by national borders.

However, not everyone in *Albert, R.N.* enjoys such efforts at building a united international community. Throughout his time in the camp, American Lieutenant Norton (William Sylvester), known as "Texas," is unable to give himself over to the group dynamics of the camp. That is, while the others decide to band together to patiently work out an escape plan, Norton isolates himself and rashly enacts his own plan that leads to his death. While Norton is an Ally, his actions do not serve the Allied cause and are instead shown as reckless and self-serving. Even the fact that he is called "Texas" rather than "Norton" constantly signals his national difference from the group as a whole, his Americanness a declaration of independence from his British counterparts. When we first meet him, we also learn that he has been kept isolated in the "cooler" for a month — a place that also represents American exceptionalism in *The Great Escape* (1963). After his stint in the cooler, he joins the British and Canadian prisoners and goes along with their escape plan until just after the first escape. During a briefing about the escape, Norton is told that Albert mustn't be used again for at least a month, to allay enemy suspicion. Norton complains, but is ordered to "be patient." In the next scene, as the men are standing in the

yard at roll call, Norton tells Henry that he will not wait, and smugly notes that he will "go right through that wire" alone. This threat is tested later, when Albert's maker, Ainsworth (Anthony Steel), sells his chance at escape to Norton and Maddox (Jack Werner), the commanding officer, shuts it down saying that Ainsworth is just one man, but needs "to think of the whole camp," and that Albert is their way out, "not a ruddy prize on the black market." This decision spurs Norton to implement his own escape plan, despite Maddox's speech about the greater good of the camp. While everyone is at lunch, Norton speaks to Shultz, the German guard, about shutting down the lights at the wire surrounding the camp, and offers his chronometer in exchange for Schultz's help with his escape. Norton's move of trusting Schultz instead of his fellow allies aids in his isolation from the others and is proven foolish when Shultz betrays him, and he is killed trying to escape.

Norton's ultimate failure to be a team player after Maddox's warning is noteworthy. His willingness to use Albert for his own gain, but not for others' demonstrates his resistance to the camp community. And, while pieces of him produced Albert, he resists Albert's symbolism as one who represents all the prisoners and their collective resistance to incarceration. Albert, not Norton, is the central figure in the escape narrative because Albert is quite literally a composite creation, a dummy figure made up of bits of everyone. He represents more than one point of view and cannot be used for selfish purposes. His existence works to reproduce the camp space into one where the prisoners look out for one another, and Norton will not conform.

Lefebvre reminds us that "social space is produced and reproduced in connection with the forces of production (and with the relations of production)" (77). He says that "these forces, as they develop, are not taking over a pre-existing empty or neutral space, or a space determined solely by geography, climate, anthropology, or some other comparable consideration" (77). The

camp space is therefore dynamic, creating as it is created. Norton's belief in his exceptional

ability to escape all by himself, and his lack of contribution to the good of the camp as a whole,

results in death, which serves as his removal from the space's productive function. Lefebvre goes

on to suggest that the products of space can also be works of art, which Albert the dummy

technically is, and which allows us to consider this camp, too, an example of Soja's Thirdspace,

where reality and imagination serve to produce and reproduce the space accordingly. Thus, while

Cull notes that Norton's subplot is indicative of how "the POW movie became a perfect tunnel

through which the British could escape from the Americans" (289), it seems that in Norton's

case, the American removes himself from the group, and leaves the British to their work of

becoming an authentic body that can escape from the Germans.

Like *Albert, R.N.*, *The Colditz Story* also depicts themes of authentic Britishness and

deals with tensions between those with the same national affiliation before those imprisoned in

the camp work towards its reproductionas a more cooperative space. That is, while the British in

Colditz measure themselves against everyone else (and find everyone else lacking), they are also,

initially, quick to exclude and accept their own however they see fit. When Colonel Richmond

(Eric Portman) enters the camp for the first time, two British soldiers, Gordon (Richard Wattis)

and Cartwright (Ian Carmichael) note his importance as senior British officer and the somewhat

preferential treatment he receives. When Richmond is whisked off to speak to the commandant,

Gordon whines, "now where's he going?" "Off to speak to Matron, I'd imagine," Cartwright

replies, before adding that he bets the Colonel is "naffy," othering the Colonel as one socially

beneath them, despite his elevated rank.[3] Similarly, when Reid and Mac object to Richmond's

initial edict that they should avoid trying to escape, Reid notes, "silly old man ought to be

repatriated," and Mac responds that no one would want him. They also refer to him as "a ruddy

foreigner," echoing Henry's sentiments toward Joe in *Albert, R.N.* Even though we later learn that Richmond has an escape plan that would include everyone, for Reid and Mac, his apparent desire to remain in the camp negates his Britishness and makes him part of the increasingly international community of the camp. And so, despite Reid's and Mac's failure to recognize the "foreignness" shared by all the prisoners in the camp, they (temporarily) excommunicate Richmond from Britishness because he dares to see the perspectives of others. However, Richmond is ultimately the voice of reason, and pulls off the escape by bringing the different nationalities together as a united front.

But again, the space of the camp in this film is a place where those with "outside" practices of sociality can gain new and more equitable understandings of others. These spaces are carceral ones which are, in human geographer Dominique Moran's terms, spaces of incarceration that are "spatial, emplaced, mobile, embodied and affective" (*Carceral Geography* 1). As carceral spaces, these POW camps are formed through communal experience. They are, as Moran tells us, "social and psychological [constructions] of relevance both within and outside" (*Carceral Geography* 87). They foster sociality that — at least in the cinematic world — challenges historically- or ideologically-based ideas of national and personal identity. In *The Colditz Story*, the camp space fosters a sociality that forces Reid and Mac, and Gordon and Cartwright, to see a bigger picture beyond themselves and changes their long-entrenched notions of imperialistic Britishness.

We also see the breakdown of pre-war Britishness and the building of a more culturally diverse body through interrogating identities in the space of the camp in *Very Important Person*. This film delivers the same message that pre-war understandings of Britishness — and even of soldiering — will not survive in the postwar era, and that change is needed. After all, as old-

guard British as Sir Ernest Pease is, he does not even pretend to fit the film's depiction of what a British soldier should be, and he wears his uniform constantly, apparently more for prestige than anything else. This bid for respect extends to his refusal to shave his beard, and his subsequent joining of the Royal Navy, rather than the Royal Air Force, who would have made him shave it off.

For Pease, authentic Britishness looks like him, and not like the collective identity of the Royal Navy or the individuals who comprise it. Of course, this does not help ingratiate him with the other inmates of the camp. As in *The Captive Heart*, Pease's fellow prisoners are suspicious when they discover that he speaks German, and begin trying to figure out whether or not he is really British. But while Hasek in *The Captive Heart* is able to forge a new identity as a British man alongside his fellow prisoners, the gulf between Pease's understanding of Britishness and that of his fellows is huge. While the men in the POW camp ask him about bus routes and football teams — none of which the disinterested, upper-class Pease cares about — in order to gauge his Britishness, he responds by wishing to be asked the more generally applicable information that he has studied, such as what the petrol ration is, or the value of a meat coupon. Pease and his prison countrymen ultimately find common ground despite the unfamiliarity of Pease's brand of Britishness to the others' experience. Still, the film demonstrates the lack of comprehension between classes, and uses the camp space to bring them together. By virtue of proximity and the need for teamwork in the camp, the distance between British class knowledge is closed enough for this collection of prisoners to function as a group.

Cull notes that while *Albert, R.N.* "offered reliable suspense and English pluck" (283) and *The Colditz Story* "followed the now tried and tested formula of daring and ingenuity" (283), *Very Important Person* rehearses the clichés of the genre "to comic effect" (286). Stollery,

though, observes the comic doldrums these films tend to fall into, writing that *Very Important Person* takes "the humorous aspect of this film cycle to its logical extreme" (554). But beyond Stollery's and Cull's assessments of the ways these films follow the formula the genre is generally dismissed for being true to, I think the ways these films set up their protagonists as disagreeable prisoners inside a prison camp is fascinating, in light of the transformation they and the space undergo. Following Benedict Anderson's logic, the camp community is based on the real experiences of the past, but it must also contend and change with the present by creating new regulations based on the context of the camp itself. Those in the camp work toward making it a new version of England, a "cultural artefact" (Anderson 4) steeped in the context of war and national boundaries, while also navigated practically by those in it. Prisoners and guards enter with preconceived ideas of how things should be arranged, and yet these ideas change as the camp community changes.

To this point I have demonstrated how the prison camp experience encourages prisoners to adopt what seems to be a more authentic form of collective Britishness in *The Captive Heart*, *Albert, R.N.*, *The Colditz Story*, and *Very Important Person*. I will now delve more deeply into the production and reproduction of identities in British POW cinema and the interactions between the prisoners and the carceral spaces that contain them.

While the other prisoners in *The Captive Heart* quickly come to trust Hasek as an honorary Englishman, there is a fascinating scene in which Hasek seems to induct himself into Britishness by altering his body. When he realizes that he will need to write to Celia to maintain his ruse, and that his handwriting will give him away, he agrees with another prisoner that he needs "an alibi for using [his] left hand." While common sense might dictate that he simply lie to

Celia about an injury that has forced him to switch hands, Hasek is willing to undergo a process of violent injury and recovery to assert his 'Britishness' to the camp and beyond its borders.

Outside the barracks, Hasek approaches two other prisoners engaged in driving a fence post into the ground. A low-angle shot of Hasek shows his calm demeanor as he moves to replace the man holding the post. Shots of the soldier swinging the mallet are intercut with shots of Hasek looking down at the post he holds, gradually moving his hands upward as he steadies the post. Each beat of the mallet's rhythm affects Hasek, as his face increasingly betrays his fear. Finally, he slips his hand on top of the post just before the mallet finds its mark and, with the smashing of the mallet into his hand, Hasek is metaphorically fully initiated into the British ranks, having endured what we might see as a "war injury" that allows him to proclaim a British identity.

Boyce claims that Hasek's subsequently bandaged hand comes to "[represent] Redgrave's determination to continue at any cost" (55) and, while I agree that it represents Hasek's determination, I believe it also signifies his initiation into Britishness, almost as a voluntary hazing. He has been initiated into a new nationality through a choice to accept physical pain in wartime and maintain a stiff upper lip. Hasek's loss of function in his dominant hand serves as a physical reminder of his transformation from one person to another. The dead British soldier Mitchell's identity and Hasek's are broken down into pieces that ultimately produce a new kind of Britishness in the space of the prison camp.

Just as Hasek is in the midst of becoming the best possible version of an Englishman that he can fathom, he is also reproducing the camp space to facilitate this transformation. The fence post that was initially meant to segregate and restrict as part of the camp grounds — to mark a boundary of the camp — has been reappropriated to function as a part of Hasek's transformation

— a checkpoint on his journey to Britishness. The liminal space of the camp therefore represents, as Moran observes, a "transitive space, which although it may perhaps become for some a space of frustrated partiality, may also have a cumulatively transformative effect over time" ("Between outside and inside" 343). What is meant to be part of the inside environment of the camp is now directly responsible for Hasek's identity outside it, as it enables him to better pass as Mitchell, and to write convincingly in order to win Celia's heart.

We see prisoners breaking down and building up Britishness in *Albert, R.N.*, too. The awkward relationships and affiliations among the imprisoned allies are precisely why Albert, a dummy that prisoner/artist Ainsworth crafts to take the place of escaped prisoners during roll call, is so important to fostering cooperation and building a new community in the camp. Albert represents an "everyman" British soldier: he is made of pieces of each of the men's uniforms, bringing them together into one body, clothed in a British uniform. Albert is a whole created from an amalgam, and operates as a powerful signifier of how the disparate collective of men in the camp manage to forge a motley British identity from their multiple class and personal differences.

Albert becomes a symbol of the need for new ways of understanding British identity, not just in the camp, but beyond it. Ainsworth's escape plan is contingent on the men giving of themselves, blending in with one another. The idea is that after the men step outside the barbed wire to use the showers, one of them will stay behind, and Albert, its parts having been distributed among the men, will be quickly assembled and serve as the escapee's proxy, evening the body count as the men march back to their barracks, carrying Albert with them in order to have his lifeless body count as one of the actual (though now hopefully escaped) prisoners. After seeing Henry's rocky relationship with Joe, we can anticipate the men failing to work well

together. However, Albert's creation brings them together physically and ideologically, making them a united group. Like the camp body, Albert consists of several different pieces that can be assembled and disassembled as required. In order to make Albert look as realistic as possible, Ainsworth requests volunteers for hair, eyelashes, and eyebrows. This is a crucial part of Albert's creation, the disparate Allies coming together as part of one (literal) body, breaking off pieces of themselves to form Albert, and accepting him as a member of their ranks. When Albert is finally fully revealed, Ainsworth places him, dressed in full naval uniform, between two prisoners, and the men applaud with delight at Albert's realistic look.

As the men marvel at their new companion, each surmises what Albert's occupation might have been, treating him as an actual soldier with a past, present, and future (at one point Texas wonders if Albert will be left "holding the fort" once they're all gone). Albert therefore becomes a member of their group — one who also can never be "restored" to a previous national identity because the offerings of the other men to build him cannot be taken back. As the revelation scene comes to an end, Ainsworth notes as the camera cranes in for a close-up of Albert, that Albert is "Mr. Nobody and Mr. Everybody [...] the final product of the modern world."

As with Hasek, "looking British" is enough to make Albert a stand-in for the men in the camp, uniting them both through what he is and what he is not in relation to them. When Ainsworth is about to make his final escape attempt, Maddox takes him aside and thanks him for Albert, saying that Albert is "more than just paint and paper, you know. He's our refusal to accept all this." While "all this" could mean the prison camp, Maddox's words extend to include the war in general, in which case, Albert's border-defying composition certainly represents a

refusal to accept wartime roles and the imposition of national identity and side-taking on human interaction.

Like the space of the camp, then, Albert can also be considered a "cultural artefact" (Anderson 4), built from that which has been broken down, that is created and creates, aiding in the production and reproduction of space and identities. Albert manifests Ainsworth's imagination, and the camp becomes an art studio in which each prisoner can participate in Albert's creation. While German guard Schultz's vile demeanor always reminds us of the dangers of the prison camp, the men in the camp find solace in creating Albert, and contributing something of themselves in that space. The camp is therefore "socially produced," in Edward Soja's terms, "distinguished from the physical space of material nature and the mental space of cognition and representation, each of which is used and incorporated into the social construction of spatiality but cannot be conceptualized as its equivalent" (*Postmodern Geographies* 120). The camp is no longer just a camp, but becomes a space in which men can come together and create and leave with a different understanding of themselves and others, having incorporated others — including Joe, Jim, and, of course, Albert — into a more inclusive form of Britishness.

Opening wide the arms of Britishness in *The Captive Heart* and *Albert, R.N.* calls up Cull's observation of British POW cinema's "English style that emphasised the common man, eschewed professionalism and relied on improvisation and 'muddling through'" (282–283). This quality is certainly present in the films discussed here, and indeed, permeates the genre. However, Cull goes on to note that at the core of this style "was an English exceptionalism that held that the island possessed something special and distinct from the rest of the world" (283). And yet, the inclusivity we see in the POW films I discuss here suggests otherwise. *The Colditz Story* actually warns against British exceptionalism by introducing a community of continental

allies (and, of course, enemies) to put the British in their place. It begins by drawing us, along with Reid and Mac, further and further inside the fortress of the camp and closing the doors — and gates — to the outside world. While this smacks of Goffmann's 'total institution,' we soon see that the prisoners bring much of the outside in, and work together to get what is inside, out.

At one point, faced with a group of Polish prisoners who have stumbled upon the British prisoners' isolated quarters in *The Colditz Story*, British prisoner Harry Tyler (Lionel Jeffries), who clearly does not speak Polish, tries to communicate using rudimentary French, showing off his minimal language skills. Comically, one of the Poles immediately launches into fluent French, stumping Tyler and his compatriots. Mac, demanding to be included, turns and asks, "doesn't someone around here speak English?" When someone confirms that he does, Reid, looking relieved, notes, "good egg," bucking against the room's multilinguism with an English colloquialism, unintentionally making himself the butt of the joke and demonstrating the others' willingness and ability to include them in their community, even if the British cannot — or will not — immediately reciprocate. The British prisoners therefore enter the camp believing that they are self-sufficient, but in their condescention and demand to be catered to they look foolish, proving their insularity and their need to be included in the wider community.

British exceptionalism, in Nicholas Cull's sense, is troubled again in *Colditz* during an escape attempt, when a tunnel collapses on some hopeful British escapees as Reid and Tyler become distracted and neglect their watch as their compatriots struggle underground. As Reid pulls his men out, and calls to the others, suddenly, up pops one of the Dutch soldiers, an Ally in the midst of digging a separate tunnel in the same area as the British one, angrily shouting at Reid that the British have ruined their escape. The shot cuts to show one of the British soldiers in the tunnel, wrestling with what we assume is a Dutch soldier's leg. The two men struggle in the

earth, each hoping to make it out alive before suffocating.[4] They share similar motivations, plans, and executions, and yet these two focus only on their differences. Even the German guard who comes upon the scene mocks the prisoners for having two tunnels, and laughs uproariously at the Allies' lack of organization and communication. Of course, the placement of British soldiers at the tunnel's entrance to rescue everyone is certainly contrived, meaning that as hapless as the British soldiers may seem, they are still the heroes when things go wrong. Moreover, Richmond seems to be the one who ultimately organizes everyone, which suggests that only the British are capable of rallying the allies. However, this scene also clearly demonstrates the folly of attempting to police the borders of national identities — in the camp or otherwise. In this scene, the boundaries of the camp are breached by men who physically alter its terrain by digging an escape tunnel. And, as the men move ever closer to working together, they break down established identities to produce new, more cooperative ones as they change the camp's terrain.

We see this shift from British imperial exceptionalism to inclusivity in *Very Important Person*, as well. While Pease steamrolls fellow prisoners with his version of Britishness, he is, eventually, able to see their perspective and find common ground with them. After news of his escape is circulated throughout the camp as a ruse, the men leave the barracks for roll call, and the curmudgeonly Pease descends into the partially-dug tunnel to await their return. Concerned by the length of time Pease has spent underground, the men rush back and set him free, asking, as they do, if everything is "tickity boo." To everyone's surprise, Pease emerges confirms that all is indeed "tickity boo" before he catches himself, abashed by such common parlance. The verbal slip seems to result from his time spent in the earth of the camp space, and he emerges more willing to engage in community with his fellow countrymen. After this experience, he no longer wears his uniform jacket, and blends in more with the others, and the next scene shows him

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eating a meal that he has actually prepared himself, with the men of the camp, the event of sharing food drawing everyone together in community.

What we see in the scenes described above is a change in Britishness in the camp space; the prisoners begin to move more toward an understanding of each other, rather than clinging to the prejudices they entered the camp with. Lefebvre notes that social space "'incorporates' social actions," and that "from the point of view of [the subjects within it], the behaviour of their space is at once vital and mortal: within it they develop, give expression to themselves, and encounter prohibitions" (33–34). In these films, the British attempt to enact their accustomed roles of hierarchical power upon the space of the camp, claiming it as British territory, but the social and dynamic space of the camp renders these roles largely irrelevant. The social space of the camp chips away at the British soldiers' assumptions about their national identity and its related social power as they come to understand more fully not only where they have come from, but where they actually are and what they will be returning to once the war comes to an end. Britishness, through this process of discipline via international sociality, becomes a better version of itself, less hierarchical, and more open to new ideas of citizenship and new possibilities for social belonging.

The Captive Heart particularly exemplifies Lefebvre's theory of social space, and walks us through the ways characters develop and express themselves as members of the camp community, ditching their uniforms for more practical daily wear, and taking up hobbies to make this prison space their own. In one particularly illuminating sequence, Celia and Hasek write letters to one another, describing their circumstances, and we encounter two versions of England: the version animated by Celia's letter, where everything seems as stable and unchanging as ever, and the version animated by Hasek's, in which he describes how he and his fellow prisoners

have been building their own approximation of England in the camp, incorporating what is at hand. As a non-Briton, Hasek takes part in this re-imagining of England as a place where he too belongs. As such, Hasek's prison camp version of England is constantly in production, unstable and changing, and yet dynamic and full of life. Moreover, as we hear Celia's voice, we see the images she describes and gain access to Hasek's imagination of that space as it interacts with his reality, recalling Soja's concept of Thirdspace as a place in which the merging of reality and imagination creates "a distinct mode of critical spatial awareness that is appropriate to the new scope and significance being brought about in [Lefebvre's] rebalanced trialectices of spaciality — historicality — sociality" ("Thirdspace 57).

As Celia reads her letter in voiceover, we see a shot of the village square, complete with a thatched-roof house and a stone church flanked by army trucks, foregrounded by a white picket fence as we hear Celia's voice describing how "everything's changed, and yet nothing's changed." Celia's voiceover, which we hear as Hasek reads her letter, contributes to the imagined space of the camp, bringing Hasek's imagination to bear on the reality of his situation. Celia's description of English life animates Hasek's perceptions of her and her home and smacks of what Michel Chion calls an "umbilical web" if we consider Celia both as love interest and, as we see in the film, nurturing mother figure. For Chion, the mother's voice "originates in all points of space, while her form enters and leaves the visual field. [...] The voice could imaginarily take up the role of an umbilical cord, as a nurturing connection, allowing no chance of autonomy to the subject trapped in its umbilical web. Clearly when the voice is heard spearate from the body [...] it can play this role the most easily" (61–62).

If Hasek experiences a sort of "rebirth" as Mitchell in the space of the camp, what he imagines to be Celia's voice, illuminating images of Britishness, is guiding him through the

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world with his new British eyes, carrying him through this transition as he reads her letter. Even Chion sees the connections between the umbilical web and the POW genre, as he uses the example of *Grand Illusion* to describe a woman's voice on a record nurturing French soldier Maréchal (Jean Gabin) and "feeding him the necessary energy to carry him through the long captivity ahead" (62). It seems fitting, then, to apply this same theory to *The Captive Heart*. As Mitchell's wife, Celia is the foremost witness to the birth of Hasek's British identity. In building familiarity with Celia, Hasek is guided through their daily domestic life in a scene scored by light, playful music, and experiences his new identity vividly until the letter ends and he is brought back to the world of the camp.

And, while Celia's voice prepares Hasek for his new British life, Hasek's voiceover in his return letter allows Celia a glimpse not only of prison camp life, but of a happier marriage to a more attentive man, as Hasek creates for her an image of the transformative world of the camp. His bandaged hand in the shot's foreground marking his right of passage to Britishness, he describes life in the camp to her. The shot cuts to a profile of Stephen Harley (Derek Bond) playing the piano — a song played with a low, energetic tremolo introducing scenes of activity and productivity like gardening, construction, and arts and crafts throughout the camp. As the music continues, the shot cuts to one of the men gardening outside the barracks. Hasek says that the music tells of men "emerging from the twilight, turning their faces inwards from the wire, creating in miniature a world of their own." Not only does the camp garden connote ideas of hope and of growth, but it also suggests a degree of rootedness and of investment; these men are working the land with their hands for their own means. They are taking it for themselves, as land is always taken in war, but they are using the land for non-combative pursuits, and through its cultivation, approximating their homes.

The shot cuts to one of the men inside, sewing and trying on clothing as though creating a new uniform more appropriate to the identity he is forming in the camp. Hasek explains that the men "have come to terms with the present and have found it far from empty," and we then see shots of men engaging in the pursuits of comfort and creativity: Evans (Mervyn Johns) makes a doll as Horsfall (Jack Warner) works a plank of wood; another soldier hammers a photograph of King George VI to the wall, and still others engage in a boxing match amid a crowd of cheering supporters.

As Hasek's narration pauses, we see more quick shots of men enjoying a library, painting, learning lessons in anatomy, playing basketball, betting on horses, singing in a choir, and listening to music while gathered around a phonograph. The next shot shows a stage act: some of the prisoners, dressed in skirts, wigs, and be-nippled brassieres, sing and dance across the stage, as the audience responds with mirth. The scene's final shot is taken from the outside the barbed-wire fence, along which the camera pans as Hasek signs off, noting that each camp represents a "great sprawling [town] of 20,000 men, or hamlets of a few hundred, each a little piece of England."

And so, in both letters, the writers' voices escape the boundaries of their respective spaces and permeate the imaginative spaces in which Hasek and Celia hear one another. It is as if Celia enters the camp with her voice and releases Hasek from it, showing him around his new home. What's more, Hasek's voice convinces Celia that Mitchell is a new man, not the haughty and uncaring one she married, but rather, one who engages with and alters his surroundings for the better. Eventually, at the film's conclusion, these detached and distant voices and bodies are brought together, and, while Celia of course does not recognize Hasek's body when she finally meets him, she recognizes his voice, which she has imagined through his letters. Their ability to

imagine one another and a potential life together perforates the confined camp space and allows each to metaphorically cross its boundaries.

Moreover, while Hasek's letter credits those at home with the ability of those in the POW camp to carry on, the shots presented alongside the reading of his letter suggest that it is the camp prisoners making their own version of home, and their new sense of purpose in building it, that keeps them going. They are engaging in pursuits already familiar to them from their previous lives in England, but impossible to follow while in battle, thereby making the camp into their own country — their own "little [piece] of England" — to which they might creatively contribute. So, while outside the camp, Hasek steals an English identity by taking the papers of a dead man, inside the camp, he is given the opportunity to earn that identity through acts of imagination. In their exchange of letters, we see Hasek's abstract imaginings and concrete experiences of life compliment Celia's, in keeping with Soja's theory: "Everything comes together in Thirdspace: subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdiciplinary, everyday life and unending history" ("Thirdspace" 54). The film therefore uses the voiceover narration of written letters to convey a growing sense of connection between these two characters — a connection that takes place in a cinematic Thirdspace that is made possible by the prison camp.

However, while Soja's observation that "everything comes together" in Thirdspace rings true, he also reminds us that Thirdspace "does not derive simply from an additive combination of its binary [perceived and conceived] antecedents but rather from a disordering, deconstruction, and tentative reconstitution of their presumed totalization producing an open alternative that is

both similar and strikingly different" ("Thirdspace" 55). For experiences and identities to come together, as they do in these films, deconstruction must also happen. The prisoners in these films change and are changed by the nature of the camp space, and must, despite their various countries of origin, move forward as a collective body, represented by Albert.

This moving forward is not easy, though. *Albert, R.N.*'s Maddox says at one point that it is "so easy to let [the camp] become the reality and [home] the dream." Unlike Hasek's romantic description of his camp becoming a "little piece of England" in *The Captive Heart*, the men in Maddox's camp do not so easily adapt to prison camp life. In one scene, as the men lie in their beds, their voiceovers let us in on their thoughts — daydreams of what they cannot have. Bongo (Guy Middleton) longs for a steak; Joe focuses on his young, pretty wife; and Henry prays that they find patience with one another in their captivity, bringing a dose of reality back to the otherwise wistful nature of the scene. He also prays that they "may be restored" to those at home.

I find the use of the word "restored" here important. While it can mean "returned," in terms of being brought back; it can also mean "returned to a former condition." These men are dreaming of being restored to places and experiences they have previously enjoyed, and I agrue that to be "restored" to such conditions cannot truly occur. While I am aware of no scholarship on the nature of the character development we see in the men during their imprisonment in *Albert, R.N.,* Soja notes that living in a Thirdspace environment involves the disordering, deconstruction, and tentative reconstitution of one's "presumed totalization" ("Thirdspace" 55). Maddox, for example, will never be restored to his life before entering the camp, because it no longer exists. Just before Ainsworth's second escape attempt, Maddox shares that his second son died the week before, having been predeceased by his only brother. While much in the camp has changed, given Albert's presence and the men's renewed attempts at escape, the goings on in the

camp might well be considered reassuringly static in comparison with the men's impressions of upheavals in the outside world; in the relative routine of the camp, Maddox is able to put off confronting his sons' deaths, and seems to have made himself at home. He has posted family photographs on the wall and works at a desk covered by papers, as if at a familiar office. He says a few times that, while he sometimes wishes he could "have a go" at escaping, he will not attempt it. This makes him a fixture of sorts, part of the camp's structure, especially after the news of his sons' deaths. With the likeness of his wife hanging on the wall next to photographs of his sons, the camp provides memories of home as it was, without him having to experience it as it is now.

Similarly, we learn later in the film that Jim's home life has also changed, as he has a four-year-old son he's never met, and that Ainsworth is afraid to return home to his fiancée, Allison, as they have never met in person, and he worries that they will not have a happy life together after enduring the trauma of war. Thus, Henry's prayer for restoration illustrates Maddox's point that the men have a tendency to see home as a dream (whether good or bad), and the camp as their new reality. However, as Soja and Lefebvre's theories of space allow us to see, the camp is actually a combination of both dream and reality where real and imagined spaces exist within the same physical confines.

To this point I have demonstrated the ways these films advocate for and produce more inclusive forms of British identity through the prison camp space, and I have outlined the ways these camp spaces are also reproduced alongside this inclusivity. Another crucial aspect of production and reproduction — both of the spaces and the identities in them — is performance and the use of music and dress. Music, dress, and costume combine imagination and reality in

these films in ways that facilitate the breakdown and reimagination of once-starkly-drawn boundaries of gender as well as national identity.

In *The Captive Heart*, Corporal Horsfall takes it upon himself to unite the men, not under a national banner, but under one perhaps even better understood — a pub song. The scene shows the prisoners standing in the yard as an unseen German voice tries to intimidate them with national propaganda and what he calls a German "battle hymn." "*Wir fahren gegen Engelland"* ["We March Against England"] blares over the camp's loudspeaker and the camera pans across the British soldiers' faces as they stand, looking downcast and defeated. It stops on Horsfall, who, disregarding his rank, musters officers and enlisted men alike, saying, "come on, boys, let's give 'em our great battle hymn!" He then stands straight, shoulders pressed back, and starts to belt out "Roll out the Barrels." As the shot cuts to the loudspeaker, we hear the faint sound of other soldiers joining in from other areas of the camp. We then see the commanding officer, Major Dalrymple (Basil Radford), and Hasek. As Dalrymple sings, Hasek stands behind him in solidarity. Horsfall's choice of "Roll out the Barrels" as a "battle hymn" becomes an inclusive gesture—whether intended or not—because choosing a British military song — or even "God Save the King" — would have emphasized Hasek's exclusion from this scene of patriotic defiance. The men begin singing passionately and loudly as "*Wir fahren gegen Engelland*" fades out, and, in a high-angle crane shot from behind the loudspeaker, we can see the group of soldiers, indistinguishable from one another, united in their non-nation-specific commonality within, but also as a result of, the prison camp.

This is certainly not the first time a film about war has used performance as a metaphor for defeating the enemy — think of the defiant singing of *La Marseillaise* at Nazi personnel in both *Grand Illusion* and *Casablanca* (1942) — the anthem as a sonic establishment of spatial

control. After all, as Chion tells us, "A film's aural elements are not received as an autonomous unit. They are immediately analyzed and distributed in the spectator's perceptual apparatus according to the relation each bears to what the spectator sees at the time" (3). This scene stands out, our attention diverted to it, not only because these prisoners are obvious underdogs, but also because the song they sing together is not a wartime song; it is unexpected. While Horsfall refers to it as a "great battle hymn," anyone who knows it is welcome to sing it, as it is more reflective of community than of victory, or even of wartime effort. It is a party song, not a song intended to stir up patriotic fervor or battle rage. On the contrary, suggesting that anyone in the camp is about to "have a barrel of fun" is at least ironic, and perhaps even reinforces the space of the prison camp as one of performance — a place of both experience and imagination. Moreover, the song's insistence that "the gang's all here" does not specify national affiliation and instead includes everyone within the prison gates.

As we see in *The Captive Heart*, *Albert, R.N.* and *The Colditz Story*, signifiers of national identity like music and military uniforms are re-conceptualized within the adaptive space of the cinematic prison camp to reflect a new and more inclusive postwar understanding of British identity. If, as Boyce notes, the British were not united about anything during the war (2), performing — whether with songs, follies, or costume-like uniforms — provides unity in the camp that is sorely missing on the outside, and illustrates Cull's point that "Englishness [...] is the ability to move between identities for one's own purposes" (288). Human geographer Jennifer Turner's understanding of geographical boundaries as they apply to prison spaces is also helpful here. She writes:

> Lines on a map may be one way in which we make a boundary feel real, but that same
> boundary is also constituted by a set of objects and practices in space. [...The border] 'is

not merely a place of separation where differences are asserted; it can also be a place of exchange and enrichment where pluralist identities can flourish. One can have encounters there that cannot take place elsewhere.' (49)

Through their reconceptions of national signifiers like music, uniforms, and language, the cinematic prison camps I describe here certainly demonstrate the "exchange and enrichment" of flourishing pluralist identities in a way that cannot happen elsewhere in these films.

While music is one part of the performance of identities we see in cinematic prison camp spaces, the prisoners dressing up (or down) is also critical to the play of identity in these films. As I have shown, *The Captive Heart* and *Albert, R.N.* use uniforms as a means of inclusivity: Hasek puts on Mitchell's uniform to become a British officer, and Albert is dressed in a British naval uniform in order to blend in with the escaping Allies. But also noteworthy is British soldiers dressing as their German captors as a means of escape in *The Colditz Story*, *Very Important Person*, and *The Password is Courage*.[5]

While the ubiquity of this trope in British POW cinema might cause eyes to roll, I find it fascinating that in order for characters to reinforce their Britishness through escape and repatriation, they must often first discard outward signifiers of national identity and don their enemy's uniform. Furthermore, the cinematic prison camp space not only enables but encourages such drastic shifts in identity, exploiting or undermining the meaning of outward signifiers of national identity such as clothing.

That the bodies of prisoners of war should be so easily dis/enfranchised by wearing and removing military uniforms at will suggests the genre's attention to the malleability of wartime identity, and perhaps even its cynicism regarding the imposed binaries inherent in wartime side-taking. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler comments on the disruption of body-regulating

practices of cultural coherence (130), and argues that body demarcation is fluid, and "is not initiated by a reified history or by a subject" (130–131). She says instead that "this marking is the result of a diffuse and active structuring of the social field. This signifying practice effects a social space for and of the body within certain regulatory grids of intelligibility" (131). Considering this in terms of Lefebvre's and Soja's spatial theory, if the space of the cinematic POW camp counts as a social field that can be produced and reproduced by bodies that are also being produced and reproduced — and Lefebvre and Soja would say that it does — then the "regulatory grids of intelligibility" within each camp space must be fluid, rather than binary, and allow for the marking and remarking of bodies in that space.

The Captive Heart and Albert, R.N. show that British POW cinema invariably renders binary identities of enemy and patriot fluid, through the taking off or putting on of uniforms and women's clothing so that a prisoner can become someone else.[6] The Colditz Story demonstrates this when the once-staunchly British officers dress as Germans in order to escape. When Richmond forms an escape committee comprising members from all the different nationalities of prisoners, the borders of national identity — and the enemy/ally binary — are crossed when Richmond strikes a plan that involves dressing up as Franz Josef, a portly mustachioed German sentry. He pads his body and wears a facsimile of Josef's iconic mustache in front of the men, delighting in their reactions to his change.

This strategy appears again in Very Important Person when Jock (Stanley Baxter) impersonates Stamfel, the camp commandant, to facilitate Pease's escape, and the make up for the actor (who plays both Jock and Stamfel) is deconstructed and reconstructed on-screen, transforming Jock from ally to enemy before our eyes. While film scholar Graham Rinaldi notes that Baxter's "powers of imitation showed no bounds" (n.p.), his role demonstrates the facility

with which characters move between national identities in a camp space — something reinforced by Stamfel's eventual redemption and welcome into Britishness by his former wartime enemies at the end of the film. No identity, this film shows us, is permanent, fixed, and impervious to change and improvement—at least from a geo-political point of view.

Crucially, the spaces of these cinematic camps also allow for other performances of identity through the ubiquitous follies show or revue. Similar to the one in *Grand Illusion*, described earlier, these shows provide space within even the toughest cinematic prison camps for prisoners, and sometimes guards, to embrace the exotic, the absurd, and the conventionally feminine, putting aside their military identities if only for a while, much to everyone's delight. Through these performances, prison camp space is redefined, along with the bodies within it. Components of the space are rearranged to become a theatre with a cast of performers, producing a new social space alongside the existing one: stages are built, costumes are made, and the audience is a mixture of allies and enemies alike, laughing and enjoying the performance together. In these follies shows, gender and nationality — identifiers generally seen as stable, reliable, enforced, or inherited — are made fluid. These scenes of literal performance dramatize the dismantling of identity markers , and challenge the personal boundaries of the soldier-actors in myriad ways, often by including bawdy dance numbers or requiring same-sex embraces as part of the drag show. Butler notes that "The boundary of the body as well as the distinction between internal and external is established through the ejection and transvaluation of something originally part of identity into a defiling otherness" (133). The cinematic prison camp follies show therefore allows the participating prisoners to become "others" who in their performance sometimes defile traditional notions of femininity — with their lack of grace and abundance of facial stubble — but still relish the transformation. Their participation operates as a kind of

declaration of openness within the liminal camp space to new, albeit temporary, identities forged in wartime, where the expectations and demands of domesticity, nationalism, and masculinity do not apply in the same way. Moran notes in her discussion of the carceral that David Sibley and Bettina van Hoven "contested the Foucauldian regulation of prison space and the docility of bodies" and instead described "'spaces...produced and reproduced on a daily basis' (van Hoven and Sibley 2008: 1016), and the agency of inmates making 'their own spaces, material and imagined' (Sibley and van Hoven 2008: 205)" (3). Through the doffing and donning of uniforms— and their replacement with civilian clothes, enemy uniforms, or grass skirts and coconut bras — the camp community (at times, including the guards) is produced and reproduced, sometimes in sync with, and at other times in opposition to, the norms of gender and nationality.[7]

In *The Colditz Story*, the final escape plan involves the camp revue, which perfectly facilitates the escape. The theatre brings the Allies and their captors together for the common goal of entertainment and the camp space is reimagined through the proscenium arch that frames the stage, and through abounding costumes and shifting identities. More concretely, the revue provides the escapees the opportunity to hide under the stage and make their exit during the show. It also allows for one of the British soldiers to dress in German uniform to pull off an escape — to become "other" — in a temporarily acceptable way. The revue is entitled "Colditz Capers" — a name that brings all participants and spectators together regardless of their status as jailers or prisoners. The audience is comprised of soldiers from every group in the camp, including the commandant and his men. The curtain opens to reveal four British soldiers in kilts, berets, and sporrans singing "I belong to Colditz" to the tune of "I belong to Glasgow," playfully transferring their loyalty from Great Britain to the prison camp. While this is ironic, it

nevertheless speaks to how national affiliation is treated throughout the film, as something malleable, and less important than more personal forms of community. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler notes "that the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality" (136). Used in the cinematic prison camp context and considering that the camp space is produced and reproduced as social space, even as it produces and reproduces the bodies within it, the performances here suggest the fluidity of the soldiers' identities, being who they need to be from moment to moment. Or, as Soja's theory of Thirdspace suggests, "the emphasis [of spatial or bodily identity] shifts from an existential ontology (statements about what the world must be like in order for us to exist as social beings) to a more specific discussion of the epistemology of space (how we can obtain accurate and practicable knowledge of our existential spatiality" ("Thirdspace" 55).

As the men sing about Colditz as "only a dirty old prison camp, as the commandant knows quite well," the shot cuts to a close-up of the commandant, who laughs heartily at his inclusion. The commandant's laughter contrasts with his interpreter's (Leo Bieber) seriousness, and it seems to align him even more with the Allies. So, too, we see Priem (Denis Shaw), the guard standing at the back of the room, thoroughly enjoying the performance, much to the chagrin of another officer, who gives him a look of disapproval before moving to the front of the room and enjoying Cartwright and Gordon's soft-shoe comedy stylings, the final joke of which depends on their highbrow British accents and gets a big laugh.

During the revue, the wartime boundaries between enemy and ally are blurred. The entertainment reinforces no borders, and the film makes a point of showing characters like the commandant and Priem struggling to keep their pleasure to themselves, and giving in to the sight of costumed men dancing around on stage and joking about common experiences.

