

**Filmmakers as Historians: Understanding Authentic  
Representation within the Films of Powell and  
Pressburger**

by

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*Thesis  
Submitted to Flinders University  
for the degree of*

**Doctor of Philosophy**

College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences

November 2021

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I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university, and that to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Ellen Zetta Whitton

July 2021

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my sincerest thanks to Andrekos Varnava for his guidance and support throughout my candidature, and for introducing me to The Archers during my undergraduate years. I am also grateful to Peter Monteath and Giselle Bastin for their assistance and support during this project too. Thank you all for the countless hours invested in the supervision of my project.

A big thank you to my immediate family – my parents Paul and Therese, my brother Alex, and sister Louise – for encouraging me to undertake this task and soldier on when moments seemed overwhelming. A thank you to my partner Kiefer for his patience, love, and support. To my friends and fellow PhD students at Flinders – Christina, Matt, Ella, Ryan, Kieran and Charissa – thank you for the numerous conversations shared over coffee, meals, and drinks. The PhD experience has a reputation for inducing loneliness, but I have found it rather companionable with you all nearby. This thanks also extends to Flinders' wider History faculty because without their warmth and support this would have been an isolated and daunting experience.

I would also like to acknowledge the hard work of the British Film Institute's staff at the Southbank (London) complex and archive. Without their guidance and general assistance, much of the primary material utilised in this study would have been missing. This thanks also extends to the staff members at the British Library and the National Archives at Kew – your work is paramount to historical studies, and I appreciated the service and assistance that was provided during my primary research phase in 2017.

To conclude my acknowledgements, I also recognise the contribution of the Australian Government through the Research Training Program, as it has enabled me to undertake this research and produce this thesis.

## Thesis Summary

The complex relationship between film and history has been discussed by scholars since cinema's earliest features; however, in the past twenty years, conversations regarding authenticity and historical representation have dramatically increased. They have now spilled significantly into the wider public discourse and have influenced how filmmakers discuss and publicise their research and filmmaking practices. Despite this growing interest and such changes, a gap remains regarding the interrogative methods used in historiophoty studies and a focus on modern film/television releases (post-1980s) has produced a gap regarding the work of early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century filmmakers and the development of authenticity on screen. Using a newly refined methodology developed specifically for the interrogation of authenticity on screen, this thesis aims to fill this gap through the in-depth interrogation of the historically set war films from Britain's acclaimed filmmaking duo 'The Archers', Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger (1939-1957).

While approaches towards historiophoty have developed, no clear framework has been created for researchers to follow when investigating the construction and reception of authenticity on screen. Due to the multi-faceted nature of film/television programs, resources of this type can seem overwhelming because they are highly intertextual and complex in their content, production, and reception. When investigating authenticity, particularly regarding history-based resources, where does a researcher begin? What do they consider? How and what do they cross-examine? And how do they report their findings and explain their processes to broader audiences?

Utilising structuralist methodologies put forward by Roland Barthes and Brian McFarlane, and in consultation with the work and approaches employed by New Film History researchers, this thesis provides a flexible methodology that can be applied when interrogating authenticity and considers content, such as the narrative, characters, and *mise en scène*, and the broader industrial and social context in which the film was made and received, i.e., preproduction, production and release/reception. By investigating both content and context, researchers can develop a deeper understanding of what, why, and how, authenticity is developed and better understand representation within the medium's unique parameters.

The case studies within this thesis highlight how authentic representation is not a new phenomenon in cinema's history; early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century filmmakers, like Powell and Pressburger, were developing and producing films that were historically or contemporarily authentic. As role models, they demonstrated that archival research, library visits, research trips, interviews, and the employment of subject specialists, were necessary when creating authentic cinematic experiences – particularly those set within the history genre. Furthermore, although operating within a different medium, they demonstrated many skills that traditional historians employ and, for that reason, should be considered as 'filmmaker historians' due to their efforts and contributions to broader historical.