But, even as some of the Germans seem to align with the Allies in their unselfconscious response to the review, on the floor below, some of the allies, including Reid, Tyler, and Jimmy, have also adopted temporary Germanness by donning German uniforms, and even speaking smatterings of the language, in order to make their escape. This kind of pantomime adopted to achieve escape mirrors the show onstage. It is also reminiscent of Hasek's adopting of an English identity to escape who he was before entering the prison camp in *The Captive Heart* — the trappings of national identity cast off and put on as are a series of costumes in a play. The stage production is a decoy to distract the Germans, while the actual drama of escape plays out, and yet the escape is an extension of the stage production, suggesting that everyone in the camp is a player in the formation of a new European community in the camp.

The Password is Courage also demonstrates the malleability of identity through the changing of uniforms, and it especially makes use of converting old uniforms into civilian clothes —signifying the shift from the national symbolism of uniforms to the nondescript nature of the civilian clothes they become. Uniforms are reformed, their significance redirected, expressly to render the wearers anonymous Germans or citizens of a German-occupied territory — identities that must be supported by the papers and maps also being crafted to facilitate escape. This film and others like it undermine the sacredness of the national military uniform, and remind us that official clothing — like any other fabric — can be cut up and made into something new, a motley collection of materials, much like Albert in *Albert, R.N.* These uniforms can also be discarded, or temporarily replaced by women's clothing for follies shows. While combat can tear and rip a uniform, demonstrating its mere physical vulnerability, the uniforms we see in cinematic prison camps are often targets of complete symbolic makeovers, or even complete destruction. *Password*'s final scene emphasizes the altered significance of

uniforms when Coward and his friend Bill don their final disguises. But, rather than exchanging their British uniforms for German ones, they dress as firemen, ditching military national identity entirely in favour of civilian regalia. While this suggests that the best way to escape a POW camp is in the guise of a disinterested third party, Coward disrupts this possibility when he screams "heil Hitler" and layers an Axis identity onto his performance as a firefighter.

While these props and performances lend credence to the idea that these films are merely depictions of schoolboy antics that refuse to take the subject of war — and particularly the subject matter of World War II — seriously, their inclusion in these films offers the more provocative possibility to viewers that national and personal identities do not always align in war. Stollery and Cull would certainly agree that the films warrant more consideration, and Stollery calls for the reconsideration and reconfiguration of what he calls "the canon of British POW films" (540), as I do, despite their tendency toward schoolboy drollery. These films all suggest that no sense is to be made of war, and yet offer the space of the prison camp as one where a soldier works through who he has been and who he might be as a result of war. The camps in these films offer space where prisoners can break down their identities using costumes, sets, and dialogue to reimagine who they must be to survive. In doing so, they explore and experiment with connections that, while at times unconventional, can help them move forward beyond their camp experiences.

I argue in other chapters that we see the same thing to some degree in French and American POW cinema, but these postwar British films depict characters that are particularly quick to adopt disguises, as though belying claims to the postwar fracture of traditional Britishness and the cultural scramble for a viable national identity after victory. British prisoners

dressing up as their German antagonists might seem counter-intuitive, and yet in these films such manipulation brings the men together.[8]

Given the frequency with which identity performance occurs in these films, Britishness cannot be treated as a single category of identity in opposition to another, but must instead be considered situationally, as a relational or contingent feature of these characters. In these films, Britishness is, as Butler notes of gender, a performance with no ontological status keeping it in place beyond what constitutes it at any given time, which is in turn connected to what purpose the identity fulfills for the characters we see (136).

So far, I have demonstrated the ways in which British identity can be reimagined and recreated in these fictive camps in order to become more inclusive, and to embrace a new kind of British authenticity that would serve a nation heading into the Cold War, and how the space is transformed accordingly, as in *The Captive Heart* and *Albert, R.N.* I have discussed how British exceptionalism is challenged by these films, in favour of a new, more inclusive mode of Britishness, as seen in *The Colditz Story* and *Very Important Person*, and I have demonstrated how apparently reliable signifiers of national identity, like music and uniforms, can be reappropriated and revised, along with understandings of gender performance, as needed, as in *The Captive Heart*, *The Colditz Story*, and *The Password is Courage*.

With all of this in mind, and considering the transformative space of the prison camp as one that acts and is acted upon by everyone in that social space, I turn now to a more intentional discussion of the ways in which these films handle their German antagonists. Although German inclusion in the British experience is largely left unexplored in these films, the more general point they make of trying on identities to see which one fits, and of attempting to rebuild them from positions of want and disillusionment includes German guards, too. That is, while the

British soldiers attempt to bolster themselves with whatever will get them through the war, these films also allow German antagonists significant opportunity to explore their identities and to distance themselves as men or as soldiers from the abhorrent behavior attributable to the Nazi regime.

Wendy Webster writes that early in the war the earlier "distinction between Nazis and Germans increasingly faded from view and, after 1940, the possibility that Germans could be 'good Europeans' was seldom entertained" ("Europe Against the Germans" 966). Postwar British POW films re-engage with this distinction, taking care to separate German humanity from Nazi monstrosity. This, more than any other quirk of British POW films, demonstrates the complicated and untethered nature of the postwar British community: while there are many examples of inhumane Nazis in films set during World War II, that POW films in particular should provide a more nuanced approach to German captors is surprising, and speaks to the nature of the prison camp space as one that enables everyone to rebuild their wartime identities to accommodate postwar disillusionment. After all, if, as Sonya Rose notes, "war exaggerates the significance of the nation as a source and object of identity" (1148), the cinematic prison camp and its removal from combat's more necessary side-taking offers space in which new sources and new objects of identity can crop up, rendering nationality less significant.

Given Rose's point, it makes sense that these films break down wartime binaries and offer characters new understandings of identity that extend beyond what it means to be British. While all of these films deal in some way with Britishness, most of them also go out of their way to depict the humanity of some Axis characters with fairness and sympathy.

The Wooden Horse is a good example. While Stollery says that the film is "usually classified as the first in a distinctive cycle of 1950s British POW films that encapsulated the

particular version of English exceptionalism Cull describes" (545), it presents an extraordinary

scene that complicates the stark us-versus-them binary in keeping with that vision of national

exceptionalism. The 40-second scene involves two German guards inspecting a vaulting horse

used for the British prisoners' exercise after it has been put away for the day. We see one guard's

hand rapping gently on the horse, checking its integrity. The camera pans up to his face, which

looks intently at the top of the horse as his hands prod at the material covering it. Far from

suspicious, his face shows his fascination with and wonder at the horse.

He tells the other guard that everything is fine, and is left alone with the horse. The guard

moves into the corner of the room, his hands clasped together as he stares intently at the horse.

The hint of a smile crosses his face as he looks around to make sure he's alone. The smile grows

as he then spits into his hands, runs, and leaps over the horse lengthwise, his legs flying out on

either side of him. He lands with a loud thump, grinning, and we realize that all of the close-ups

on his intent and curious face during the Allies' exercise have led here. His earlier expressions

were not antagonistic, but wistful, a sign of his desire to participate, rather than to police.

A British film ostensibly about British identity and British solidarity, *The Wooden Horse*

goes out of its way not only to depict the German soldier's ability to do what the British soldiers

do, but also to demonstrate his humanity — he is having fun. The production and reproduction of

identities in the camp space includes him, too. While he is responsible for keeping the Allies in

captivity, he, too, is captive and takes a moment of private indulgence that makes him

momentarily sympathetic to us. The scene is completely unnecessary to the film's narrative, and

counters a traditional approach to prison camp space and personnel, but its inclusion situates *The

Wooden Horse* in a genre that, at least for the 20 years following the war, seemed less interested

in maintaining national boundaries than in playing with the narrative possibilities available in the imposed international communities of the prison camps.

This is not to say that all German soldiers in all British POW films were depicted as indifferent or unwilling participants in the Third Reich. Several characters serve as shocking villains in what have otherwise been fairly unobtrusive narratives. Anton Diffring's roles as Hauptmann Schultz in *Albert, R.N.* and Fischer in *The Colditz Story* come to mind here, as both are Axis soldiers who seem to want nothing less than to make their prisoners suffer. Still, while Schultz's fixation on Norton's U.S. Air Force-issued chronometer and his insistence on wearing it with his German uniform underscores his obsession with the spoils of war, in wearing it after he compels Norton to give it to him, he alters his German military appearance by decorating himself with a piece of American military gear. Moreover, both Schultz's and Fischer's cruelties are generally kept in check by war-weary commanding officers who tend to exemplify the troubled balance between duty and conscience.

Martin S. Dworkin argues in "Clean Germans and Dirty Politics" that these films tend not to stress "the humanity or dignity of the erstwhile enemy [...] in order to decry the total hatreds of the years of conflict, or to depict the futilities or stupidities of war" (524). He notes that rather than distinguishing between "Germans" and "Nazis," these films are more concerned with the distinction between "soldiers" and "politicians," noting that in doing so "issues of why [Allies] fought at all tend to be ignored, minimized, or deliberately despised as unworthy of military concern. Soldiers — or sailors — are the heroes, and politicians the villains; and political soldiers, of course, are no soldiers at all" (525).

I agree that there is an important distinction to be made between soldiers and politicians, but, as I have discussed above, that distinction is rarely made clear — or even dwelt on — in

British POW films. While *The Captive Heart* introduces a member of the Gestapo as Hasek's primary antagonist, he is given little screen time, no background, and fades away in favour of the repatriation narrative. The most politically motivated German character in the films I discuss here — *Albert, R.N.*'s Schultz — simply rises in military rank, and does not enter the arena of Nazi politics beyond fulfilling his military duty. He is instead depicted as a greedy and vindictive prison guard who is far less likeable than the commandant who outranks him.

Crucially, though, Dworkin is right that reasons for fighting the war in the first place are largely ignored in postwar British POW films. Instead, as Cull notes, British POW films — at least those of the 1950s — "looked back to a time of moral certainties." He writes that "The POW genre was also marked by a wish to avoid thinking about the experience of the Holocaust (288), and notes that the genre "allowed a flirtation with the world of barbed wire fences, and even atrocities without direct engagement" with the Holocaust, and that the silence was "broken only and somewhat imperfectly in *The Password is Courage*" (288). Thus, despite brief references to concentration camps in *Password*, and *The Captive Heart*, any references to Nazi practices beyond those in the camps are noticeably absent. Rather, their ostensible wartime purpose assumed and/or swept hastily under the rug, prisoners in these films represent the more pressing dilemma of determining British identity in a postwar Europe.

Of course, a more obvious factor in some of the more generous depictions of British captors is the Cold War and West Germany's entrance into NATO in 1955, days after American, British, and French forces ended their military occupation. Still, though, this would not have been a factor in either *The Wooden Horse* or *The Colditz Story,* given their pre-1955 releases.[9] Further, by the time *Password* was made in 1962, the Eichmann trial was barely over, and, recalling Cull's words, "Nazi atrocity now moved to the fore of public discussion of the Second

World War" (287), suggesting that *Password* marked the end of the identity crisis in the postwar British POW genre and made way for a different discussion.

In the postwar era, though, the glimpses of Axis humanity that we see are rooted in the communal space of the cinematic camps and the presentation of identity as subject to change and re-formation in these carceral communities. After all, as I have noted, while the Axis characters clearly have power over their British prisoners, they too are confined to the camp, and are also subject to the identity politics found there, which imbue the camp's spatiality with the new possibilities of Soja's Thirdspace.

Film critic Anne Campbell Dixon says something similar in her review of *Albert, R.N.*, when she writes, "No difficulty here about defining a theme or working up sympathy for this character or that. The camp does that for you" (*The Daily Telegraph*, October 10, 1953). I offer that "this character or that" can apply to both the prisoners and their captors. Both *Albert, R.N.* and *The Colditz Story* depict camp commandants (both played by Frederick Valk) who are intentional about treating their British counterparts as equals. In *Albert, R.N.*, when summoned to the commandant's office after a British escape attempt, Maddox, the British commanding officer, has a conversation with the commandant and asks if the commandant ever tried to escape. The commandant chortles and exclaims, "I did! Five times, I tried." The two men connect over shared histories of imprisonment, and we see the commandant as a victim of the war just as much as Maddox is.[10] While scenes like this show some modicum of understanding between British and German counterparts, *The Colditz Story*, and later, *The Password is Courage*, actually depict instances of unjustified British prejudice toward the Axis soldiers, and, at times, even morally superior Axis soldiers, which urge the British characters toward better and more communal conduct. Campbell Dixon's comment is therefore applicable to all of the British

POW films I discuss here, as the space of the camp does indeed foster sympathy for the most unlikely of characters.

Not only do British POW films bring British exceptionalism to light, the relatively high earnings of these films at the box office (Webster, *Englishness* 89), and their production company backing, also suggests that the British audience — at least in the 1950s — was ready to reconsider their imperialist past in the wake of their pyrrhic victory, especially in the context of Cold War allegiances. Martin Marcussen et al tells us that during the Cold War "the élites in [Britain, Germany, and France] collectively shared an 'Other,' communism and the Soviet Union. Moreover, British political élites have continuously considered 'Europe' as the friendly 'out-group'" (616), suggesting that, while British isolationism remained in the postwar period, there was no wish to alienate those who were, like the British, against the Soviet Union.

The space of the cinematic prison camp reflects this careful treading by showing British prisoners mingling with Continental "others", and extending an olive branch of sorts to their new allies while experimenting with performances of British identity. While escape plots formed the backbone of most British POW films, new identity politics that would enable the British to define themselves in terms of the new, postwar world order were already apparent onscreen, in these depictions of various Europeans gathered together in the prison camps. Even fantasies of home are coloured by the world of the camp, which offers space for the British to consider who they are in relation to the wider European community. The subtle and not-so-subtle ways these films depict imperialist or isolationist Britishness as dangerous, ignorant, or mad, and as something that must come to a head in the camps, suggests that the postwar period in Britain was one in which old experiences of national identity had to make way, first for new definitions of

what constitutes British character and then, throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, for ways in which that British character could be part of Cold War-era Europe.

I return once more to *The Captive Heart*, as it revels in the loosening of national boundaries to accommodate new bodies and to create new relationships that serve to expand the shrinking British Empire. Michael Boyce notes that *The Captive Heart* addresses postwar Britain's need for middle-class males to continue to show the dutiful, stiff-upper-lip masculinity of films made during World War II" (54). It calls for change on national and personal levels. Hasek's partnership with the British, and his relationship with Celia toward the end when she knows and loves him as Karel Hasek, suggests that Hasek is a character who can take on what those born British can't. His fluent German helps the British officers get the supplies that they need, and his love for Celia far surpasses that of the brutish Geoffrey, whom Hasek outdoes as an English gentleman. Hasek ushers in a new form of Britishness — one of spirit rather than birth, and one that will animate what was, both during and after the war, divided by such social determinants as rank and status. This new Britishness could only be forged in the crucible of the prison camp as lived space, taking both perceived and conceived notions of England and putting them together in the person of Hasek, reinvigorating approaches of spatial knowledge "with new possibilities heretofore unthought of" ("Thirdspace" 56).

Throughout this chapter I have demonstrated the ways in which *The Captive Heart* and other films I've detailed here alert us to what postwar Britishness should be. The creation of these cinematic identities is both a seeming testament to peace and cooperation, as in *Albert, R.N.,* and the movement away from imperialist attitudes, as in *The Colditz Story* and *Very Important Person*. And, in each of the films discussed in this chapter, and maybe especially in *Very Important Person* and *The Password is Courage*, revised Britishness is also presented

through the imperative for British soldiers to slough off any physical indicators of British identity and instead clothe themselves to resemble anyone else, including their captors, indicating that for one to exert one's national identity through escape, one must first embody someone else's.

The cinematic prison camp space allows for all of this. It provides prisoners the space and materials they need to change — not only to escape, but to learn important lessons about who they are in relation to others. But this provision it is consistently produced and reproduced through the prisoners' lived experiences there. From building sets for revues on it to digging tunnels beneath it, from planting gardens to connecting with wartime enemies, the space of the camp, and its constant reproduction, is essential to breaking down old wartime identities and rebuilding new postwar ones.

So, while Cull suggests that British POW films "allowed the war to be remembered according to old notions of Britishness, un-encumbered by events on the battlefield" (287), I suggest the camp spaces actually make way for new forms of Britishness. And, while Cull situates these old notions in boarding school stories, which are full of antics similar to those in *Password* and *Very Important Person*, as well as those in *The Wooden Horse* and *The Colditz Story*, Stollery warns against seeing them as only boarding school narratives, and I suggest that, while drôle, the boarding school narratives found in these films at least necessitate the idea of graduation, even if the shift is from World War II to the Cold War.

This obviously began cautiously and became more prevalent in the later 1950s, culminating in the early 1960s with *Very Important Person* and *The Password is Courage*. And yet, despite Ramsden's observation that by the mid-1950s war films were meant as an ego boost to an economically suffering Britain (59), the careful anti-imperialist sentiments seen in POW

films like *Colditz* suggest that in addition to bolstering British confidence, British POW films seem also to be about the process of Britain "growing up" after the war, and attempting to determine its new identity in light of an old one.

While each of these camps remain Anglocentric havens for white masculinity, they are also reformed (and reforming) spaces. They are built within the social and psychological construction of the carceral, not in opposition to the outside world, as Goffman's 'total institution' would have it, but comprised of a combination of dream and reality that insist upon more open concepts of community that transcend transgressed borders and allow for more cosmopolitan "pieces of England."

1. While Redgrave's presence as a leading British actor might promote Hasek as a man with laudable British values, it also serves to put a familiar — and trustworthy — face on the culturally unknown and the historically wronged. Cultural historian Wendy Webster's assessment of Czech-British relations in *Night Train to Munich* (1940) offers an appropriate study to parallel here, and suggests that positive relationships between Czechs and Britons may serve as a *mea culpa* for past dealings. She claims that, "in showing Britons protecting and aiding Czechoslovakians the film obscures the prewar history of British-Czechoslovakian relations, particularly the Munich agreement, which conceded Hitler's demand for the annexation of Czechoslovakia's border regions by the Third Reich" ("Europe Against the Germans" 964). Since we already recognize Redgrave's face as British, which might, as in *Night Train to Munich*, deny "the insularity used to justify the Munich agreement" ("Europe Against the Germans," 964), the film nevertheless asks us to trust that Hasek's story is true, and that he is deserving of his welcome into the British fold.

2. See Chapter Three of this dissertation.

3. According to John Ayto, Chief Etymologist of the Bloomsbury English Dictionary, the phrase "naff off" first appeared in the 1950s. He writes that, "functionally, it is a euphemism for "fuck off" (345), and that it did not stand in for "unstylish," "unfashionable," or "tasteless" until 1969 (345). Ayto notes possible antecedents might include "niffy-naffy," meaning 'stupid,' "naffin" and "naffhead," meaning 'idiot,' and "nyaff," meaning 'unpleasant person' (345). But, given Cartwright's offhand comment that he "bets" the Colonel is naffy, rather than simply stating it as fact, it is possible that another etymology is the best fit for this curious scene. Ayto writes that "alternatively ["naff"] could come from "naf," an old backslang reversal of "fan" in

the sense [of] 'female genitals'" (345). This last meaning suggests that, according to Cartwright, Richmond is not even a man, or, if a man, an effeminate man whose identity, according to British law at the time, could be construed as illegal. This changes Gordon's and Cartwright's seemingly comic remark to one of deep and unprecedented antagonism toward their countryman. Of course, any assumption of Richmond's sexuality here is ironically mirrored in a subsequent scene in which Gordon and Cartwright perform in the camp revue together. They dance closely, perfectly in step with one another. One wears a top hat and tails and the other a fur and a boater hat, seemingly enjoying a somewhat dandified existence in the camp. Moreover, that the two are never apart suggests that they are dealing with their own identity politics, potentially attempting to conceal their own coded unbelonging by casting fleeting suspicion on their military superior.

4. A clear metaphor for the prison experience as a whole.

5. While dressing as others was done in Prisoner of War films from World War I, and while it continued to be used in American films like *The Great Escape* and *36 Hours*, dressing as the enemy was certainly most commonly seen in post-World War II British films, as opposed to the post-World War II French and American films I discuss in this dissertation.

6. After all, prison camp follies shows seem to require the men to dress as women, marking the practice as socially acceptable, while a similar practice outside the camp space would likely meet with fear and contempt.

7. *Very Important Person* features the production of a proscenium arch that showcases the prisoners dressed as French can can dancers. The existence of a proscenium arch in the prison camp denotes the theatrical potential of the space and provides the opportunity for whomever occupies it to change at will.

8. *The Password is Courage* manipulates identity even more flippantly when Coward, having escaped from his camp, hides in a barn also occupied by German soldiers. When he falls asleep, the Germans assume he is wounded and take him to a German hospital, where he is awarded the Iron Cross before he is discovered and flees again. While Coward's receipt of the Iron Cross is touted as a comic device, it is the first of the film's many examples of national identity as a matter of performance, rather than of birth or upbringing.

9. Moreover, in his discussion of combat film *The Longest Day* (1962) and Darryl F. Zanuck's clement presentation of German soldiers, Stephen E. Ambrose points out that "the refusal, in June 1994, to allow the Germans to participate in the 50th anniversary celebrations of D-Day suggests that Zanuck offered a greater forgiveness in 1962 than what proved possible thirty years after the film was made" (430).

10. Similarly, in *The Colditz Story,* the commandant suggests that he and Colonel Richmond talk "man to man," to which Richmond reluctantly agrees. This offer suggests the commandant's effort to equalize the situation, and reminds us that both are confined to the camp, despite enemy/ally distinctions. The commandant then confesses that he, too, was a POW during World War I, and understands Richmond's position.

CHAPTER TWO
Raising the rifle butt: French postwar identity and the new pessimism

In 1945, after the liberation of France, Albert Camus noted the remnants of his tattered

country and mused, "the hatred of the killers forged in response a hatred on the part of the

victims…. The killers once gone, the French were left with a hatred partially shorn of its object.

They still look at one another with a residue of anger" (Judt 35). This "residue of anger" was

particularly felt between veterans of the world wars, especially given First World War veterans'

accusations toward those taken prisoner during World War II. Rather than acknowledged for

their sacrifice, World War II veterans were regarded as "knights of the raised rifle butts," and

their imprisonment equated to surrender ("Shorn Women" 60). Wendy Webster tells us that

"Prisoners-of-war could be celebrated as heroes through their subsequent resistance activities, as

in *Les Démons de L'aube*, but returning prisoners-of-war were not portrayed in French film until

1949 in *Retour à la vie* (Return to Life)" ("Shorn Women" 60). She goes on to observe that "The

contrast between the speed with which resistance narratives were made and the reluctance to

screen stories about returning prisoners-of-war suggests the extent to which filmic military

honours after 1944 were distributed mainly to those who had engaged in clandestine activity"[1]

("Shorn Women" 60).

Webster's work on the treatment of returning prisoners of war contextualizes Bresson's *A

Man Escaped* (1956) and Renoir's *Le caporal épinglé* (or, *The Elusive Corporal*, 1962) — two

films that reflect deep social dissatisfaction with postwar France, and which I consider essential

to POW cinema scholarship. I hasten to clarify here that the films discussed in this chapter are

not genre films, in contrast to so many of those made in the UK during this period, and explored

in my first chapter. Rather, Bresson's *A Man Escaped* and Renoir's *Le caporal épinglé* appear

here, as I have noted earlier, because of how these particular auteurs treat space and spatiality in the POW camps in which their respective prisoners are confined. Both of these films demonstrate a profound sense of loss about national identity, and both feature characters who, once they are prisoners, fashion identities that are not reliant on national affiliation by making the prison space around them their own. While certainly less boisterous than the British films I have discussed earlier, and less idealistic than the American films about POW camps, these French films focus on the ambiguities of what identity (man, soldier, ally, enemy, citizen) stands for within the spaces of the camps and tend toward depictions of isolated individuals cut off from their national communities.

I argue that these portraits of isolation reflect deep feelings of displacement in postwar France. Germany's occupation of France in 1940 meant that those fighting for France before it fell, and who were hoping for repatriation, would return to a country very different from the one they had left. After the war ended, France's national identity was in shambles, and animosity divided those who were picking up the pieces. This is, perhaps, especially gutting, considering that feelings of belonging and of community were, as Margaret Butler tells us, "fundamental to Vichy ideology" (7). Marshall Pétain, the head of France's Vichy government, tied his ideology of French community to a connection with French soil, and to the pastoral. "Rural literature," Butler writes, "praised the noble *paysan* who worked the honest earth. Films like *Monsieur de Lourdines* (1943, Pierre de Hérain) returned dissolute young men to their rural roots, and in *La fille de puisatier* (1940, Marcel Pagnol), Vichy's pro-natalist policy and familial stability were satisfied within a rural setting" (8).

Considering the pastoral provenance of so many wartime films made under the Vichy regime, and given the historical treatment of returning prisoners of war that Wendy Webster

describes, and on which I will elaborate later, French postwar POW cinema seems to respond to wartime cinema by clearly demonstrating the shift from family stability and the surety of allegiance to the instability of that identity once one is inside the barbed wire or thick walls of the prison camps these films depict. That is, in these films we can detect the presence of what Gavin Lambert calls the "new pessimism" of French cinema, which can in turn be used to dissect the Vichy pro-natalism of the war years, and also to convey the period's dissatisfaction with fragmented postwar France. Lambert notes that the "disturbed and uncertain conditions" of the early postwar years "have no doubt provided the main reason for a preoccupation in the new French cinema with actual, immediate situations, with films whose tendency towards the specific seldom gives that melancholy after-feeling of 'life going on,' so characteristic of earlier Carné and Renoir" (8).

While made some years after Lambert's observation, *A Man Escaped* and *Le caporal épinglé* respectively convey pessimistic attitudes toward individual and national identities as they have been affected by the war, and each film uses the space of the prison camp as a foundry of sorts, to burn away more nationally-centred ideas of community in wartime, and to re-forge individual ways of understanding one's place in the postwar world. My aim in this chapter is to demonstrate through close readings how characters in each film use the spaces of their respective POW camps to build their own worlds, affected, but not ultimately determined, by national affiliation or military obligations.

Because I am working with only two films in this chapter, I will discuss them one at a time, beginning with *A Man Escaped*. I will move through a discussion of the protagonist, Fontaine's (François Leterrier), experience in the camp space, beginning with his relationship to that space and how he works both with and against the spaces in which he finds himself. I will

then highlight his relationships to others in the camp, and finally, I will describe Fontaine's reproduced identity as a result of his camp experience. In my discussion of *Le caporal épinglé*, I will discuss le caporal's (Jean-Pierre Cassel) somewhat fickle approach to the camp space before delving into Ballochet's (Claude Rich) more nuanced approach and the loss and reclaiming of his sense of self.

I will show that while each film provides hope for escape from a prison camp, each also presents its prison camp as a space or community that inmates might shape according to their own allegiances — to themselves, to others, or to ideals. Characters in each film escape the identities they had before being imprisoned and refurbish themselves and their surroundings to suit their needs. Because of this, the preparations taken to escape are depicted as far more important than what these characters undertake after their escapes from the camps. Moreover, the films' depictions of changing loyalties and increased emotional isolation experienced by their respective characters parallel an already-broken national community and the rejection of prisoners of war as part of the postwar reparations. Thus, *A Man Escaped*, and *Le caporal épinglé* shoulder the burdens of post-war France, even in their wartime settings, and reflect the disjointed and disillusioning process of rebuilding a nation.

Michel Foucault's thoughts on prison spaces are useful here, as is his understanding of "docile bodies" subject to the panoptic gaze of their captors. Both of the films I discuss in this chapter present characters who flirt with docility as the result of their capture, and yet through their docility they find the strength to resist their captors in unexpected ways. They delve further into the camp's liminal space to create private sanctuaries that they control, all the while acting in accordance with camp expectations. While in *Discipline & Punish* Foucault refers to those in prison as "criminal" and "delinquent," his theories about prison spaces creating delinquents as

"institutional products" (301) can be easily applied to my work on POW camps, and even to the prisoners' "delinquency" from their national affiliation. *The Order of Things* will also help me to discuss the ways in which these films depict prisoners who aim to establish a new order, beyond the broken nation that simultaneously claims them as citizens and denies them as failures.

Edward Soja lays the groundwork for my understanding of the prison camp as social space that can be produced and reproduced as it produces and reproduces those in it. Both *A Man Escaped* and *Le caporal épinglé* involve prisoners who physically transform camp spaces according to their own needs. These transformations allow the prisoners to increase their distance from Frenchness, which is in the spirit of Soja's assertion that "In the context of society, nature, like spatiality, is socially produced and reproduced despite its appearance of objectivity and separation" (*Postmodern Geographies* 121). Substituting "identity" for "nature," the prison camp space in these films serves as a society in which prisoners' identities undergo significant, and at times unexpected, change. In conjunction with Soja, I also find Henri Lefebvre's work useful here, as both engage with trialectic thinking that helps me to see the prison camp space as one that is necessarily "Other."

A Man Escaped and *Le caporal épinglé* support Margaret Butler's argument against the critical sentiment that French postwar films avoided present-day realities and that 'quality' cinema at the time prized appearance over substance, and her work on French cinema history will be useful for discussing these films in their historical and national context. Gerald Mast and Bruce F. Kawin suggest that the postwar French film "sprang from the filmmaker's stylistic concern with the way a camera can capture reality" (376). While French cinema's postwar aesthetics are certainly noteworthy, and while critics like André Bazin have praised them for essentially continuing the "authentic French tradition" of the interwar period, some productions

managed to use appearance as an entry point to substance, which resulted in works that starkly reflect postwar feelings of isolation and non-belonging within wartime settings. Butler's claim that "French post-war cinema very decidedly evoked the mood of its time, producing films which celebrated ordinary life and some which, as Gavin Lambert put it, had a 'new pessimism'" (10) is thus compelling.

French cinema scholar Colin Davis's criticism of *Le caporal épinglé* will also help me to situate these films not as a continuation of tradition, but as a direct response to the expectation of tradition. Davis brings in Henry Rousso's study of the "Vichy syndrome," which corroborates the complications in postwar France, categorizing the period into different phases, including one of repression from 1954–1971, and, as Colin Davis notes, in Rousso's account "the trauma of the Occupation was made particularly acute by the internal divisions which became manifest at the time" (Davis 45). Leah D. Hewitt's *Remembering the Occupation in French Film* is important to my reading of *Le caporal épinglé*, and her film and media scholarship regarding *Le caporal épinglé*'s cinematic context lines up well with Wendy Webster's work.

Film and philosophy scholar Brian Price offers important criticism of *A Man Escaped* and helps me explain how Bresson's protagonist deconstructs and reconstructs the camp space as required. Jean Douchet's criticism will also be helpful in my discussion of these films and his assessment of the film captures the pessimism that Gavin Lambert discusses in "French Cinema: The New Pessimism."

As I have already shown, social and cultural historian Wendy Webster's scholarship is useful for contextualizing my work. French historian Georges-Henri Soutou's contextual knowledge is also helpful. Soutou notes that World War II and its consequences were "defining experiences for the French during the 1944–66 period" (35). He also allows that France's

participation in the Cold War as well as "the colonial wars in Indochina and Algeria, the beginning of European integration, the Suez crisis in 1956, de Gaulle's quest for independence and a new world role after 1958" (35) were all influences on the films made during that time.

Naturally, the films I discuss here will be laden with the influences of each of these major events in French history, and yet I suggest that these films return us to the setting of World War II to demonstrate how French individuals become more self-sufficient and less communally driven, even in the middle of a war that insists upon allegiance to borders, uniforms, and languages, and even after France's defeat and fracture. Thus, it would seem that at least some filmmakers traced the beginnings of the "new pessimism" back to the war itself, and to the complicated nature of French identity after the fall of France. Colin Davis makes a similar point in his article "Renoir and the Vichy Syndrome: *This Land is Mine*, *Carola* and *Le Caporal épinglé*" when he argues that "Renoir's works about the Second World War are powerful and distinctive interventions in the politics of memory, as they open wounds which go right to the moral core of wartime and post-war Europe" (45). While Davis provides much insight concerning *Le caporal épinglé*, his notice of its use of individual force amid "evidence of [France's] still recent military humiliation" (54) can also apply to *A Man Escaped*. Not only are these films stylistically important, they also contribute significantly to the POW genre by depicting soldiers who become ever more divorced from Allied wartime ideals.

A Man Escaped follows Fontaine, a captured member of the resistance. As Fontaine moves through prison camp society, he uses his isolation to explore his individuality, and his silence and reflection (available through his voice over) suggests inner spaces of both determination and despair that we never have full access to, but that drive his actions. His efforts to escape also serve to form the beginning of a new life free from national ties. Throughout the

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film we see Fontaine move through his experience, forming relationships and gleaning insight and information that he then applies in his solitude as he refashions various tools that will aid his escape. His time in the prison is not passive, but active, as the work he does to plan his escape directly coincides with the work he does to divorce himself from his national identity.

Fontaine's achievement of freedom through isolation and his transformations within the space of the prison camp form a lens through which to view Jean Renoir's *Le caporal épinglé*. *Le caporal épinglé* features a group of friends: le caporal, the film's pseudo-hero, Pops (Claude Brasseur), the pragmatic voice of reason, and bespectacled and mousy Ballochet. An unlikely group, considering their class differences (le caporal comes from an affluent background while the other two come from more humble means), the friends are imprisoned and navigate various prison camps together and apart from each other. While le caporal's goal is to return to his life in Paris, the other two struggle with the idea that they have little to return to. All value their relationships with one another, but le caporal is often ignorant of his own privilege as well as the others' plight and strives to escape even as Pops and Ballochet find comfort in the various camp spaces they occupy.

From the beginning of *A Man Escaped*, we see France in ruins. The opening credits play over the cracked and crumbling concrete walls of the Lyon-based prison camp and emphasize the ways the literal and figurative foundations of French life have been destabilized. The shot fades into a close-up of handcuffed hands resting on their corresponding knees. The palms of the hands face upwards before rotating downward. The left hand gracefully drifts, and the camera follows it to the handle of the door of the car that we — and the operator of the hands — seem to occupy. A pinky finger juts out to tease the door handle, pushing it down ever so gently before the hand pulls back, the movement contained and secretive.

The camera tilts up to reveal the hand's owner, a young man whom we will come to know as Fontaine, a captured member of the French resistance. He sits in the car, jammed against another man who glances at him, but does not otherwise move. Fontaine looks down at the other man's hand, which, the camera shows us, is cuffed to someone else's. The physical joining of these two strangers draws attention to Fontaine's separation from them and heralds his continued isolation over the course of the film. While the prisoners handcuffed together must act and move together, Fontaine relies on and is responsible for only himself. This is his struggle throughout the film as he balances the safety of isolation with the loneliness he feels from it.

In the car, we adopt Fontaine's point of view as he stares out the windshield of the car from the back seat, looking intently at the potential roadblocks ahead. When a cart on the road promises to slow the car, Fontaine's hand moves gingerly toward the door handle once again, as his eyes stare straight ahead, silently willing the car to stop. Instead, it merely swerves, and Fontaine's hand returns to his knee. He keeps trying, though, and finally a streetcar blocks the road, forcing the car to stop. Fontaine bursts out of the car and runs. Instead of following him, though, we remain in the car, facing the man who was sitting next to him. Importantly, the man stays still, his eyes fixed ahead as though Fontaine were still there. The camera remains trained on him as we see movement outside the car, and a recaptured Fontaine being led back. As Fontaine is returned to his seat, the man continues to stare straight ahead in blatant non-acknowledgment of his fellow prisoner.

Through its treatment of Fontaine's isolation and resourcefulness, and its awkward regard for comradeship, this scene sets the "every man for himself" tone of the film that Fontaine navigates within the prison camp. The distant regard that these prisoners show for one another is not seen in British or American POW cinema and emphasizes not only the downtrodden isolation

of French prisoners of war, "evoking a humiliating period in the recent past" (Butler 123), but also a defeatist and largely unromantic view of *le résistance* as an ineffective tool against German aggression. And, while I have mainly used Foucault's post-structural approach in my work here, *A Man Escaped* also, paradoxically, fits well with the philosophical backdrop of French existentialism as the film presents the Sartrean view that existence precedes essence and that we are responsible for creating ourselves out of our own choices. That is, Fontaine needs to leave behind ideas of what a member of the French resistance should be, and instead become the man he wishes to be by securing his escape. According to Sartre, we are each "*abandoned* in the world, not in the sense that [we] might remain abandoned and passive in a hostile universe [...], but rather in the sense that [we] find [ourselves] suddenly alone and without help, engaged in a world for which [we] bear the whole responsibility without being able [...] to tear [ourselves] away from this responsibility for an instant" (710).

Thus, with Sartre and this opening scene in mind, the film's subsequent scenes draw attention to how Fontaine navigates the prison space as one that facilitates his isolation, and, ultimately, his disassociation from wartime Frenchness. The opening scene also provides insight into his narrated thoughts as he is roughly tossed into his cell: "I found myself alone." While this sentiment obviously denotes his return to solitude after leaving the resistance, the car containing the other prisoners, and the guards who have evidently roughed him up, it also recalls Sartre's words, "I find myself suddenly alone and without help" (710) and suggests that the solitude of his cell is what allows him to re-discover himself as an individual, free from outside responsibilities or allegiances.

François Truffaut has noted that "[it] isn't courage that incites Fontaine to escape as much as it is simple idleness and boredom. A prison, after all, is a place to escape from, besides

which our hero owes his success to luck. Moreover, this is a hero about whom we shall learn nothing more than that he is Lieutenant Fontaine" (190). While escape is an inevitable part of any POW story, I disagree that idleness and boredom are Fontaine's only motivators. While luck certainly plays a part, once Fontaine sets his mind to escape, boredom and idleness no longer take up the majority of his time. Rather, he becomes obsessed with channelling his isolation and experience of personal identity as a prisoner into transforming his cell into a vehicle through which he might be reborn as an entity unto himself. Here, Foucault's discussion of order comes to mind when he notes that "what has become important is no longer resemblances but identities and differences" (*The Order of Things* 50). Foucault's sense of identity and difference is coming to bear, even this early in the film. While his solitude might motivate Fontaine to act, he is motivated out of a deep sense of discovery — not to return to some semblance of his pre-prison life, but to move beyond it. For Fontaine, the only way out of his prison is through it, and he uses everything at his disposal to make a way for himself.

My use of both Sartre and Foucault may seem odd here: while Sartre claims that we build identity out of nothing, Foucault argues that institutions shape identity without individual agency. But, while Fontaine's drive to escape the prison camp by digging through and reforming his cell seems the kind of romantic gesture of absolute freedom that smacks of Sartrean existentialism, it is also possible to read Fontaine as a man in the grip of the institutions that have formed him — the military, the Resistance, French identity, etc. The two are a fascinatingly apparent paring that poses the paradoxical question of which comes first: freedom or institutional power. Fontaine escapes the institution of the prison, and yet he attains freedom through the very institutions that have claimed him. His escape is made possible with help from his fellow French soldiers, as well as from his family — both institutions that have governed and continue to

govern his actions, despite his disregard of them. While, as I will discuss, Fontaine escapes, he escapes into the unknown, his individual agency in tension with institutional influence.

When he first arrives at the prison camp, Fontaine's voiceover immediately describes his surroundings, calmly noting his cell's dimensions and its sparseness. He then takes inventory of what he has: a wooden bedstead with a straw mattress, two blankets, a sanitary pail in a recess by the door, and, set into the wall, a stone shelf. He climbs up onto the shelf, exploring the space vertically to reach the window, marking his first effort at interaction with the world beyond his wall. This exploration is the beginning of the intimate relationship he is to have with his cell and foreshadows the eventual transformation of these items as Fontaine endeavours to release himself from captivity. It is also an indication that Fontaine is his own overseer, which again conjures up Sartre and the responsibility of creating oneself from one's conscious choices. In *Discipline & Punish*, Foucault describes the process of examination that those undergoing punishment experience. He writes that examination, "combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgement. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. [...] At the heart of the procedures of discipline, it manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected" (184–185). In making his own examination of his cell, Fontaine begins to show signs of overseeing his own discipline as well as that of his space. Rather than a docile prisoner, he is making the space his own, using everything in it to his advantage. In doing so, he is exacting his own discipline over himself.

This continues for the duration of Fontaine's time at the camp as he is moved around the institution. While Fontaine's first cell enables him to form relationships with Terry (Roger Treherne), an older prisoner who walks the yard, often stopping briefly beneath his window, and

with his next-door neighbour, his confinement in a new cell re-establishes his isolation and prompts him to "[study] the walls." His intimate acquaintance with his new cell is furthered when he suddenly notices his door. He stares closely at it for the first time and notes its composition. The shot cuts from his face to his hand, now touching the door, letting his fingers slide along the grooves between the panels, as though gently showing mastery over it. Fontaine examines the door's strengths and weaknesses and registers his confidence that he can bend it to his will, again surveilling his space and turning the Foucauldian objectifying gaze onto the space of his capture.[2]

At this point, even Fontaine attributes such confidence to "chance or idleness," as if anticipating Truffaut, and much scholarship concerning *A Man Escaped* has focused on chance, and Fontaine's general good luck, as the secret to his successful escape. It seems though, that while his body has been idle within the confines of his cell, his mind has worked to figure out his surroundings and his place within them. That is, Fontaine's confinement seems to make possible an imaginative freedom that eventually brings about his liberation from the cell. By physically occupying the space but concentrating on its potential contribution to his liberation, Fontaine becomes a figure consonant with Soja's Thirdspace, his "geographical imagination" expanding "to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives that have heretofore been considered [...] incompatible" ("Thirdspace" 50). The above scene therefore signals Fontaine's determination to escape from, but also through, the space of his captivity. As he talks about transforming his door, he is increasingly transformed, becoming suddenly hopeful, his embrace of isolation becoming an expression of his hopefulness rather than a sign of his despair.

As his examination of his own immediate space proceeds, Fontaine begins to bring in items from outside his cell to further transform the space of his cell. After a guard brings him

food, Fontaine picks up the spoon and looks at it with wonder, turning it in his hands. The shot fades to a close-up of Fontaine's hands sharpening the spoon's handle on the dirty floor until it forms a chisel. He playfully sticks the spoon between the boards on the door and eases them apart ever so slightly. Hope burgeoning, Fontaine begins to see himself as an engineer, plotting out his escape methodically and practically through the manipulation of various items in his cell. Now planning his schedule, he anticipates the days ahead that will bring about the completion of his work, estimating the days of a future well-spent in his cell, rather than idly dreading his fate. He carefully tucks the spoon-chisel into some loose fabric in his mattress, implicating both in his plan as well.

Fontaine's work schedule and sense of discipline changes his relationship to the space he occupies, and in turn, changes the space's functionality. Thus, while through Foucault's *Discipline & Punish* we understand that the prison space was created to embody political and military discipline coded and defined as a place to keep prisoners in (143), Fontaine is able to exert personal discipline to redefine that same space as one that will facilitate his escape, channelling Soja's assertion that "Space in itself may be primordially given, but the organization, and meaning of space is a product of social translation, transformation, and experience" (*Postmodern Geographies* 79–80). While his constant fear of making noise and being discovered reminds us that Fontaine is a prisoner, the scenes showing him move through the steps of his escape are calm and uneventful, focusing on Fontaine's deliberate execution of the task at hand. We see his hands slowly draw the spoon-chisel down one of the door's grooves, and we watch a thin strip of wood curl out toward us, marking his progress. The quiet of the cell is now a comfort, rather than a dreaded imposition, and assures Fontaine of his now-desired solitude, and, by extension, his safety. As the cell becomes Fontaine's — rather than the camp's — space, he

even pays attention to its housekeeping to prevent from being discovered: he must sweep away the debris under the door from the soft wood scrapings, keeping it inside the cell with him. While this is ostensibly a safety measure to conceal his clandestine work, his forethought also smacks of a certain degree of pride in the utility he is creating from the space, as though he must fully embrace the cell as his space before he can leave it. Fontaine's work in these scenes also emphasizes the time involved in the process of change as it affects the composition and security of the cell. Since the scenes that depict Fontaine's slow work compel us to focus on the process of transformation, we bear witness to the slow change he brings about to the nature of the cell and its capacity to hold him as part of its original function. These scenes recall Sartre and highlight Fontaine's responsibility of choice, engaging in his surroundings and "stamping it with [his] seal" (*Being and Nothingness* 710) as he creates the person he wants to be by slowly repurposing his surroundings.

Importantly, after a few vigorous scrapes of the chisel, Fontaine's voiceover notes that he has no plans for after he opens the door. This is fascinating, considering the film's prison camp identity politics. While Fontaine enters the camp as a member of the resistance, his time in the prison camp changes that allegiance and he sloughs it off.[3] Although the isolation dramatized in *A Man Escaped* can be attributed to Robert Bresson's propensity for "expressive silence," wherein "some of his characters are caged into silence, while others choose it as a discipline" (Mast & Kawin 381), I suggest that the pervasive air of isolation and ennui in French World War II POW films stems from the fact that during and even after the Occupation, French prisoners of war were excluded from belonging and were instead met with derision as "knights of the raised rifle butts" ("Shorn Women" 60). It seems only right then that characters depicted in postwar POW films would struggle in their barracks against erasure, both by the occupying force and the

collaborationist government, and would instead question what it means to be French. In these films, we see prisoners of war consider who they are in the space and political context of the camp, and we watch them tentatively adopt different identities, perhaps by dressing a certain way, or befriending unlikely allies, or isolating themselves altogether. Thus, unlike the many British POW films that emphasize escape for purposes of repatriation, Fontaine's escape attempt signals a key difference: repatriation is not a foregone conclusion, nor is it necessarily desirable. Fontaine persists in his attempt, not out of a sense of national, duty, but out of a duty to himself.

Once he chisels through his door, Fontaine waits for the cover of night to roam the halls of the camp. Once locked in a cell and guarded by various pugilistic enforcers, Fontaine now experiences his space as more camp than prison. This is, of course, far from the prison-camp-as-sleepaway-camp experiences depicted in British films like *The Colditz Story* (1955), or *The Wooden Horse* (1950) that so disgusted Bosley Crowther and his ilk. Still, by moving beyond the door of his cell, Fontaine experiences a similar type of freedom. Once outside his cell, Fontaine has another blank space in which to move, and he takes advantage of this freedom by becoming his own patrol and taking on the panoptic gaze that "is alert everywhere" (*Discipline & Punish* 195).

As he gingerly steps out into the hallway, he looks around. His body follows, and he sets off, tiptoeing slowly at first, before increasing the pace of his stride. He comes up to a door on which is scrawled in German, "NO EATING, NO EXIT." Fontaine immediately uses his sleeve to erase these orders, helping his elderly neighbour Blanchet (Maurice Beerblock), who is locked behind the door, but also performing an act normally assigned to one of the guards by dictating Blanchet's privileges.[4] Moreover, once we confirm in a subsequent scene that the prisoner is Blanchet, Fontaine's joyride — or, perhaps more appropriately, joywalk — has less to do with

his escape, and more to do with establishing his power over the floor by walking around it unfettered.[5]

As Fontaine erases the orders, Blanchet asks for an explanation from inside the cell. Fontaine identifies himself by name, and cell number, trusting that Blanchet, and anyone else who hears him, will not turn him in. Fontaine's voiceover indicates that he is pleased by Blanchet's surprise at his sudden freedom. Blanchet's witness to his now less-fettered position in the camp fuels his confidence. While he remains bathed in shadow, Fontaine's willingness to identify himself suggests that he is not terribly interested in keeping his relative freedom a secret, and he seems to enjoy flaunting his ability to roam the halls. After all, he "outs" himself to others even as they remain locked away, differentiating himself from the general population of prisoners. Fontaine clings to his relative freedom as a step toward leaving the camp entirely and starting over on his own. He is claiming space, little by little, first in his cell, then in the prison's halls, then, eventually, beyond them.

Crucially, Fontaine is an imprisoned body whose dedication to his own imagined, conjured freedom renders him already affected by the power of that dedication, even though he remains physically imprisoned. Fontaine tends not to distinguish between experiential space and imagined space, and his actions instead align with Soja's concept of Thirdspace, using the prison camp as "a place of critical exchange where the geographical imagination can be expanded to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives that have heretofore been considered by the epistemological referees to be incompatible, uncombinable" ("Thirdspace" 50). Paradoxically, through his imprisonment, Fontaine can conjure a sense of freedom that helps him escape not only the prison camp, but also the fetters of nationally imposed ideologies.

After weaving his way around the prison, Fontaine returns to his cell to continue fashioning it to his purpose. As he stands looking down at his bed, the voiceover notes his requirement of 40 feet of strong rope. He lunges toward his bed and immediately begins uprooting and unwinding the chain-link wire that holds his mattress over the bed's frame. This exercise, much like his use of the stone shelf, and his re-tooling of the cell's door, further suggests that the space that contains him is also his way out — out of the prison camp, and out of a war that has demanded his submission. He shreds his pillowcase to produce the rope and redistributes the pillow's horsehair to the mattress. His hands — in close-up — meticulously fold the shredded cloth around the wire, taking care to wind it effectively so that it will hold him.

Later, Fontaine takes apart his lamp frame, his hands shown again in close-up, slowly and silently twisting the screws to release the frame, carefully wrapping the glass before breaking it and disposing of it in his waste pail. Using a pencil Terry has given him, and his wall as a template with which to fashion hooks, he sketches the building's ledge, conceptually bringing the outside of the camp to the inside of this one cell, taking the information in and using it to create something to mitigate its effect on him as a prisoner, making his apparatus fit, and hopefully rendering him undetectable, blending in with the very environment that he is trying to escape.

Importantly, Fontaine also uses items from home to aid in his escape, making them into prison effects. For example, one day while on his rounds a guard hands Fontaine a box. Fontaine opens it on his bed, allowing time for the guard's hand to rove over and rifle through its contents. After the guard leaves, Fontaine remarks upon the package as a saving resource, and the camera cuts to a close-up of the various fabrics in it. The shot fades to one of Fontaine's hands rhythmically tearing his new items into strips to be used for his escape plan. He braids the strips

together, recalling his mother braiding his sister's hair, superimposing that memory over his present prison activity. He takes that childhood knowledge of hair braiding and refines it into a useful skill for his burgeoning identity as a potential escapee. He combines the items from home with the items from prison, letting them mingle and create a new product, just as he is becoming a new creation, formed by his home life, by the resistance, and by the prison camp. As he weaves this amalgam of rope together, he notes that he will use it to link the compound and exterior walls of the camp, maintaining the link between home, prison, and the war outside through this length of cord.

To this point, I have described Fontaine's life in the POW camp cell, and the process by which he comes to appropriate the space meant to contain him. Fontaine's transformation of his cell from a place in which discipline is enacted upon him from the outside, to a place in which his discipline is self-inflicted, is crucial to his transformation from someone who follows orders (either as a soldier or a prisoner) to someone who gives them. I will now turn to an examination of Fontaine's social relationships and how the sociality of the camp space provides community for Fontaine while also, paradoxically enabling and emphasizing his isolation.

While his initial longing for companionship is quickly replaced by his longing to escape, each of Fontaine's relationships provides him with tools (a pencil, and a few other contraband provisions) and insight about the possibility and terms of his own freedom, and thus aids in his ability to transform the contents of his cell, and himself, from relics of wartime captivity to something renewed, pragmatic, and released from their original physical and ideological frameworks. So, while Fontaine goes to various lengths to become acquainted with his fellow inmates, these acquaintances ultimately allow him to use his community of fellow prisoners as another tool, an instrument in the achievement of individual freedom. This is not presented as

exploitative; rather, the community is complicit, exercising their free will, which they cannot otherwise express in the camp, to help Fontaine.

Fontaine's first acquaintance is Terry, an older prisoner who seems to have special privileges in the camp. While locked away in his cell, Fontaine boosts himself up onto the stone shelf that gives him access to his barred window and sees three men walking toward him. These men are prisoners, but Fontaine's observation of their regular walks suggests they have some agency. They walk mournfully back and forth across the courtyard, heads bowed. While Fontaine clears his throat to alert the men to his presence, only Terry responds while continuing to stare at the ground; the others act as though he does not exist and turn, continuing their traversal of the prison grounds. Before joining his companions, Terry urges Fontaine to "pay close attention" until he returns.

Terry's urging of vigilance, rather than patience, is a suggestion that Fontaine treat his environment as dynamic, rather than static, and emphasizes the possibility for change in the camp. The shot returns to Fontaine, who glances around in response, heeding Terry's words despite his limited view out of the cell window. The shot switches back and we see the three companions once again walking toward the prison wall. This time, Terry looks up at Fontaine before lowering his head again, as though signalling his decision to include him as a companion. The two exchange names and immediately Fontaine begins asking Terry about sending messages out of the camp, maintaining his active, rather than passive, response to imprisonment, and using his new acquaintance as a means of getting something of himself — his letters — out. Terry replies that he can help and, as Fontaine climbs down from the stone shelf, his narration notes that in meeting Terry, "everything had changed."

Through Terry, the prison camp provides Fontaine with an opportunity to reach beyond the prison walls. Terry's offer to mail letters[6] to Fontaine's mother and to his resistance commander to tell them that he is "in prison" and that he failed in his resistance duties[7] provides a form of severance from Fontaine's domestic and military lives and leaves him with a singular focus on his present situation inside the camp. Moreover, after Terry tells him that his letter to the resistance has arrived, Terry quietly notes, "you've done your duty," as though releasing Fontaine from his service and, again, allowing him to see his potential freedom from an internal, rather than an external, perspective. That is, Fontaine is now free to resist participating in either side of the war and can instead focus on his own resistance even while imprisoned.

Another boon to Fontaine's transformation is provided by the pastor, Deleyris (Roland Monod), another prisoner whom Fontaine meets in the communal washroom. Strangely, though, Fontaine's encounters with the pastor are few, and they are never private. Instead, the pastor seems to watch over Fontaine, monitoring his journey toward escape, and aiding him in his transformation from prisoner to free man by giving him a slip of paper with a Biblical passage, John 3:4–8, written on it, which Fontaine ultimately adopts as inspiration for that escape. When discussing fellow prisoner, and Fontaine's lookout, Orsini's (Jacques Ertaud) reckless escape attempt, Deleyris suggests that Orsini did not run because of despair, but because he had "too much hope for a new life." This piques Fontaine's interest, and the pastor gives him a copy of the Biblical passage to which his comment refers, John 3:4–8. Later, at his window, Fontaine reads the passage aloud to Blanchet:

Nicodemus said unto him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Do not marvel that I

said to you, you must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes."

This passage, which is the source of the film's alternate title, *The Wind Bloweth where it Listeth*, is crucial to understanding Fontaine's — and Orsini's — rationale for escape. Fontaine's purpose is to be free, but the mention of rebirth seems to spark in him renewed motivation. He sees himself as the wind, planning to go where he wishes, without feeling confined to past or future obligations. This passage is another hint that Fontaine is a free agent, made so by the help he has received in the prison camp as he strives toward self-reliance. Deleyris clearly also has the somewhat panoptic ability to keep an eye on the goings on in the camp, and his gift of the Biblical passage recalls Foucault's assessment of language as "the locus of revelations" that is "included in the area where truth is both manifested and expressed" (36).

I have so far discussed Fontaine's refashioning of his cell through what Soja might call his "social translation, transformation, and experience" (*Postmodern Geographies* 79–80), and how he participates tangentially in the camp community, mostly by collecting tools that will help him escape alone. I turn now to a more intentional discussion of Fontaine's constant change as the film depicts it, and how the film directs us to see Fontaine's escape as a sloughing off of what is past, and a "rebirth" into a new way of being in the world.

Fontaine's journey of "rebirth" by way of his interactions with the camp community and his refashioning and repurposing of items in his cell, is not without its difficulties. Despite the Thirdspace-like agency that he has produced in his cell and — once his door is dismantled — outside it, Fontaine's prison camp experience remains affected by fear, loneliness, and despair. His transformation is rife with setbacks that involve the need to constantly re-imprison himself until his plan is ready, and his friend Blanchet asks him to stop trying to escape, for the good of

the prison community. Even as he temporarily assumes the role of the German guard when he

erases the orders on Blanchet's door, Fontaine must also serve as his own guard, refastening his

handcuffs and replacing the panels in his door before he leaves his cell. As he continues to work,

shots of Fontaine's success with his homemade chisel, and the splintering of his doorframe, are

countered by ones of him meticulously shutting himself back into his cell, ostensibly undoing his

work, while relishing his progress. Similarly, he works to plug the holes he has made in his door

with paper he stains by dipping it in water and rubbing it on the floor, again using his

surroundings to re-seal himself in his cell, erasing all traces of his escape by reinforcing his now-

strategic restraint in the service of his future liberation. He therefore reinforces the production of

his own delinquency inside the institutional cell, as, according to Foucault, "delinquency is for

the most part produced in and by an incarceration" (*Discipline & Punish* 301).

Bresson emphasizes the restraint Fontaine shows in his self-shackling in his often-

fragmented framing of Fontaine's body —specifically his hands, but other parts as well. Shots of

Fontaine's hands working on his door, or his foot guarding his spoon suggest that his body —

like his cell — is comprised of instruments bent toward his escape. In *Cinematic Body (Theory

out of Bounds),* Steven Shaviro writes that, "the human body is never an organic whole in

Bresson's films, but rather a repertory of disconnected, autonomic functions" (249). While

Fontaine is shot as an organic whole at the end of the film as he walks away from the prison, the

frequent and prolonged shots of his hands, feet, and eyes as he works toward his escape illustrate

Shaviro's point. However, the functions seem less autonomic and more intentional. The camera

is showing us that by exerting agency over parts of his confined body, Fontaine can exert agency

over his confinement. As Fontaine's ideology seems to move from compartmentalization (his

institutional Frenchness, the end of his time with the resistance, his identity as a prisoner, and

that of a determined escapee) to cohesion (a man in his own right, walking away from the prison

and from his role in the war), I understand Bresson's visual breaking up of Fontaine's body as an

indication of its capacity to perform the various separate functions required to escape, from

breaking the door to sitting on his bed, handcuffed, in the guise of a languishing prisoner.

Bresson's particularization through cutting as Fontaine crafts his means of escape shifts to show

full body shots that preserve the visual integrity of Fontaine's form as he escapes. This again

communicates Fontaine's navigation of integrated experiential and imagined space as

exemplified through Thirdspace and Soja's claim that Thirdspace is rooted in "a recombinational

and radically open perspective" ("Thirdspace" 50).

Crucially, when Blanchet asks him at one point why he tries to escape, Fontaine

answers, "To fight." While this might at first be taken as a sign of his desire to re-join the

resistance, Fontaine immediately revises his answer. "To fight the walls, to fight myself, to fight

the door."[8] Fontaine's reply is fascinating because he sees himself as a component of his own

imprisonment. His prison is the man he is. He fights it; he looks within it for means of escape,

and of change; he breaks it and puts it together again, leaving it slightly different — slightly

more fragile than it was, but more complex in that it is used both to contain and to free. So, while

Price observes that "chance occurrence provides a way for Fontaine to refashion his entire

existence" (25), Fontaine's existence is carefully and meticulously reproduced by his active

refashioning of the circumstances of his captivity.

Importantly, when Fontaine first tries to get Terry's attention, and when he first knocks

on the prison walls, he has no knowledge of the wartime allegiances of either Terry or his

neighbour, nor does he even seem to consider their affiliations. While Terry and the neighbour

are French, neither their Frenchness nor Fontaine's is ever mentioned beyond Terry's

acknowledgment of the end of Fontaine's military service. While we assume that Frenchness in a French film set in a POW camp in Lyon can be taken for granted, the film acknowledges awkward commonalities and ambiguous relationships that suggest that the prison camp is a space in which rules of engagement operant in combat and national meaning-making do not apply.

We see this nowhere more clearly than in Fontaine's relationship with Jost. Having planned to escape alone after being turned down by potential partners, and after his formal death sentence necessitates his imminent escape, Fontaine returns to his cell and is confronted with Jost (Charles Le Clainche), his new and rather ambiguous cellmate. This infiltration of his cell immediately changes his relationship to the space he's been cultivating for so long, and the change is reminiscent of Soja's concept of Thirdspace. Soja tells us that Thirdspace "produces what might best be called a cumulative '*trialectic*s' that is radically open to additional otherness, to a continuing expansion of spatial knowledge" (Thirdspace," 55). If we recall that the spatial dynamics of Fontaine's cell have been changing the entire time, though his movements within it, Jost's addition is simply the next stage in its evolution. Now, for better or for worse, Fontaine must continue to evolve as well.

As Fontaine comes to terms with his new spatial dynamic, he stares at Jost, who is dressed "half as French soldier, half as German soldier." Fontaine asks the bedraggled boy if he is German, and the boy, head in hands, gives no verbal response, and yet his shoulders shrug ever so slightly, as though he either is not sure or does not care. Fontaine then asks the boy if he is French, and the boy nods slightly, without showing his face. Jost is, as far as we — and presumably Fontaine — can tell, French, and yet common nationality is now clearly not enough for Fontaine to trust him.

As the scene plays out, we see Fontaine's identity politics in action. While he believes Jost's claim that he is a French deserter of the German army, (having, in a sense, extricated himself from the meanings imbued in both uniforms that he wears), his voiceover recalls his uneasiness as Jost tells him that by joining the German army he thought he was fighting for France. Fontaine then looks at him and replies, "France is your khaki pants and leggings. That's all that's left of it." Fontaine therefore suggests that, but for some pieces of cloth, they are nationless, and that this relieves them of the complexities their national affiliation has accumulated. Fontaine's rhetoric could also apply to the German army-issued jacket that Jost wears, reiterating the meaninglessness of national affiliation presented in the film. After all, if Jost wears both France and Germany, but pledges allegiance to neither, is his clothing anything more than just manufactured items with which to cover the body? The film suggests not, and seems instead to see national affiliation during wartime as something easily put on, and just as easily removed and replaced with something else.

After seeing Jost talking casually with a German guard,[9] Fontaine questions his honesty before suggesting that he chose to wear the German uniform. Lifting his head to meet Fontaine's gaze, Jost curiously explains that he chose nothing and, asking if his jacket bothers Fontaine, tries to remove it.[10] Fontaine stands and puts his hand on Jost's shoulder, tells him there's no point and says, "You are what you are." This line is one of the most important in the film. Not only does it suggest that uniforms are generally meaningless in the space of the prison, it also suggests that allegiance is less important to freedom than independent personhood is. This is certainly reinforced when, during their eventual escape, Jost leaves their shoes and jackets on the roof of the prison, leaving pieces of national affiliation behind to contribute to the pieces of the camp that Fontaine leaves behind — the deconstructed door, the concealed pencil, the

dismantled bed frame. Leaving clothing behind signals that Jost and Fontaine are unfettered by national allegiance once out of the camp and are truly reborn.

We see the use of clothing to demonstrate the putting on and taking off of national identities in British POW films, too, and yet those films are far more playful about it. Here, Jost's clothing denotes so many nationalities as to signify none; leaving the uniforms behind as the two move into a different space and experience is important, and recalls Judith Butler's argument that body demarcation is fluid, and "is not initiated by a reified history or by a subject" (130–131). I wonder if Julia Kristeva's understanding of abjection might also work here. If, as Butler explains, the "abject designates that which has been expelled from the body, discharged as excrement, literally rendered "Other" (133), perhaps these uniforms can be designated "abject" in that they are cast off from the body and rendered "other," no longer applying to Fontaine's or Jost's identities.

While Fontaine remains somewhat suspicious of Jost, he ultimately understands that they want the same thing. Jost is a deserter and is looking for an end to the war. The patchwork of his uniform suggests that, like Fontaine, the person he has created from various scraps of state-sanctioned identity is not seamless. Instead, he remains ragged, unable to give himself wholly to any one nation. In the cell, the two discuss their desire to escape and Fontaine reveals his plan. Jost becomes Fontaine's partner and takes on the tasks of making extra rope and other preparations, amending space and materials in the cell — to work towards their new society. The camera now shows two pairs of hands in close-up, rather than only one, and we understand that Jost and Fontaine are now allies despite their divisive origins. When the two land beyond the outside wall of the camp, Fontaine pulls Jost close, demonstrating the bond that he and his young

comrade have formed. They quickly walk away into the night — into what looks like empty space, perhaps a blank canvas to be re-shaped, just as they have been.

While his fellow inmates are tremendously important to Fontaine's transition from national to personal freedom fighter, their absence is also essential to his breaking and reformation process. Price says that *A Man Escaped* "is best understood as a long and virtuosic display of how objects in prison can be transformed — how matter can be altered — and thus how one's fortune can be altered" (26). This, of course, echoes my examination of the camp as a Thirdspace wherein new possibilities can emerge out of traditional spatial disciplines ("Thirdspace" 56). I therefore suggest that all of these alterations come as direct results of Fontaine's imprisonment, and of the need for him to transform himself from captured French resister to one who resists and embraces his capture by turns in order to be finally reborn as his own man. Fontaine's journey throughout the film is one of learning and of adaptation. And so, when Fontaine's voiceover notes near the beginning of the film, "I found myself alone," this statement not only denotes his return to solitude after leaving the resistance, but also means that his solitude in the cell has allowed him an element of self-discovery to which he had not previously had access. That is, as much as his self-discovery is aided by his relationships in the camp, he really does "find himself" alone through his transformation of his prison cell into a space through which he might attain his freedom. That this sentiment is provided in voiceover from the long-escaped Fontaine is perhaps a reassurance to his captive self that change through solitude is indeed the way to ensure his unfettered future.

I have demonstrated how Fontaine interacts with space and with others, as well as this film's complex depictions of personal and national identities. Fontaine's achievement of freedom through isolation and his transformations within the space of the prison camp form a lens

through which to view Jean Renoir's *Le caporal épinglé*, and I turn now to a discussion of that film to elucidate what I see as crucial points in the characters' development of and interaction with the camp space, from upper-class le caporal's need to leave the camp space to return to his beloved Paris, to working-class Ballochet's creation of a space all his own in the camp, away from the iniquities he experiences in war and at home. The character of Pops, too, plays an important role in bridging the two perspectives and voicing the illusory nature of the Paris le caporal wishes to return to. Through these characters and their navigation of camp space, the film presents deep disillusionment with national identity and illustrates the freedom found in raising one's rifle butt.

As in *A Man Escaped*, *Le caporal épinglé* begins with a foiled escape attempt. This one involves the three comrades, le caporal, Ballochet, and Pops, moving toward a wall that separates them from possible freedom. While Pops boosts le caporal over the wall, though, in the background Ballochet removes his glasses and lets them fall into the weeds below. He drops to his knees and his hands rove half-heartedly through the foliage as he explains that he cannot escape because he has lost his glasses. To le caporal's chagrin, Ballochet is left behind as he and Pops drop over the wall, only to be immediately caught and taken to another camp.

This important sequence establishes the different ways in which Pops, le caporal, and Ballochet understand camp life and the context that drives them. While Pops and le caporal seem brave and Ballochet cowardly, their actions here are far more deeply rooted in experience and the ways in which each understands his identity both inside and outside the camp. In his synopsis of the film, Jean Douchet writes that the film:

Focuses on an existence of intolerable oppression. The triumph of the Nazi regime, with which the film begins, marks the devastation of the old orders: society, nation, Western

civilization and its system of values. There remains only capitalism stripped of its

justification, democracy, and reduced to its most brutal function, the complete exploitation

of man [...]. It imposes a new existence from which every glimmer of humanity is

banished, as much for the masters as for the slaves. Europe has become an immense stalag;

the world (the action takes place almost entirely outdoors) is a prison. (301–302)

Douchet's summary captures the pessimism that Gavin Lambert discusses in "French Cinema:

The New Pessimism," and lends itself well to much of *A Man Escaped*. I suggest, though, that

while Renoir's film certainly presents a broken Europe, it also allows for the site of the prison

camp to serve as a kind of limbo; the prisoners — part of the French military before the

Occupation — cannot return home, and yet their fight is over. They are imprisoned, not quite as

soldiers, and not quite as civilians. Instead, they must each discover their places in the post-

Occupation world.

This is easier for some than others, as is foreshadowed in the sequence above. Le

caporal's rank means nothing in this new world, and yet it is the only way we know him,

suggesting his inability to truly thrive in a postwar world, despite his multiple escape attempts.

Despite his rank, le caporal comes from wealth and privilege. Working-class Pops and Ballochet

would not be returning to the same life, and right now, have the chance to eke out a more

egalitarian life in the camp, where they can freely socialize with le caporal without class

disparities occluding their friendship. While he sees himself as one of the men, le caporal is an

outlier in the camp, believing that life beyond the barbed wire is better because that is how he

remembers it to be. I suggest that he sees the camp space in an obvious way — as a prison that

inhibits his freedom. In Lefebvre's terms, he seems to acknowledge only spatial practice — the

presuppositions with which he perceives the camp as a place of incarceration — and spatial

conceptualization — the planning of his movements within the space, particularly with regard to how he will leave it (38-39). What le caporal is missing throughout most of the film is spatial representation, which Lefebvre describes as "the dominated — and hence passively experienced — space in which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects" (39).

Instead of changing and appropriating his space and, in turn (according to Soja's theory), experiencing his own evolution, le caporal keeps attempting to return to the past (the Paris he remembers), only to be dragged back to the present. But, much like my observation that restoration in *Albert, R.N.* (1953) is impossible because life has changed so drastically for the prisoners in that camp, le caporal's persistent need to align himself with pre-Occupation Frenchness is problematic. Not only does pre-Occupation France no longer exist, in attempting to return to the Paris he remembers, le caporal alienates Ballochet and Pops, and refuses to consider what such a regression might mean for his less-privileged friends. In one scene when he and Pops are gathering firewood, they take a break and sit together under the lackadaisical supervision of a disinterested guard. Pops tells le caporal that he will not join him on his next escape attempt and, as le caporal pouts, Pops urges him to try to see his point of view. Pops notes that he's afraid to return to Paris because the class disparity between them will separate them. He then says of the camp, "It's not like that here. A friend is a friend. No one cares what you do in your civilian life. The soup may be dishwater, but at least we're eating it together." Pouting restlessly as he listens to Pops, le caporal refuses to believe him, telling him instead that the soup they will eat together in Paris will be thicker.

In this scene, Pops sees the space of the camp as one in which he can socially engage with his friend without worrying about class discrepancies. He is adopting what Soja calls the

"Otherness" of Thirdspace, which "disrupts, disorders, and begins to reconstitute the conventional binary opposition" ("Thirdspace" 52). The scene's natural setting is almost pastoral in its depiction of camp space as "Other," beyond both combat and Parisian society.

Pops, whose name suggests a familial link to his friends, simply wants to keep the "family" together. He remains loyal to le caporal, and even compromises his desire for an egalitarian camp society when he finally joins le caporal in his final escape attempt. In the last scene, le caporal and Pops walk across a deserted street in Paris, Pops lagging slightly behind, as though anticipating their separation. They stop on a bridge, looking out over the Seine, their backs to the camera, anonymous and in transit. Pops then says goodbye to le caporal, noting that they are — literally and figuratively — going in opposite directions. They turn and face the camera as le caporal notes that his family waits for him without expecting him, acknowledging his somewhat nebulous existence as an escaped POW. Pops extends his hand and the two bid one another "*à bien tôt*" before Pops walks out of frame and le caporal turns his back on us once again. But then, as le caporal occupies the liminal space of the bridge alone, Pops comes back into frame and suggests that, once le caporal has spent some time at home, he should "do it again." Le caporal takes a breath, looks out over the empty river, and notes Paris's beauty, just before allowing, "it's only just begun. I find the sight of swastikas very depressing," hinting to Pops that he will leave Paris to re-join the ranks of combatants.

This recalls his statement early in the film that, unlike France, he personally didn't sign an armistice, setting himself apart from national allegiance and instead embarking on more personal rules of war at the beginning of the film. Colin Davis is right, then, when he suggests, "[le caporal's] decision to join the fight against the Germans looks more like narcissistic posturing than a philosophical commitment to freedom or political opposition to Nazism. Like

Carola, *Le Caporal épinglé* pays no lip service to the myth of a heroic *France résistante*" (57-58). While this scene suggests le caporal's sudden zeal to fight the Nazis, it seems, as Davis suggests, even more indicative of his desire to return Paris to its pre-Occupation aesthetic for his own comfort. Pops is beyond pleased that he will see le caporal again, even if the context of war, which is, as he explains earlier, the only context in which they would see one another in any case, given their class differences. This characterizes what Davis calls the film's "mixed messages" of pain, humour, and desire for relationship that "typify [...] much of Renoir's post-war work in general. [...] This creation of uncertainty about how to react is precisely the point. By sending mixed messages the film refuses to direct our response in one direction or another" (59).

I have so far illustrated le caporal's attitude toward the camp space as an inconvenient anti-Paris, and I have demonstrated his lack of understanding of postwar society and his place in it, despite Pops' clear and persistent attempts to convince him of the differences between them outside the liminal space of the camp. I will continue this discussion, but with the addition of what I believe is the most important storyline in the film: Ballochet's preferred internment in the camp space, his changing identity politics, and le caporal's refusal to accept them.

After a long separation from both Ballochet and Pops, le caporal is brought to a new camp where he is forced to undergo the regimented "discipline" that serves as his punishment for trying to escape. Forced to run and crawl while wearing heavy backpacks, the men undergoing discipline might exemplify Foucauldian docile bodies that are "subjected, used, transformed and improved" (*Discipline & Punish* 136).

Once finished, le caporal hears that Ballochet is working at the same camp as an interpreter. Shocked and thrilled to hear Ballochet's name, le caporal is led to one of the

barracks, where he blunders inside, exhausted. The camera pans to reveal a fat German guard, his feet on the newspaper-strewn desk, his attention diverted to a letter that he holds as another guard admonishes him for smoking on duty. The camera pans back to le caporal, who has not moved. He looks up and a cut reveals a medium close-up of Ballochet, who turns, surprised and bewildered, to see his friend. Ballochet rushes toward le caporal, cavalierly shoving the Nazi guard's feet aside as he greets him. He then pivots back to the snoozing guard and orders him in German to trade a can of food for some schnapps. The guard springs to life and Ballochet once again moves toward le caporal, this time guiding him toward the cot previously occupied by the guard.

While le caporal has to this point believed Ballochet to be a weak and ineffective man, Ballochet cradles and feeds him as he remarks that Ballochet did not try to escape. Ballochet answers, "what for?," prompting le caporal's confusion and recalling Douchet's assessment of what Ballochet and the others would be returning to. He would, in effect, return to postwar Paris a working-class "knight of the raised rifle butt" ("Shorn Women" 60), socially worse-off than he was before. Ballochet then defends his refusal to escape, saying, "being on the other side of the barbed wire doesn't necessarily mean freedom." He lowers his head, attending to his stew, and continues, "in Paris, I am a slave. Even more so than here. A slave to my habits, to my ideas. A slave to the stupidity that rules the world."

He is, instead, perfectly content where he is, operating within the liminal space of the camp where he need not identify strictly with one group or another, as shown by his ability to bark orders at his captors in their native tongue. He notes that he has a friend in the post office who will sometimes send him German packages, which is how he got the stew that he is cooking when he first receives le caporal, and he offers to find le caporal a choice office job within the

camp. In the camp, Ballochet has, much like Fontaine, has become what Foucault calls an "institutional product" (*Discipline & Punish* 301) who has created his own methods of discipline "which [makes] possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body" (*Discipline & Punish* 137). The camp space has shaped him into one who can, in turn, shape it. Ballochet asserts himself as separate from military side-taking and nationalistic Frenchness and instead makes his own meaning beyond the dimensions of identity determined by his social and military ranks.

Ballochet's feelings about returning home are similar to Pops' when he tries to explain his experiences of sociality both inside and outside the camp to le caporal earlier in the film. But while Pops concentrates on how different spaces affect his relationship to le caporal, Ballochet is far more concerned with his personal relationship with the various spaces he occupies. Ballochet vividly describes his feelings about the class differences that limited his personal and social options in Paris and makes it clear that his experience in the prison camp removes him from all of that. He has more social power as a POW in the camp than as a civilian outside it, and he uses the camp space to shield himself from the oppression he experiences outside that space, in keeping with Foucault, and with Homi Bhabha's approach to Thirdspace when he notes in an interview with political scientist Jonathan Rutherford: "I try to place myself in that position of liminality, in that productive space of the construction of culture as difference, in the spirit of alterity or otherness" (209).

The film is clear that Ballochet is constructing an identity of alterity in the POW camp. He is a French prisoner who orders German guards around, who is free to make his own food, and who occupies his own space. He challenges partisan notions of good and bad and forces the viewer to see the gray of wartime, the way war opens up spaces for social possibility, even as it

closes others off by its show of military force. Yes, Ballochet is French, but his experience of Frenchness is vastly different from le caporal's, and even Pops', and this applies to his service to his country and his willingness to fight to control his own oppression. Here, in this barracks, Ballochet is in charge, and even exercises power over le caporal, whereas in Paris Ballochet's status as a gas meter reader is far below le caporal's as an upper-class man of means. In the remainder of the scene described above, and building on the social power he has already established in this particular space, Ballochet fervently asserts that all involved in the war are "idiots," as the camera cuts away from le caporal and back to him. He looks out the window, hopeful, and tells le caporal, "so I built myself a dungeon, above the insects who carry on their grotesque battle. I'm no longer a part of that. I'm above the mêlée. And I'm inviting you."

This scene establishes Ballochet as a prisoner who regards freedom as a position relative not to wartime allegiances, but to his agency within a space that has been socially produced through war. The sunlight hits his face as he raises a spoonful of stew, smiling as he turns toward le caporal, who still sits, exhausted, in the shadows. Contrasting with the medium close-up shots of Ballochet are the medium high-angle shots of le caporal, who is diminished in this social scenario. Here, Ballochet is not the mousy man who intentionally drops his glasses at the film's beginning, but is instead stately and victorious, asserting his independence from wartime allegiances and pre-war class structures. Ballochet's transformation, and his new relationship to the camp space helps us to see that "spatiality is socially produced and, like society itself, exists in both substantial forms (concrete spatialities) and as a set of relations between individuals and groups, an 'embodiment' and medium of social life itself" (Soja, *Postmodern Geographies* 120). The space of the prison camp exists physically as a segregated space, cut off from both combat and Paris, but it also exists as a set of relations that establishes a society in which Ballochet is on

equal footing with le caporal, despite their different levels of social caché outside the camp. Thus, as Soja observes, "the social production of spatiality appropriates and recasts the representations and significations of mental space as part of social life, as part of second nature" (*Postmodern Geographies* 121). The scene concludes with Ballochet moving the spoonful of stew over to le caporal's lips and feeding him, sharing what he has with his friend and asserting his newfound social power within the barbed wire's confines, appropriating and recasting previously lived representations as he does so.

Ballochet's impassioned establishment of himself as ruler of his dungeon makes sense in the context of war and class disparity, and le caporal accepts his invitation to sit "above the mêlée" for a time. Le caporal quickly begins to understand the significance of Ballochet's dungeon as a place of peace and, in a subsequent scene we see him, Ballochet, and another French soldier playing cards with the German guard. The group drinks and smokes cigars together, sharing the space without regard for their wartime enmity, and le caporal enjoys several jokes with the guard, jovially slapping him on the back as the two laugh together. Even the card game seems to have been forgotten in light of the fun being had, pausing even that practice of distinguishing winners from losers. This is very different from the panoptical isolation that Fontaine experiences in *A Man Escaped*. While Fontaine takes ownership of the space of his cell, his interactions extend only as far as speaking to those who will help him. In contrast, Ballochet's dungeon is a place where the mutual enmity decreed by war does not apply, and where everyone is equal, at least for a short time.

Because Ballochet creates a space that reconfigures boundaries in this way, le caporal is able to overcome certain obstacles of his own when he becomes romantically involved with Erika (Cornelia Froboess), a German dental assistant. Complaining of a toothache, at the

dentist's office le caporal pushes past the others in the waiting room, insisting that he be allowed to go in first.[11] Of course, as Colin Davis notes, this scene is the closest the film offers to a depiction of torture, when we see le caporal wince in pain and hear him scream as the dentist repairs his tooth (58) with Erika's assistance. However, as this is happening, he is also able to comically correct Erika's French, and the two spend much time flirting, eventually breaking down wartime boundaries enough to become lovers, leading Davis to suggest this scene typifies that *Le caporal épinglé* "does not seem to know what kind of film it is: a war film, a comedy, or a romance" (59).

Given my readings of other films in this dissertation, I suggest that while Davis is right that *Le caporal épinglé* incorporates elements from multiple genres, such incorporation is found in several, if not most, POW films.[12] The scene described above actually typifies *Le caporal épinglé*'s membership in the POW genre: le caporal imbues the dentist's office with "Other" significance, just as Ballochet does in his barracks, and much as *A Man Escaped*'s Fontaine does in his cell. Le caporal uses the occasion of his imprisonment to exert his agency over a given environment, and, in doing so, enjoys a sense of personal freedom — flirting with Erika despite their national differences, and despite his having a wife in Paris. The office becomes his Thirdspace, allowing for new possibilities inside traditional spatial disciplines theorized by Soja ("Thirdspace" 56). What's more, le caporal's casual relationships with the German dentist and her daughter also echo in some sense Ballochet's casual relationship with the German guard: in these close quarters, no one really knows how they should relate to others, and we are asked to forget almost[13] entirely about wartime affiliations, and instead to focus, at least temporarily, on personal relationships.