At a micro-study level, this thesis fills a unique gap in the wider discourse surrounding Powell and Pressburger's filmmaking practices, particularly regarding their experimentation with realism, a style that they are not commonly associated with. In a broader context, the methodology created for this thesis provides researchers with a flexible framework to follow when investigating the authenticity of any film/television program (historical or contemporary) and encourages a deeper understanding of the industrial context surrounding production and reception, as well as content. Furthermore, this methodology can also be applied practically by burgeoning filmmakers as it provides insight into what audiences expect and critique when analysing authenticity on screen; if understood, filmmakers could produce the desired, authentic experience that audiences seek, whilst also contributing meaningfully to wider discussions.

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## Introduction

*'We all know and admit that film art has a greater influence on the minds of the general public than any other art [and] unless we study its laws and possibilities very carefully, we shall not be able to control and direct this potentially greatest instrument of mass influence ever devised in the course of human cultural history'.*

Béla Balázs, 1952.<sup>1</sup>

During the second year of my undergraduate study, I was introduced to filmmakers Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, known collectively as The Archers, through their 1943 epic *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*. I was immediately transfixed by its colours, characters, and themes, and barely noticed its 165-minute run time. Although intrigued by its romantic lens and highly stylised sequences, I kept noticing details throughout the picture that struck me as authentic – in both its historical scenes and in those dedicated to the contemporary representation of 1940s Britain. This intrigued me, but no matter how keen, I lacked the tools and time to explore. The opportunity to investigate in-depth came in the form of my 2015 honours project<sup>2</sup>, which was supported by my supervisor and fellow Powell and Pressburger admirer, Andrekos Varnava, as well as a comment from Powell regarding *Colonel Blimp's* development; 'burrowing in the British Museum, Emeric had discovered a little book in German on the etiquette of duelling. It contained every one of the points which we used so effectively'.<sup>3</sup> The book that Powell referred to was Luigi Barbasetti's *Ehren Codex* (1898) and alongside its use as a reference text during the scriptwriting stage, it was also included on-screen in prop form. This one small example demonstrated that The Archers were invested in the film's authentic representation, that they conducted historical research to inform and support their narrative, and that they included visual references within their picture that conveyed this to their audiences. It also suggested that there was more to uncover about authentic representations within *Colonel Blimp*, as well as our wider understanding of filmmaking practices and the efforts of early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century filmmakers.

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<sup>1</sup> Béla Balázs, *Theory of the Film*, translated by Edith Bone for Dennis Dobson Ltd, London, 1952, 17.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen Whitton, *Deconstructing Film as a Historical Resources: Illustrated Through the case study of Powell and Pressburger's 'The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp'*, Bachelor of Arts (Honours), Flinders University, Australia, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Powell, *A Life in Movies*, Methuen, London, 1986, 405.

In order to conduct this research, I required a methodology that would assist with the in-depth interrogation of a film and provide a framework that could help guide my inquiry, as well as the communication of my discoveries and analyses, but as an early career historian and an avid cinephile that believes that film is an effective educational tool, how was I going to approach the in-depth analysis of a cinematic resource without any guide to help scaffold my investigation? Where do you start and what do you consider when the construction and execution of such a resource required multiple reference texts and team members' input? I was introduced to Brian McFarlane's work and the debates and practices prevalent in adaptation studies, as well as the wider Film History discipline, and utilised these to construct a flexible methodology that would suit the interrogation of a film's authenticity, particularly for those that are historically set. By adapting McFarlane's structuralist approach to the theory of adaptation (informed by Roland Barthes), and adding further support from scholars like Warren Susman, Robert A. Rosenstone, Jonathan Stubbs, Hayden White, Richard Maltby, and Marnie Hughes-Warrington, to assist with the unique intertextual nature of cinema, a methodology was produced for the in-depth interrogation of *Colonel Blimp's* overall narrative, its supporting *mise en scène*, and the wider industrial and social context that shaped its creation. This allowed me to argue that Powell and Pressburger's work should be considered as a serious secondary resource as significant research was undertaken to ensure that the historical data included in the film was appropriately placed and transferred well within the visual medium – thus contributing to historical discourse.

This thesis is an extension of that early work and aims to achieve a series of goals that its predecessor could not wholly accomplish due to its limited size and scope. Firstly, it will build upon the methodology created and used in 2015 and will provide researchers with a more refined and flexible empirical framework for interrogating historiophoty or contemporary authenticity in any film, across multiple genres, borrowing practices from both historians and film theorists. It encourages scholars, educators, and wider audiences, to critically investigate how a picture's narrative and supporting *mise en scène* create immersive experiences, and advocates for better understanding the relationship between film content and the resources (especially primary sources) used to construct it. Furthermore, this methodology promotes the interrogation of a picture's lifecycle, i.e., preproduction, production, and reception, to better understand how a filmmaker's initial plans are often subject to change due to factors beyond

their imagination or control (funding, time restrictions, limited resources, or audience tastes) as this can influence the execution of a picture's overall authenticity.<sup>4</sup>

Alongside this theoretical application, this methodology can also be applied practically by burgeoning filmmakers, making it unique through its duality. By understanding what, why, and how audiences critically analyse authenticity on screen (as outlined by the methodology) and by understanding the research practices and filmmaking approaches of past creators (case studies), current filmmakers can develop and execute their authentic representations in a more informed manner, particularly those interested in historically set projects. While success and response towards their efforts will ultimately vary (due to the unique parameters of any project), modern filmmakers could meet, or even surpass, audience expectation and provide authentic representations that not only entertain and immerse but also educate and contribute meaningfully to wider historical discourse.

In regard to Powell and Pressburger, this thesis aims to fill a gap in the discourse surrounding their filmmaking practices and builds upon the findings of my earlier work. Known best for their artistry and surrealism, their technological experimentation, and controversial narratives, The Archers' efforts towards realism and authentic representation have been largely overlooked by scholars. This has likely occurred because Powell himself denied their interest in realist cinema, 'our business was not realism, but surrealism. We were storytellers, fantasists'<sup>5</sup>; however, their war-based pictures (some contemporary 1940s releases, others later), contained realistic elements and themes that did not produce a wholly escapist feature film. This was evident in *Colonel Blimp*. Although highly nostalgic and romantic, *Colonel Blimp* contained themes and elements that represented real events and social practices (prejudices too) and challenged audiences to consider the danger that romanticised traditionalism could have in a highly mechanised, total-war landscape. Such warnings would likely have been lost in a surrealist film and evidence shows that The Archers, and their production teams, worked hard to produce authentic representations of both past and present settings to reiterate the topicality of their messages. Using the proposed methodology, this thesis will broaden its investigation into The Archers' filmmaking practices to better understand how their approach towards historiophoty

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<sup>4</sup> These traits, i.e. empirical investigation, a focus on primary sources, considering films as products of their time with unique lifecycles (cultural artefacts), and technological knowledge, are common practice within the New Film History manner of investigation. See James Chapman, Mark Glancy & Sue Harper's 'Introduction', *The New Film History: Sources, Methods and Approaches*, Palgrave MacMillan Ltd, 2007, p. 11-20.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 532.

developed and changed throughout their career and to also determine whether they should be considered as 'filmmaker historians' in light of these efforts. The case studies chosen for this study are *The Spy in Black* (1939), Powell and Pressburger's first film together, further interrogation of *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943), which includes new information from resources that were previously inaccessible, and the partnership's final commercial success *The Battle of the River Plate* (1956). Each film was historically set and war-based, which creates continuity for the investigations conducted in the following chapters; however, this does not mean to suggest that Powell and Pressburger were disengaged with history in their other features. Throughout their catalogue The Archers demonstrated a fondness and curiosity for the exploration of history on screen. For example, their 1947 psychological drama *Black Narcissus* addressed Britain's colonial presence and influence in India within its primary themes/motifs, *A Canterbury Tale* (1944) examined Anglo-American relations through a neo-romantic lens that was linked strongly with Britain's literary culture and its traditions, and *Gone to Earth* (1950) contained folkloric themes, i.e. magic, an affinity with nature and animals, that were common throughout Britain's oral and written storytelling traditions. Such films also warrant attention regarding their connections and representations of history, but due to size and scope, this dissertation is limited to three: *The Spy in Black*, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, and *The Battle of the River Plate*.