After his dental treatment, le caporal and Erika go to the sitting room, a space further away from le caporal's fellow inmates and closer to the centre of the German home. Erika asks le caporal to choose a book from her collection, and, with closed eyes, he randomly chooses a volume of Ronsard. As Erika cuddles up next to him on the sofa, listening to him read French poetry, le caporal turns to Erika, burying his face in her hair, and tells her that when he is near her he feels "the sun, the little birds, the warmth of a fire."[14] They embrace as lovers who cannot resist one another, and, strangely, this is where le caporal's allegiances get complicated. Erika passionately tells le caporal that she admires his many escape attempts, and that she "[likes] a man who isn't a slave." Erika's words recall Ballochet's earlier sentiment that he is a slave to his habits, ideas, and the "stupidity that rules the world" in Paris. But, for le caporal, her words snap him back to old understandings of identity that seem to be what Ballochet is attempting to get away from.

I have to this point illustrated le caporal's privileged and illusory understanding of space and his identity within it, and I have discussed Ballochet's definition and realization of "a radically new and different form of citizenship" within the politically charged space of the POW camp ("Thirdspace" 51). Because he experiences Ballochet's dungeon, le caporal is free to reconfigure his own spaces and establish forms of sociality that would otherwise be impossible for him. And yet, as I will now discuss, when he hears Erika's desire for a man who is not a slave, le caporal's relationship to the camp space changes once again. Le caporal is reminded of his social relationship to Ballochet, and in this instant, is recalled to that relationship. Le caporal's realization of his 'real' social stature re-configures his opinion of Ballochet and affects the way the two of them will interact in subsequent scenes.

After le caporal's scene with Erika, we see him marching purposefully and authoritatively back into the camp. He shakes off a guard and enters the barracks that has so recently become his new egalitarian home. Ballochet sits, smoking a cigar and vigorously opening a can of *foie gras*, looking content as he addresses le caporal about the unfortunate lack of champagne to accompany their meal. Sombre, le caporal walks over to Ballochet and tells him that he is seeing him for the first time, slapping the cigar out of Ballochet's mouth and protesting the comfort that he so recently enjoyed. Ballochet stands, confused by what he believes is le caporal's sudden disregard for *foie gras*. Le caporal angrily snatches Ballochet's lapels and snidely accuses him of enjoying his "splendid isolation" before throwing him down and trashing the barracks. His violence stems from his anger at himself, and his realization of his complacency. He was lured into Ballochet's world and enjoyed the peace that has come from absenting himself from the struggle for an identity as a combatant dedicated to a country that no longer exists as it once did. Like Ballochet, he has become an institutional product (*Discipline & Punish* 301), albeit of a different kind, now punishing Ballochet for daring to disobey the established social structure.[15]

But, like Fontaine in *A Man Escaped*, only through le caporal's sudden awareness of his own idleness does he become determined to escape. Unlike Fontaine, though, le caporal's imperative involves the destruction of Ballochet's dungeon and a renewed enactment of national allegiance, even though this change is spurred by his relationship with Erika, because destroying the barracks and acting so decisively against his captors will prevent his own people — perhaps especially those like him who benefit from the established social order — from considering him a slave or a coward. Leah Hewitt notes that "*The Elusive Corporal* chips away at French nationalism by humanizing the (German) Other — in the form of female German civilians

(rather than male German soldiers)" (46). This is largely true — le caporal's relationship with Erika crosses that boundary, and le caporal encounters a couple toward the end of the film (a Frenchman and a German woman who plan to marry and remain in Germany) who denounce nationalism more blatantly when the man notes that he has no reason to return to France after the war because he has no ties to the country. But, strangely, le caporal's relationship with Erika ultimately provokes him to reclaim his Frenchness by leaving what he sees as his complacent slavery in the prison camp. Arguably, though, since we know le caporal only by his military rank, and since four out of his five escape attempts end with his forcible return to a prison camp, perhaps he is more of a slave to his ideas of identity and his subsequent habits than he would like to admit. By destroying Ballochet's dungeon and pursuing the habits and ideas that reinforce his pre-Occupation identity, he sets himself up as precisely what Ballochet is trying to avoid.

Le caporal illustrates both Ballochet's and Pops' experiences in Paris by possessing and using the power to punish another. He installs himself as a judge in the camp just as he is at home and illustrates Foucault's observation that "the prison does not at all represent the unleashing of a different kind of power, but simply an additional degree in the intensity of a mechanism that has continued to operate since the earliest forms of legal punishment" (*Discipline & Punish* 302). Le caporal does not exercise new forms of social power over Ballochet, but rather relies on old ones that have worked in the past, from which he has benefitted.

By bringing the violence of the war, and of his social position, into Ballochet's previously peaceful barracks, and by infiltrating Ballochet's "splendid isolation," le caporal gains ground within the camp and Ballochet is pulled back into the mêlée of national side-taking and negation. After le caporal's outburst and subsequent exit, Ballochet, appearing contrite,

emerges from the once-happy dungeon that he built to escape his national and social identities, shamed into facing them once again. He is in full uniform as he encounters a German soldier who asks him to translate information for the other men. Rather than comply, Ballochet blows a raspberry at the soldier, earning a slap in the face and demonstrating how wartime antagonism can so easily undermine efforts for peace, both societally and individually.

Le caporal's call for Ballochet to be a more disciplined Frenchman affects him, and Ballochet's sudden side-taking is unexpected. But, as Ballochet alters his behaviour and attitude in response to the camp's social structure, the meaning of the camp space also changes. What was once "a *Thirdspace of political choice* that is also a meeting place for all peripherized or marginalized subjects wherever they may be located" ("Thirdspace" 51), now becomes a space of deep shame for Ballochet, as he metaphorically raises his rifle butt. This has nothing to do with national allegiance or the desire to fight the Germans but is in response to le caporal's refusal to accept the sociality of the space.

Crucially, though, Ballochet does not keep his rifle butt raised for long. While I have discussed le caporal's change of heart, and Ballochet's resulting shame, I would now like to delve deeper into Ballochet's tumultuous identity politics and discuss his efforts to reclaim his sense of self. Leah Hewitt is correct when she notes that "Renoir's prison camp is a microcosm revealing the *postwar* anxieties and humiliations of French men" (47), and in the following paragraphs, I examine how these anxieties and humiliations affect Ballochet in particular, and the ways in which le caporal contributes to them.

Even when Ballochet leaves his dungeon and is forced once again to live within the pre-determined roles of allies and enemies, he refuses to be bound by them, expressing frustration with himself for acquiescing to le caporal's words, rather than with the German soldiers or le

caporal. After his insubordination, Ballochet is forced to perform the same discipline le caporal underwent before discovering Ballochet's dungeon. As Ballochet crawls through the prison yard, le caporal, who is being punished for another foiled escape attempt, catches up to him and, surprised to see his friend, asks him why he is there. Rather than acknowledge his punishment for insubordination, though, Ballochet explains that his presence there is to punish him for "having abandoned" his dungeon.

Ballochet's crime, then, is that he re-joins the French ranks through his snub of the German soldier, giving up his personal liberty to pretend at being part of a collective effort that he has already — to his mind — escaped from. While the war and the German high command were obviously responsible for Ballochet's self-described dungeon in the first place, Ballochet is clearly trusted — even respected — and was left to his own devices prior to his demonstration of insubordinate rudeness. He is, in a sense, a diplomat, using his dungeon as an embassy representing not France, but he himself, as one who has transformed and improved. Leah Hewitt notes the film's prediction of "the postwar situation within the context of the war's depiction:"

> In a proleptic vision, we see that the end of the war will not eliminate class differences, will not free French men of their problems, and the changes the end of the war will bring — such as the enfranchisement of women — loom ahead in scary ways. This is why being stuck in a prison camp even feels comforting to some of the men who, temporarily at least, do not have to contend with the new complexities of a postwar French society. (47)

By leaving his dungeon, Ballochet becomes a "knight of the raised rifle butt" according to his own sense of self, and he must spend the remainder of the film attempting to justify and reclaim the identity that was left behind in that space.

Ballochet's attempt to reclaim the degree of autonomy he once enjoyed in the camp leads him to privately explain his experience of Frenchness to le caporal in a latrine. Ballochet sits on a toilet as le caporal leans over a half-wall, watching him. Here, Ballochet admits to purposefully dropping his glasses before their first escape attempt with Pops. He treats the latrine with the solemnity of a confessional, and notes that his confession is "a painful one."

That Ballochet should choose to make amends in a latrine is curious and speaks to the way in which he sees the camp as Other, rife with infinite possibilities of use. Its use reminds us that "Trialectical thinking is difficult, for it challenges all conventional modes of thought and taken-for-granted epistemologies" ("Thirdspace" 54). While an open-concept camp latrine might force a certain degree of sociality among the men, its use here is different and challenges "conventional modes" of use. And, while Ballochet perches on a toilet, le caporal's higher viewpoint suggests that he is placing himself in a position of authority, having taken a panoptic gaze of Ballochet to encourage his new-found discipline.

After confessing his secret, Ballochet notes that his courage "only goes as far as the gas meters," again suggesting the importance of his independence from French society in camp, even if it makes him seem cowardly.[16] But, Ballochet's courage is not measured by his willingness to defy German authority; rather, it is measured by his unwillingness to acquiesce to imposed French identity, even if acquiescing means that he is more easily accepted by his comrades.

Here, in the latrine/confessional, though, Ballochet struggles with his identity. By being there, he is continuing his refusal to adhere to communal identity politics, even as he confesses that he wishes to. He tells le caporal that as a child he wanted to be Guynamer, the flying knight. He mocks the image of himself as a fighter pilot, chasing the Germans while wearing his glasses, and notes of his dungeon that he "withdrew into [his] pride" as le caporal looks at him with pity.

And yet, the pride he has experienced in his dungeon is the pride of self-realization, and of living "above the mêlée." He is not Guynamer, nor is he a French fighter pilot; instead, he is his own creation, and does not need to be defined by a national ideal. And, while he calls himself a rat, as though anticipating what might be said of him upon his potential return to Paris, he also notes that "courage is fine for the masses," separating himself once again from the collective majority.

It is a strange scene to be sure, but it is one that underscores Ballochet's thought process and his presence of mind. He is not delusional within the space of his dungeon. Rather, he finds clarity there in a manifestation of his imagination that bucks against the realities of war. As a space apart, it must be protected and preserved. Jean Douchet notes of the film that it "confronts the collapse of Western civilization and speaks of the necessity, in the resulting chaos, of rethinking our attitudes about life. Liberty is its sole subject" (301). Ballochet embodies the figure in search of liberty just as much as le caporal does, but he does it as Fontaine does in *A Man Escaped*: with the knowledge that liberty cannot be regained but must instead be forged anew within the new paradigm in which he finds himself.

So, while le caporal seems to see spaces like Paris and the camp as concrete manifestations of given socialities, Ballochet does not. Instead, his approach to the camp space falls in line with Soja's description of trialectical thinking — the thinking that accounts for Thirdspace: "disorderly, unruly, constantly evolving, unfixed, never presentable in permanent constructions" (54). Ballochet knows that his dungeon isn't a permanent solution for him, and yet it provides a space for his personal evolution as it evolves to meet his needs. Therefore, while Douchet goes on to describe Ballochet's dungeon as "easy, selfish, and cowardly" (303), I suggest that the dungeon is more properly read as Ballochet's version of escape, of finding a

better situation outside the constraints of French (or, now, Vichy) sociability, and of the now-defunct French military that promotes it.

In contrast, although le caporal continues to believe that he has the power to absolve Ballochet, his behaviour could also be described as "easy, selfish, and cowardly." He too has withdrawn into his pride, recklessly escaping from various camps only to be brought back again, managing only to elude any identity that does not connect him to the now-defunct French military, even as Ballochet succeeds[17] by removing himself altogether from the mêlée, and seeing the camp as a new country in which he can pay allegiance to himself. Le caporal's escape attempts do not make him brave, nor does Ballochet's refusal of nationalism make him cowardly.

This situation is perhaps best illustrated by Ballochet's last scene. Their roles reversed, Ballochet attempts to escape while le caporal remains safe in his barracks. Le caporal sits in the dark barracks, playing solitaire as the other men talk among themselves and as Ballochet readies himself to leave. Le caporal's solitary activity in the barracks reminds us of Ballochet's earlier stew-making, which was a way to make the dungeon more bearable by cutting himself off from the group. As le caporal sits, Ballochet shaves, looking at himself in the mirror. His face fills the glass, obscuring any background images. When he steps back from the mirror we see that he is dressed in dark, unmarked clothes, and is preparing to leave. While it may seem at first glance that his confession to le caporal has led to a change of heart in which he would adopt his friend's determination to escape back to France, Ballochet asserts that he is "leaving in search of human dignity," suggesting that the principles he held in his dungeon are those he still holds dear. Le caporal laughs and returns to his game of solitaire, but Ballochet persists. He removes his glasses and tells le caporal, "I find myself at one of those rare moments when dreams can align with reality, when the gratuitous act becomes practical and Don Quixote finds Sancho Panza."

Here Ballochet acknowledges that for him, striking off on his own is more practical than staying. He found dignity in the solitude of his dungeon and here, he is once again the man he was before le caporal shamed him out of his "splendid isolation," and before he grieved for his lost chance at French heroism. What's more, his comment that dreams can align with reality speaks directly to Soja's notion of Thirdspace ("Thirdspace 57) and presents a renewed understanding of the space of the camp as one in which reality meets imagination, and out of which a new society can be born. This moment is not another abandoning of Ballochet's dungeon but is rather a further turn toward the splendid isolation that he wishes to recover.

Afraid for his friend, le caporal protests Ballochet's exit. The camera cuts to Ballochet in his clean black turtleneck, towering over the shot, lit from below to accentuate his stature as the newly-minted hero of his own fate. In contrast, le caporal remains seated, his coat draped over his shoulders in a way that betrays his weakness in the cold. He begs Ballochet to stay and tells him that if he waits they can go together. Ballochet refuses this offer and insists that someone like him "can only go alone," again preferring the solitude of non-affiliation to comradeship. He puts on his coat and commands the room's attention by knocking a broomstick against the floor. Ballochet then makes his goodbyes and foils every excuse to stay that is suggested to him. The others ask if he carries a flag and he gestures overtly toward an invisible one that he says does not represent France, but *Gaz de France*, his employer. He emphatically states that he is a gas company employee, now proudly proclaiming his Parisian social status and signifying that this affiliation is perhaps just as ridiculous as a national one.[18]

Ballochet turns to leave and le caporal lunges toward him, tearily blocking the door. But Ballochet gently moves his friend out of the way and calmly walks through the door and down the hallway. The other men, all dressed alike, maintain their distance from Ballochet as he exits

the barracks, emphasizing their collectivity and Ballochet's refusal of belonging. The men

estimate the time it will take for Ballochet to cross the yard, reach the barbed wire, cut it, and be

free. They count slowly in unison, anticipating Ballochet's off-screen moves. After they have

counted two minutes, the men happily announce that he must have made it. The camera focuses

on le caporal's face, which fills the frame as three quick bursts of gunfire break the silence and

cause his expression to change from hope to despair. In this way we learn that Ballochet's search

for dignity is ultimately contained within the confines of the camp and does not extend beyond

the barbed wire. If, then, the camp's space represented to Ballochet "a radically new and

different form of citizenship" ("Thirdspace 51"), that citizenship exists only in the liminal spaces

of society and cannot endure beyond Ballochet's trialectical thinking.

In this chapter I have highlighted the ways in which *A Man Escaped* and *Le caporal

épinglé* represent the deeply felt pessimism of postwar France through their engagement with

camp space. Both Bresson and Renoir work with the spaces of the POW camp in ways that draw

me to closely examine these films, and both films depict the camp space as "Other," reflecting

Soja's understanding of Thirdspace as "a meeting point, a hybrid place, where one can move

beyond the existing borders" ("Thirdspace" 56). I suggest that they provide a reflection on the

consequences of the war and of France as a broken nation attempting to reunify amid a politics

of division and suspicion. In their pessimism, these films present their respective prison camps as

opportunities for increased self-awareness and renewed identity that includes various other

allegiances and ideologies that diffuse the divisive power of wartime nationhood. Hewitt notes

that "Instead of thinking through France's status as a nation in terms of internal resolution or a

settling of accounts in the postwar era, Renoir thinks of it as a reconciliation *across* national

boundaries" (47). I'm inclined to believe this is also true for Bresson in *A Man Escaped*. Since *A

Man Escaped is set in a German prison camp in Lyon, what recourse has Fontaine but to establish new alliances now that the France he knows — and even the France he is in — no longer exists? Similarly, since Ballochet is captured in Germany before, and held during, the Occupation, his identity as a French soldier in the camp is moot, and so he must come up with another way to enact meaning and identity that is authentic and current to his circumstances.

Thus, these men build themselves dungeons that facilitate their freedom. Only in the prison camp can Ballochet find the space in which to explore who he is and what he is fighting for, and he does so by refashioning his barracks to become a space of peace and social integration, "above the mêlée," in which work and play are balanced. Similarly, only in the prison camp can Fontaine be symbolically relieved from his duty to his country and instead focus on his duty to himself. While his dungeon is far darker than Ballochet's and is steeped in far more suspicion and violence (recall that before he meets Jost he must fight the walls, the door, and himself to be free), it also becomes one of peace and integration, and one which he refashions to suit his own wartime needs.

Unlike the British and American films I discuss in other chapters, these films do not present a romantic view of French national identity. Instead, escape is linked more to a quest for personal identity and has little to do with patriotism toward a nation that no longer exists as it once did — and especially one that would threaten the honour of soldiers taken prisoner. While their themes of escape might certainly serve as what Webster calls the "clandestine activity" that might mitigate judgment concerning the "failure" of French prisoners of war to prevent the Occupation ("Shorn Women" 60), these characters seem to have no intention of re-ingratiating themselves with the nation they so recently fought for. Instead of returning with raised rifle butts, they seem to have thrown the rifles away entirely, having embarked on a path that resists war and

side-taking altogether, in favour of reconciling with more personal determinants of their

identities and allegiance.

1. Webster's note that ten years would elapse between 1949's *Retour à la vie* and the next time prisoners of war were depicted on screen seems a more figurative than literal statement, since *A Man Escaped* was released in 1956.

2. As the shot lingers on the door, it reminds us that we, too, are inside the cell, becoming increasingly fascinated by the ways in which the space that contains us could facilitate our freedom through Fontaine.

3. As I will explain later, while his relationship with Terry has facilitated his continued work with the resistance through his warning letter, Terry, as Fontaine's new comrade, tells him that his work with the resistance is done and Fontaine seems to agree.

4. This act roughly mimics the propensity in British films like *The Password is Courage* (1962) for prison camp escapees to don German uniforms, momentarily acting as their captors and denying their allegiances as part of the escape plan.

5. After all, Blanchet is Fontaine's next-door neighbour and confidant, and yet he traverses nearly the entire floor before happening upon Blanchet's door.

6. As Terry leaves with the letter, Fontaine asks him for another favour — a safety pin, which contributes to Fontaine's freedom, facilitated through both Terry, for supplying it, and his neighbour in the next cell, who teaches him — through their Morse code conversation against the wall — to use it to pick the lock on his handcuffs. Terry also gives Fontaine a pencil (which he uses to write his letters), a razor blade, and some food, further enabling his eventual escape and further contributing to his increasing control of the cell as he secrets it away, making a home for it in the recess that contains his sanitary pail.

7. Fontaine's failure as part of the Resistance is apparent both in his capture, which might be received as a "raised rifle butt," and the information that "the post transmitter [he] was in charge of was aiding the Germans as they'd cracked the code. Having now participated — albeit inadvertently — in both Allied and Axis work, Fontaine must now work toward his own personal victory.

8. The idea of fighting oneself appears in *Le caporal épinglé* as well, when Ballochet clings to the prison camp because he would rather be a prisoner than a slave to his own thoughts and ideas in Paris.

9. This smacks of Ballochet's relationship with his disinterested watcher in *Le caporal épinglé*, and, perhaps, even more so of de Boeldieu's cordiality with Rauffenstein in *Grand Illusion*. This shot shows Jost talking slowly to the guard, whose back is to the camera. Jost looks down and smiles, as though talking to a friend. The shot cuts back to Fontaine, and we are left more unsure than ever of Jost's allegiance.

10. Again, this shows how easy shirking national allegiance can be — perhaps especially in wartime, considering the urgency of representation, and the stakes of wearing the right or wrong symbols.

11. He plops down in the chair and looks suspiciously at the female dentist. She asks him to remove his overcoat, which he does, revealing a faint "K G," standing for *Kriegsgefangener* [prisoner of war], marked on the back of his shirt. Here, like Ballochet, le caporal disregards his status and lives life normally — assuming that he might create and engage in a social situation, despite his obvious imprisonment.

12. Some examples include the romance between Karel Hasek (Michael Redgrave) and Celia Mitchell (in *The Captive Heart* [Basil Dearden (1946)]; and Schulz's (Sig Ruman) goofy

demeanor around the American prisoners in *Stalag 17* [Billy Wilder (1953)]. Because the genre is set between combat and domestic spaces, it makes sense that most of the films include elements of both.

13. I say "almost" here because, when le caporal is in the dentist's chair, the scene cuts away to newsreel footage of the London blitz, showing us the outside world and again demonstrating the more insular experiences of the French, who are in limbo while the war rages on. The interruption is rectified when we are swiftly returned to the dentist's door, and le caporal's next visit. As Erika opens the door, we see that le caporal is clearly besotted with her, and he cordially addresses her mother in German, allying himself with this pocket of Germans as the door literally closes on his compatriots.

14. Here we are reminded of the suggestion in *Grand Illusion* (1937) that French Maréchal and German Elsa might triumph over the war through their love.

15. He is perhaps also demonstrating his fear of what the postwar environment of the film knew to be true: that le caporal might be treated as a "knight of the raised rifle butt" unless he escapes.

16. Arguably, Ballochet's courage has made it to Germany, and has manifested itself in his desire to have his own space in which he can cook, and work, and play, regardless of the war outside, or of his social status back in Paris.

17. While it is true that Ballochet ultimately dies during an escape attempt, explicitly not eluding the German guards, the set-up for his escape in the scene before it suggests that he remains — at least in his mind — extricated from the war.

18. It also again reinforces his isolation, as he is the only gas company employee there — at least, that we know of — to form his team of one on the search for dignity.

CHAPTER THREE
"Meat's meat": American exceptionalism in postwar Prisoner of War cinema

Halfway through 1965's *King Rat*, American POW Corporal King (George Segal) cooks a feast for his closest British and American adherents at Changi, a hellish Malayan camp run by the Japanese during World War II. A nobody in America, King's fast talking and shady dealing have made him Changi's top dog. His followers outrank him militarily, and yet his control of capital within the camp makes him their leader.

In the scene, Marlowe (James Fox), Larkin (Denholm Elliott), and McCoy (Leonard Rossiter) sneak into a concrete cell where King is waiting for them, and the sight of meat and the promise of sustenance immediately transforms the wasted prisoners from surly men into giddy, slavering animals. They look incredulous as they watch King cube the meat, standing over it as Larkin excitedly asks if it's "real pig." King scoops up the meat as Marlowe joins in, congratulating King and asking him where he got it. King remains coy as their eagerness to eat the meat builds. The men jump and dance, piling on one another and circling the room, forgetting themselves in their inability to contain their enthusiasm. Their laughter is raucous and they cackle as they lose control of any sensibilities they had before.

As the meat simmers in the pot, King tells one of his lackeys, Tex (Todd Armstrong) to check the door seals, noting that "if the smell gets out [they will] get torn apart." This statement comes just before King takes a ladle-full of stew and moves toward the men, lifting it to his lips, blowing on the steaming concoction, and taking a taste. He passes the ladle to Max (Patrick O'Neal), and on to Marlowe and Larkin, who assert that it needs "only a dash" of salt to make the meal complete, their culinary pickiness only thinly veiling their desperation.

Until this scene, King has been both celebrated and reviled for his capitalistic prowess and his sleight-of-hand-business acumen. His followers are comfortable in their roles as his employees, forsaking their ranks — and even their national identities — in order to benefit from King's position of power. But in this scene, King reveals the truth about identity in the camp. The image of the men, sweating, licking their chops in anticipation, paired with the warning that if others smell the stew they will be "torn apart," reminds us that human identity is on the decline in the camp, and that at this point in their captivity the men are more akin to dogs than the men they were before camp life. After the men taste the meat, Marlowe, King's most ardent follower, eagerly leans forward, again asking King where he got the meat. The camera cuts to King, his face turned downward toward the stew. Stirring, he replies, "it's Hawkins' dog."

Silence falls as the camera cuts to the men and captures a gamut of expressions: contemplation turns to realization, which turns to disbelief. Marlowe laughs, believing King's assertion to be a joke, and Larkin insists that King said it was pig. King corrects him, remarking on his silence when Larkin said it was pig. Now horrified by their ingestion of their comrade's beloved pet, the men look nauseous. Marlowe, in close up, says that he doesn't know what he's going to do, as he negotiates the boundary between the man he was — Hawkins' friend — and what he has become. King then breaks the tension by smiling and noting, "Dog, pig, what's the big difference? Meat's meat."

And indeed, the lesson in *King Rat* and the other American POW films made in the twenty years after World War II is that meat is, above all, only meat, regardless of where it comes from. Crucially, much like British and French films about POW camp experiences, American POW films portray POW camps as spaces away from both home and the front lines that insist on eliminating the geographical distance of the United States from their wartime

enemies, and most of their allies. With that distance gone, American prisoners of war must interact with and rely on allies and enemies alike. Often, these once-stark identities become blurred and, as in *King Rat*, the difference between enemy and ally becomes difficult to discern. Meat is meat. And, like the flesh eaten in the scene above, identity in these films is easily manipulated and easily rendered, implying a push back against the culture of American exceptionalism promoted in the years after the war. The films' attention to the degradation and reformation of American wartime identity as, at best, nothing special and, at worst, something inhuman, signifies a reckoning of two decades' worth of identity crises and paranoia.

While contemporary combat films have given us highly visible American heroes who fight the enemy bravely and proudly, American POW cinema of the 1950s and early 1960s offers American anti-heroes, like King, bent on saving their own skin, even at the expense of their fellow Americans. Juxtaposing this move against American collectivity is the tremendous effort made in these films to distinguish between enemy ideology and the people forced to embody it. That is, as in the British film *The Wooden Horse* (1950), these films go out of their way to depict what Martin S. Dworkin refers to as "clean" enemies. According to Dworkin, these enemies

> may wear Nazi insignia, being Germans in uniform [...but] they despise all ideological considerations, which soil the military purities of warfare with civilian concerns. Politics, dirty civilian politics, brought on the defeat — if not the war itself. The soldiers, the ordinary decent Germans, are not to blame. It is the politicians who are — and they happen to be Nazis. (523)

Dworkin is right that these films tend to separate soldier from ideology and, while he refers to depictions of Germans specifically, American films also depict righteous Japanese figures that often challenge American ideals. The anti-enemy stance of so many combat films made during

and just after the war gives way in POW cinema to the understanding that everyone in these films shares commonalities, and that *anyone* can be a hero, a villain, or any other identity commensurate with their wartime experience. This is not easily done, though. Of "turning old enemies into friends," Dworkin notes that "to turn Germans into movie heroes, with whom we can associate our sympathies, requires either an unthinkable repudiation of ourselves, for having been their adversaries, or some alteration of the past, to make it all seem right" (522). My discussion will show how the German heroes in *Decision Before Dawn* (1951) and *36 Hours* (1964) exemplify this self-repudiation to varying degrees through their refusal to allow American exceptionalism to steamroll allyship, and I will also demonstrate how *Stalag 17* (1953) and *King Rat* show that heroism and villainy are not determined by the signifiers of national identity.

Decision Before Dawn and *36 Hours* stand apart from the other films in terms of their unconventional settings. *Decision Before Dawn* features a German prisoner bound psychologically and ideologically to an American camp who is allowed some degree of physical freedom from his captors to gather intelligence. He is sent to Germany as a spy for the Americans. But, while he might use this opportunity to escape, he operates very much within the psychological confines of his imprisonment and, at the same time, uses it to further his ideological stance to free Germany from the Nazi regime. *36 Hours* involves drugging an American spy and moving him to a German prison that has been fantastically constructed to look like an American hospital. The surreal transposition of Americanness onto Germanness suggests the instability of both identifiers and the space provides the liminality from the war necessary for both the captive and his captor to reassess their parts in the war. Both of these films have much in common with the others I discuss, and I would be remiss if I failed to mention their unconventional approaches to the physical prison camp space.

As I have discussed in other chapters, the prison camp space is crucial for this critical shift in wartime identity politics. The POW camp provides a space in which American prisoners are neither isolated nor exceptional. Michel Foucault notes that "Discipline sometimes requires enclosure, the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself. It is the protected place of disciplinary monotony" (*Discipline & Punish* 141). While here Foucault describes a prison space, his words might just as easily describe postwar American isolation. In these films, the camp space comes to represent a mockery of American idealism in which American prisoners are not isolated, and are instead confronted with the problems associated with their country's exceptionalist ideology.

My reading of the films mentioned above is contextualized in history. Despite film noir's cautionary tales of lone individuals cut off from society after wandering beyond the reach of an overarching and isolated authority, the 1950s saw some members of American society become less beholden to American exceptionalism and to adopt a broader, less nationalistic, identity. While S.E. Wilmer notes that 1950s American family life as represented in television shows like *Ozzie and Harriet* and *Leave it to Beaver* "suggested an ideal sense of security, conformity and homogeneity" (128) that was welcomed, many, as Paul Fussell argues, resisted and challenged what American historian John Bodnar calls "attempts to consign [American] attitudes to virtuous images and stories" (Bodnar 6). Moreover, those who aligned America's involvement in the war with a more humanitarian effort minimized American distinctiveness, again challenging the louder rhetoric of a national identity of exceptionalism by making America part of — at least the wider Western — community.

In this chapter, I discuss how the films listed above challenge the wartime enemy/ally binary by offering viewers "enemy" heroes, and by suggesting that enemies and allies are far

more subjectively defined than combat alone allows. I also offer examples of camp insularity and show how it contributes to character reassessments of their identities as they become less starkly defined by nation, and gender. Finally, I describe how these films present repudiations of American exceptionalism in favour of a broader understanding of wartime identity and allyship. These films suggest that, if meat is meat, either everyone is special or nobody is. While we might expect, in an American film genre, to encounter narratives of Americans overcoming obstacles, the POW genre provides much bleaker depictions of prisoner interactions that dismantle exceptionalist attitudes by showing enemy-heroes, domestic enemies, and enough self-repudiation to challenge Ozzie and Harriet's secure, comfortable, and homogeneous way of life. The Americans in these cinematic camps exist in a fractured condition. There is a kind of collectivity, but it is treated with caution and tied to the pursuit of an individual's capitalist goals, as in *Stalag 17* and *King Rat*. This unity is fraught with instability and is inflected by an individualist, competitive attitude that marks it as specifically "American."

Michel Foucault's theory of docile bodies as subjected and practiced, the discipline of which "increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)" (*Discipline & Punish* 138) will be useful here, especially given the importance of human utility over and above national allegiance in these films. In *Power & Paranoia*, cinema scholar Dana Polan also points out representations of "social positioning, the fixities of a system, the delegation of roles, [and] the assignation of goals within an ideologically defined space" (6) when discussing the American context of World War II, both on the home front and on the front lines. Polan uses Foucault's work to attempt to understand these changes to spatial criteria, looking at "social space as a kind of engridding where potentially separate(d) social elements find a position, a connection, a sense" (6). Polan writes:

For Foucault, we are never in contact with a pristine reality that would exist outside our griddings. The stabilities of our social languages work to cut up space in precise ways to govern our behavior, to calculate which things (practices, ideas, speech-acts, etc.) we can produce and which ones we can't. Our perception is an effect of our social place, and everything we do is readable in relation to a system of inclusions and exclusions that work to make up our social reality. (6–7)

Foucault's claim that "we are never in contact with a pristine reality that would exist outside our griddings" relies on the perceptions brought into spaces, and he suggests that we cannot invent new identities that are completely free from the trappings we exist in. As we see in *Decision Before Dawn*, and *Stalag 17*, *36 Hours,* and *King Rat*, each "potentially separate(d) social [element finds] a position, a connection, a sense" (6) through the roles they occupy within the space. Enemies and allies know who they are in relation to one another, and underdogs establish themselves as leaders within a social hierarchical system that is at once familiar and malleable. But, where Foucault's work becomes problematic is in his suggestion of the stability of space and the ways that social languages govern behaviour and reinforce roles and ideologies. This suggests that the creation of space infiltrates life, but that life has little or no control over the redefinition of space. Still, Foucault notes that "social griddings are never *faits accomplis* — purely efficient and entirely successful impositions of social power over social subjects," and he goes on to posit that this allows "all the more for there to be momentary resistances to power, little acts of subversion that respond to power's little acts of enunciation. The more power is removed from a singular expressive function, the more it is simultaneously less and more effective" (Polan 7).

As in other of my chapters, Judith Butler's work on gender performance provides support for my analyses, especially as it relates to assumptions of heteronormative behaviour in camp settings. Since, as I argue, the cinematic POW camp allows for new ways of behaving in social spaces, it stands to reason that performances of gender and relationship would follow suit. Robert Eberwein's *Armed Forces: Masculinity and Sexuality in the American War Film* also helps, especially with regard to the close relationships between King and Marlowe in *King Rat*, and Harry (Harvey Lembeck) and Animal (Robert Strauss) in *Stalag 17*.

Also useful to my purpose is Edward Soja's "Thirdspace" as a merging of reality and imagination that occurs when a new mode of spacial awareness is applied to a given liminal space. Thirdspace is what Soja calls "a purposefully tentative and flexible term that attempts to capture what is actually a constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances, and meanings" ("Thirdspace" 50). Unlike Foucault's observations about the stability of space, Soja believes that Thirdspace both acts and is acted upon, facilitating spatial practice even as a given practice evolves. I have used this notion as a means of explaining what I see in cinematic POW camps as the formation of new societies with new rules dictating what is and is not acceptable in performances of identity — wartime or otherwise.

In *Carceral Geography: Spaces and Practices of Incarceration*, Dominique Moran builds on the idea of Thirdspace when she allows that carceral spaces in particular are both social and psychological and are consistently produced and reproduced (3). Moran's work also helps me to elucidate the the camp space as liminal, representing "a temporarily transitive space, which although it may perhaps become for some a space of frustrated partiality, may also have a cumulatively transoformative effect over time" ("Between Outside and Inside" 343).

While much has been written about *Stalag 17*, there has been surprisingly little criticism about the other films discussed here. Martin Dworkin's distinction between German soldiers and Nazi politicians has already been useful elsewhere in this thesis and will continue to be. His work ties in well with my contention that the liminal camp space allows for re-produced identities, and he notes that making allies of the Germans on screen

> may require an imaginative wrench, and a renovation of memory, that the movie makers are less able to manage gracefully than can professional adepts at *Realpolitik*. For, to admire the Germans' military prowess — or their peacetime regenerative power — is no more difficult than to admire ourselves, for having been superior in battle and strategically magnanimous in victory. (522)

Meanwhile, John Bodnar's *The "Good War" in American Memory* provides historical and social contexts for these films. Bodnar claims that American involvement in World War II was highly contested, and that it resulted in an upheaval in understandings of American identity in the years following the war. Bodnar sees that these disagreements were often reflected in cinema and, while he does not focus on POW films *per se*, his work certainly aligns with my larger contention that the re-produced identities forged in prison camp spaces reflect national identity crises in the postwar era.

In this chapter I also draw on American pop culture historian Mike Chopra-Gant's work. While the films I discuss tend to align with Bodnar's view of the tenuousness of American collective identity in the postwar period, in the early 1950s, the rhetoric of national collectivity and American values was also strong. In *Hollywood Genres and Postwar America: Masculinity, Family and Nation in Popular Movies and Film Noir,* Chopra-Gant insists that, "unlike the films noirs, the most popular films of the time celebrate traditional American values and provide an

impression of the mood of American culture in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War which is better characterized as optimistic about the future of America than as anxious and paranoid" (27). Chopra-Gant characterizes "traditional American values" as best represented through the mythologies of America as a land of opportunity and of articulating national identity through assimilation (57–58). He also cites Geoffrey Gorer, who notes in *The American People: A Study in National Character* that "Americans differ from the rest of the world in their belief that nationality is an act of will, rather than the result of chance or destiny" (188).

  I have suggested elsewhere in this study that British films like *The Captive Heart* actively promote this same standard for postwar notions of Britishness, indirectly rendering Gorer's claim hyperbolic, and I similarly claim that American POW films problematize Chopra-Gant's insistence that postwar cinema optimistically reflects "traditional American values." In the POW films examined in this chapter, American characters are not at home, and so cannot rely on America as the land of opportunity, nor can they expect those around them to assimilate to their national ideals. While these films were not the most popular ones released in their respective years,[1] they were not unpopular, despite their being far from optimistic about the future of American culture, perhaps resisting Chopra-Gant's assessment that only by celebrating traditional American values did a film garner box office success.

  Robert Dean reminds us that while celebrating traditional values in postwar American society may have been popular, it went hand-in-hand with a culture of suspicion. He writes that "the defense of national security took on new cultural meanings, often producing a deep suspicion of the motives and concealed practices of the state" (612). However, despite his observations that "the after-effects of World War II left the United States on a permanent state of alert" and that "despite the victory over Germany and Japan, the nation remained on the lookout

for enemies and dangers" (60), John Bodnar splits the difference between Chopra-Gant and Dean and asserts that, "the memory and meaning of that war was actually a matter of contention among Americans who lived through those times" (1). He writes:

> The controversy was lengthy and extensive [...] because ultimately it was not so much about the war as about national identity. The cataclysm of war [...] forced Americans to consider both the virtuous and the violent sides of their nature. At stake in the debate was, in fact, the myth of American exceptionalism with its attendant faith in the promise of individualism. In this creed it was an aggressive sense of personal freedom for all and a hatred for all forms of tyranny that made America a special place and offered its citizens and the rest of the world the best chance to create a future better than the past. In such a culture strength was favored over weakness, self-reliance over cooperation. (2)

First on the list of the films in this section is *Decision Before Dawn*. *Decision Before Dawn* follows German POW Karl Maurer (Oskar Werner), a young and idealistic medic. Near the beginning of the film, American Lieutenant Rennick (Richard Basehart) takes Maurer prisoner and, after seeing his fellow prisoners mistreated, Maurer agrees to spy for the Allies, explaining that he loves his country, but that he believes "fighting against them now is fighting for them." As a POW and a spy for the Americans, Maurer's task is to parachute into Germany from the Allied headquarters in France and follow the 11th Panzer Corps on foot to guage their position and report back to Rennick. While Rennick initially regards Maurer as his enemy, he comes to see Maurer — whom he code-names "Happy" — as his savior and a beacon of hope. Maurer becomes the film's hero and we are encouraged to cheer him on, even through American air raids, as he nervously moves through his homeland in pursuit of his target, cautiously attempting to blend in with his own people while betraying the Third Reich. Excepting a few

Reich-supporting Germans whom Maurer encounters on his mission, the film does not demonize the German people, but instead presents variously affiliated humans attempting to make it through the hardship of war. While *Decision Before Dawn* is not set in a POW camp, Maurer is a POW and I argue that his imprisonment extends to and describes his situation in the spaces he occupies as he works for the Americans, and that these spaces are produced and re-produced — along with Maurer — in ways that resemble in crucial ways the prison camp experiences we see in other films.