Regarding resources, this thesis will consult a variety of primary and secondary materials. Most uniquely, it utilises The Archers' research notes and the production records that are currently housed in the British Film Institute's (BFI) special collections. These materials are highly underrepresented in the discourse surrounding Powell and Pressburger and are especially significant for this project as they provide insight into the duo's creative processes, the resources consulted during their research periods, their joys and grievances, and their wider professional relationships. This project is also supported by openly available resources, such as published autobiographies, biographies, memoirs, and oral histories (primarily interviews), and does its best to effectively integrate their content while remaining aware of their interpretive nature and possible risks regarding manipulation, exaggeration, or misremembering (particularly for oral histories).<sup>6</sup> To further contextualise these resources and cross-reference their claims, this

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<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that there are significant debates within multiple disciplines, i.e. History, Psychology, Law, and Education, regarding the legitimacy of oral accounts and their use when attempting to understand the past.

dissertation closely interrogates the films themselves, consults the wider collections of the BFI, the records available in Britain's National Archives, Mass Observation's records, online newspaper archives, as well as a variety of supporting secondary materials. Through this extensive support, this dissertation will demonstrate the effectiveness of its methodology, investigate Powell and Pressburger's developing approaches towards historiophoty and authenticity, and demonstrate that filmmakers can be historians within the parameters of their medium.

### *History on Film, Film on History<sup>7</sup>: Debates in Film Theory*

Discussions regarding the power and influence of films over historical memory have been a significant point of contention amongst scholars and commentators since cinema's earliest days. Pioneers like Boleslas Matuszewski (1898) saw its potential as an educational tool and championed its inclusion amongst traditional archival resources.<sup>8</sup> Decades later, film theorists such as André Bazin, Siegfried Kracauer, Rudolf Arnheim, and Béla Balázs, moved beyond Matuszewski's work. Between the 1940s and the 1970s this group, and their peers, produced integral texts that focused on a variety of philosophies and practices that could be found within the medium – effectively laying the foundations for future scholars and cementing film as a significant academic field of study.<sup>9</sup>

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This thesis does not have the space to address this in length, but a recent study by Christiane Bertram, Wolfgang Wagner and Ulrich Trautwein, is an excellent resource for outlining some of the basic concerns regarding society's interest and use of oral histories. Their research draws on a wide range of publications and their specific empirical study found that people (students of history, in particular) are more likely to connect and respond to oral histories, despite the challenges that they produce regarding reliability. Live oral interviews are often vivid and impressionistic and can form an emotional connection with the listener; however, there is always the risk of active manipulation, exaggeration, or misremembering. Despite these concerns, Bertram, Wagner and Trautwein, found that oral histories effectively promoted historical thinking but needed considerable care when used. Christiane Bertram, Wolfgang Wagner & Ulrich Trautwein, 'Learning Historical Thinking with Oral History Interviews: A Cluster Randomized Controlled Intervention Study of Oral History Interviews in History Lessons', *American Educational Research Journal*, vol. 54, no. 3, 2017, 444- 484.

<sup>7</sup> Robert A. Rosentone, *History on Film/Film on History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Routledge, London, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Boleslas Matuszewski, 'A New Source of History: The Creation of a Depository for Historical Cinematography (Paris 1898)', translated by Julia Bloch Frey for *Screening the Past*, [online] date accessed: 28/02/2020, <<http://www.screeningthepast.com/2014/12/a-new-source-of-history-the-creation-of-a-depository-for-historical-cinematography-paris-1898/>>.

<sup>9</sup> See: Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, Princeton University Press: New Jersey, 1947; Rudolf Arnheim, *Film as Art*, University of California Press, Berkley: California, 1957; *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1960; André Bazin, *What is Cinema? Vol. 1*, (trans) Hugh Gray, University of California Press, Berkley: California, 1967, and *What is Cinema? Vol. 2*, (trans) Hugh Gray, University of California Press, Berkley: California, 1971.