Stalag 17, the second text examined in this section, depicts a group of American prisoners of war attempting to escape from a German camp. Their plans are foiled, though, when they discover that one of their number is a German spy. The natural suspect is Sergeant Sefton (William Holden), a cynical and somewhat smarmy loner who, like Corporal King in *King Rat*, cares nothing for military identity and becomes the embodiment of capitalist efforts in the camp, much to the others' chagrin. He is indifferent and largely unsympathetic but for his somewhat gentle treatment of Joey (Robinson Stone), a prisoner suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Like King, Sefton reminds us of the tension between collective wartime selflessness and capitalist American ideals. Sefton's character brings the rift in America's wartime ideology into relief by demonstrating that pursuing individual goals is better than collectivity in the long run. Both Sefton's and King's embodiment of the fractured condition of American ideals is not insignificant and contributes to both films' reflections of their postwar contexts in terms of embracing individual enterprise at the expense of collectivity that could so easly be conflated with communism. The film — along with its extreme changes in tone, from more serious scenes involving Sefton to the shenanigans performed by Harry Shapiro and his buddy, Animal — takes us through various camp hijinks until the spy, who is not Sefton, is

found and brought to justice. Crucially, clearing his own name is not enough for Sefton to feel completely part of the group he nominally belongs to as a fellow POW, and in the end he would rather leave than be one of them.

Like *Decision Before Dawn* and *Stalag 17*, *36 Hours,* another of my texts*,* is also largely about loyalty. The film features Major Jefferson Pike (James Garner), who is privy to the Allies' top-secret plans for the D-Day landings, being drugged and kidnapped by Nazi spies and brought to what appears to be a military hospital in Germany. Pike is led to believe that he has lost six years to amnesia, that the war has ended, and that he is married to his nurse, Anna (Eva Marie Saint), who wears his mother's wedding ring. Major Walter Gerber (Rod Taylor), a German army doctor, orchestrates the ploy. Speaking in a flawless American accent, and insisting the other German military personnel do the same, he builds a makeshift "American" hospital and fills Pike's room with his personal belongings, provides fake newspapers,[2] and has Pike's hair grayed and his vision blurred to keep up the ruse. Thus, while Pike believes he is in a bright and shiny American hospital, he is actually in a makeshift German prison camp. Gerber is able to detain Pike long enough to extract details of the landings from him, under the guise of treating his amnesia. Increasingly fed up himself with the SS though, Gerber ends up helping Pike, thus embodying the distinction between "clean Germans" and "dirty politics" that Dworkin describes. With Gerber, and a few other good Germans helping them out, Pike and Anna are able to escape and the Nazis are unable to learn about the D-Day landings in time to thwart the mission.

As in the scene described at the start of this chapter, *King Rat* details the lives of Corporal King and his followers in Changi as their capitalist enterprise of buying and selling food and other goods disrupts the military hierarchy in the camp, and shows us that greed and desperation trump loyalty to national and military values. *King Rat* shows us the betrayal of the supposedly

unshakeable allegiance to nation that uniforms and oaths signify and suggests that if capitalism is stronger than national loyalty, then victory can go to whoever makes the most money, rather than to the "land of the free." All the officers in this film but one defer to King. The holdout is Provost Marshal Grey who, despite his characterization as the film's villain, resists King's empire and instead tries to fight against corruption by being unwaveringly fair, even though he is consistently unsuccessful and rather infuriating. The narrative takes us through King's relationship with Marlowe and his antagonism toward Grey until news arrives that the war is over. At that point, the men must all learn how to live outside the camp again, which proves difficult.

Each of these films uses the POW experience to suggest the flaws found in the bedrock of what identities are tied to, from military obedience to national allegiance to heteronormative lives and loves, and each presents Allies and enemies as mutually human, even when war attempts to strip such humanity away. In doing so, they poke holes in the overt American exceptionalism that was promoted in the postwar period and instead offer narratives of self-repudiation and humility.

Decision Before Dawn is the earliest example of a cinematic potshot aimed at American exceptionalism. In choosing to spy for the Americans in order to reclaim his war-torn country from the Nazis, Maurer immediately appears to us as a hero, going beyond the call of duty to effect change. Naturally, we see tests of his character from other German soldiers: first Tiger (Hans Christian Blech), another POW working for the Americans — and one who seems untrustworthy — and then Scholtz (Wilfried Seyferth), an unscrupulous and mercenary SS man who befriends Maurer and grows suspicious of his cash and apparent freedom. Maurer is an

angel by comparison, and we trust him to complete his mission, which equates to treason against his own country, for the greater good.

While Maurer's goodness amid "bad" Germans complicates the ally/enemy binary of the film and the genre to which it belongs, this structure is complicated at its heart by Maurer's relationship with Rennick. The film's last sequence depicts Rennick swimming to an American-held German shore, returning to his unit after Maurer sacrifices his life to save Rennick's. Once ashore, Rennick makes himself known to the Americans guarding the beach. As he recovers from his harrowing swim, surrounded by his fellow countrymen who are celebrating American advancement into Germany, Rennick's guilt over twenty-year-old Maurer's sacrifice is palpable.

When at the end of the film Rennick reflects on Maurer's sacrifice, he thinks of a young man able to see beyond wartime side taking as a means of saving his country, even if it involves protecting the life of an enemy. Maurer's sacrifice might suggest that he sees Rennick as an image of what Germany once stood for, and could stand for again. However, I don't think Maurer sees Rennick as an individual hero. Rather, Maurer sees Rennick as an American whose side might with the war, and whose help might secure agency for the German people after having been under Hitler's thumb for so long. For Rennick, though, Maurer is not just a German, but a person with ideals separate from Rennick's. Rennick admires him, and this admiration serves to separate Rennick from the other Americans in his unit. At the end of the film Colonel Devlin (Gary Merrill) addresses Rennick's grief by calling Maurer a traitor, despite his reasons for helping the Americans. Rennick then places the blame for the young man's death on the Americans, noting that they didn't hesitate to use him, and Devlin fires back, replying, "in a war, to save lives you use whoever you can."

This scene exemplifies Dworkin's assertion that making allies of the Germans is difficult and requires "an imaginative wrench, and a renovation in memory" (522). Back at the Allied headquarters, Devlin must see Maurer as an enemy so that we can understand Rennick's ideological shift. Rennick, though, comes to see Maurer as a fellow human being, and seems, at least at times, to forget his German nationality, and Maurer's identity as "enemy" can no longer be maintained. While Rennick's full interaction with Maurer and his resulting change of heart doesn't happen within the confines of the prison camp, Maurer is still a POW, and must navigate the German land he traverses for the Americans armed with new loyalties and assumptions that contradict those that sent him into battle in the first place. Moreover, in her study of carceral spaces, Dominique Moran considers the liminal prison space to extend to "the experiences of prisoners [...] who come face-to-face with persons and objects which come from and represent their lives on the 'outside'" ("Between Outside & Inside" 343). Because Maurer remains a prisoner despite being somewhat able to traverse Germany, he experiences whatever space he's in as a liminal, carceral one. He therefore approaches that space differently than he otherwise would as he encounters "free" Germans who would kill him if they knew his secret, American-driven agenda. And because Rennick also operates in Germany (much like the guards in other POW camps operate in the same spaces as their prisoners), he, too, is changed by his interaction with the space of Germany as one that he exerts a certain amount of power in, but does not understand or control. He comes to understand Maurer through their mutual endangerment, and his trust in him extends far beyond the allegiances signified by the nationality and shared military objectives that he apparently shares with Devlin.

By the end of the film, Rennick clearly sees Maurer not as a traitor, and not as a POW, but as an ally. Rennick's initial adherence to wartime loyalties to his nation — which caused

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him to hesitate in teaming up with Maurer and the other German prisoners of war — is no longer foremost, as is obvious when in the final scene his driver cavalierly calls Maurer "just another kraut." The camera then cuts to a low-angle shot of Rennick, as we hear him in voiceover: "A man stays alive as long as he is remembered, and is killed only by forgetfulness. So long, Happy. Let your real name remain unknown, and let the memory of your sacrifice serve as a key to the meanings of treason. It was to me."

Rennick's choice to keep Maurer anonymous seems at first a bit disappointing. After all, Maurer has just given his life for Rennick and it would seem the least Rennick could do would be to acknowledge Maurer's true identity. However, Maurer's anonymity also reinforces the idea that no one is special in war — that meat is meat. By acknowledging Maurer's sacrifice and their mutual humanity, Rennick softens the hardline divisions between ally and enemy and obliterates the cavalry driver's exceptionalist sentiment.

Maurer can be seen as a Foucauldian "docile body" who is "subjected, used, transformed and improved" (*Discipline & Punish* 136) through his imprisonment, but also transformed and — in his completely selfless death — improved in terms of Rennick's initial disdain for Germans as a people group. But toward the end of the film we see that Rennick, too, is a docile body who has been subjected and used as a soldier, and transformed and improved as Maurer's ally. As in *King Rat*'s dissolution of ranks and boundaries, *Decision Before Dawn* offers a complex and sobering look at the humanity shared by allies and enemies alike, despite being made a mere five years after the war's end. Very few of the Germans Maurer encounters on his mission truly embrace the politics of Nazism; rather, he meets men who are tired of the war and who want their lives back. Even the officer he briefly works for, Major Hauptman, is deeply humanized, balancing military protocol with compassion and understanding. While this was also done in

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Britain in films like *The Wooden Horse* (1950) and *Albert, R.N.* (1953), British cinema certainly did not go out of its way to feature a German hero in a POW film.[3]

Instead, as in other American films discussed here, *Decision Before Dawn* is primarily about expressions of loyalty, relationship, and identity. Just after their first meeting, Rennick takes Maurer to the prison camp before heading to his unit headquarters, which is set up in a convent — a liminal space between the physical and the spiritual that offers sanctuary from the combat raging beyond its doors. When Colonel Devlin decides to celebrate after his idea to recruit German volunteers from their pool of prisoners of war is approved, he raises a glass and shouts, "*Prost!*," and the men raise their glasses and reply in kind. This action is extraordinary and curious. While the American plan is to infiltrate German intelligence, the plan is to recruit Germans to the task. By exclaiming "*Prost!*," the Americans are playing at being Germans themselves, crossing the figurative line separating Axis and Allies, and eliding their staunchly American identities with the language of German merrymaking.

Further, while in the camp, Maurer speaks with Richter (Robert Freitag), another German POW. Richer defends the Germans who volunteer to help the Americans, noting that there is no difference between the volunteers and those they're offering to help and that in blindly following the Nazis, the German soldiers found themselves "forced to fight the wrong enemy." While this line reinforces America's righteous wartime image by suggesting that the Americans are the German people's "wrong enemy," this acknowledgment also sets Richter up as "the wrong enemy" for the Americans to fight, and complicates the dichotomy of World War II enemies and allies bound by national borders. Richter therefore begins reconceptualizing the space of the camp as a recruiting station, distinguishing between "the physical space of material nature and

the mental space of cognition and representation" (*Postmodern Geographies* 120) to try to create

a new socially produced space.[4]

Released just two years after *Decision Before Dawn*, 1953's *Stalag 17* also cinematically

elides and complicates enemy and ally identities in the camp space, and upon its release was

immensely successful.[5] While the identity politics in *Stalag 17* might appear slightly less heavy-

handed than those in *Decision Before Dawn*, the film offers complications that reflect *Decision*'s

sentiments and work to reinforce a non-exceptionalist view of American identity.

Except for Sargent Sefton, and sometimes his friend Cookie (Gill Stratton), the men in

Barracks 4 of Stalag 17 embrace working-class American exceptionalism. According to *Senses*

of Cinema writer Sander Lee, for these men, "the world is an unambiguous place filled with

obvious good guys and bad guys. As long as they act in the expected manner, the Americans in

the barracks [...] are all good and the Germans are all bad. The best and most trusted people are

the ones who talk the best game, spouting patriotism and openly defying the Germans in doomed

attempts to escape" (n.p.).

But, throughout the film, Sefton sees the camp space as, in Lee's words, "a microcosm of

the world at large, a world of lies and pretense where slogans of freedom and equality mask a

reality grounded in prejudice and power games" (n.p.). Of course, the other Americans see the

space of the barracks as one of punishment, but also one in which all but Sefton can be trusted.

Price (Peter Graves), the spy, sees the camp as an assignment. The film therefore offers different

perspectives of the camp space and aligns nicely with Soja's understanding of Thirdspace as "the

insight that there is not just one single definition of space and spatiality but rather a multitude of

approaches and perspectives" ("Thirdspace" 50).

This space of different practices and perspectives offers Price the chance to blend in, just as it allows Sefton the opportunity to opt out of the group dynamic. Unlike the others, he cares only about himself in any given moment while the others work as a team — the result of their national, military, and situational circumstances. Because Sefton takes a more individual perspective, making himself the exceptional one in a room of men who embody American exceptionalism, the others see him as a potential enemy collaborator. The scene in which he cooks himself an egg makes this more than apparent. While the others eat potato soup that is mistaken for laundry water, Sefton anticipates Corporal King in *King Rat* when he heats a pan on the furnace and cracks an egg into it, drawing fellow prisoners Animal and Harry toward him with the scent. Duke (Neville Brand), another prisoner who is highly suspicious of Sefton, presses him about the egg's origins. Sefton tells him that he traded 45 cigarettes for the egg — the ones he won in his bet that some of their countrymen, Manfredi and Johnson, who attempt escape at the beginning of the film, wouldn't make it out of the camp alive. Duke responds loudly, noting that Manfredi and Johnson had been shot the night before, angrily accusing Sefton of moving from trader to traitor. Sefton then argues that trading does not equate to collaborating, and challenges the dualism held by Duke and the others. He then notes, "This ain't no Salvation Army. This is everybody for himself, dog eat dog."

Sefton's understanding of a prison camp as "dog eat dog" is familiar. Like Corporal King in *King Rat*, Sefton understands that national identity means little in a prison camp, and that instead, meat is meat. Rather than the Allies-good-Axis-bad binary adhered to by his fellow Americans, Sefton's understanding of the prison camp allows for the "multitude of approaches and perspectives" of space and spatiality that Soja discusses ("Thirdspace" 50). According to Soja, Thirdspace does not urge "either/or" logic, but "both/and," marking "a place of critical

exchange where the geographical imagination can be expanded to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives that have heretofore been considered by the epistemological referees to be incompatible, uncombinable" (50). While through their hatred of the Germans and those who trade with them the general population of Americans in the camp believe Axis/Ally perspectives to be "incompatible" and "uncombinable," though, they are proven wrong, first by Sefton and, as I will discuss later, by Price.

Later in the film, Sefton's constant refusal to cooperate with his fellow prisoners leads them to ambush him as he sleeps, and they beat him as he lies in his bed. Sefton then gets up and argues for his self-reliance, and suggests that their desires for freedom are not supported by their country: "Let's say you make it to Switzerland. Say to the States. And then what? They ship you out to the Pacific, send you on another plane, you get shot down again. Only this time you wind up in a Japanese prison camp. That is, if you're lucky." Here Sefton articulates the realities of the war outside, and of the prisoners' national obligations: as soldiers, these men do not have the right to go home to stay. They are at the mercy of the military and must make the most of their time in the camp to explore different beliefs and allegiances that are the foundations of identity.

The film therefore uses the space of the camp as one in which to contemplate the instability of allegiances, and it pits naive conceptions of American exceptionalism against Sefton's more cynical viewpoint that draws on individual exceptionalism to find a compromise, reflecting "the world at large." This largely reflects the nation's division between those who aligned their feelings about national identity with people like General Douglas MacArthur and organizations like the American Legion, believing that militarization was the key to American success, and those whose postwar national identity was more closely aligned with President Truman and, later, Dwight Eisenhower. Eisenhower had reservations about exerting military

power, as did organizations like the American Veterans Committee, who "kept alive the idea that World War II had been fought primarily for the realization of human rights everywhere" (Bodnar 69). While MacArthur believed that it was the duty of American soldiers to wage and win wars, Bodnar tells us that Eisenhower "came to represent the idea that it was acceptable to hold deep reservations about American military power and the very idea of war" (81), and that his election and "embrace of 'co-existence' with the Russians" represented a more moderate approach to the Cold War, and a sense of caution concerning new military engagements when the experience of World War II was still so clear in the nation's memory (82). While in Barracks 4 of Stalag 17 most of the men are eager to represent their country's military might and achieve success, Sefton's reservations are understandable and challenge the blind nationalism his compatriots embrace.

That Sefton's individualism is what makes him so dangerous to his American colleagues in *Stalag 17* suggests that the film gauges the controversy of its time more acutely than it lets on. While ostensibly fortified as part of the general outrage over Pearl Harbor, national identity as actually eked out through the violence and trauma of the war was not so easily defined. This lack of definition made postwar national identity what Bodnar calls, "a topic of dispute but a subject of public performance in rituals, commemorations, and various political and cultural expressions," and yet "the vast trove of representations of the war in American culture ultimately told a cluttered story in which virtue was forced to share cultural and political space with streams of doubt, cynicism, and regret" (3–4). Thus, depending on which stream of doubt, cynicism, or regret was most trusted at a given time, fighting "the wrong enemy" seems remarkably likely.

The Thirdspace nature of the cinematic camp space provides a good place to sort out ideas of who the "right" and "wrong" enemies might be, since it provides a space where one can

be "materialist and idealist, structuralist and humanist, disciplined and transdisciplinary at the same time" ("Thirdspace" 50). While early on in *Decision Before Dawn* Richter warns of fighting the wrong enemy, the American prisoners in *Stalag 17* take much longer to consider the same thing. They eagerly pounce on Sefton as their enemy because he does not buy into their collective Americanism and they are too accepting of the performance of Americanness and their gullibility makes them overlook the real spy in their midst, Sergeant Price. While *Decision Before Dawn* and *36 Hours* present sympathetic "enemy" characters, *Stalag 17* dares to suggest that an enemy could out-American the Americans, moving undetected among them while they go after one of their own. This happens because the Americans in these films are uncritical when it comes to overt signs or signifiers of Americanness and elide identity (what one is) with belief (what one stands for). Someone can look and act as if they are "American" but not believe in the tenets that should undergird their identity. The camp space provides the pressures and possibilities for separating identities from the values and principles conventionally connected to them, and the characters involved are charged, at least in part, with finding that distinction.

The epitome of proper form and clean-cut Americana, we rarely see Price without his American military-issue bomber jacket. Peter Graves' casting also ensures that Price has a smooth and precise accent that stands out among the others' more regional and low-brow dialects. He is, perhaps, almost *too* American, too perfectly put together among a rag-tag group of working class men consistently performing various identities as Price sticks very precisely to one. Even Lieutenant Dunbar (Don Taylor), an American officer from a wealthy background suspected of blowing up a German munitions train, is more "down-home" and easy going, despite his strained relationship with the enlisted men. Crucially, Price is made Security Officer, and Lee notes in his article on the film that this is no accident, since "at that same time, the men

charged with similar duties, i.e., the congressional members of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) [were] busy protecting American security by depriving citizens of their right to be different in very much the same ways as those depicted in the film" (n.p.). Lee's reading of the film as a political allegory suggests that Price's role in the camp reflects the contradictory nature of the State's attempt to balance both obligations to its citizens. This works, but I think the character, and the others' relationship to him, is more complex. In the camp, Price is both guard and prisoner, both American and German, his panoptic gaze met with his soldier's docility, in Foucauldian terms. Considering Price's opposition with Sefton, both dramatically and behaviourally, who is immediately tagged as a traitor because of his openness, *Stalag 17* echoes *Decision Before Dawn*'s concern with fighting the wrong enemy, cautioning against Price's apparent perfection and signal approval — or at least tolerance — for Sefton's standoffishness.

I have discussed the ways early postwar films like *Decision Before Dawn* and *Stalag 17* deal with the ideology of American exceptionalism and how these films use the space of the camp as a microcosm for the exploration of the dangers of thoughtlessly fighting "the wrong enemy." Perhaps surprisingly, both films were relative box office hits, possibly because they expressed postwar fatigue, and illustrate Bruce Crowther's claims that in this period America experienced "a pervading atmosphere [. . .] of dislocation and disillusionment" (157).

I turn my attention now to *36 Hours* and *King Rat* as examples of later postwar POW films that take up similar issues of identity politics in their respective camp spaces. While each of these films depicts courageous exemplars of American heroism, each also presents scenarios in which American exceptionalism and military might are challenged, through defense of Rooseveltian international cooperation and what Bodnar calls "human community" (6). These films also engage with the idea of "wrong" enemies and allies and pit loyalty to the new

communities formed inside the camps against relationships of national belonging. Moreover, they demonstrate the ease with which various American identities and "traditional American values" can so easily be manipulated.

36 Hours continually challenges our allegiances, reminding us of everyone's common humanity rather than their national identities. While Walter Gerber, the German officer who orchestrates the plot to trick American Major Jefferson Pike into giving him information about the D-Day landings, is supposed to be the enemy, he is presented as compassionate and friendly toward Pike, Anna, and his fellow officers, and uncompromising and stubborn toward Otto Schack (Warner Peters), a diabolical blowhard who flaunts his membership in the SS. In fact, he loathes Schack and resents his presence in the camp, suggesting that there is no room for such an uncompromising figure in a space built to elide identities. While Gerber organizes the camp space as a Nazi doctor who wishes to extract information, he becomes part of its social production and, like the camp, he becomes a product of "social translation, transformation, and experience" (*Postmodern Geographies* 80). Ultimately, like Maurer in *Decision Before Dawn*, Gerber fights his country to save his country, and helps the man who is supposed to be his enemy. Gerber's identity shift from Nazi doctor to Pike's ally is perhaps the most significant part of the film, as it enables him to save Pike and ensure the D-Day landings that would be a turning point in World War II. Despite his team-player anti-Ally stance in the film's beginning, as the plot unfolds, Gerber's love for his country is comparable to Maurer's in *Decision Before Dawn*, and the distinction between nation and identity as it relates to Germanness and Nazism is brought into relief.

Just before Pike is brought to the camp, Gerber is clearly in charge. He addresses his troops in German as he walks through a room littered with Americana, and orders that English

should be spoken at all times so that Pike might be fooled. Not unlike Peter Graves in *Stalag 17*, Rod Taylor, a beloved Australian-born American actor famous for British and American films alike, embodies someone on the other side of the war, speaking German and complicating the audience's allegiance to him as a beloved actor, and to the Allied cause.[6]

Crucially, as we learn during his heated discussion with Schack, Gerber's identity has already crossed multiple borders. When Schack notes that Gerber has become too confident in his ability to become Pike's confidante because of his "unaccented" American English, Gerber discloses that he was born in the United States and did not move to Germany until he was 16. Of America, he insists he knows the idioms, attitudes, and customs, rendering his character all the more complicated for an American audience. Not only is this man attempting to defeat America by *pretending* to be an American; he *is* an American by birth, and yet has chosen to fight for Germany, rendering allegiance resulting from national borders as unreliable as they are in *King Rat*, *Stalag 17*, and *Decision Before Dawn*.

But, despite the potential narrative ease of creating allyship through national ties with Pike, Gerber's American birth seems to have nothing to do with his decision to help Pike and Anna escape and to keep the Allies' D-Day plans a secret from the SS. Rather, his creation of the prison camp space as one that straddles German and American national identities reflects his own dual identity — using language from one while wearing the uniform of another. Barring his initial address to his German troops, Gerber is generally gentle, considerate, and well-liked. He is presented as Schack's counterpoint and his antagonism toward Schack grows throughout the film as he realizes the two are not fighting for the same thing. Schack, willing to condemn or take credit for Gerber's idea, depending on the outcome, proves time and again that he cares only about his own advancement.

By the end of the film, Gerber himself becomes a prisoner, and is no longer a soldier. He becomes, like Pike, more disciplined in terms of his own ideologies, and rejects the tenets that determine his membership in the German military, as a result of his spatial practice. According to Foucault, discipline produces docile bodies by increasing "the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)" (*Discipline & Punish* 138). However, Gerber is not docile in terms of being weak. He becomes docile toward Pike by refusing obedience and by taking up the space he has created for Pike. Schack, on the other hand, should hold all the power as the panoptic observer, and yet he is introduced as an undisciplined buffoon who clumsily imposes on Gerber's plan, and steals credit for Gerber's ideas only as long as they impress the top brass. Schack is ultimately responsible for his own demise because of his greed for Nazi prestige. When Gerber turns on the German military and lets Pike and Anna escape with his research, Schack kills him and attempts to hunt Pike and Anna down before they reach Switzerland, only to be shot at the end of the film by a German border guard (John Banner) who is also against Nazism. Schack's bumbling intrusion into the camp space sets him up in oppostion to Gerber, who is "not interested in medals and honors," but rather, wishes to see his scientific work continue. Moreover, Gerber's refusal to return Schack's "heil Hitler" at the end of this scene speaks not only to his dislike of Schack, but also to his resistance to Nazism. In another scene, Gerber antagonizes Schack even as he's tricking Pike. When talking with Pike and Schack about the outcome of the war, which Pike believes ended six years earlier, Gerber coolly claims that the Germans assassinated Hitler and that Goering, Goebbels, Himmler, the SS, and the "Gestapo brass" were all executed. His story that the German people rose up against Nazi antagonism makes Schack extremely uncomfortable, and certainly separates "clean Germans" from "dirty politics," and tells us that Gerber is, at least, less

of an enemy than Schack is. Science, not nationality, is at the root of his allegiance, and he is the more powerful for it.

　　While viewers might expect Pike to heroically defeat every German captor, including Gerber, in this film, instead, Pike and Gerber come to respect one another. Toward the end of the film, after Pike discovers that he has been deceived and is returned to the camp after trying to escape, he is brought to Gerber's office and the two men talk about the effectiveness of Gerber's methods on Pike. In the camp's inner sanctum — the heart of its organization — they are amiable and talk as friends, despite their nations' enmity. Pike is impressed with Gerber's research, and Gerber is open about his methods. Resigned to the realization that his ruse is over and the potential of Schack's wrath as a result, Gerber notes that he will have to turn Pike over to the "bully boys," and Pike accepts this as he takes a seat on Gerber's couch. The shot cuts to Gerber, who uncorks a bottle of spirits and pours each of them a drink. While doing so, he tells Pike about Schack's true identity and compares him, derogatorily, with Himmler when Pike refers to him as "innocuous." Sitting down, Gerber admits that Schack has likely discovered his treason, and refers to himself as Pike's "company" as an enemy of the Reich. Gerber replies that in studying Pike for his experiment, he has come to consider him "one of [his] best friends." Pike is similarly affectionate in his reply, noting the project's importance to Gerber and registering a degree of regret in its outcome. Gerber then tells Pike that his research has helped emotionally troubled soldiers returning from the Russian front, and Pike acknowledges that he has seen similar cases with American troops. Like Pike, we come to see Gerber as a sympathetic figure who cares deeply for the wellbeing of his people, and we forget about his previous role as Pike's antagonist.

This scene reveals Gerber's humanity and reinforces the connection he has with Pike. We easily forget that Gerber fights for the other side, and we sympathize with his desire to help traumatized soldiers. Thus, like Pike and Gerber, we, too, have been transformed through the camp space. By entering the intimate arena of Gerber's office — a space away from what Moran calls the "bureaucratic gaze" that judges prisoners' actions and attitudes (*Carceral Geography* 30) — we are provided the time and space to know and understand Gerber as "the wrong enemy."

Gerber's camp has therefore offered "a set of relations between individuals and groups" (*Postmodern Geographies* 120) that facilitates a new social structure as those within it come to know each other better. Before the end of the scene, Gerber offers Pike "one last drink together," if not as friends, as men who respect one another. When Gerber is court martialed and his research is threatened by the SS, he entrusts only Pike and Anna with it, knowing it must leave Germany if it is to be useful to anyone.

Thus, Gerber becomes Pike's and Anna's savior, electing in the film's last act to stay behind in the camp to give them a chance to escape. But, his valour extends beyond Pike and Anna: his research for helping those traumatized by war, which they carry, elevates him from a local traitor to an international hero. Just before the SS come to take him away, Gerber points to the envelope and gently tells Pike, "I'll be in that envelope. You make it, so do I," placing them permanently on the same team, both fighting for a good that will come regardless of the war's outcome. By the time the SS realizes Pike and Anna have escaped, Gerber has taken steps to take his own life in order to avoid betraying them, ending the film a hero.

Since *36 Hours* overtly emphasizes the importance of individual action and allows heroism to move beyond the boundaries of national ties,[7] it may be unsurprising that the film did

not see the critical success of *Decision Before Dawn* and *Stalag 17* and was generally dismissed. While in his *Sight and Sound* review John Russell Taylor touts the film as a "nice" entertainment thriller (41), Bosley Crowther wrote that the "weird spy thriller" gave him "the irksome sensation of somebody pulling [his] leg" (*New York Times*, January 29, 1965). Still, the film remains an example of American POW cinema that complicates wartime identities within a limited space of action. After all, the film's plot is predicated on confused identities and allegiances in the camp space, and reflects a troubled "myth of American exceptionalism" (Bodar 2) by framing Gerber as the one on whom victory depends.

And, while the film's POW camp begins as a political space for the purposes of enforcing wartime enemy/ally identities, by the end of the film it becomes what Soja calls "a space of collective resistance, a *Thirdspace of political choice* that is also a meeting place for all peripherized or marginalized subjects wherever they may be located" ("Thirdspace" 51). While the film might have focused more intently on Pike's ability to foil Gerber, get the girl, and win the war alone,[8] instead it focuses largely on Gerber's identity politics, his love for his country, the importance of his research, and his stalwart resistance against Nazism. By organizing the camp, Gerber makes a political choice that ensures an ongoing voice for marginalized subjects of the war, and his transformation in the camp space both causes and directly results from his understanding of such subjectivity.

While I have shown that, like *Decision Before Dawn*, *36 Hours* elides enemy/ally relationships, *King Rat* takes an approach closer to *Stalag 17*'s by pitting King, who represents the pitfalls of capitalism and American exceptionalism, against Grey, the British Provost Marshal who makes it his mission to destroy King and all he stands for. At the beginning of the film he uses his military rank as a way of bullying King, despite that the socially produced space

disregards rank as a mark of authority and, by insisting on his identity as a British military officer, Grey's character serves to measure the changing sociality in the camp. He is a counterpoint to King, his humble beginnings in England prompting him to embrace the authority his military merit and rank once provided him. Like King, whose home life in America is nothing special, Grey has made something of himself within the wartime world, and yet he stands by his military identity in the camp and uses it as the seat of his power, while King disregards rank entirely in favour of building capital. Importantly, Grey is not strictly a law man: he stands by his bunkmates when they boldly lie to their Japanese guards about the presence of a radio in their barracks, focusing on the greater good rather than the camp's rules. And yet, as with King, the sociality he wishes to produce — that which is also beyond the camp — does not ultimately work with the larger society in the camp.

But, because Grey and King both wish to produce the camp space in ways that work for them, the human geography of the camp becomes what Soja would call "a competitive arena for struggles over social production and reproduction, for social practices aimed either at the maintenance and reinforcement of existing spatiality or at significant restructuring and/or radical transformation" (*Postmodern Geographies* 130). Both men need the camp space to keep them from class-based drudgery at home, and yet Grey chooses to fight King's social production of the space just as King chooses to fight Grey's.

Of course, like King, Grey is also ultimately disillusioned by the harsh reality that his preferred way of life does not work. While visiting two officers, a Lieutenant-Colonel and a Quartermaster, and inspecting their allotment of rice for the prisoners, Grey, fulfilling his role despite suffering a severe bout of dysentery, collapses onto the table covered in weights for measuring portions of food. After righting himself, Grey looks down at the weight in his hand,

and a close-up of his thumb pushing into the bottom of the weight shows that the weight has been tampered with. Grey confronts the officers. While the Lieutenant-Colonel continues to look guiltily down at the table, the Quartermaster grabs the weight and attempts to persuade Grey that the weight has merely been corrected. Grey authoritatively confronts both men again and threatens to show the weight to the whole camp. The Quartermaster begs him not to, accusing the Lieutenant-Colonel of orchestrating the whole plan and blackmailing him to comply. Grey listens to the Quartermaster's story and again confronts the Lieutenant-Colonel, asserting his right to challenge his authority. The Lieutenant-Colonel then attempts to bribe Grey with two pounds of rice and half a pound of dried fish a week — an exorbitant amount of food when compared with the meagre rations meted out to the other prisoners. While this would certainly work on someone like King, though, Grey resists the rampant corruption he sees. He threatens to tell the Colonel and hopes to lead a "bore-hole party" (an execution that involves allied men drowning one of their own in a latrine).[9] While a bore-hole party certainly would not fit protocol, it serves as an established consequence in an otherwise chaotic place. Grey's threat therefore serves as a means of trying to reproduce camp space (the latrine) for a result that reinforces his military authority. In Soja's terms, he is attempting to imbue a space of nature/the natural with politics and ideology (*Postmodern Geographies* 121). Of course, Grey is also attempting to establish discipline in his own terms without realizing that the race for power in the camp has begun anew and does not consider outside rules.

But, despite Grey's grim self-righteousness, when he brings the matter to Colonel Smedley-Taylor (John Mills), Smedley-Taylor tells him to forget about it. Grey protests the ruling, noting, "we caught them red-handed, stealing the camp food. That's your food and mine. They deserve to be topped!" Here we are reminded that, more than just running with his role of

Provost Marshal, Grey demands the order and fairness that he has come to expect from the British Army. Instead, here he is faced with its degradation, which continues as Smedley-Taylor replaces the tampered-with weight with an intact one. So, while Grey is part of the camp's social space, his rules-based ideologies of allegiance, rules, and spatial practice don't fit. Because he believes so much in the social structure of the military, and clings so tightly to his identity as a soldier, he does not understand the camp as a place of "betweenness and indistinction" ("Between Outside & Inside" 341) as everyone else does.

Once the war ends and the men are shipping out, Grey triumphantly declares that now that Churchill is out of office, his "people" — presumably those who support a Labour government under the leadership of Clement Atlee — will finally get their turn to rule, fairly supplanting those with title, wealth, and privilege.[10] At the end of the film, he is the only liberated prisoner with any optimism for his role beyond the camp space. Much like *Decision Before Dawn*'s Maurer and *36 Hours'* Gerber, Grey wants only what he believes will be best for society, in contrast to King's more selfish reasons for reproducing the camp space, That is, King trades on his fellow inmates' despair and builds an empire that he controls by swindling captors and captured out of any capital they have, subordinating them to his whims. While King returns to his country a relative nobody as compared to his status as "king" of Changi, Grey returns to a different socially produced space — England — full of hope.

King Rat's sympathy for Grey, alongside its depiction of King as a failure of American values, caps a broader trend in American postwar POW cinema that presents non-Americans as heroes or, at least, as sympathetic. Even the film's Japanese guards are patient, and never violent — qualities rarely seen in Western depictions of Axis powers. In one scene, one of the guards,

Yoshima (Dale Ishimoto), even cites his treatment of the prisoners as complying with the Geneva Conventions, despite Japan's refusal to ratify them during World War II.

So far, I have discussed American POW cinema's treatment of ally/enemy relationships and their common depictions of allies as enemies and enemies as allies. With their depictions of "wrong enemies," American POW films consistently remind us to interrogate identity by giving us odd, and at times paradoxical, visual and aural cues. I would now like to take a closer look at the insularity of the camp space as one that produces as it is produced, dismantling some identities and making way for new ones to take shape within it.

I have already argued for the German territory Maurer traverses in *Decision Before Dawn* to be considered an extension of camp space. As a prisoner, Maurer treats the landscape differently than he would if he were a free man, and the landscape becomes a place in which he can hide in plain sight. And, while *Decision Before Dawn* still hints at times at America's moral upper hand, it also plays quite fast and loose with markers of national identity. When preparing for his mission for the Americans, Maurer collects German paraphernalia, including maps and razor blades, to corroborate his Germanness while carrying out his American mission. That Monique, a French woman working at the American headquarters, and Maurer's love interest, is the one to give him these items, imbuing him with Germanness via Americanness via Frenchness, reminds us that national identity is something to be added to, taken from, and doled out as needed. This proves a more difficult concept for Rennick, at least at first. As Maurer exits this scene in which he has gathered his various military signifiers that complicate assumptions about his allegiance, Rennick enters, and his companion asks him how it feels "to be a civilian again." Rennick, dressed in civilian clothes to mask his identity as an American radio operator, tells his companion, "just tell the pilot to drop me in Cleveland, Ohio," assuring everyone of his

Americanness, despite his lack of uniform. He is put through the same paces as Maurer, having to point out on the map the drop site he is to parachute into, and name the address of the safe house. While Maurer is able to recite these things, ready to take on a new identity, Rennick seems a bit less sure of himself and must navigate a different way of enacting Americanness in a foreign setting.

In a subsequent scene, Rennick and Maurer prepare to drop into Germany. As we jump with Maurer from the plane and onto the earth below, we land in freshly-fallen snow, a space as yet untouched by the war. From here, Maurer must establish his new, unprotected, identity among his own people, just as so many other cinematic prisoners of war do. The scene changes and we see Maurer on a bus filled with soldiers singing a German folk song; the camera frames him in close-up, emphasizing his isolation. He is now alone among his people, a covert objector who no longer identifies with the countrymen who surround him. As Maurer's bus pulls into Munich, we see the remnants of buildings crumbling from Allied bombs, and in the foreground are civilians and soldiers, going about their everyday activities as best they can, blending militarism and domesticity. Like Rennick, Maurer must embrace such blending and navigate his way through militarism and domesticity dressed familiarly and yet in a way that is entirely foreign. As Rennick and Maurer navigate Germany as a space of occupation and imprisonment, they are reminiscent of Foucault's observations about "evolutionism," in that time causes "The partial identities or resemblances that make a taxinomia possible [to] be the marks, revealed in the present, of one and the same living being, persisting through all the upheavals of nature" (*The Order of Things* 152). In this case, I suggest that the camp space facilitates similar "upheavals of nature" that allow those inside to evolve towards similarity, rather than difference.

Stalag 17's character Price must also be covert as he straddles German and American identities in the camp space, especially as he works to ensure his "taxonomy" remains intentionally different from the others'. This becomes problematic when Price and Schulz (Sig Ruman), the barracks guard, finally conspire in person. In the meeting, Price speaks German while wearing his American bomber jacket, juxtaposing his two identities, embracing and slandering both simultaneously. While this juxtaposition is reminiscent of *Decision Before Dawn*'s Maurer and *36 Hours*' Gerber, and their actions that speak to purposes beyond the war, Price's betrayal is depicted as decidedly more troubling, given his adherence to wartime binaries and derision toward the Americans whom he has only pretended to befriend. Once the Americans are onto him, Price cannot keep up with the camp's social production. He instead interprets the camp's spatiality as he always has, and ignores its "potential social transformation" — something Soja claims is a consequence of adhering too closely to socially independent processes (*Postmodern Geography* 122). Unlike Maurer, Price can no longer blend in with his own people, and yet he can no longer fit with the Americans, either. Just before Price's death, after the others have discovered his identity as their enemy, Duke holds him down inside the barracks and sneers that Price will be killed by his "own *soldaten*," using German and English interchangeably, just as Price used Germanness and Americanness interchangeably. After the Americans shove Price out of the barracks, Price goes down shouting, "*Ich bin ein Deutscher!* [I am a German!]" repeatedly, but to no avail, his outward affiliation betraying his true identity.

Of course, while most of *Stalag 17*'s characters staunchly embody their identities as American soldiers, they also try on unexpected identities, all the while berating Sefton for his unwillingness to conform. Their shift away from the "all-American soldier" persona indicates the instability of identity in the camp, as the men fluidly trade one language and uniform for another.

This trade is done in fun, but remains a curious part of the narrative, since the only tolerable way to live in the prison camp seems to be to live as someone else, even for a short time. However, if we consider the liminal quality of the camp as one that embraces Thirdspace characteristics of "extraordinary openness" and "critical exchange" where issues of race, class, and gender can be addressed simultaneously" ("Thirdspace" 50), these shifts in identity make sense, especially when considering the varied performances we see.

One character, Bagradian (Jay Lawrence), actually endears himself to his fellow prisoners as a shapeshifting actor, and does multiple impressions throughout the film to entertain the others, framing the camp space as one of performance. Others try on different identities that would perhaps be too risque outside the camp, but are eagerly tried inside. In one scene featuring an organized dance in the barracks, all the men dance together as a makeshift band plays. Alone, Harry exaggerates his comedic role as a rejected partner while Animal drowns his sorrows and looks longingly at a poster of Betty Grable. Then, seemingly as a gag, Harry fashions a ladies' hat and some blonde hair and offers himself as "the Queen of the May." He engages Bagradian for a dance, telling him he looks like Cary Grant. Doing his best Cary Grant impression, Bagradian pinches Harry's cheek and offers his regrets: "I'd love to, Queenie, but one of the other girls asked me first. Bye, darling, bye," before walking away.