After a brief lull, the specific relationship between history and cinema was brought to the forefront with Robert A. Rosenstone's 1988 article 'History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film'.<sup>10</sup> Rosenstone discussed his experiences as the historical consultant on Warren Beatty's 1981 film *Reds* and argued in favour of cinema as a legitimate form of historical representation. He encouraged scholars to broaden their methods of analysis to fully understand the medium's handling of historical data.<sup>11</sup> Hayden White seconded this notion and declared that it was time for historians to overcome their fears concerning the visual medium's 'specter of fictionality'.<sup>12</sup> White went on to coin the term 'historiophoty' in this paper – using it as a label for the process of representing history on screen. Since then, a significant number of film-related analyses' have emerged; however, in 2015 Rosenstone addressed the issue again in his piece for J.M Carlsten's *Film, History and Memory*. With some exceptions, Rosenstone stated that there was still a significant gap in scholarly approaches towards historical films and requested,

Those of you who read these words and have an interest in this topic to help in the process of investigating the history in an effort to understand the knowledge of the past provided by the visual media and thus fill out and complete our notion of historiophoty.<sup>13</sup>

This dissertation cannot address all the problematic issues that film theorists have outlined for the historical film/television genre. Instead, it focuses on investigating a set of concerns that continue to emerge in discussions from scholars, critics and wider audience members – those regarding 'accuracy' and 'authenticity' and their overall influence upon perceptions of 'good cinema and good history'.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Robert A. Rosenstone, 'History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film', *American Historical Review*, vol. 93, no. 5, 1988, 1173-1185.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 1184-1185.

<sup>12</sup> Hayden White, 'Historiography and Historiophoty', *The American Historical Association*, vol 93, no. 5, 1988, 1193-1199.

<sup>13</sup> Robert A. Rosenstone, 'Reflections on What the Filmmaker Historian Does (to History)', in J.M Carlsten et al. (eds.), *Film, History and Memory*, Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, 2015, 196.

<sup>14</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, *Slaves on Screen: Film and Historical Vision*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge: Massachusetts, 2000, xi.



Before beginning, it is pertinent to remember that, as Jonathan Stubbs noted, ‘not all historical films are serious about representing the past authentically’.<sup>15</sup> Referring to Ellen Draper’s commentaries regarding melodramas, Stubbs reminded readers that many projects use a detailed *mise en scène* to cement their fictions within the past to transcend an audience’s contemporary reality.<sup>16</sup> Dramas like *The Tudors* (2007-2010) or *The Young Victoria* (2009) rejected events from history’s timeline and invented moments that were factually incorrect in order to produce entertaining narratives. In such cases, the realism produced by the detailed *mise en scène* counteracts this fiction and works to convince an audience of the inventions/liberties taken by the filmmakers. The decision to create a project that is both historically authentic and factually correct<sup>17</sup> depends heavily on a filmmaking team’s vision and conviction when working within the parameters laid down within the industry. Each production varies, therefore, investigating the historiophoty of these visual features – particularly their interaction with primary/secondary resources and their ability to educate audiences about the past – requires a case-by-case approach.

#### *A Note on the term ‘Authenticity’ and its scope in this Dissertation*

When conversations regarding a film/television program’s historiophoty begin, whether they be conducted through critical reviews, online discussion forums or wider media releases, the phrase ‘historically accurate’ often emerges. It has a complex history within the wider scholarly discourse and its parameters are still disagreed upon, but this discord has not hindered the phrase’s power and usage, nor its ability to discredit a filmmaker’s meaningful attempts at historiophoty.

‘Accuracy’, as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (*OED*), refers to the ‘closeness of a measurement, calculation or specification’ with a particular emphasis on precision and exactness, but even this basic definition is problematic when applied to history due to the discipline’s interpretive and contested nature.<sup>18</sup> It is not exact in the same manner as

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<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Stubbs, *Historical Film: A Critical Introduction*, Bloomsbury, New York: London, 2013, 41.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Within the parameters of this thesis ‘factually correct’ refers to the historical events and trends that have reached a point of consensus amongst historians due to the evidence left behind, i.e., official documents and first-hand accounts confirm that Anne Boleyn was beheaded on the 19 May 1536. While the manner and atmosphere of the event can be openly interpreted by contemporary authors, the date and location cannot be disputed.