Bagradian's impressions are impressive and entertaining, and yet they also overtake his identity as a citizen beyond the camp space. We rarely get a glimpse of Bagradian the American soldier, much preferring — along with Bagradian, the other prisoners, and the film in general, it seems — his shapeshifting capabilities.[11] He even dresses as Hilter at one point, getting the rest of the men to follow suit by wearing fake mustaches. Of course, Sander Lee is quite right that

while the men "pretend that they are accepting Nazi indoctrination, without realizing that they have already accepted the American version" (n.p.).

Harry's gag, however, is reminiscent of the gender bending performances we see in British POW films, and yet more practical. He sees a lack of women at the dance and identifies himself as "Queen of the May." But, as "Queen of the May," a figure associated with spring and fertility, Harry personifies change and growth in the camp space. In doing so, he illustrates Judith Butler's claim that "'coherence' and 'continuity' of 'the person' are not logical or analytic features of personhood, but, rather, socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility" (17). That is, Harry's identity is socially produced in response to the camp space, just as he is contributing to its social production. Butler also notes that "It would be wrong to think that the discussion of 'identity' ought to proceed prior to a discussion of gender identity for the simple reason that 'persons' only become intelligible through becoming gendered" (16). While in this dissertation I have gone againt Butler's order of things, her point is valid here. Harry's identity in the camp is as malleable as the space that produces it, and that it produces. In this place, he is able to become the Queen of the May to the joy of the other inmates. That they perceive this shift as a joke does not take away from the fact that Harry is able to exercise gender fluidity in the camp in ways that would be socially unacceptable outside it. Moreover, this shift does not reinforce binary identities. That Harry easily moves from an American military uniform to women's clothing suggests that the prison camp is a place in which multiple expressions of identity are readily, if only temporarily, accepted at once.

Toward the end of the festivities, a very drunk Animal sees Harry in the same drag outfit and believes that he is Betty Grable.[12] He eases out of his bunk, ogling Harry and whining, "Betty! Betty!" as he moves toward Harry. Starry-eyed, Animal asks "Betty" to dance and Harry,

unaware of Animal's delusion, readily agrees. They dance happily until Animal asks "Betty" to pinch him so he knows he's not dreaming. He begins singing along to "I Love You," which the band is playing in the background, and, as he turns, we see a look of disbelief on Harry's face as he realizes Animal's mistake.

And, according to the scene, it is very much Animal's mistake. Robert Eberwein notes of the scene that "It is not impossible to imagine that the scene, shot in a two-shot from above the waist, is meant to imply that Animal has an erection" (98). Harry is above reproach for dressing as a woman, and Animal is not upset because he is exhibiting homoeroticism, but because he can't have the woman he is reminded of. That is, Harry is not seen as a deviant, but Animal is. Harry tries to get Animal's attention as he gushes about his love for him/her, commenting on Harry's/Betty's legs and little nose. Finally, Harry slaps Animal and removes the wig and hat, resorting to his original identity expression and insisting, "I'm Harry Shapiro!" Crestfallen, Animal begins to weep wretchedly and walks away. Harry casts his eyes downward, a look of guilt for entertaining Animal's delusion on his face before he tosses the wig and hat away in another effort to reinstate his identity after breaking Animal's heart. Eberwein notes that by putting on the wig, Harry intends "specifically to attract a male dancing partner" and "puts on partial female attire to gain contact with a male when he is unable to engage in the dancing, an activity authorized by his comrades" (98). Animal's tears are therefore "not because he's embarrassed for having desired a man who turns out to be a woman, but because he cannot have the woman who is being impersonated by the man" (98).

The ease with which Harry is able to resemble a woman in Animal's (albeit drunken) eyes and maintain the charade while enjoying their partnership suggests that, as dramatized by *The Colditz Story*'s Gordon and Cartwright, perhaps the prison camp is the place in which they

might explore homoerotic identities further, despite their tendency to protest them. Butler tells us that "The heterosexualization of desire requires and institutes the production of discrete and asymmetrical oppositions between 'feminine' and 'masculine,' where these are understood as expressive attributes of 'male' and 'female'" (17). While dressed in women's clothing, Harry is still identifiably Harry, and yet he has elided these oppositions that determine "the heterosexualization of desire." So, while Butler goes on to say that "The cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of 'identities' cannot 'exist'" (17), it seems the cultural matrix of the camp says they can, just that they might not be preferable.

That this scene remains part of the narrative suggests its importance to the "Otherness" of camp space as one that is socially produced. Film scholar Gene Phillips provides a letter written by Joseph Breen, the industry censor, who writes, "If there is any inference in the finished scene of a flavor of sex perversion, we will not be able to approve it under the Code" (*Some Like it Wilder* 146). Moreover, Phillips notes Breen's discomfort with the affection shown between Harry-as-Grable and Animal when they dance because Animal seems to take sexual pleasure in it (146). However, despite Wilder's promise to consider Breen's recommendations, the scene remains, and we see the camp space as one in which new norms might be socially produced and accepted, despite those instituted beyond the wire.

As the scene above shows, camp space is extremely useful for figuring out various expressions of identity that would be less conveniently explored outside it. Social production of space and social practice within it is constant and, as identities and behaviour shift, space must be produced accordingly. And, just as Harry, Animal, and Bagradian use the camp space to explore various identities and social practices, Sefton, too, navigates the camp space according to

his own needs. While, like Corporal King, Sefton is enterprising and confident in his nonconforming identity, the others see him as a threat to their collective national identity, pushing him into isolation, without noticing that their blind acceptance of American ideals is flawed (as is shown when they don Hitler mustaches). Sefton is ostracized by the group, resulting in his necessary creation of space in his corner of the barracks as he exerts agency in defiance of the group mentality, reflecting the tenuous balance between American exceptionalism and broader affiliations.

But, crucially, once the truth of Price's German identity comes out, Price's betrayal is punished just as Sefton's alleged betrayal is lauded. After Sefton proves Price's guilt, the others admit their prejudice and Duke, who has to this point been particularly hard on Sefton, even calls him "brother," bringing Sefton back into the American fold, his resistance to collective national ties having saved the day. Sefton, though, exercises what Soja refers to as "the right to difference in the contextualized dialectics of centers and peripheries" ("Thirdspace" 51), and sees beyond the good-guy-bad-guy dynamic of his compatriots. He puts the butt of a cigar in his mouth and unceremoniously strikes a match on the back of Duke's neck. "Forget it," he says, still unwilling to be a full-fledged part of the American team as Duke good-naturedly smiles in awe of Sefton the unlikely — and unwilling — war hero.

So far, I have demonstrated how American POW films challenge wartime enemy/ally dualism by offering characters that are not so easily categorized, and I have shown that the insularity of the camp space contributes to various experiments in and expressions of identity that might not be so easily seen outside such a liminal space. Now, paying special attention to *King Rat*, I will discuss these characteristics and the ways in which they work toward repudiating

American exceptionalism rather than contributing to the pervading exceptionalist attitude promoted during the Cold War.

King Rat's repudiation of American exceptionalism is done largely through King's downfall toward the end of the film and through everyone's grappling with identity once the war ends. As top dog, King has managed to alienate most everybody, even as he made them dependent on him. While I began this chapter with a scene that shows King's attitude toward his fellow prisoners and their movement away from ideas of who they were before imprisonment, I turn now to the end of the film. Marlowe, King's most ardent follower, and one of the men slavering over the chunk of meat in the scene described above, becomes such an adherent to King and his order in the camp that he forgets who is is behond the camp's confines. This contrasts King, the posterboy for exceptionalism and ingenuity, who has established himself in the camp as the man he wishes he could be outside it. Toward the end of the film, after news of the war's end has come, a British soldier from outside the camp (Richard Dawson) comes in to liberate the camp and demands to know everyone's national affiliation. He approaches Marlowe, introduces himself as Weaver from the paratroop corps, and asks who is in command.

Like a child afraid of a stranger, Marlowe moves suspiciously away from Weaver as he advances, aligning more with his camp community than with his countryman. Weaver then asks Marlowe if he is British, telling him not to be afraid. He tells Marlowe that the war is over and offers him a "real" cigarette from home, but again, as he advances, Marlowe steps back, as though confused about where "home" actually is, much to Weaver's confusion. King's society has recomposed the war's "dialectical reasoning" and has produced an understanding of identity that "no longer clings to historicity and historical time" ("Thirdspace" 55). That is, the space of

the camp has become so socially produced through the inmates' King-centred spatial practice that Marlowe does not recall who he was before the war.

However, Weaver's infiltration of the camp space signals the end of King's reign and reintroduces the understandings of identity that exist beyond the camp space. King clings to his power by singling himself out. He welcomes Weaver to Changi and identifies himself as Corporal King, an American. Weaver asks him why he is in good shape and dressed "properly" and King simply replies that he looks after himself and his things, suggesting that everyone else (mostly British subjects) does not. Having impressed Weaver, King becomes the exemplar of American military might and propriety.

But first, King's empire must fall. After news of the war's end breaks, Max suddenly turns on King, pulling rank as a sergeant and threatening to court martial him as he refers to King as "Corporal." In what was King's hut, Max assumes full military command before King kicks him hard in the backside, sending him stumbling over to the other side of the room. Max lands, frustrated, and threatens to murder King through his tears. King has two of his still-loyal lackeys subdue Max, proving that military rule has not yet taken over the camp. And yet, a shot cuts to King, who leans back in his chair, a look of pity and concern on his face as he resigns himself to his return to mediocrity in the outside world. Here, within King's camp, there is no place for military rank and rule and outside, there is no place for King's empire. The camp is the only space in which King can be exceptional and, once it's gone, he must prepare for anonymity.

King begins to distance himself from the people who supported his rule in the camp. After learning of the war's end, Marlowe approaches him, having wondered where he was. King looks up and addresses him as "sir," for the first time heeding Marlowe's rank as a superior officer. Marlowe, slightly amused, replies that he just wants to see King, but King then leaves, as

though letting Marlowe know that the man he knew in the camp will not be seen again, given his shift back into his pre-prison camp identity. Later, Marlowe confronts King about this, arguing that the war's end shouldn't change their friendship. King looks at him and callously notes that he only ever considered Marlowe an employee, clambering for power by asserting capitalistic, rather than military, might over the man who was once his closest friend.

This harsh interaction brings the shift from inside identities to outside ones into relief. Marlowe's pleas indicate his fear of losing King to the outside world. He has become comfortable in the Thirdspace otherness of the camp as it has recomposed the wartime dialectic "through an intrusive disruption that explicitly spatializes dialectical reasoning" by disordering, deconstructing, and tentatively reconstituting presumed understandings of an environment that exists because of war ("Thirdspace 55). Not only is Marlowe's interaction with King here effectively a break-up, in the sense of a relationship irretrievably lost, it is also a severance of Marlowe's understanding of the camp space and its facilitation of that relationship. While King might have had a strong and lasting relationship with Marlowe, King chooses now to isolate himself from Marlowe, refusing to believe his life will be better lived in cooperation. In the last sequence, we see Marlowe in uniform, running across the camp and into King's empty hut. He then runs outside and asks those standing nearby where King has gone. The officer he speaks to does not know King, and Marlowe must generalize, exasperatedly sputtering, "the Americans!" and rendering King once again an anonymous member of the American military. The officer tells him that the Americans are moving out. Marlowe takes off running again, this time toward the transport vehicles. He pushes his way through a group of American soldiers, all back in uniform, their prison rags replaced with freshly pressed symbols of their national identity.

Marlowe looks in one direction and the camera finds King in another, first focusing on the stripes on his arm denoting his military rank before tilting up to his face. He stands with his back against a truck, clearly hiding from Marlowe behind symbols of his American military identity. Finally, King is led to the truck, which starts to drive off just as Marlowe sees him standing in the back. The two men stare at one another as the distance between them grows. As the truck drives out of sight, Marlowe looks crestfallen as he is left with his fellow Britons, once again forced to acknowledge his identity outside the camp. While Marlowe's identities as King's wingman and a British officer are not mutually exclusive, Marlowe clearly cares more about the former, having railed against King's address as "sir," and preferring to chase after him rather than rally with his countrymen. He has become accustomed to a different way of life within the prison, and has elected to shift his loyalty from his patriotism, as symbolized by his military rank, to his relationship with King, of which there is nothing left but the emptying camp to remind him.

As King fades from view aboard the transport before the final shot cuts, I am struck by how King's way of life in the camp is portrayed, first as brave and enticing, but ultimately as needy, egotistical, and pointless. The money he has made in the camp will be useless in America and any allies he had (other than Marlowe) saw him only as someone to hide behind. Almost as a morality tale would, this film seems to caution against King's bravado and bullying, and shows no real-world value in that identity.

Considering Rennick's repudiation of Devlin and the transport driver in *Decision Before Dawn*, Sefton's stalwart resistance to American collectivity in *Stalag 17*, Gerber's help to Pike in *36 Hours*, and King's downfall in *King Rat*, each of these films points out the flaws in exceptionalism as part of national identity and instead promotes individualism as an extension of

common humanity. *Stalag 17*'s conflicting identities expose a cynical side to postwar culture and American values. In creating Sefton as a reluctant hero with a price, and Price as an exemplary American until his true identity is discovered, *Stalag 17* suggests that America's postwar exceptionalism is misplaced. In the space of the prison camp, men can be women, heroism can be bought, and America's best can also be the enemy. It effectively defies the "system of inclusions and exclusions" that Polan, citing Foucault, says makes up our social reality (7). If the barracks in *Stalag 17* serve as a general microcosm of American exceptionalism, Price and Sefton both prove that the system is highly fallible by moving within their own griddings, despite the others' efforts toward a unified and exclusive social grid "where potentially separate(d) social elements find a position, a connection, a sense" (6). As we have seen, Sander Lee echoes this sentiment when he discusses the inmates donning Hitler mustaches in order to dramatize what they see as German joinership, all the while missing their own hypocrisy.

King Rat is perhaps the most overt in its depiction of the repudiation of American exceptionalism, both through King's character, and then in the scene in which the Japanese surrender. Near the end of the film, after a radio is found in one of the barracks, the senior Allied officers are called into the Japanese colonel's office, apparently to be told of the violating prisoner's impending death. Five commanding officers stand before the stately colonel, who also stands, bows, and begins reading a document in Japanese. Standing next to him, Yoshima translates, "The enemy has made use of an inhuman bomb and has incessantly subjected innocent people to grievous wounds and massacre. To continue the war under these conditions would not only lead to the annihilation of our nature, but the destruction of human civilization as well." During this declaration of surrender, the camera cuts from a two-shot of the colonel and

Yoshima to a low-angle shot of the group of allied senior officers, looking confused, the camera exalting them as the Japanese officer's words paint their nations' actions as "inhuman."

The camera cuts to a shot of the prisoners, still kept behind gates strung with barbed wire, as the officer's voiceover continues, noting Japan's fragile subjects' need of protection from such inhumanity, and the forgiveness required of their ancestors to continue the war with this knowledge. The voiceover then acknowledges what they as a country have lost, galvanizing the Japanese people in defeat just before the Allies scatter in victory. And, while the camera cuts to the various degradations of humanity found throughout the camp as the document Yoshima reads calls for an era of peace, the declaration in this context seems a sincere promise to do better. In this scene, Americans in general are singled out as monsters, rather than as war heroes. Oddly, this American film does not make room for American voices here, either in support or rebuttal. Rather, their enemies are able to promote a new era in spite of American violence as the American prisoners are lumped in with everybody else in the room.

While this is a significant concession speech, and one given with the knowledge that those reading it are soon to meet their fate at the hands of those they have so recently dominated, we are reminded that throughout the film we have seen no violence from those running the prison. In fact, Yoshima has remained relatively placid in all of his scenes, and has remained in the background as allied officers run amok. Moreover, in his referencing the use of an "inhuman bomb," and in the camera's cut to the senior officers, we are reminded of that horror and that the Allies were the ones who perpetrated it, making victims of the innocent. In the surrender, the Japanese take responsibility for their actions and promise a peaceful future, but the Allies make no such promise. While they have been prisoners here, now they stand, bewildered, as victors, but painted with the stigma of inhumanity.

Of war and politics, Foucault tells us that "it may be that war as strategy is a continuation of politics. But it must not be forgotten that 'politics' has been conceived as a continuation, if not exactly and directly of war, at least of the military model as a fundamental means of preventing civil disorder" (*Discipline & Punish* 168). The capitalist politics in Changi have certainly sprung from war and have adopted the camp space as one in which to excersise social production. These men are both soldiers *and* citizens, and yet, in the camp, they are also neither. But, when the war ends, those in the camp space must reproduce their social footing on the outside. And yet, as we see with King as he embraces his role as a lowly American Corporal, the film indicates that he is hardly up to the task outside a prison camp context.

In *King Rat* we see that Americans in the camp, who by extension stand for the country as a whole, are indeed exceptional, but only in terms of their violence and lack of human connection. *Decision Before Dawn* also makes this clear through Rennick's disagreement with Devlin and his indebtedness to Maurer for saving his life. While the Americans get the last word in *Decision Before Dawn*, it is to praise Maurer's selflessness and to shame an American soldier for referring to his unknown enemy in a derrogatory way. Thus, instead of possessing an inate ability to win the battle, Rennick and his unit are unable to get what they need unless they have help. This is true for Pike in *36 Hours*, too. When he first arrives in Lisbon to get the information he requires, Pike is immediately caught unawares, drugged, and brought to Gerber's hospital. Pike arrives in Lisbon a confident lone American and leaves unconscious, unaware of his surroundings, and dependent on Gerber and Anna for his care.

In this chapter, I have discussed how the tension between American heroism and Axis humanity is palpable in each film under discussion, and how each film plays with the fluidity of American identity even as it offers opportunities to reinforce assumptions about what American

identity means. I have illustrated how each of these films sets the prison camp up as transformative space that erases America's distance from the war and forces global perspectives on relationship building and trust. Finally, I have shown that each of these films immediately and consistently depicts the myth of American exceptionalism — and even of the American hero — as precarious, if not blatantly untrue. Subtle or not, the shaky ground of American identity is depicted as in Rennick's suave endorsement of treason and defense of Maurer in *Decision Before Dawn*, and Sefton's stubborn refusal to conform to the clean-cut Americanism that turns out to be German in *Stalag 17*. It's seen in Pike's determination to continue Gerber's research in *36 Hours*, and, of course, in most of *King Rat*'s characters' refusal to adhere to national ties while imprisoned, and their reluctance to return to them once freed. Thus, through capture and imprisonment, the characters in these films are able to eschew exceptionalism and succeed, or embrace it and fail. They are responsible for socially producing their camps cooperatively, enacting "a set of relations between individuals and groups" in a space that serves as the "'embodiment' and medium of social life itself" (*Postmodern Geographies* 120).

In so clearly challenging the belief in American exceptionalism through depictions of troubled identity politics in prison camp spaces, these films exemplify Bruce Crowther's claim that postwar America endured a "climate of dislocation and disillusionment" (157). While American values are visible in these films, they're enforced by characters who are deeply flawed. Setting these films among prisoners of war offers the perfect opportunity for filmgoers to explore what Bodnar refers to as "The cataclysm of war," which "forced Americans to consider both the virtuous and the violent sides of their nature" (2), and to face the virtuous and violent sides of American identity.

As spaces of war, the prison camps in these films are meant to discipline, but the discipline found in them is unexpected — not "an art of rank" as Foucault argues (*Discipline & Punish* 146), but the kind that is "radically open to additional otherness" ("Thirdspace" 55). The American cinematic camp is less a crucible that produces permanently changed identities, as the camps in British and French films are, and more a mirror that offers a microcosm of Cold War disillusionment that warns against the dangers of exceptionalism and shows the consequences. While in the camps, characters are exposed to different understandings and ways of doing things, those understandings don't necessarily stick around, as each protagonist leaves to return to the life he lived before — for better or worse. Rennick returns to his unit as the war rages on. As a newly-recognized war hero, Sefton has not actually changed, and his willingness to help Dunbar escape does not come from his sense of duty, but from his mercenary bent, as he notes that he might be eligible for reward money. Pike leaves Gerber's compound with Anna, and yet they drive off in separate cars, demonstrating that she has no place in his actual life in America. Finally, King leaves the camp bound for America and the life he wanted so desperately to escape, but only after alienating Marlowe to ensure his isolation.

Thus, the "morally superior, heroic, united, innately peaceful" (2) traditional depictions of Americans in the postwar period that Chopra-Gant champions are challenged as these films explore postwar American might as it collided with Cold War apprehension and the need for new and powerful allies. This exploration resulted in films that engage in rituals of heroism and military might, but also subtly, or overtly, as in *King Rat*, reveal the cynicism, doubt, and cluttered identities that informed the American postwar experience and remind us that, regardless of where it comes from, meat is ever only meat.

1. It is true that films like *Quo Vadis* and *The African Queen* significantly out-grossed *Decision Before Dawn* in 1951, and *Stalag 17* was outdone by *From Here to Eternity*, another melancholy war film, before receiving Academy acclaim.

2. *The Stars and Stripes* Pike reads refers to Henry A. Wallace, a former vice-president and 1948 presidential hopeful who "called for stronger action on civil rights and more open efforts to work with, not against, communist actors at home and abroad. Wallace's vision echoed "social democracy" in Italy and France, where communists and socialists were part of multifaceted ruling coalitions, not the American tradition of two-party government" (Jeremi Suri, "Postwar Politics and the Cold War" n.p.). A subsequent issue that Pike reads at the camp claims "Former President Roosevelt Arrives in Warm Springs," strangely changing Roosevelt's wartime death to continued life, and "Wallace Message Asks 'Unrelenting Peace Offensive,'" which suggests that in a plausible postwar world (of which Gerber is attempting to convince Pike) a socially democratic president would use military terms to attempt to enforce peace. Another column notes, "Peace Parley Could End Chinese War," which again uses terms of engagement to discuss an end to the conflict that saw the rise of McCarthyism in the United States, and an end, for many, of the period of booming postwar social recovery.

3. *The One that got Away* (Roy Ward Baker [1957]) features German prisoners of war, but the German lead, Oberleutnant Franz von Werra (Hardy Krüger), is not terribly likeable, and the film does not explore issues of loyalty, relationship, or identity to as great an extent as the films here do.

4. In addition to rebranding the space of the camp, the implications of "the wrong enemy" trope that keeps cropping up in these films seem to be reactions to America's political climate during the postwar period. At the time of *Decision Before Dawn*'s 1951 production, the United States saw President Truman's disapproval of General MacArthur's plan to invade China, and MacArthur's subsequent relief from command in Korea happened in April of that year, just eight months before the film's release. MacArthur's willingness to expand the Korean War into China was indicative of American support for dichotomously pitting themselves against others to win wars. *Decision Before Dawn*'s success suggests that not all Americans wished to draw such stark boundaries. Hollywood biographer Michelangelo Capua notes that "the box office and critical success of *Decision Before Dawn* was so intense that [Litvak] was eager to direct a sort of a sequel, *The Steeper Cliff*, once again shot in Germany" (86). MacArthur's firing and the film's success both suggest that much of America was ready to move into a time of less overt exceptionalism and more willing international cooperation as they settled in for the Cold War.

5. TCM notes that it earned $10M within six months of its release before garnering Academy Award nominations and a Best Actor win for William Holden (Nixon & Stafford, n.p.).

6. The complication of language continues when Gerber visits a senior officer, Lieutenant Colonel Ostermann (Oscar Beregi, Jr.) and casually asks that they carry on their conversation in English because he is afraid of slipping into German at the wrong time and giving away the operation. While this move mitigates the problem of Rod Taylor's lack of fluency in German, the scene elides national signifiers by using the language of Germany's enemies while conversing about the German agenda as Ostermann's Nazi-emblemed hat sits prominently in the foreground. This is not the first instance of linguistic elision. Earlier in the film a German general is handed a telegram, which we see from his point of view, indicating in code that Pike has been dispatched.

As he reads, the German letters fade to English, and we become complicit in the secrets of both sides of the war. Particularly interesting here is that the Nazi seal is stamped on the lower left-hand side of the telegram, now approving English words as well as German, confusing wartime identities despite the film's ostensible subject matter.

7. It furthers this point even after Gerber's death, when we are introduced to more helpful and resourceful Germans, each essential to Pike's and Anna's continued safety. In a brief scene in which Pike and Anna hide in a dilapidated cellar exposed to the outside, we see a young German soldier, reminiscent of the one in *The Wooden Horse* (1950), enjoying a bit of recreation while only steps away from discovering the pair. The camera, shooting from Pike's and Anna's hiding place, captures a concerned look on the soldier's face, and it seems that all is lost. However, the reverse shot reveals that, rather than spotting Pike and Anna, the soldier notices a bird's nest, full of chicks. The soldier kneels down and enjoys the new life, whistling and fawning over the birds. While his lingering adds to the scene's building tension as shots of him are intercut with ones of Pike and Anna, anxiously waiting for him to leave, it also humanizes the German soldier, demonstrating that Gerber's goodness is not an anomaly. Just after the soldier leaves, though, Anna reveals that she was repeatedly raped during her time at Ravensbrück. This revelation prevents us from becoming too comfortable with wartime Germanness in general and instead asks us to consider individual acts of humanity rather than collective acts committed in the name of war.

8. To be sure, Gerber's plan for Pike is foiled by a papercut Pike receives at the beginning of the film. In the camp, Pike gets salt in the wound and immediately concludes that he has been duped. He then attempts to get the better of Gerber, but is foiled once again. Pike's only way to victory is through a close working relationship with Gerber.

9. We witness the horrifying results of an earlier "borehole party" when another officer, accused of stealing food, is executed by being drowned in one of the makeshift outdoor toilets, his feet sticking up out of the open hole full of excrement, topped with a makeshift seat of plywood.

10. Of course, the Labour party's short stint in government and Churchill's return to power in 1951 means that Grey is sure to be foiled once again.

11. This is in line with many French and British films before it, as well as the American World War One Prisoner of War comedy, *Two Arabian Knights* (1927).

12. Grable, we are told, is "the girl [the prisoners] would most like to have behind barbed wire," suggesting the Thirdspace blending of reality and imagination. It also demonstrates that they want to bring Grable *in* to the camp space, rather than escape and go to her.

CHAPTER FOUR
"This is our show": Taking up space in *The Great Escape and The Bridge on the River Kwai*

After the War and throughout the early 1950s, American identity was under pressure, as postwar victory was steeped in the paranoia of postwar anticommunism and the fear of conspiracies that would "undermine and destroy a way of life" (Hofstadter 29). However, what constituted the American way of life at the time was complicated. Cold War scholar Stephen J. Whitfield writes that in the late 1950s, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), which had championed efforts to purge the United States of anything deemed "un-American," was scolded for the vagueness of that term (124). In 1959, former President Harry Truman also denounced HUAC, labelling it "the most un-American thing in the country today" (Whitfield 124). HUAC's and Truman's concerns about what constitutes "un-Americanness," necessitated the examination of what represents Americanness during a time when, as John Bodnar tells us, many conservatives and liberals alike "moved away from any ideal view of the goodness of human nature or the dream that it could be reformed" (Bodnar 62).

British identity politics were also changing. The early postwar effort to "collect" identities under one large and diverse British family, as we see in films like *The Captive Heart* (1946), shifted to feature a stronger, less hapless Britain. As Wendy Webster notes, this new imagery expelled narratives of American heroics and instead reached back to Britain's imperial roots in an effort to rework "Second World War narratives from a 'people's war' to a 'hero's war'" and to develop "a new myth of national destiny" (*Englishness & Empire* 58). An important reason for this regression was the Suez crisis of 1956. Webster tells us that the debacle "decisively demonstrated American dominance, and meant that anxieties about American power were closely linked to anxieties about loss of imperial power. In this context, British-American

relations, far from bolstering ideas of Britain's status in the world, were a major way in which loss or power was registered" (82).

While much of this history relates to my chapters on American and British POW cinema, it specifically contextualizes the two most famous, most successful films in the genre, which no study of POW cinema would be complete without: *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957) and *The Great Escape* (1963). While important, neither of these films fits neatly into my study of Allied national cinemas using the space of the cinematic POW camp to explore new, less nationally defined identities and allegiances. Instead, they reflect more nationalistic leanings as postwar feelings of relief turned to assertions of strength. Both *The Great Escape* and *The Bridge on the River Kwai* feature rather heavy-handed depictions of isolated and proudly nationalistic anti-heroes confined in the prison camp space. As I have shown elsewhere, other POW films use the space of the camp to bring together — or even elide — disparate identities, its liminal position creating a place that destabilizes self-conceptions and shifts expressions of identity away from the expected — patriotic, masculine, heteronormative — and toward more practical ones that reflect national postwar/Cold War identity crises. However, the camps in these films harbour more concentrated expressions of national identity, claiming the camp experience as "*their* show," despite their captivity, as *Bridge*'s Colonel Nicholson (Alec Guinness) points out.

In other chapters, I have discussed the space of the cinematic prison camp as an "imagined community," both in terms of Anderson's concept and Edward Soja's understanding of Thirdspace as an "other" space that is produced via real, perceived space, and imagined, conceived space. National identities are reimagined and give way to individual or communal identities that don't rely — at least, not as much as they do outside the camp — on national ties. In *The Great Escape*, though, the American "imagined community" is actually reinforced and

reasserted in the camp space. This is not to say that the non-American community is comparatively herd-like and un-assertive in their efforts to escape the camp. Rather, the Americans in the camp find ways to distinguish themselves in such a way as to illustrate American isolationism in an otherwise international collective. Despite its exaggerated displays of international cooperation, *The Great Escape*, and especially the character of Hilts (Steve McQueen), seems to reject the camp's burgeoning international project, and instead turns inward, embracing the isolationism that films like *Decision Before Dawn* and *36 Hours* avoid.

This seems a calculated move to foster the American fascination with war at the time. James Chapman writes that *The Great Escape* represents the zenith of the cinema's representation of the pleasure culture of war" and that it "was one of a cycle of 'all-star' war epics in the early 1960s [...] that marked the genre's transition from sober realism to all-out spectacle" (202–203). Chapman calls this transition "part of the film industry's attempt to lure audiences away from their television sets and back into cinemas. [...] The traditional family audience had disappeared by the 1960s (with occasional high-profile exceptions such as *The Sound of Music*) and the hard core of regular cinema-goers now comprised a younger, largely male demographic" (202-203).

And so, while earlier American POW films like *Decision Before Dawn* could challenge identity politics and the enemy-ally binary that war both depends upon and encourages, *The Great Escape* needed a clearly American star-hero at the heart of the spectacle to lure the people that Chapman refers to above to theatres. To be sure, *The Great Escape* still explores themes of identity within the cinematic prison camp, even if it seems one-dimensional. *The Great Escape* borrows tropes that I have discussed in other chapters from many other films,[1] including tunneling and wearing civilian clothes. In his review of the film, Bosley Crowther notes that, "A

few of the wilder episodes in this over-long melodrama [...] are so far beyond plausibility that they could not have happened anyplace. And since I've seen most of them in other pictures about cheeky prisoner-of-war—three or four in the past year—I must assume that they are derived from common lore" (*New York Times*, Aug. 8, 1963). This review is not unlike that of *The Wooden Horse*, *The Password is Courage*, or many other POW films accused of prioritizing genre over substance. Still, *The Great Escape* refuses to fit neatly into my study on the cinematic POW camp as an international community largely for one reason: the film's priority is to reinforce isolated American heroism. While *The Great Escape* features British prisoners as well as Americans, the film does not attempt to deconstruct identities in the same way that the other American films I've discussed do. Instead, the film concentrates on the star power of James Garner and Steve McQueen. This meant taking liberties with Hilts' character — a sassy, baseball-wielding loner — and with the story.[2] Besides noting the ways Hilts' behavior would not have been accepted in the actual Stalag Luft III, on which the film is based, Suzanne Broderick tells us that in the real story, "the Luftwaffe seemed to consider the Allied airmen more as brother pilots than as enemy prisoners" (80), which aligns more with *Decision Before Dawn* and many of the other, more internationally-minded films in this dissertation. *The Great Escape* therefore stands apart from the other American films I've discussed in other chapters because it goes out of its way to suggest that international cooperation is not the key to survival; rather, American gumption is.

The Bridge on the River Kwai, on the other hand, renders British gumption absurd by featuring a protagonist so caught up in his performance of national identity that he actually collaborates with the enemy. As a prisoner, Nicholson no longer contributes to his national service in battle, and his assertion of national character becomes completely disconnected from

the British national project of the war. And, while like the films I discuss in my chapter on British cinema, *Bridge* certainly deals with disillusionment, misplaced identity, and compassion for one's enemy, it does so not by opening up Britishness to newcomers who wish to participate in a form of Britishness, but by rendering Britishness a dangerous identifier to keep in check.

Of course, another crucial difference between *Bridge* and the British films I have discussed is that for many, including director David Lean and producer Sam Spiegel, *Bridge* is considered a Hollywood picture (Phillips 226). Moreover, during the initial planning stages for the film, Gene Phillips notes that Lean "assured Spiegel that he would work with the screenwriters to 'rescue Col. Nicholson from being depicted either as a lunatic or a traitor...and give his character a sympathetic and heroic dimension'" (225). Given its Hollywood pedigree and Colonel Nicholson's staunch nationalism, *Bridge* does not fit neatly into my chapter on British POW cinema, despite other similarities I will discuss.

The Great Escape features a group of allied prisoners of war who work together to pull off a daring multi-man escape from a German prison camp run by the somewhat disinterested Kommandant Von Luger (Hannes Messemer). Each prisoner plays his role in the escape, from Bartlett (Richard Attenborough), who is "Big X," the group's ring leader, to Hendley (James Garner), "the Scrounger," always on the hunt for resources, to Danny (Charles Bronson), the "Tunnel King" in charge of creating their underground exit. Steve McQueen plays Hilts, the "Cooler King," whose frequent stints in the cooler (solitary confinement) often isolate him from the rest of the group. The other men work closely together to create new identity papers, convert uniforms to civilian clothes, and forge a tunnel through which we follow them under the wire to freedom. The majority of the action involves the triumphs and pitfalls of the escape plan as the men try to arrange their freedom away from the German guards. We also follow the major

characters after they make their escape. Some, like Bartlett and his friend, Mac (Gordon Jackson), are caught, and we feel the tragedy of their execution. Confident Americans Hilts and Hendley are caught and returned to the camp, seemingly ready to do it all again under a new commandant after Von Luger is forcibly relieved from his command.

The Bridge on the River Kwai depicts British troops, led by Colonel Nicholson, who are forced by the camp commandant, Colonel Saito (Sessue Hayakawa), to build a bridge to connect Axis powers in Bangkok to those in Rangoon. Nicholson protests Saito's insistence that all the troops — including officers — work, and the two men are at odds until Saito relents. Nicholson begins working on the bridge and eventually comes to believe that it could be a monument to British industry. He edges Saito out and takes on the project himself, commanding all of his men to work on it, even though its purpose is to help the enemy. Meanwhile, despite the camp's notoriety for being escape-proof, American Commander Shears (William Holden) escapes and joins a multi-national unit led by British Major Warden (Jack Hawkins) intent on blowing up the bridge and destroying the Japanese hold in Rangoon. As Nicholson and his men finish the bridge, Warden and Shears see that he has also become their enemy and call for his death as well as Saito's. Nicholson comes to his senses only in the end, after Shears and Warden have rigged the bridge to blow and he has been hit with mortar fire. He uses his last ounce of strength to fall onto the detonator and blow up the bridge, seemingly undoing his treason and leaving Dr. Clipton (James Donald) to walk the beach alone, confusedly uttering "madness" repeatedly.

Both of these films stand out from the rest of my study enough to warrant their own chapter. While I maintain that the liminal space of the cinematic POW camp functions as one in which social, national, and even gendered identities can be examined and re-produced along with the spaces that contain them, I am interested in the ways these films use the space of their

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respective camps not to break down these expressions of identity, as we see in the other films here, but to exaggerate them. Both films indulge in over-the-top displays of nationalism, whether through consistent reminders of suave American confidence or stubborn British pride, albeit to different ends. *The Great Escape* foregrounds American ingenuity and isolationism, suggesting that the key to survival is solitude, baseball, and motorcycle chops. It therefore seems to stand for everything *Decision Before Dawn* fights to reconsider. *Bridge*, though, depicts the opposite (and the other side of *The Captive Heart*'s coin), and demonstrates the dangers of isolated nationalism and the ways in which it affects every day humanity.

I will break this chapter into two parts, discussing *The Great Escape* first. I outline the ways American characters assert control of their captors and of the camp space before moving into a discussion of Hilts and American isolationism in the camp. From there, I discuss *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. I begin by highlighting Shears and Clipton as characters consistently disillusioned by issues of identity in the camp. Next, I will provide examples of Nicholson's increasing militarism as it compares with Saito's increasing humanity, which will lead to a discussion of Nicholson's troubling colonizing behavior as it exists alongside Japanese Colonel Saito's spatial practice with which he attempts to balance his identities as soldier and human being. I will end my argument with an examination of the film's nihilistic ending which includes the destruction of human life and the bridge that simultaneously represents collaboration and resistance.

Michel Foucault's work on punishment and discipline is relevant here. Foucault's examination of punishment as it is affected by changing power dynamics helps me analyze the ways *The Bridge on the River Kwai*'s Japanese commandant, Colonel Saito, becomes ineffectual at punishment, even as his prisoner, British Colonel Nicholson becomes more disciplined as a

British colonizer. As a POW charged with building a bridge for the Japanese, Nicholson's move from staunch refusal to leading the project reflects Foucault's understanding of discipline that involves "the formation of a relation that in the mechanism [of the body] itself makes it more obedient as it becomes more useful" (*Discipline & Punish* 137–138).

Edward Soja and Henri Lefebvre also contribute to my examination of the camp spaces in these films as ones that allow for more concentrated, or exaggerated, demonstrations of identity. Soja's questions concerning the relationship between being and place (whether they act as "separate spheres," interdependencies, as a result of "the absolute ego," or as a result of the materiality of place) will help me to understand the prison camps in *The Bridge on the River Kwai* and *The Great Escape* as ones that produce and are produced differently from those discussed in other chapters (*Postmodern Geographies* 135). Lefebvre claims that "the political power which holds sway over 'men,' though it dominates the space occupied by its 'subjects,' does not control the causes and reasons that intersect within that space, each of which acts by and for itself" (413). This suggests that the exaggerated nationalism in both films is not enforced from outside the camp, but is, instead, enacted by each individual. The films certainly confirm this, since characters like Nicholson and *The Great Escape*'s Hilts enact their versions of Britishness and Americanness respectively, not because they must fall in line with the other British and American prisoners, but because their expressions of national identity (their uniforms and stereotypical behavior, for example) work for them personally, and even isolate them from their compatriots, distinguishing them as the exemplars of their respective nationalities.

Given the nationalistic bent of both *The Bridge on the River Kwai* and *The Great Escape*, I also rely on Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* to chart and understand the ways these films establish and reinforce national identities, despite the diverse communities they

feature. As in other chapters, Anderson's work helps me to understand the ways in which characters like Hilts and Nicholson function in spite of their prison communities, and live apart from them, both physically and, at times, ideologically.

Wendy Webster's work on postwar Englishness and the move toward more imperialistic identities continues to inform my discussion of *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. Webster notes that "Second World War narratives, transposing manly and high-minded heroes from an imperial to a Second World War setting, offered a new myth of national destiny (*Englishness and Empire* 58). Crucially, though, while Nicholson might seem to embody such a new myth, the film is careful to point out its flaws.

James Chapman writes specifically about *The Great Escape* as it participates in what he calls "the pleasure culture of war" (202), contextualizing it among its combat-focused contemporaries. Suzanne Broderick also provides useful contextual scholarship for the film, and her interview with real-life POW Ernest Thorp demonstrates how McQueen's character reinforces exceptionalist attitudes. *The Telegraph* writer Sinclair McKay's work also does this, as he details Hilts' isolation. Gene Phillips' work on David Lean adds useful context to my work on *The Bridge on the River Kwai* here, as does Laurent Bouzereau's short documentary, *The Making of* The Bridge on the River Kwai (2000). My analysis relies too on Nicholas Cull, who considers both films essential to the British POW genre. Finally, I cannot leave out another scathing Bosley Crowther review, this time of *The Great Escape*.

I begin my discussion with *The Great Escape* and the ways it prioritizes Americanness in the camp space, rather than reconsider enemy/ally divisions as other POW films do. In contrast to films like *Decision Before Dawn*, and *36 Hours*, in which Axis characters are deeply humanized, *The Great Escape* tends to antagonize the Axis characters for sport by allowing

American characters to take ownership of the space. While they might be treated sympathetically in part, they are consistently put in their place as weak men who are played with by the intellectually superior American prisoners.