<sup>18</sup> *OED*, ‘Accuracy’, *Oxford English Dictionary*, [online] date accessed: 27/10/2020.  
< <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/1281?redirectedFrom=accuracy#eid>>.

mathematics or science and measuring historical content in regard to 'accuracy' is ill-fitting. As White noted in *Historiography and Historiophoty*, 'no history, visual or verbal, "mirrors" all or even the greater part of the events or scenes of which it purports to be an account'.<sup>19</sup> Concerning cinema, historically correct facts, like common dates and known locations, are utilised and sometimes quotations from historical evidence can be directly incorporated, i.e., excerpts from speeches or letters. However, smaller details – particularly aesthetic and emotive ones – surrounding such events are often missing from traditional written accounts (whether they be primary or secondary) and must be inferred after the consultation of multiple historical sources.

Due to this construction and handling from contemporary figures, film/television programs can never be precise *doppelgängers* of their historical counterparts. They can never wholly achieve 'historical accuracy'. Measuring filmmaking efforts in terms of accuracy and with a Dragnet style, 'just the facts ma'am' framework reduces our ability to understand how the visual medium produces effective and emotive representations of the past. Unless directly used in supporting resources, this thesis will not apply the term 'historically accurate' to its analysis. Instead, it will consider 'authenticity' (a term that is also commonly applied to film/television by critics and audiences), which delineates away from the strict confines that the phrase 'accuracy' entails and allows for the techniques that filmmakers use when producing their verisimilitudes of the past.. As highlighted by Nickolas Haydock, the *OED* lists four definitions for the term 'authentic' that can be applied or considered when conducting an analysis of authenticities (Gothic literature, in his example). They include: '1. True or in accordance with fact; veracity; correctness; 2. Authoritative or duly authorized; authority (now rare); 3. With reference to a document, artifact, artwork, etc.: the fact or quality of being authentic; genuineness; 4. The fact or quality of being real; actuality, reality'.<sup>20</sup> In regard to this dissertation, definitions 2-4 are most pertinent and can be linked to particular characteristics and practices, i.e. research, the use of historical consultants, replicating objects or archival materials on screen, that are often employed to establish and emphasise the legitimacy of a project's historical representation. While some scholars debate the validity, use, and parameters of the term 'authentic', its popularity amongst cinemagoers, filmmakers and critics is undeniable. Regardless of its status in the academic context (the theoretical circles that most cinemagoers, even many critics, will not

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<sup>19</sup> White, 'Historiography and Historiophoty', 1194.

<sup>20</sup> Nickolas Haydock, 'Genealogies of the Early Gothic: Forging Authenticity', in Karl Fugelso's *Studies in Medievalism XXVII: Authenticity, Medievalism, Music*, D.S Brewer, Cambridge:UK, 2018, 13-21.

venture into), the phrase ‘authentic’ will be adopted for this study as its aims to create a flexible, portable, and accessible method for the interrogation of historical representations on screen – one that can be used by anybody interested in this form of analysis.

In 2018 Matthias Frey described authenticity and the construction of the ‘authenticity feeling’ in film/television as such,

Authenticity signifies a realistic historical experience, an effective suspension of temporal-spatial disbelief. Authenticity, as the engine of mainstream historical filmmaking, has three chief functions: as an aesthetic strategy, a reception discourse and a marketing discourse. A feeling, a form of perception and (supposed) knowledge, the aesthetic success of authenticity, and thus the mainstream historical film, is assessed via the following question: Has the past been conveyed in a way that the spectator can reconcile with his or her perception of the historical reality? Audiences speak of films that “bring history to life”. I call this condition – this sensation of a media-produced, purportedly successful historicity – the ‘authenticity feeling’.<sup>21</sup>

Establishing this ‘authenticity feeling’ within cinema has been a focal point for filmmakers, as well as a point of critique for wider audiences; however, the general focus on films produced after the 1980s often overshadows the efforts of earlier filmmakers.<sup>22</sup> This oversight suggests that such filmmakers were apathetic about forms of authentic historical representation, but as Natalie Zemon Davis noted, ‘some directors, like Dreyer [ Director of *Passion of Jeanne d’Arc*, 1927] care about being faithful to historical evidence’.<sup>23</sup> She suggested that researchers should consider the medium’s advantages, rather than focus on the limitations found within adaptation processes, which would alter how filmmakers are perceived when creating historical representations, ‘... rather than being poachers on the historian’s preserve, filmmakers can be

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<sup>21</sup> Matthias Frey, ‘The Authenticity Feeling: Language and Dialect in the Historical Film’, *Research in Film and History*, 2018, [online] date accessed: 10/03/2020, <<https://film-history.org/approaches/authenticity-feeling>>.

<sup>22</sup> For further information regarding this trend see Jerome De Groot’s *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Popular Culture*, Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York, 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Davis, *Slaves on Screen*, 13.

artists for whom history matters'.<sup>24</sup> This positivity, in turn, would change the parameters of historiophoty approaches and allow historians to consider the wider relationship between cinema, traditional modes of historical discourse, education, and memory, in a less scathing manner.

Years later, director Dominic Lees explained the efforts and anxieties he faced whilst making historically based feature films, further highlighting the continual existence of Davis' 'faithful' filmmakers.<sup>25</sup> He highlighted how 'an audience's acceptance of a historical representation is based as much on belief as on evidence' and further argued that 'for the filmmaker to persuade the spectator of their film's authenticity, a sequence of "authenticity effects" needs to be displayed'.<sup>26</sup> Lee's went on to describe how most 'authenticity effects' are often sequestered within the *mise en scène*, working hard to support the overall historicity of the feature.<sup>27</sup> His work demonstrates how many filmmakers are doing their best to be faithful to historical evidence. Considering such efforts, which are confined within a specific set of parameters due to the medium, should be a serious task for researchers and one, as Davis highlighted, that should consider its advantages regarding historical representation.

With these factors in mind, a) the creation of 'authenticity feelings' and convincing representations of the past, and b) productions from some early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century filmmakers, this thesis focuses on exploring how particular history-based productions (before the 1980s) created and presented their audiences with authentic verisimilitudes of the past, i.e. the steps taken to produce the 'authenticity feeling' and their presence on screen. Throughout this dissertation, the terms 'authenticity' (overall historical ambience) and 'authenticity effect' (techniques that contribute to the construction of historical ambience) will be used many times. They align with the notion that filmmakers create a representation of the past that stimulates audiences and 'brings history to life' in a manner that is believable and faithful (within the confines of the visual medium) to the historical evidence, often empirical, that it is derived from.

Finally, due to the sheer breadth of the history genre, this investigation will be confined to the historical films from the British and Hungarian filmmaking duo Michael Powell and Emeric

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>25</sup> Dominic Lees, 'Cinema and Authenticity: Anxieties in the Making of Historical Film', *The Journal of Media Practice*, vol. 17, no. 2-3, 2016, 203.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

Pressburger, thus following Richard Maltby's recommendation that film history researchers 'undertake small-scale practicable projects that... have the capacity for comparison, aggregation and scaling'.<sup>28</sup>

In order to keep this study manageable (in size) three Powell and Pressburger films were chosen for in-depth investigation: *The Spy in Black*, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* and *The Battle of the River Plate*. They were chosen for five main reasons:

1. They were produced by the same filmmaking duo and each feature emerged during different periods in the partnership's life cycle. This creates an opportunity to investigate how their approach to historical projects changed throughout their careers.
2. All were British made, full-length feature films.
3. Each film emerged during turbulent periods in British history, which allows for further inquiry into the influence of politics – in both government and within the nation's cinema industry – and wider social and cultural practices over historical based filmmaking processes.
4. Each picture demonstrates a different approach, a level of seriousness, per se, to historiophoty; *The Spy in Black* focused more on contemporary themes and ambience; *Colonel Blimp* was a serious effort to represent both past and present in an authentic and informed manner; *River Plate* was a serious historically set piece.
5. While *Colonel Blimp* has garnered attention from prominent scholars over the years, *The Spy in Black* and *The Battle of the River Plate* have been overlooked by academics and Powell and Pressburger enthusiasts. The available studies do not focus on the films as legitimate historical representations and investigations into the adaptation processes used by Powell and Pressburger (for this genre) are currently absent.