For example, Hendley, the suave and confident scrounger, befriends Werner, a drab and soft-spoken German guard, and offers what Werner believes to be genuine friendship in order to obtain rare items. Ironically, Werner is first introduced to the film when he challenges the meaning of enemy/ally relationships. Near the beginning of the film, Hendley walks around the camp inspecting his new surroundings when Werner approaches him and asks why he wishes to help the British when they are his enemy. Confused, Hendley asks for clarification, and Werner remarks on the War of 1812, in which the British bombed Washington DC. Hendley dismisses this fact as "propaganda."

Here, we already get a sense of Hendley, an American, asserting his presence in the camp space and illustrating the ways in which national communities are imagined and re-imagined, as Benedict Anderson has theorized. Moreover, the tension between Hendley's apparent agency in the camp space and his assertion that the British invasion of American space is "propaganda" suggests that he already treats the camp space as an imagined community wherein Americans come out on top. Hendley's interaction with Werner also invites Lefebvre's observation that "the political power which holds sway over 'men,' though it dominates the space occupied by its 'subjects,' does not control the causes and reasons that intersect within that space, each of which acts by and for itself" (413). While the camp space is technically German, we are about to see that Werner's German authority means nothing to Hendley. Werner, nicknamed "The Ferret," is presented as a hapless and pitiable German against Hendley's confident American wit and charm. While the same is true of Schulz (Sig Ruman) in *Stalag 17*, he exerts at least some

agency over the barracks; Werner seems to exist mainly as a weak German to make Hendley look the part of the wily American who turns a bad situation — his imprisonment — into an opportunity to show his strength. In doing so, Hendley refashions the nature of the camp space as a contested one in which he holds some authority over Werner.

The next time he and Hendley meet, Werner is inside the barracks, staring wistfully out the window, just as a prisoner might. But as a guard, his place is on the other side of the window, gazing into the more confined space of the barracks in order to maintain order in the camp. While we see him through the window from the outside, guarding him, his gaze is turned the wrong way — outward, rather than inward. While he should be patrolling the barracks and using his gaze to assert his position of power in the camp, he is instead using it passively. He is shirking any military discipline he has that would enable him to "neutralize the effects of counter-power that spring from [an organized multiplicity] and which form a resistance to the power that wishes to dominate it" (*Discipline & Punish* 219).

Instead, Hendley takes up this discipline, feigning friendship and effectively neutralizing Werner by muddying his allegiance between Hendley and his duty. We see Hendley through the window frame behind Werner, walking into the barracks with a cigarette. He casually asks Werner for a light before joining him at the window and arrogantly blowing smoke across Werner's view. Werner's expression makes it clear that he would love a cigarette, but that he also registers Hendley's rudeness in both distracting Werner from his reverie, and in failing to offer him a puff. He turns, seemingly involuntarily, toward Hendley before returning his gaze to the window. Hendley feigns regret and offers Werner a cigarette of his own, introducing the odd power dynamic of prisoners having and guards wanting that the scene develops. Werner looks around nervously before taking one, noting that he will smoke it when he is off-duty. Hendley

then takes two more cigarettes from his pocket and, shoving them in Werner's breast pocket, offers him more for his "roommates," a passive-aggressive move that shows Hendley's refusal to defer to Werner's authority.

As the scene develops, it continues to stress Werner's underprivileged position as a guard — rather than Hendley's as a prisoner, and to humanize Werner. Crucially, though, while shared humanity is highly valued in other POW films, here, Hendley takes advantage of Werner's. We discover that both men were boy scouts, but that Werner had to go into the Hitler Youth and could not earn as many merit badges as Hendley could. So, instead of asserting commonality to disrupt national differences, as in *Decision Before Dawn*, *36 Hours*, and even *King Rat*, here, Hendley disrupts commonality by asserting national difference. This snippet of Werner's personal life tells us that while Hendley experienced a normal childhood, Werner's was interrupted by the Nazi regime.

While this film offers some sympathy to Werner for his past experiences, it also exploits him by continuing to make him look weak, both emotionally and physically. In the same scene, Hendley asks Werner if he plans to remain in the army after the war. Werner turns toward the camera and urgently replies that he is unwell. He tells Hendley that a problem with his teeth will prevent him from continued service and discloses that their dentist "is a butcher." He then catches himself and leans toward Hendley, begging him not to tell anyone.

In many of the other films I've discussed, an exchange like this would likely elicit compassion for Werner and his conscription into the German military. In this scene, though, Hendley, with his suave cockiness, good health, and rugged good looks, has slowly and carefully altered the barracks' power dynamic, and we delight in his confident trickery. As an example of Thirdspace, this camp undergoes significant restructuring as Hendley asserts his social power

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over Werner. We are meant to see Werner as Hendley's pathetic stooge — a sad loner who doesn't understand Hendley's cool use of American resourcefulness. Hendley is engaging in a spatial practice inside the boundaries of the camp intended to deconstruct Werner's authority. Ever in uniform, we can see Hendley as representative of the American military will to reclaim the camp space as he fights a psychological battle against Werner. If we recall that Soja tells us that Thirdspace "does not derive simply from an additive combination of its binary antecedents but rather from a disordering, deconstruction, and tentative reconstitution" ("Thirdspace" 55), we can understand that Hendley is disordering and re-shaping the space of the camp to fit his and his allies' needs. Through Hendley's manipulation of this space — for it is his perspective of the action that the camera delivers to us — we see Werner as a man who must leave the army because of a toothache — an ailment that suggests Werner's weak constitution. In comparison, Hendley's fashionable uniform (a rugged white turtleneck sweater worn under his blue Airforce jacket) — distinct from that of the other Americans — squares his silhouette and makes him look as though the military suits him. The shots we see represent Hendley's view of the camp and his view of people like Werner. Hendley sees Werner as weak, and so the camera films Werner in positions or from aspects that depict or hint at that weakness, just as it films Hendley — and, by extension, America — in positions that allow him to reclaim agency, despite being imprisoned. That is, the camera's point of view gives us the camp space as Hendley wants it to be. Moreover, the claims that the German dentist "butchers" his fellow Germans further suggests that we are not meant to respect any of the camp's German soldiers. Compared with Hendley, who oozes machismo, Werner seems utterly inconsequential.

Even when Werner comes to understand that he is being manipulated, he can do nothing because Hendley, who has stolen his papers, threatens to blackmail him for having reneged on

his duty as a guard. While this is an impressive and exciting move in terms of the progress of the Allies' escape plan, Werner is the loser here, having lost his identifying papers. Instead, Hendley now controls his own identity as well as Werner's, depriving Werner of his agency just as the Reich has. Soja tells us that Thirdspace is a space where "old connections can be disturbed and new ones emerge" ("Thirdspace" 56). In this scene, Hendley has disturbed and overwritten the original function of the camp space to establish a contradictory and ambiguous one in which his own spatial practice takes precedence even as his "old connections" remain intact.

While this way of regarding one's wartime enemy might seem unsurprising, and even expected in these films, Hendley's treatment of Werner is unusual in light of what the other American POW films I've discussed depict. But, given its design as an American cinematic spectacle, *The Great Escape*'s enduring popularity might be precisely because it shows how easily Americans can take over wartime spaces and manipulate their captors for their own benefit. In this case, Werner's reluctance and uncertainty does not suggest that Hendley is being unsporting by picking on someone weaker than he. Instead, Werner's hesitancy highlights Hendley's confidence and encourages our admiration of him. In *The Great Escape*, vulnerability like Werner's does not just provide camp prisoners an opportunity to form new alliances or to question old ones within the liminal camp space — even though Hendley is given the option. Instead, Werner's vulnerability is a chance for Hendley to take full advantage of his opponent.

Crucially, while Hendley is still at war in the camp space, Werner is not. Hendley does not behave as someone who has temporarily given up the fight with the enemy. Instead, his attitude communicates an insistence that even in the camp, he is an active opponent at every turn. Hendley's primary identity as committed American pilot has not been affected or altered at all in the liminal camp space, unlike many of the other characters in the other films I discuss. Rather,

he asserts his outside spatial practice on the camp, manipulating it to fit his needs. While his ongoing imprisonment means that there are obvious limitations to this repurposing, he is, nevertheless, making the space his own as much as he is able, drawing upon "the material and mental spaces of [...] traditional dualism but [extending] well beyond them in scope, substance, and meaning ("Thirdspace" 56). As we will see in *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, *The Great Escape* therefore does not conform to what I have discovered in other films, making it noteworthy in that it uses the camp space as one in which American ingenuity can be asserted as part of a new spatial awareness in which American identity trumps German identity in a German-run camp. While other postwar POW films largely set national allegiance aside in favour of human connection, *The Great Escape* offers its Cold War-era audience the assurance that nothing has changed since World War II and that Americans are secure in their identity and cause.

Oddly, we are led to like Werner in a way that reflects Hendley's treatment of him as a weakling to be pitied, rather than to hate him as a diabolical member of the German ranks. This allows Hendley to maintain his charming and infinitely likable demeanor as somewhat of a diplomat, and also shows the ease with which Americans can claim space simply by talking. Still, we are disappointed when Werner is the one who clumsily discovers one of the Allies' tunnels and alerts his superiors. We, too, are drawn to Hendley's allure, and Werner's performance of his actual duties seems out of character, as he reclaims the tunnel from the Allies and foils their plan. But, almost as a punishment for ruining the Allies' plan, the narrative ousts Werner from the remainder of the film after he discovers the tunnel. Werner's presence to this point has provided at least the possibility of wartime boundary-crossing, emotionally and psychologically, as Hendley is able to manipulate him; politically, given Werner's mention of

the "butcher" dentist and his fears about going to the Russian front; and physically, as Werner spends time with Hendley and shares a cigarette in the Allied barracks. However, as soon as he does his duty and exposes the Allied prisoners' escape plan, he adjusts the camp's power dynamic once again and reminds us that the Americans are prisoners, confined by very real and specific German-drawn camp borders. In a film focused on American gumption and know-how, such a reminder seems inevitable, despite Hendley's confidence. Therefore Werner — and any chance of the film further exploring the complexities of camp relationships and identities as other films do — fades away to make room for an Allied comeback.[3]

The same is true for Colonel Von Luger, the camp's ineffectual commandant. Colonel Von Luger is introduced as someone keenly aware of the tension between his identity as an officer of the Third Reich and as a human being who hates certain aspects of the war. Like Werner, Von Luger is introduced as someone who disagrees with Nazi politics, but who finds himself involved nevertheless as the one in charge of a camp he cannot control. While Von Luger's character could give viewers a sense of the humanity of those who have little choice in what they fight for, Von Luger is presented as one who plans simply to "sit out the war as comfortably as possible."

Von Luger's tenure as camp commandant is far from comfortable, though. Despite his title, he is not truly in charge of the camp — rather, he must read memos from "higher authorities" who have far more power than he does. Von Luger is rarely seen outside his office, choosing instead to avoid interaction with all but Ramsay, the Senior British Officer, whom he is forced to tell of the fifty dead escapees. The prisoners traverse more of the camp space than he does, enabling them to move beyond the known capacities of imprisonment and to "analyze new aspects of space and spatiality" ("Thirdspace" 56) that Von Luger cannot imagine. Moreover,

Hilts antagonizes him throughout the film with his antics, and flaunts his constant trips to the cooler for punishment, asserting a spatial practice that Von Luger does not understand. In the end, as with Werner in the beginning, we come to see that Von Luger is just as much a prisoner as the Allies are, as he is removed from his command and taken away under guard as a result of the Allied escape attempt. While Von Luger's departure might prompt pity for him in some viewers, the film ensures that we are instead left thinking of an American hero, Hilts, who is left standing outside the commandant's quarters. Just before Von Luger is taken away, he turns to Hilts, who earlier mentions his desire to see Berlin as a free man and tells him that Hilts will likely see Berlin before he does, hinting at his own fate while acknowledging Hilts' potential to freely move beyond the camp space once again.

Hendley and Hilts assert their own influence over the camp's spatiality in an ongoing process. Soja writes that spatiality "is a way of thinking, an ideational process in which the 'image' of reality takes epistemological precedence over the tangible substance and appearance of the real world" (*Postmodern Geographies* 125). In *The Great Escape*, Hendley's and Hilts' influence over the camp space reflects an ideational process that insists on asserting American Cold War ideology and the rhetoric concerning "the myth of American exceptionalism" that John Bodnar discusses: "In this creed it was an aggressive sense of personal freedom for all and a hatred for all forms of tyranny that made America a special place and offered its citizens and the rest of the world the best chance to create a future better than the past. In such a culture strength was favored over weakness, self-reliance over cooperation" (2).

Given the US's Cold War common ground with West Germany, *The Great Escape*'s somewhat lukewarm treatment of German characters makes sense as a way of giving domestic audiences permission to once again like Germans — or, at least, those without communist

leanings. However, when comparing *The Great Escape* with *36 Hours* (1964), it seems clear that the film was simply more interested in making the American characters look as dominant as possible to satiate what producers saw as the American audience's fascination with war and their desire for an American spectacle. After all, the film does not allow us to wholly give into an alliance with Werner or Von Luger, and instead insists we favour Hendley and Hilts, even over the other Allied characters. Again, this is not to say that we are not meant to engage with the other characters. We become attached to Danny (Charles Bronson) and Willie (John Leyton) as they dig the tunnels, Sedgwick (James Coburn) as he creates props for the escape, and Big X (Richard Attenborough) and Ramsey (James Donald), who run the show. But, while the others tend to work together or in teams, Hilts and Hendley exude an air of exception that the others don't. Even when Hendley partners with Blythe (Donald Pleasence) to escape, Hendley is wholly responsible for Blythe, given Blythe's blindness.

And, sometimes, the American repurposing of the camp space also excludes their allies. While, as I will discuss later, Hilts works alone throughout the film, he actively works with his fellow Americans, Hendley and Goff (Judd Taylor) to make moonshine. This collaboration reinforces Americanness in an otherwise international camp when a later shot of the three tasting the moonshine dissolves into a full shot of Hilts, dressed in a red tunic, setting an explosive in a trash can set on an angle, like a cannon. The blast sounds as Hendley runs an American flag up the camp flagpole. The three Americans then take swigs of their moonshine and reveal revolutionary war-era costumes. Hilts grabs a flute, Hendley a drum, and Goff a Betsy Ross flag, and the three march around the camp playing "Yankee Doodle," as the others — largely British officers — follow them *en masse*, celebrating their revolutionary defeat as Goff exclaims, "down the British!"

Here, the Americans take over a portion of the camp space to remind their fellow Allies not of their similarities, but of their differences. By commemorating the revolutionary war, even in fun, Hilts, Hendley, and Goff bring up America's once-adversarial relationship with, and victory over, Britain, reinforcing Werner's earlier notice of America's now-odd allyship with Britain. And, while they are aligning with their experience of nationality as an Andersonian "imagined community," their flaunting of national identity is not typical in POW films unless it is later to be corrected and the community expanded. So, while Margaret Butler reminds us that part of Benedict Anderson's argument is that "nation states emerge less through military conquests than through language, education and mass communication" and that by these means "people come to know themselves as belonging to a distinct community" (6), Hilts, Hendley, and Goff are not asserting their national identities by aligning with their allies concerning language and mass communication; rather, they are distinguishing themselves by asserting a military victory against Britain that saw the birth of their nation.

And, while Hendley, Hilts, and Goff include everyone in the celebration, it is clearly a parade of American identity and independence. Despite the ensemble shots, this sequence is inherently divisive and separates Hilts, Hendley, and Goff from their fellow prisoners by reminding us of the American triumph over their now-allies. In this respect, they revert to wartime dualism that does not reflect the space's potential as a Thirdspace that engages what Soja calls "a new cultural politics of difference, distinctive features of which are to trash the monolithic and homogeneous in the name of diversity, multiplicity, and heterogeneity" ("Thirdspace" 57) While this scene makes clear that all is long forgiven between the Americans and the British regarding the revolutionary war, that it is brought up in the first place is divisive in its effect and brings battlefield binaries into the liminal camp space.

To this point, I have demonstrated *The Great Escape*'s treatment of Americanness at the German characters' expense and the ways in which Hendley and Hilts are able to wrest authority from both their German captors and their British allies and take over the camp space. I will now shift my focus to discuss American exclusivity in the film and Hilts' specific role as an exemplar of isolated Americanness.

American Air Force flyer and Cooler King Virgil Hilts is rarely without his baseball, especially when he is locked in the cooler, suggesting that this most stereotypically American of characters thinks and works best on his own, regardless of any unseen help he may receive from others. Hilts only grudgingly cooperates with the rest of the escape team, preferring to find his own way out. While he befriends Ives, the Scottish prisoner whom he meets in the cooler, and who ultimately suffers a breakdown and attempts to go over the wire in broad daylight only to be shot dead, and while Ives' death motivates him to take part in the group escape, Hilts insists that he work alone. Importantly, Hilts' isolation does not bar him from respecting Ramsey, the Senior British Officer, according to military protocol and certainly, his decision to participate in the group escape demonstrates a noteworthy change from his even more isolated behavior before Ives' death. However, Hilts' participation in the escape hinges on his solitary role as the "Cooler King" and his ability to be a nominal part of the group and yet separate from them demonstrates his embodied exceptionalism.

From the film's beginning, when the prisoners are brought to the camp, we see Hilts walking along the wire, already isolated from the other prisoners. With his leather bomber jacket, sweatshirt, and khakis, Hilts' appearance sets him apart from the fully uniformed others, including Hendley, who, in full US Airforce uniform, also scouts the camp's perimeter away from the others. After loitering outside the barracks, Hilts reaches into his bag and pulls out his

baseball and glove — clear symbols of his American identity. He tosses the ball into the glove repeatedly, the ball slapping the leather of the glove as he plans his exit. Hilts casually tosses his baseball toward the fence and jumps over the wire to retrieve it — and to check the tower guard's line of sight. He is quickly caught, and yells for the guards not to shoot.

Far from being powerless in this situation, though, Hilts is enacting a plan that involves altering the nature of the camp space to suit his needs. This is certainly something we see in other POW films, and yet, unlike in the other films, Hilts uses the nature of the camp to reinforce his outside identity. In doing so, he does not quite treat the camp as a liminal space, but rather as one that reflects what Soja refers to as "Firstspace-Secondspace dualism" that imbues the space with unintended possibilities while strongly adhering to traditional approaches to spatial knowledge ("Thirdspace" 56). That is, while Hilts moves against the wartime boundaries set out for him, it does not open him up to personal change, like we see with Fontaine in *A Man Escaped*, or Rennick (Richard Basehart) in *Decision Before Dawn*.

Instead, he takes a colonizing approach to the camp, attempting ownership of camp space to assert his American dominance. He facetiously argues with the guard who runs up to him, claiming that he didn't see the wire, and indicating that he wants his baseball back. Three senior German officers, including Von Luger, approach him, and he then casually admits that he was trying to cut his way through the wire, tossing his wire cutters in the air, catching them, and handing them over. After a brief exchange during which Von Luger notes that both men will be "grounded" for the duration of the war, Hilts, hands on his hips, looks upward and tells Von Luger to speak for himself and that he hasn't seen Berlin yet — a not-so-subtle indication that Hilts wishes to take over that space as well. Hilts is then sentenced to isolation, a sentence that reinforces his existing behavior.

Both in this scene and in his frequent relegations to the cooler, Hilts is almost constantly set apart from others, which suggests that he doesn't belong with the other Allied officers in the camp. Even the camera constantly singles him out. In the above scene, he is alone and filmed in close-up when the camera is on him, and in the reverse shot, he remains in the foreground of the frame as two German officers and a group of Allies fill in the rest. Over the course of the film, Hilts is established as an exemplar of American exceptionalism and the doctrine of distinctiveness that re-emerges in the Cold War.

In previous chapters, I have suggested that the cinematic POW camp is an "othered" space that comes from, but does not necessarily reflect, war. In *The Great Escape*, Hilts and his compatriots seem to claim this otherness for their own. But, this assertion of control over the liminal prison environment suggests that Hilts' awareness of spatial constraints does not change the ways in which he engages with that space. While characters in other films change to fit the camp environments that they help create, Hilts and his ilk change the camp environment to suit them. Their behaviour goes against Lefebvre's and Soja's understandings of "Lived Space" or "Thirdspace" because, while they produce and reproduce the camp space, they remain firmly grounded in their outside identities. If, as I have argued, the cinematic prison camp functions as an example of Thirdspace in terms of its depiction as "a meeting point [...] where old connections can be disturbed and new ones emerge" ("Thirdspace" 56), the American characters in *The Great Escape* resist the idea of mingling and instead hold tightly to their "old connections."

This is not to say that no mingling occurs. Hilts builds a relationship with Ives, a Scottish prisoner, and the two even plan to escape together. However, their relationship seems more about demonstrating Hilts' ability to thrive while isolated than it is about making new connections.

While he marches off to the cooler with Ives, the film makes clear that Ives needs community and is not meant for the isolation of the camp — much less the cooler. The second the door closes on Ives; his expression becomes downcast and his shoulders slump. As soon as the door closes on Hilts, though, it is immediately opened again and we see Hilts' arm reach through the door frame, his hands holding the guard's keys to return. Hilts, "the Cooler King," relishes his time alone and interacts with others only when it suits his own plan of escape. And, while Hilts' initial escape plan includes Ives, it is short-lived and Hilts refuses to expand it to accommodate the others. After the plan fails, both men inevitably find themselves back in the cooler, where Ives's psychological state deteriorates, and Hilts remains as self-confident as ever, using his time in the cooler to plan, rather than to brood. So, while Ives represents one of many non-Americans in the film who need collective action in order to survive, Hilts is indicative of the American resistance to anything resembling Communism and the collective action that dominated Cold War discourse. He reassures American viewers that isolation is might and that collective action is weakness — even in the context of war.

Only when Hilts hears that Bix X is planning to move 250 men is he interested in participating in the collective escape plan, and only when Ives dies does he decide to act, albeit largely through the isolation of the cooler as the one who intentionally distracts from the other prisoners' work. Then, during the escape, Hilts is the one who notices the flaw in the plan — the tunnel exit is 20 feet short of the woods — and amends it by offering to escape first and alert the others when the coast is clear. He is able to be the hero and benefit from the plan while still having gone it alone (and without having helped with the majority of the work).

We can therefore see Hilts as the embodiment of American isolationism and exceptionalism that would appeal directly to studios and viewers seized with Cold War anti-

Communist anxieties. He is the antithesis of *Decision Before Dawn'*s Rennick, who actively

works against such exceptionalism. And, in his heroism, he even contrasts *Stalag 17'*s Sefton

(William Holden), who isolates himself from his fellow Americans, and whose isolation his

fellow Americans see as suspicious, rather than admirable.

Importantly, as much as the film exhibits anti-Communism and Cold War politics, we must

remember Chapman's point that the film needed a hero to lure young people to theatres. Steve

McQueen's casting has much to do with Hilts's depiction and his portrayal serves as a source for

and guarantee of the ideology we see in *The Great Escape'*s diegesis. Sinclair McKay notes that,

like his character, Steve McQueen had no interest in sharing the spotlight with any of the other

players in the film and insisted he be given "more to do" to compete with the bravado James

Garner got to affect as Hendley (*The Telegraph*, Dec. 24, 2014). As a result, the script was

reworked to include the famous "motorcycle scene" toward the end of the film, which shows

Hilts outrunning the Nazis before he is, once again, caught and returned to the cooler.

The scene features Hilts, who has escaped the camp, managing to steal a Nazi motorcycle

and uniform to lead a pursuit. Hilts quickly loses his pursuers and immediately ditches the

uniform and reverts to his identity as the baseball-wielding American flyboy in time for his

motorcycle dare deviltry at the Swiss border. He traverses forbidden territory like he owns it,

collecting more and more wartime space for himself without disguise. And yet, he is ultimately

cornered at the border fence and cannot cross into Switzerland.

This runs counter to the film's general attitude that Americans can take up whatever

space they wish. The limitation is surprising and frustrating. The barbed wire of the fence

mirrors that around the camp and contains various wartime identities inside, reminding us that

Hilts is still a prisoner, even if he has quite a lot of agency. After he is caught up in the border

fence, somehow, Hilts is not shot on sight, like his British allies are.[4] Instead, both he and Hendley, who has also escaped, are returned to the prison camp. Hilts even manages to get one last verbal jab in at Von Luger before he is taken away. As Von Luger heads to his demise (punishment for allowing 50 men to escape the camp), Hilts is led to the cooler, his baseball and glove tossed to him as he walks back to the safety of isolation. He is not entirely unlike *Le caporal épinglé*'s (1962) Ballochet, who builds himself a space within the prison camp he occupies. Hilts brings everything he needs to the cooler — his domain as the "Cooler King" — and "appropriates and recasts the representations and significations of mental space as part of social life, as part of second nature" (*Postmodern Geographies* 121).

Hendley's confidence and bravado and Hilts' isolation, over-the-top action sequence, and inexplicable survival distinguishes *The Great Escape* from the other films I've written about here in terms of its use of camp space to socially reinforce national identity. Characters like these ensure that any narrative of collectivity over and above wartime side taking is diminished in favour of appealing to star power, spectacle, and the mood of Cold War anti-Communism, which feeds into Hilts' anti-collectivist attitude and actions.[5] What makes *The Great Escape* so special to this study is perhaps that it is precisely what one might expect amidst Cold War fervor, and yet it stands alone amid its contemporaries. *King Rat*, released just two years later, also takes a cynical view of collectivity, and yet the isolationism it depicts is far from laudable. *36 Hours* stays away from isolationism altogether and suggests that American success is contingent on international help and sacrifice. *The Great Escape* represents a turn away from feeling a part of an international project, and a turning inward, pandering to an embrace of postwar isolationism.

Now that I have discussed the ways in which Americans assert control over the camp space and their captors in *The Great Escape* in reinforce national identities, I will shift my focus

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to *The Bridge on the River Kwai* and the ways it warns against such reinforcement, first through the characters of Shears and Clipton, who exist inside (and, for Shears, outside) the camp, and signal the futility of identity in war. Neither clings to whatever outside identity he enters the camp with, which in other films I discuss in this dissertation could mark their ability to transform the "other" space of the camp into something meaningful. However, neither has much control over the camp space at all: Shears escapes early on, and Clipton's collectivity is eclipsed by Nicholson's nationalistic madness.

Shears is, like Clipton, a level head in the film, and he is curiously self-deprecating of his American identity. His lack of enthusiasm for any other identity, compared with our initial impressions of him while he remains a prisoner, suggest that to Shears, national identity — collaborative or not — is meaningless in war. When we are first introduced to Shears, he is a prisoner in the Japanese camp the majority of the film is set in, digging graves with an Australian soldier. When the two complete the grave, Shears delivers a brief eulogy, making up a serial number for a dead corporal and reflecting on his futile life and meaningless death. He calls the corporal a "Valiant member of the king's own, or the queen's own, or something." Shears then asks rhetorically what the man died for and looks perplexed as he tries to reconcile this soldier's death with the ongoing war. The Australian tells him not to mock the grave, but Shears is being serious, searching for a reason the corporal had to die.

Shears's realization that he does not know the man they've just buried, speaks to the way identity markers can be lost or, at least, interchangeable, in the camp. Thompson's serial number is made up, his monarch is ambiguous, and his cause is obscure. All he has is his name — Herbert Thompson — and rank, which, after all, can be easily traded. No one remembers Thompson for who he was, either individually or militarily, and this point seems to pervade the

film. With this scene, the film sets up the plight of the prisoners in relation to the world. In the camp, they are set apart from the world, in danger of losing their humanity for nothing.

Much like Corporal King in *King Rat*, Shears is an average person at home. In the camp, he, too, changes his identity, and trades his own name and rank for an officer's, never returning to his true identity. He is a calculating scoundrel, and yet, unlike King, Shears can't find a way to navigate the camp space to his advantage. At one point someone jokes that Shears is "neither an officer nor a gentleman," and they are correct. His attire doesn't even align him with a specific rank or nationality, and he refers to the cargo shorts he wears as his "working kit." Here he is something different — something inexplicable — and his actions must be taken on their own terms, rather than as part of a national collective.

Just as *The Great Escape* offers Hilts as a standalone American hero, *The Bridge on the River Kwai* presents an American character who would mitigate the overt Britishness in the film and attract American dollars to offset the film's hefty $2.8M price tag (Bouzereau). But, of course, Shears is not in the camp space for long. He escapes and goes off on his own almost immediately. However, Shears is repeatedly made a part of various communities in the film — whether he wants to be or not. He is taken in by a local village and, after he has been on his own again, is forcibly adopted into Force 316, led by British Major Warden, and comprised of various Allied officers. Force 316 might be seen as what Soja refers to as "*Thirdspace of political choice*" that Soja tells us is "a meeting place for all peripherized or marginalized subjects wherever they may be located" ("Thirdspace" 51). As someone who believes wartime expressions of identity to be highly dubious, Shears counts in this film as a peripherized or marginalized subject and finds his home, for better or worse, in Force 316. He even refers to himself as such when he first encounters the group. While out walking, Joyce (Geoffrey Horne),

a Canadian soldier dressed as a Japanese combatant, accidentally attacks him while undergoing a training exercise. The embarrassed young soldier stands and explains that he thought Shears was the enemy. Shears adjusts himself and simply notes, "well, I'm an American, if that's what you mean," By referring to himself as "the enemy," he complicates his political identity as an Ally and nods to his peripheral identity in the war effort as a whole. While William Holden certainly stands out as the film's lone American, by joining Force 316, Shears joins the type of international community we see in some of the other films, although instead of embracing others, remains irreverent to all. Crucially, though, he is outside the camp space when he does this, pitting himself against the overt national lines being drawn inside the camp space.

While Shears can do this as a solitary American from outside the camp, Clipton must deal with very different identity politics inside the camp. While Nicholson is the camp's Senior British Officer, Clipton is the one who keeps Nicholson and Saito in check by ditching a military identity and instead appealing to both leaders' humanity. His dual role as Major and Doctor helps this, as he is at once a military man and one who puts military men back together. For him, the camp space is chaotic, and yet he consistently reminds both Nicholson (and, in the beginning, Saito) that it contains human beings, rather than merely soldiers. Thus, until the end, Clipton's attitude is that everyone can be improved. He has, what Soja might consider, a "Thirdspace consciousness," which is the "precondition to building a community of resistance to all forms of hegemonic power" ("Thirdspace" 56).

So, while Nicholson seems to become more nationalistic as Saito becomes more human, Clipton plays the crucial role as the camp's arbiter of reason and moral centre. And, because he serves as the measure by which we chart Nicholson's madness and Saito's goodness, we see him as ally and enemy simultaneously. When Saito locks Nicholson in the "oven" — a metal prison

meant to magnify the sun's heat — Clipton barges into Saito's office to confront him. Clipton's ability to enter and remain in Saito's office suggests that it is a somewhat open space that facilitates dialogue and change, even as it relates to other spaces around the camp. It allows Saito to be both civilian and soldier, and Clipton to be both ally and enemy. While Nicholson sees the camp space perhaps as Foucault would: as a space of discipline requiring enclosure, "the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself" (*Discipline & Punish* 141), Clipton — and ultimately, Saito — clearly treat it as Soja would: with "a multitude of approaches and perspectives" ("Thirdspace" 50).

Clipton is reminiscent of characters like *36 Hours'* Gerber or *Decision Before Dawn*'s Maurer in that he is able to see the pitfalls in his own countryman's exercise of nationalism. While he certainly rails against Saito's initial fury, he also has the power to confront Nicholson. While Nicholson argues that building the bridge is best for the men's morale and health, and that Saito has been "most reasonable" since he took over command of the project, his engagement with Japanese military tactics is puzzling, especially since he feels it somehow restores British identity through its revitalization of his men. Clipton confronts him about this, noting their collaboration and potential treason, but to no avail.

Clipton's role as the film's moral centre further contrasts Nicholson's increasingly unreasonable attitude in a scene in which the two men are in the hospital hut. Crucially, the hospital is Clipton's domain, the designated space where life meets death. The scene begins when Nicholson enters the hut and tells Clipton that they are facing a crisis. Already aware of the impending absurdity of Nicholson's "crisis," Clipton stands to face Nicholson, who relays that they "haven't the manpower" to finish the bridge on time, and that he's "asked the officers to lend a hand," completely oblivious to his own hypocrisy in refusing Saito the same "manpower."

When Clipton asks why Nicholson didn't ask Saito for some of his men, Nicholson curtly replies, "this is *our* show, we must make the most of our own resources."

Soon after, we discover that these "resources" include sick men. As Nicholson begins infringing on Clipton's territory, we see Clipton stand his ground and fight for his patients before rejecting Nicholson's idea of Britishness. As the camp doctor, Clipton does not help build the bridge and, as one who by the end vehemently opposes Nicholson, Clipton wants no part in celebrating it. His physical separation from both Nicholson and Saito, and his decision to take up his own space in the camp, saves his life. Force 316 executes an ambush, killing Saito and Nicholson, and causing the bridge to explode. Clipton withdraws from the wreckage alone, rejecting the enmity he has just witnessed. But, while in the end he is the camp's only survivor of the bizarre and pointless construction project, Clipton is not victorious. Rather, he is alone on the vast island, uttering "madness" as he walks inland, back to the confines of the camp where he has at least some control.

To this point, I have discussed the characters of Shears and Clipton and the roles they play in terms of spatial practice and identity. Both overtly suggest the futility of engaging with the behaviours used to assert national identity in the camp space, and yet both provide some grounding for asserting change as part of spatial practice. They also provide a contrast to Nicholson and Saito and their specific spatial practices in the camp.

While Shears and Clipton are quick to disengage from adherence to nationalistic and binary "us versus them" expressions of identity, Nicholson and Saito are not. Both Nicholson and Saito seem to adhere to the space of the camp as one in which they might expand their current existence: Nicholson wants to be more than merely a POW, and Saito wants to be more than a military commander. Both approach the camp space as "a place of critical exchange where

the geographical imagination can be expanded to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives," as Soja's definition of Thirdspace outlines ("Thirdspace" 50), and yet for Nicholson, this means increasing the military practice of the camp while for Saito, it means diminishing it. Thus, there is no sense that the camp space brings about the kinds of regrouping that are so much a part of the British and American films I study in other chapters. We see Saito struggle as he works to become the type of man and military leader that he can be proud of, and we also see Nicholson struggle with the types of national and military boundary crossing that tends to spell hope and progress in other POW films. Both men produce and reproduce the camp space as they are themselves produced and reproduced, and yet it all ends in futility.

The first time we meet Nicholson is just after the film's opening credits, when he takes up a position just ahead of his men as they march toward the prison camp. In full uniform, Nicholson embodies English military pride. With one foot on the ground and the other perched on a rock as though claiming it for Britain, Nicholson gazes out to his side as though he were a statue, fully inhabiting his identity as a British military leader. He and Saito stand facing one another before Saito stands on a box that has been left for him, towers over Nicholson, and announces that officers will work alongside the men, denying them the privileges of their military rank. Nicholson salutes and turns once again to face his men, dismissing them. He then approaches Colonel Saito, whom he glibly refers to as "that fellow," and explains that his men will do what is expected of British soldiers, noting that he is responsible for their conduct. He then offers Saito a pamphlet containing the Geneva Conventions, arguing that they forbid forcing officers to engage in manual labour. Saito, now standing on the stairs of his hut, still towering above Nicholson, refuses the pamphlet, and later in the film, slaps Nicholson with it.[6] He then

turns and walks away, leaving Nicholson with his naive understanding of Japanese warfare, and of his position as a prisoner in Saito's camp.

Nicholson's pride and adherence to the Geneva Conventions[7] trump his practicality and his commitment to the well-being of his men, whom he orders to stand outside in the sun in protest against Saito's demand that the officers assist in building the bridge. Saito pronounces Nicholson "unworthy of command" before sending him to isolation in "the oven." While the intent of this scene is ostensibly to showcase Nicholson's heroism, the sight of his officers dropping from heatstroke as he continues to stand indicates that he is, at least, misguided.

As a result, we take on a sort of Foucauldian gaze: we "observe performances (without there being any imitation or copying)," "map attitudes," "assess characters," "draw up rigorous classifications" and "distinguish 'laziness and stubbornness' from 'incurable imbecility'" (*Discipline & Punish* 203). While this might seem the idealized and self-imposed function of viewership in general, *The Bridge on the River Kwai* directs us to engage in such scrutiny, and Nicholson's frustrating stubbornness prevents us from blindly siding with him. Through our gaze, we are left to determine the meaning and limitations of both Nicholson and Saito. While Nicholson begins the film looking like a confident leader who has the respect of his men. Conversely, Saito begins the film with a bit of a tantrum when Nicholson ignores his authority and looks foolish despite his reputation in the camp as a monster. For all of his bravado, and despite Shears' warnings to other Allies about how tyrannical he is, Saito must stand on a box to address his enemies, signaling the frailty of his command. Moreover, while he is the camp commandant, he cannot get Nicholson to respect his authority, and consistently allows others, including Clipton, to stop him from killing those who do not comply with his wishes. We

therefore quickly form an opinion of Saito as an impotent leader, unable to inspire respect from someone from the opposing force who nevertheless shares his rank.

Nicholson, however, seems totally unaware that he has no power in the camp and, as a result, puts his men in danger as he attempts to overshadow Saito with his British might. He arrogantly flashes the Geneva Conventions at Saito and expects the treatment they entitle him to with no regard for Japan's rules of war. While Nicholson's blatant and ever-increasing disregard of Japan's wartime boundaries might recommend him as a hero to viewers, Saito's corresponding humanity prevents us from aligning entirely with Nicholson. The first time we see Saito he is in his office, which is built out of what looks like bamboo. Saito, wearing a kimono, kneels on the floor, an open window, a plant, and a decoration on the wall behind him. This office might be his home, as he goes about his meditation, and if not for various military personnel disrupting his practice from time to time, we would not know his military rank, or indeed that he is in the military at all. Behind his desk, we see a model of the bridge, above which hangs an American calendar, complete with a blonde pinup and an advertisement for Joey's Garage in Elk City, Ohio. These visual elements indicate a more persistent American cultural influence in the camp than the wartime binary of competing nationalisms would have us believe and they reassert the camp's position as a liminal space that allows for many different places, beliefs, and ways of being, rather than only one. This camp is ruled by Japan, but betrays elements of American popular culture, which makes it a mixed space that combines elements of home and the front lines. The nature of the POW camp is that its recognizable qualities do not belong fully to any one nation at war.

While he tries to exert force as a military tyrant over Nicholson and his men in the beginning of the film, we come to see Saito as a broken man who is governed by a general belief

in humanity, whereas Nicholson is driven by a specific belief in Britishness, which makes Nicholson's behaviour seem all the more inhuman. In his office, Saito is able to engage with the liminal space of the camp as at once embracing and setting himself apart from the world. Soja notes that "Human beings alone are able to objectify the world by setting themselves apart. And they do so by creating a gap, a distance, a space. This process of objectification defines the human situation and predicates it upon spatiality, on the capacity for detachment made possible by distancing, by being spatial to begin with" (*Postmodern Geographies* 132). Saito's ability to separate himself from his duty as a Japanese commander demonstrates his humanity and provides a counterpoint to Nicholson's increasing insistence that he *is* the British military. Saito creates for himself and for us a "space" in which he is a person more than he is a Japanese military commander. It is from this psychological space that the latter parts of the film show that he acts, and it is from this space and identity (defined as human rather than defined by national and military allegiances) that Saito gains the kind of respect that he could not command as a military leader.

This is in part because Nicholson exerts disciplinary force over the camp space that Saito does not (in this way, the two of them call to mind *The Great Escape*'s Hendley and Werner). While at the beginning of the film we see Saito engaging in private, civilian activities, Nicholson is the model of the historically ideal soldiers that Foucault describes: proud, courageous, head held high, betraying no sense of a self that is not thoroughly committed to the enterprise of military discipline. Saito, on the other hand, engages in the personal discipline of isolated meditation and seems only to look like, rather than to be, a military man. Saito's efforts to maintain his humanity mean that his soldierly discipline is not all-encompassing; it does not define all that he is, or all that he does. For him, the camp is an unnatural place of duty in which

he can eke out a space of personal existence in his bamboo-lined office. But Nicholson, on the other hand, is always a soldier, even when it makes no sense to claim or perform this particular identity. If, as Foucault notes, "discipline proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space" (*Discipline & Punish* 141), Nicholson's ultimate control over bodies — both English and Japanese — in the camp suggests that he is the most disciplined soldier there. However, the actions generated by that discipline are clearly wrong, which suggests that the more disciplined one's militaristic nationalism is, the more nonsensical the results will be.

But the same thing could be said of Saito's attempts to perform military authority. After arguing with Nicholson about whether the chain of command in the camp should be British or Japanese, Saito sits in his office and invites Clipton to join him, saying, "he's mad, your colonel." Saito, sweating and uncomfortable, grants Clipton an unsolicited visit to Nicholson to deliver the ultimatum that if the British inmates stop their work on the bridge, Saito will "be forced to close the hospital." Crucially, Saito does not simply say that he will close the hospital if his demands are not met. Rather, he gives the first indication that decisions made in the camp are, in many ways, out of his hands, and that he, too, is forced to exist in this space beyond the war, beyond the realm of either civilians or soldiers. He is, in many ways, a prisoner too, as Rauffenstein is when he shoots de Boeldieu in *Grand Illusion*, and, of course, like *The Great Escape*'s Von Luger is as he is stripped of his command and remanded by his own people.

Still, the threat works for Clipton, who then leaves and approaches Nicholson about ordering the British officers to work, if only to keep the hospital open. Nicholson remains adamant, refusing to have one of his officers working as what he calls a "coolie." Nicholson's use of that term here speaks directly to his embodiment of English colonialism and his reinforcement of racial and class divisions. That he refuses to see his officers "lowering

themselves" to take on the work of the enlisted men suggests that Nicholson still believes that his identity outside the camp as a British soldier still trumps any demands made of him in the world of the camp. For Nicholson, the punishment of the oven serves as a confined and "protected place of disciplinary monotony" (*Discipline & Punish* 141) that actually reinforces his docility to British military doctrine, even as he drifts further from military purpose in the British national interest.

So, while Clipton and Saito come to some semblance of an understanding in this scene, Saito and Nicholson remain at odds, and their navigation of war, duty, and camp space moves them even further apart from each other. After a long impasse over Saito's desire for British officers to help build the bridge, Saito again invites Nicholson out of the oven and into his office, this time to share a meal of corned beef and scotch. By this time in the film, both men have endured isolation in the camp space — Nicholson in the oven and Saito in his office. While this meal is certainly meant to encourage Nicholson to comply with Saito's wishes, it also reminds us of Saito's need for connection as demonstrated in the space of his office, subtly but persistently inflected by touches of international culture. Even as Nicholson alienates himself from his soldiers in the name of Britishness, Saito demonstrates his determination to work against alienation by, in Soja's words, "Entering into relations with the world, the creative connection between the human subject and the objects of his/her own concern" (*Postmodern Geographies* 133). Of course, Soja goes on to say that "this too threatens to be alienating when it reduces the subjective self, when the subject is objectified through relations with the world" (133), which helps us interpret Saito's persistent isolation from those around him and his consequent sadness when his inability to command effectively is confirmed in the film's final sequences.

The scene of the meal continues to demonstrate Saito's need for connection when we learn that Saito spent three years in London and wished to study art before his father made him join the military — personal details that humanize Saito to a still-war-weary audience. It becomes clear that Saito is merely trying to get through the war, whereas Nicholson is trying to further it by demonstrating a warped understanding of British superiority. Importantly, Nicholson keeps quiet about his personal life. As the film progresses, it is clear that he has no life beyond his military career. But while Saito is obviously buttering up Nicholson by feeding him English food and cordially noting that he and his most senior officers wouldn't have to engage in the manual labour of bridge-building, he is also sharing facets of his life and experiences in a spirit of frankness and a hope for mutual understanding. Again, Nicholson rejects Saito's overture and refuses to allow any of his officers to work on the bridge or anything else, deferring always to the military protocol that Saito does not follow.

In an outburst of frustration and fear, Saito tells Nicholson that he will have to kill himself if the bridge is not completed in time. This display of emotion is the first one that cements for viewers Saito's humanity, and reminds us that in the camp he seeks out spaces in which to enact his humanity, while Nicholson gravitates toward those spaces, like the bridge, or even the oven, that enable his militarism. This scene is an example of Saito becoming "objectified through relations with the world" (*Postmodern Geographies* 133) in the camp space, even as Nicholson is cold and unfeeling toward him. Saito then asks Nicholson, "What would you do, if you were me?" The question dares Nicholson to put himself in the position of his wartime enemy. However, Nicholson coldly replies, "I suppose if I were you, I'd have to kill myself," thoughtlessly articulating his belief that there is no individual agency apart from national service and embracing his own alienation from himself as anything other than British

soldier, through and through. He expects Saito to soldier on, just as he expects himself and others to, even at the expense of national service. Just as Nicholson ultimately builds the bridge out of his misplaced need to display British might, thereby not serving his country, Saito's soldierly obligation to kill himself does nothing to further the Japanese war effort.

At this point in the film, Nicholson becomes in a metaphorical sense, the commandant of the Japanese POW camp, and Saito, its spiritual prisoner. While I have discussed Nicholson's adherence to his British military identity in the camp, in contrast to Saito's increasingly stressful balance of military and private identities, I now turn to the film's imperial implications more forcefully. In the remainder of the watershed scene I discuss above, a reinvigorated Nicholson assures Saito that they will find a solution to the problem of the construction of the bridge, and commands Saito to sit down. With this line, and with scotch in hand, Nicholson manages to colonize Saito's office, inserting himself as the camp's commanding officer, despite his status as a POW. Saito sits, and Nicholson stands and walks toward the model of the bridge, bending to look at it, and registering his doubts about the Japanese officers' ability to complete "a job of such importance." Then, in a shocking act, he offers up his own officers to the task of building the bridge intended to become the undoing of their own countrymen, citing their extensive bridge-building experience in India — another not-so-subtle reminder of his own belief in British colonial glory. As Nicholson continues to taunt Saito, Saito unleashes his anger, jabbing a knife into the table and insisting, "I hate the British! You are defeated, but you have no shame. You are stubborn, but you have no pride. You endure, but you have no courage. I hate the British!"

Of course, Britain is not the only imperial nation in this film, as Japan also has a long history of empire. Crucially, though, as Nicholson figuratively takes over the camp space, claiming it for Britain, Saito does not resist him. Instead, Nicholson's empire building and

Saito's withdrawal seem inversely proportional. In a later scene, Saito tries another approach with Nicholson? that takes a more diplomatic turn, addressing Nicholson as he would an entire nation. During the Japanese soldiers' celebration of the 1905 defeat of Russian troops during the Russo-Japanese war, Saito again calls Nicholson into his office, and again offers him a seat. Dressed in full uniform and demonstrating his military bearing and authority, Saito confidently declares a general amnesty that would see Nicholson and his officers free to move about the camp. Then, Saito tells Nicholson that he and his officers will no longer be required to do manual labour on the bridge. This news causes Nicholson to weep as Saito watches him, stone-faced. Nicholson, teary-eyed, buttons up his shirt and prepares to address his troops, who believe that Nicholson has triumphed over Saito in a battle of wills akin to a British victory over Japan. Nicholson has effectively gotten Saito to unilaterally ignore Japanese prison camp protocol and to follow the Geneva Conventions' guidelines that prohibit forcing officers to engage in manual labour in POW camps. Nicholson's men revere him as a hero and all see Saito as an ineffective leader who cannot enforce his nation's wartime rules and loses his authority over the camp to his imprisoned enemy. Moreover, with fewer men to work on the bridge, Saito's obligatory suicide seems imminent as timely completion of the bridge without the officers is impossible.

After this scene, Saito's initial confidence and military dress seem all the more a sham — a costume that doesn't fit. By dressing up in uniform and citing a previous military victory as the reason for his reconsideration of his initial insistence that officers perform manual labour, Saito attempts to save face as he gives into Nicholson's demands in order to finish the order set before him to complete the bridge. As the British troops hoist Nicholson up on their shoulders and parade around the camp in celebration of Saito's concession, a cut reveals Saito, sitting on his bed half-hidden by a wall, weeping into his fists before collapsing on the bed. While this shot

functions narratively to bolster British pride in Nicholson's victory, it also reminds us again of Saito's humanity, and of his fear, not of losing his fight with Nicholson, but of having to forfeit his life for the shame brought upon him by his inability to finish the bridge.

Nicholson's figurative takeover of Saito's office at this point is made possible by his reliance on his privileged place in the British Empire and reflects a pro-empire ideology held during the war that, as Wendy Webster explains, "showed a heterogeneous people pulling together across differences of race and ethnicity, united in a common cause" (*Englishness & Empire* 22). Of course, this "common cause" was still steeped in the assumption of British colonial superiority, which is reflected in Nicholson's national chauvinism.

After Saito announces his amnesty for the British soldiers, Nicholson's next conquest is the bridge itself. In Nicholson's colonial obsession with proving the superiority of British aptitude and work ethic, he fails to realize that he is merely taking over Saito's command of the bridge, ensuring its construction and helping his captors all in the name of British military propriety. By undertaking this task and ultimately usurping Saito's command, Nicholson uses the space of the camp to increase Britain's empire, but at Britain's expense. Nicholson's decision to build the bridge has nothing to do with feelings of compassion or humanity toward Saito or his captors in general; there certainly remains an enemy/ally divide when Nicholson's engineers, Reeves and Hughes, indicate that the Japanese are going about the bridge the wrong way, and Nicholson is quick to criticize the Japanese for wasting so much time in their stubbornness toward him.

 But Nicholson also notes that his men have become "rabble" who need to be disciplined, treating the enlisted men who initially sabotaged the Japanese plans, and so recently celebrated his release from the oven, as poor examples of British soldiers who need to adhere to his rule.

Nicholson then declares that the construction of the bridge will help him rebuild his battalion and reestablish their "proper" British work ethic. It is an occasion for him to demonstrate the superior skills of the colonizer, even if the colonial power itself is endangered as a result. It is also an opportunity for him to maximize the obedience and utility of his men by teaching them a new understanding of discipline. While this seems a reasonable endeavour, given the wartime setting, Nicholson's politics are skewed: he values discipline more than purpose, and commands his men to compromise their purpose as soldiers fighting the Japanese. By taking on the bridge's construction, Nicholson becomes more of a traitor to his people than a war hero.[8]

Meanwhile, the increasing sympathy viewers feel for Saito, even as Nicholson becomes more insufferable, suggests that Saito is the character thinking deeply about his identity within and beyond his wartime role, while Nicholson simply accepts his as gospel. While Nicholson is obsessively attached to a national character, maintaining his Britishness despite his takeover of the bridge project, Saito is simply a man who wants to survive his nation's demand that he sacrifice his life for its honour. This contrast between the two men is unexpected, yet palpable. Nicholson does not appear overly brave, nor does Saito look entirely cowardly. Rather, the contrast between Nicholson and Saito makes Saito look human and Nicholson look absurd. This film dramatizes the problem of ignorant and careless nationalism overtaking service and duty in a space in which such nationalism does not work, while the films that I have discussed elsewhere have used the liminal space of the camp to trouble wartime assumptions and beliefs and introduce different ways of organizing issues of power and nation. Nicholson becomes so obsessed with the bridge's British legacy that he and Reeves, one of his officers, compare the bridge's elm pilings to those of London Bridge, which he notes have lasted over 600 years. The camera cuts to a close-up of Nicholson who, even in the twilight, lights up at the possibility of

his bridge lasting as long, further contemplating the bridge as his legacy, even as Saito has already commandeered it for Japan.

While Nicholson's takeover of the bridge project reminds us of the pieces of England created in *The Captive Heart'*s camp, the prisoners in that film took care of each other, and even welcomed new members into the English fold, all without betraying their allegiance to England. Nicholson's nationalism ignores the best interests of his men and his nation's war effort, and even negates his battle of wills with Saito, since after standing up for his officers' right not to work, he forces everyone to work toward a project that will not advance his nation's cause. His fervor is at its worst when Nicholson insists that wounded men help with the bridge, and he moves from military leader to dictator. He begins to treat the camp as territory that he has conquered, and he expects all soldiers — English and Japanese — to obey him. As wounded men worry that they will be called "malingerers" for not helping with the bridge, Nicholson rides on the makeshift railroad, going over blueprints, seemingly oblivious to the how his actions mimic those of the Japanese enemy, as he freely traverses the construction site. At this point in the film, Nicholson's men are visibly confused by his orders to "build a proper bridge" while at the same time asserting his right as "old Nick" to give such orders, signaling the confusing allegiances in the film. These conflicts in the bridge's production certainly signal the prisoners' destabilized national and military identities, and yet, as practiced docile bodies whose obedience goes hand in hand with utility (*Discipline & Punish* 138), they have no agency in the camp space, even when it is under British control.

In the hospital, Nicholson walks among the sick and remarks on those he refers to as the "malingerers," suggesting that work might do them good. Clipton remains adamant that his patients cannot work, and follows Nicholson into the ward, protesting every time Nicholson

attempts to minimize an ailment. Amid Clipton's protests, Nicholson walks toward an injured man, Baker, who stands to face him, and asks if he can take on some light work. The man, uneasy at Nicholson's request, has no choice but to say yes to Nicholson's clearly inappropriate use of power. Pleased with himself, Nicholson replies, "good show," and moves on to another sickly-looking man, who also assents to his wishes, as Baker collapses back onto his bed. Nicholson then returns to the foreground to address the room, calling on the same thing he asked of Baker moments before. Gallingly, after he tells them that they are "facing a crisis," he asks them, "what do you say?" dangling the power to refuse him in front of him but denying them the agency to do so. As he leaves, several men hobble and limp their way after him, returning their berets to their heads, once again becoming active soldiers, even though their bodies can't take it, following Nicholson's mania against all reason. Nicholson's obsession with representing the British Empire at all cost therefore becomes an abuse of power (and, as such, perhaps a more accurate representation), as he becomes his own troop's undoing.

As we see here, the only one willing to confront Nicholson is Clipton but, when he does, Nicholson shockingly exclaims that they haven't the right to refuse work. Here, now accepting Saito's initial argument that all prisoners must work, Nicholson argues that it is his duty as a British officer to build this bridge for the Japanese, because of his status as a POW, counting himself among the docile bodies in his regiment as those used to, in Foucault's words, "obtain an efficient machine" or, in this case, bridge (*Discipline & Punish* 164). Nicholson wishes to be remembered for doing a good job, and for showing British mettle to the world in the form of the bridge. The bridge is what he imagines will stand in for British identity in the future, a sign that the British soldiers were once there, and that they were adept at innovating. Again, this falls under Foucault's understanding of discipline in that "The individual body becomes an element

that may be placed, moved, articulated on others. Its bravery or its strength are no longer the principal variables that define it; but the place it occupies, the interval it covers, the regularity, the good order according to which it operates its movements" (*Discipline & Punish* 164). But, in this belief, Nicholson also assumes that the Japanese will take no credit for, nor will they benefit from, this labour.

By the end of the film, enemies and allies alike are shocked at Nicholson's takeover of the camp space. When Nicholson absurdly attempts to recruit injured and sick men to help with the bridge, we see Saito watching. From Saito's reaction we can understand that Nicholson is more unreasonable than Saito ever was, convincing sick men to work, even against medical advice, to build a structure meant to help their enemies. Later, when Warden, Joyce, and Shears view the bridge from their vantage point, Warden remarks on the "poor devils" being forced to build the bridge "in the condition they must be in." Their point of view as outsiders reminds us again of Nicholson's misuse of power, even though they have no idea that he is behind the atrocities they see.

Shears, now spying on the camp with Force 316, begins to see a similarity between Warden and Nicholson, noting his view of the misguidedness of British wartime behavior. He directly compares Warden to Nicholson, noting that they are "two of a kind" whose courage extends only to dying by the rules, rather than living as a human being. Shears's statement is particularly fascinating if we consider that Saito has been attempting to live as a human being all along, suggesting that he is the most courageous character in the film. According to Wendy Webster, "Shears' criticisms of British officers, while developing an opposition between American masculinity as modern and individualist against British deference to hide-bound

traditions, do not make Shears into the hero of the film;" rather, the film "can be read as an anti-war film that opposes all versions of masculine heroics" (*Englishness & Empire* 197–198).

While Warden and Nicholson seem completely unwilling to live like simple human beings, Saito is again a better example of the complexities of humans at war. From the first time we see him, he has a life beyond the war and, as the film progresses, he shows us a breadth of human emotion that Nicholson seems incapable of. After the bridge has been finished, Nicholson, capping his colonization of the camp, hangs a placard crediting the British soldiers — and Nicholson specifically — with its design and the construction on one of the posts. With this sign, Saito is effectively ousted from any meaningful role in the camp. But, in one scene toward the end of the film, he stands on the finished bridge and listens as Nicholson opens up about his life and career, remaining silent as Nicholson recounts his illustrious career as a colonizer. The scene begins with Saito standing on the bridge and staring at the sunset. As he looks, he remarks, "beautiful," reminding us of his capacity for emotion and his appreciation for things beyond his control. Nicholson turns and vocalizes agreement, thinking Saito was talking about the bridge. Saito then listens as Nicholson recounts his military history and his absence from home, telling him how he loves India, and "wouldn't have had it any other way."

As the British men celebrate the bridge's completion by donning grass skirts and bras and dancing for the men, playing with gender identity as a means of comedy in true British POW movie fashion, Force 316, covered in grease paint to hide their white skin, moves in to set the explosives under the bridge. Saito remains in his office, where he cuts a lock of his hair and rolls it in a scroll he's been writing, perhaps signaling his ritual withdrawal from both domestic and military society through the completion of his service. Saito's actions here are reminiscent of the removal of a chonmage, or top knot, a traditional Japanese male indicator of status. According to

Gary L. Ebersole's "'Long Black Hair like a Seat Cushion:' Hair Symbolism in Japanese Popular Religion,"[9] after retirement a Sumo wrestler will cut off his chonmage, indicating his change of social status (98). While Saito does not wear a chonmage, the ritual removal of his hair during Nicholson's celebration is interesting, as it signals his change in status from a commander to regular human being. Moreover, for the Japanese, hair loss indicates a loss of life force and vitality (97), which, if the close-ups of his face during his scene on the bridge with Nicholson are any indication, Saito also feels acutely.

Saito has perhaps undergone the most significant transformation during his time in the camp, illustrating the ways in which the camp can manifest as a space in which one is "neither an officer nor a gentleman" and the ways in which this might equate to an identity crisis. Within the camp space — and especially the private space of his office — Saito has passively resisted as his power structure has been rearranged, and yet he has also asserted his identity as a non-military entity in the camp's wartime space. And, while he does not always actively assert the physical, mental, and social trialectics of spatiality that Soja discusses ("Thirdspace" 57), the anticipation is there which, for Lefebvre, is enough to live into "Othered" space ("Thirdspace" 53). Saito is arguably no longer sure of his societal or military role, as Nicholson has erased him from the bridge project altogether (while at the same time using his tactics in getting the officers to help out) and has taken over command of the camp as a result.

As in *Decision Before Dawn* and *36 Hours*, *The Bridge on the River Kwai* shows us a sympathetic enemy for whom the POW camp is transformative, and the film's framing of Saito's attempt to balance his status as military commander and his primary identity as human being, and his unfolding depiction as a man who happens to find himself at war, is certainly in keeping with the rest of my study. Like the Japanese officers depicted in *King Rat*, Saito seems confused

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by the Allies' — particularly Nicholson's — behavior, and we are inclined to follow suit, identifying more with him than with Nicholson. As Nicholson speaks to his troops, telling them that eventually they will understand their work here, the camera takes us inside Saito's office. Wrapped in a kimono, Saito moves toward his uniform, which is hanging in readiness — a demonstration of the tension between civilian and military life that Saito lives. The camera cuts back to Nicholson, who completes his takeover of the camp by leading the men in "God Save the King," even as his fellow countryman and allies move to destroy the work that has just been completed.

My discussion of *The Bridge on the River Kwai* has included various examples of prison camp identities, from Shears and Clipton, who are disillusioned as both soldiers and men, to Saito, who seems more civilian than soldier, to Nicholson, who is only ever a military man. I have also explored the ways Nicholson's militarism becomes a kind of colonial takeover of the camp, while also amounting to a collaboration with unwitting Japanese military powers as Saito passively stands by. But while all of these ways of being exist inside (and sometimes outside) the camp space, the end of the film suggests that all of them are rendered completely meaningless in the context of war.

After his troops, along with some Japanese officers, have marched across the bridge completed by the efforts of the British camp inmates, Nicholson walks across it, removing debris as he goes, leaving a pristine track for the Japanese train to follow. As he leans over the side of the structure, he notices wires wrapped around the pilings. He hears the train whistle and alerts Saito. The two investigate the wires as the shot cuts to Warden, the British commander of the assortment of Allied soldiers comprising Force 316, who is astonished at the realization that an Ally, a military commander, no less, is helping the Japanese.

The shot cuts back to Nicholson and Saito, following the wire and approaching the rock that conceals Joyce, the eager young Canadian member of Force 316, and the dynamite plunger; Joyce jumps out and unceremoniously kills Saito as his allies in Force 316 cheer him on. Much to his amazement, Nicholson tackles him and is shocked in turn to realize that it is the Allies who have hatched the plan to blow up the bridge. Nicholson, apoplectic at the suggestion that his allies wish to destroy his legacy, grabs Joyce by the ankle and shouts for help as Warden, who is watching through binoculars from how far away? shouts "kill him!" Shears also stands and calls for Joyce to murder Nicholson. We hear the train and the sound of gunfire as Nicholson and Joyce struggle and Joyce is shot and killed. Shears then jumps into the water, knife drawn. Raging toward Nicholson, Shears is shot before he can kill him. However, the two share a moment in which they look at one another and realize that they began on the same side. Nicholson, now surrounded by both allies and enemies stands and asks, "what have I done?" as a shell hits the beach near him and sends him flying. Nicholson dies with that question hanging in the air, uttering it just before his mortally wounded body collapses on top of the plunger, causing the explosion that blows up the bridge and kills the Japanese dignitaries aboard the train. In the end, Clipton is left to survey the devastation his allies have caused. Disgusted, he declares the whole business "madness" as he surveys the death all around him. And so, we are left with Clipton, the voice of reason, who can do little else but soldier on as he always has, leaving the rubble of the space that represents both collaboration and resistance behind him.

The importance of *The Bridge on the River Kwai* to the argument of my thesis is that it stands as a caution against fanatical nationalism and uses the space of the camp to problematize it. There is no redemption for anyone in the end. Saito is not rewarded for his humanity, nor is Nicholson for his nationalism. Instead, we are left with the madness of war, and no other

inspiring takeaways to hold on to — a bleak reality during a time of Cold War enemy/ally personal and collective realignment.

While many of the films I have discussed in other chapters use the spaces of their respective POW camps to explore shifting wartime allegiances as they relate to side taking, both *The Great Escape* and *The Bridge on the River Kwai* are largely about occupying the space of the camp with exaggerated nationalisms. In *The Great Escape*, Hendley and Hilts use the camp as their playground. Hendley can exude confidence while playing on his guard's weaknesses and procure whatever he likes. Hilts can toss his baseball, mock his guards, and even boldly assert his independence with a parade. He does not languish, but instead seems content in the cooler, which he rules as "king." After he escapes and is caught, he smugly returns to the camp, standing up to Von Luger before confidently marching to the cooler where, smirking, he sits and tosses his baseball against the wall, catching it every time. The camp is a space in which both Hilts and Hendley can boldly assert their heroic Americanness. Thus, unlike the films I discuss elsewhere, *The Great Escape* dramatizes nationalism something to be championed in the camp, rather than something to reconsider or abandon,

The Bridge on the River Kwai dramatizes the destruction done by those who cling to national pride in the POW camp space but lose sight of what the larger conflict is all about. Nicholson puts his obsession with, and performance of, British nationalism and superiority ahead of his commitment to duty. For him, the war is not about fighting fascism, or even about being a good soldier, but about creating a legacy. While Saito becomes a figure of sympathetically frail humanity, Nicholson becomes a figure of true absurdity, disconnected from the British war effort while pushing ahead with an agenda that in his mind, delivers another territory to Britain. While Nicholson atones, in a sense, for his participation in building the bridge by destroying it, this

does not undo the effects of his imperial takeover of the camp space. We can compare him to *Le caporal épinglé*'s Ballochet (Claude Rich) or *A Man Escaped*'s Fontaine in his obsession with making his own way through the war, but such a comparison is flimsy. Fontaine and Ballochet work alone and do not see themselves, nor behave, as representatives of a national collective, since, to them, their nation no longer exists as it once did. Nicholson is a dangerous figure who performs elements of national character for his own satisfaction, sabotaging every space he is associated with along the way.

While neither *The Bridge on the River Kwai* nor *The Great Escape* fit neatly into this study, since both dramatize a more nationalistic response to wartime meaning making, their use of the POW camp space to make a point about wartime identities is useful, especially in the context of Cold War realignments. *The Great Escape* acknowledges that all the allies in the camp are useful and that each has his role to play, while emphasizing that Americans should not get too close to other groups. Werner's acknowledgement to Hendley of the United States' historical enmity with Britain is not for nothing and reminds us that because enemies and allies shift, the only constant a nation has in wartime is itself. *The Bridge on the River Kwai* problematizes this concept by demonstrating that becoming too insular is also dangerous and that the futility of war has to do with individual performances of identity. Nicholson's obsession with a certain way of being British eventually leads him to act like the enemy. It is absurd but also revelatory, because it shows us that at some point, there is no difference between combatants in war. They are seized by similar beliefs and commitments, and in the extremes of those beliefs, can do and say things that make them indistinguishable from their enemies, and a threat to the very countries they claim as inspiration.

1. It borrows directly from *Grand Illusion* (1937) especially, when characters dispose of tunnel dirt by carrying bags of it in their pant legs and releasing it into their garden plots.

2. Suzanne Broderick points out that McQueen's character, while the clear hero, is also the most problematic of the film. In her book, *Real War Vs. Reel War*: *Veterans, Hollywood, and WWII*, Broderick cites Ernest Thorp, an American who was taken prisoner at Stalag Luft III, the same camp that housed the real-life escapees on whom *The Great Escape* is based. According to Thorp, "the Germans had a number of rules and regulations that were nonnegotiable, and McQueen's character frequently violated these rules and also directly or indirectly insulted the Germans. 'He never would have gotten away with his attitude. [...] You never talked back, and he would not have been allowed a ball and glove'" (74).

3. While Werner's identity is certainly precarious in these scenes, Hendley's holds up. Even when Werner somewhat upsets the Allied tunnel plan (the Allies have three tunnels on the go, referred to as "Tom," "Dick," and "Harry"), Hendley does not actually suffer from this setback.

4. Hendley, too, manages to survive his escape, even though Blythe, an Englishman who is blinded and must rely on Hendley for his escape, is shot.

5. It would be too simplistic to say that *The Great Escape* and *The Bridge on the River Kwai* don't fit with the other chapters simply because they needed to cater to audiences to be successful. Many of the films discussed in this dissertation were quite successful in their own rights. Still, *Escape* and *Bridge* certainly had the biggest budgets of the films discussed here, and they needed the support of audiences to make bank. *The Great Escape* cost $4M to make and revenues were upwards of $11.7M (The Numbers). *The Bridge on the River Kwai* aimed to please British and American audiences alike, and it was nominated for eight Academy Awards,

won seven, and was the highest grossing movie of 1957. Even nine years after its release, when it debuted on ABC television on September 25, 1966, Tim Dirks notes that the date "was dubbed 'Black Sunday' due to the loss of business at movie theatres on account of its popular airing" (AMC).

6. Nicholson's reliance on the Geneva Conventions for his rights might seem completely reasonable to most viewers, just as Saito's dismissal of it could seem unreasonable. However, since Japan never ratified the Geneva Conventions — a point that Saito makes use of — Saito is simply fulfilling his duty and upholding his country's standard of warfare.

7. Saito refers to the Geneva Conventions as "the coward's code" and Nicholson calls them "the laws of the civilized world."

8. Surprisingly, Nicholson's colonizing attitude does not reflect the War Office's postwar relationship with Japan, or their general feelings toward the Japanese people, as it refused to approve the script. Norman Spencer explains that the War Office's General Percival […] was anxious that Britain maintain good relations with Japan" (Phillips 238). As Gene Phillips tells us, though, this was largely because Percival believed the script was too hard on the Japanese, and that "he thought it was terrible that a Hollywood movie was being made about the wretched way the British prisoners of war were treated by the Japanese in Burma while they were building the railway" (238). However, Phillips also points out that the Japanese government approved that same script (239). While the character of Shears in this film helped the film garner American approval (Phillips notes that the film was designed "first and foremost to appeal to the mass audience in America" [230].)l, the British War Office's refusal to approve the script is fascinating. While General Percival's disapproval stemmed from his worry that the film made the Japanese look bad, he seemed in equal measure to dismiss the film's cavalier depiction of

British participation in constructing what was known during the War as "the bridge of death" (Bouzereau).

9. Found in Alf Hiltebeitel and Barbara D. Miller's *Hair: Its Power and Meaning in Asian Cultures.*

CONCLUSION

My objective for this dissertation was to explore my fascination with post-World War II POW cinema and the ways it depicts the shifting of wartime identities in prison camp spaces. By "wartime identities" I mean the expressions, beliefs, and assumptions used, consciously or not, to organize or make sense of the hierarchies of power (e.g., masculinity, nationalism) that sustain war. Prisoners and guards enter cinematic POW camps bound to these markers of identity that make them soldiers, patriots, men, allies, or enemies. But, while in these spaces that are neither home nor the front lines, prisoners and their captors often see that the "natural orders" they once lived by can be re-imagined and re-organized.

My experience with these films leads me to conclude that cinematic prison camp spaces facilitate new and at times unexpected understandings of communal and individual identities, not all of which are unequivocally positive or pleasant for the characters on the screen. I also wished to examine how postwar reparations and political events of the postwar period may have influenced later examples of the genre to produce films that wrestle with nationality and national community as the primary markers of identity.

I chose to look at cinematic POW camps through the lens of spatial theory. These camps are spaces of contradiction — they imprison men for being enemy soldiers but facilitate understanding between enemies and allies through their confinement of these men in what we can call "international close quarters." The camps themselves are products of war that cut soldiers off from the war; they rely on national identifiers but allow for new communities or ways of being to form and make national identity incidental. The camp spaces in these films are exceptional in the ways they change and are changed as different bodies interact in and with them. *Le caporal épinglé'*s (1962) Ballochet (Claude Rich) turns his prison into a paradise and

King Rat's (1965) Corporal King (George Segal) turns his into an empire. *The Bridge on the River Kwai*'s (1957) Colonel Nicholson (Alec Guinness) turns his camp experience of building the bridge into his personal legacy — a testament to his Britishness at Britain's expense. These camp spaces house the tension between the home front and the front lines and remain, like the wire surrounding many of them, malleable. While many of the films — especially the British ones — seem relentlessly and unrealistically upbeat and downplay the death, violence, and anxiety of imprisonment that *King Rat* and *A Man Escaped* (1956) focus more intently on, the POW genre in general is less about showing the horrors of war, and more about dramatizing the limitations of wartime identities.

Theorists like Lefebvre, Soja, and Foucault have offered ways of understanding spaces that act while they are acted upon. The idea of Thirdspace has been particularly useful as it allows me to consider the liminality of the cinematic prison camp space, not only in terms of its situation between home and war, but also in terms of its ability to compel an audience to re-evaluate our perceived and conceived spaces of war and consider lived experience as it affects wartime outcomes.

As I discuss in my introduction, *Grand Illusion* (1937) is the touchstone of the POW genre. It uses many of the tropes common to these films in a calculated and effective way to show war as nonsensical, and stresses that war alone cannot force nationalistic side-taking through uniforms or songs. *Grand Illusion* uses the space of the prison camp as a "time out," not from the war, but more capaciously and radically, from war's inhumanity. The POW camp introduces new relationships and new identities that run counter to war as a means of solving international discord. Crucially, the POW camp is not an antidote for all international difficulties. Isolation, withdrawal, manipulation, betrayal, disillusion — all of these remain in some measure

in this space. It is not a site of unalloyed peace between those mutually regarded as "others," but neither does it give in to the bellicosity of uncritical nationalisms.

In this dissertation, I wanted to see if those films that came after *Grand Illusion* and the war that followed it also work against the intentional obfuscation of humanity in war by depicting the creation and fostering of new relationships with many different kinds of people in the prison camp space. These films were made in a wartime context—not just lingering in the shadows of World War II, but released during the Korean War, the Cold War, and the Vietnam War. They were made when France was re-learning what it means to be French, when Britain was attempting to distinguish itself, and when America was seemingly at its best, and yet always in the midst of conflict.

My focus on British, French, and American films for this study stems from my personal interest in Allied contexts. Besides their prolific postwar filmmaking, these nations, while on the same side of World War II, approached and came out of the war very differently. In learning about the postwar paradigm of each, I was struck by how different the postwar attitudes regarding identity and nationality were, and I became fascinated by the clues to these attitudes that each respective film I look at here provides.

Expanding this study to consider Soviet and Axis POW cinema of the postwar might also be productive, recalling that the USSR signed a treaty with Germany in 1939, which dissolved as the war began. While many of the films I've looked at here cast their wartime enemies in a redemptive light, I'm interested in whether or not similar themes appear, particularly in German and Japanese cinema of the same period. Since no full-length published monograph study of POW cinema and the spaces they depict currently exists, there is certainly room for me to expand my research in time, and my work here will prove an ample jumping-off point.

In Chapter One, I examine the link between postwar British POW cinema and the British postwar paradigm, defending films like *The Wooden Horse* (1950), *The Colditz Story* (1955), and *Very Important Person* (1961) from the derisive comments that have been levelled at them and consider how they use camp space to evaluate Britishness and revise it to suit a postwar context. In doing so, I have found that British POW films explore issues of identity in terms of who the British are in relation to others, and that they also involve an imperative of change. Prisoners like *Very Important Person*'s Pease (James Robertson Justice) and *The Colditz Story*'s Richmond (Eric Portman) come to see the value in leaving their previous expressions of wartime identity behind in favour of more practical and inclusive expressions of who they are. Characters like Hasek (Michael Redgrave) in *The Captive Heart* (1946) and Albert in *Albert, R.N.* (1953) demonstrate that Britishness can be crafted, and even earned. It is persistent, and yet forms a motley patchwork of those who wish to pick up the mantle of reformation. Edward Soja's concept of Thirdspace has helped me to understand camp space liminality and the ways in which it can facilitate new understandings of identity and new ways of being. Each of the films discussed in this chapter suggests that to be British means that one must first understand what it means to be someone else. Since these films focus on the prison camp experience in the midst of World War II, the camps — even the more brutally depicted ones — provide spaces in which new understandings of England, and new ways of being English, can be pitted against the prisoners' imaginings of their homeland and of their places within it.

Chapter Two highlights French pessimism after the war and looks at *A Man Escaped* (1956) and *Le caporal épinglé* as exemplars of postwar disillusionment and existential shame. I see these films as resistance narratives that resist not only German occupation, but the stifling social and economic oppression experienced by French citizens after the War. The films

therefore reflect critic Gavin Lambert's notice of French cinema's "new pessimism," and use

Michel Foucault's examination of delinquency to discuss national affiliation and its demise in

the camp space. Instead of reinforcing national identity, *A Man Escaped* and *Le caporal épinglé*

offer their camp spaces as "a meeting point, a hybrid place, where one can move beyond the

existing borders" ("Thirdspace" 56). As in British cinema, these camp spaces provide a place of

otherness for their inhabitants but, unlike the British films, which use the camp space to produce

better, stronger Britons, these films use the camp space to critique Frenchness and to enable its

prisoners to slough off national identity and never look back. Moreover, characters in these films

recreate their camp spaces for their own expressions of identity: Fontaine (François Leterrier)

renovates his cell to facilitate his escape, taking everyday objects of his imprisonment and

refashioning them to help in his liberation and Ballochet builds himself a "dungeon" in the camp

space where he can live as he likes without encountering the social disparity he experiences in

Paris. By relying on individual, rather than collective national, identity, these characters

demonstrate French postwar disillusionment with national identity and rise "above the mêlée" of

international politics by fighting the ideological containment of nationalism.

As I discuss in Chapter Three, American POW cinema is different still. The self-reflexive

American films I examine in this chapter mirror Cold War disillusionment and warn against

exceptionalist and isolationist attitudes that discount the importance of a global community.

These are not optimistic films. They promote the idea that we are all basically the same, but that

our substance is of little consequence when war is involved. We certainly see this in how *Stalag*

17 (1953) treats Sefton (William Holden), and in how Corporal King is allowed to build an

empire in Changi in *King Rat*. We also see it in the way Rennick (Richard Basehart) defends

Maurer (Oskar Werner) to a subordinate American soldier while still keeping him anonymous in

Decision Before Dawn (1951). Maurer is not "just another kraut," and yet Rennick will not give

him autonomy here, despite Maurer's willingness to sacrifice his life for Rennick's cause.

Similarly, while Major Gerber (Rod Taylor) gives his life to advance PTSD research and save

Pike (James Garner) and Anna (Eva Marie Saint) in *36 Hours* (1964), he dies and we never

discover if his sacrifice was worthwhile. Foucault's understanding of "docile bodies" has proven

useful in my examination of human utility in these films as characters operate (and are operated

upon) in the "Other" or "Thirdspace" of the prison camp that is socially and psychologically

produced and re-produced.

Chapter Four looks at *The Bridge on the River Kwai* and *The Great Escape* (1963) as

films that don't quite behave the way the others do. I argue that *The Great Escape* highlights the

merits of Americanness at the expense of others, and also how *The Bridge on the River Kwai*

uses Colonel Nicholson's rather extreme performance of nationalism to demonstrate the danger

in losing oneself to a national cause. But, while British POW cinema in general sees postwar

Britishness as somewhat of a meritocracy, *The Bridge on the River Kwai* demonstrates the

danger in assuming British identity without fully understanding it. Colonel Nicholson therefore

embodies the type of entitled Britishness that the real Geoffrey Mitchell in *The Captive Heart*

did. But, while Geoffrey Mitchell could be "reborn" through the more deserving Karel Hasek,

Nicholson presses on unchecked, building a legacy by oppressing his own people, while even his

captor reassesses identity in the wake of war. The camp spaces in both *The Bridge on the River*

Kwai and *The Great Escape* can be considered Thirdspaces that contain the potential to

reimagine identity away from home and the front lines, and yet *The Great Escape* uses the camp

space to re-entrench American identity through Hendley (James Garner) and Hilts (Steve

McQueen) and to embrace exceptionalism, pitting it against contemporary films like *36 Hours*

and *King Rat* that focus on the tenuousness of identity. Still, *The Great Escape*'s air of retrenchment demonstrates instabilities that produce disaster and lead to pointless death and destruction. It caters to attitudes of paranoia, inflexibility, and American bellicosity that the other films don't, and it defies the pattern in these films of the camp space operating as one in which difficulties are worked out.

Of course, lurking in the shadows of my study is another form of camp that World War II is known for, and that these films pay very little attention to. *The Captive Heart'*s Hasek comes to the POW camp having escaped a concentration camp, as does *36 Hours'* Anna. Nicholas Cull remarks that the real Sargent Coward, on whom *The Password is Courage* is based, helped people to escape Auschwitz, although the film pays no attention to it. Instead, these films largely avoid discussions of concentration camps. In his article, "'One Train may be Hiding Another': Private history, memory and national identity," Thomas Elsaesser uses the French railroad warning "One Train may be Hiding Another" to consider the precariousness of memory as it is presented through cinema. He says, "A train may indeed hide another, as one image hides another, but alert to the histories and identities each carries with it, neither television nor the cinema need be the train that runs us over" (n.p.). The Prisoner of War genre certainly hides the darker concentration camp narratives of World War II, but it does not negate them. That is, Prisoner of War cinema and concentration camp narratives are similar trains, but they are, in effect, on different tracks that must be considered alongside the histories and identities that inform them.

This work contributes to the extant literature on these films. While scholars like Nicholas Cull, Gavin Lambert, and Margaret Butler have produced some criticism and contextual information for some of these films, my work here is the only study that looks closely at how

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wartime identities shift in these films and how those shifts reflect national cinematic postwar contexts. My hope here was to dust off an obscure genre too often dismissed for being frivolous and to illuminate the genre's reflection of the problems with old and established ways of organizing gender, power, and nation.

Because war is about space, these films reflect the spaces and attitudes that produced them. They are imbued with postwar politics and the complications of knowing oneself and one's enemy while jumping from one war to the next and serve as cultural artefacts that demonstrate otherwise carefully concealed national disillusionment amid rampant and ongoing warmongering. These films suggest that we are the real countries, nebulous and difficult to define, changing space to accommodate our own changes.

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