#### *A Brief Snapshot of the Existing Literature on Powell and Pressburger*

As a study in historiophoty and the manufacture of authenticity effects, this dissertation will provide a unique exploration into how Powell and Pressburger navigated the tricky relationship between historical resources and data, social and industrial pressures, and their own approach towards authentic representations of the past. As noted above, this is an unexplored aspect

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<sup>28</sup> Richard Maltby, 'New Cinema Histories', in *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*, ed R. Maltby, D. Biltereyst and P. Meers, Wiley, Chichester, 2011, 13.

within the discourse surrounding The Archers and their work, as discussions addressing their artistry and creativity, themes, and motifs, controversies, and their wider impact on British cinema history, have already been addressed at significant length.

To begin, in the mid-1980s Ian Christie produced a series of publications dedicated to the history of the duo and their unique productions, as well as his 1985 interview with Powell, which seemingly prompted serious investigation into the legacy of The Archers within cinema's broader history.<sup>29</sup> Since then, publications regarding Powell and Pressburger have significantly increased and over the course of forty years a comfortable and diverse library has emerged. It contains a myriad of authors and topics. For example: Andrew Moor (sometimes in collaboration with Christie) has been involved in discussions regarding The Archers' penchant for surrealism, as well as their handling of (often controversial) themes and motifs<sup>30</sup>; Stella Hockenull interrogated the neo-romantic landscapes of *Gone to Earth* (1950) and extrapolated on The Archers' fondness of the style<sup>31</sup>; Sarah Street praised them for their clever and ground-breaking application of Technicolor<sup>32</sup>; Maroula Joannou addressed their representations of Englishness and its changing nature during wartime<sup>33</sup>; Donald Butler considered the loneliness and isolation in *Black Narcissus* (1947)<sup>34</sup>, and Charles Drazin considered the impact of their pictures beyond Britain<sup>35</sup>. Whilst broadening our understanding of The Archers' practices and influence, these publications do little to shed light on their efforts regarding historical representation and the research practices it entails. Furthermore, a number of these publications focus particularly on Powell's contributions and practices, which, over time, has ultimately produced gaps in our knowledge regarding Pressburger's scriptwriting practices and his broader contributions to each project.

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<sup>29</sup> Ian Christie's *Powell Pressburger and Others*, BFI Publishing, London, 1978; *Arrows of Desire: The Films of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger*, Faber and Faber, London: Boston, 1994; *Powell and Pressburger: The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, Faber and Faber, London: Boston, 1994; 'Powell and Pressburger' in David Lazar's *Michael Powell Interviews*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, USA, 2003; Ian Christie & Andrew Moor, *The Cinema of Michael Powell: International Perspectives on an English Film-Maker*, BFI Publishing, London, 2005.

<sup>30</sup> See: Andrew Moor, *Powell & Pressburger, A Cinema of Magic Spaces*, I.B Tauris, London: New York, 2005; *The Cinema of Michael Powell: International Perspectives*, 2005.

<sup>31</sup> Stella Hockenull, 'Neo-Romantic Landscapes: Pictorial Aesthetics in Powell and Pressburger's *Gone to Earth*', *Literature-Film Quarterly*, 2008, vol. 36, no. 4, 290-298.

<sup>32</sup> Sarah Street, *Colour Films in Britain: The Negotiation of Innovation 1900-55*, BFI Publishing, UK, 2012.

<sup>33</sup> Maroula Joannou, 'Powell, Pressburger, and Englishness', *European Journal of English Studies*, 2004, vol. 8, no. 2, 189-203.

<sup>34</sup> Donald Butler, 'Powell and Pressburger's *Black Narcissus* – A Study in Loneliness and Loss of the Soul', *Psychodynamic Practice: Individuals, Groups and Organisations*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2015, 147-159.

<sup>35</sup> Charles Drazin, 'The Distribution of Powell and Pressburger's Films in the United States, 1939-1949', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 33:1, 2013, 57-76.

Due to the nature of this dissertation and its primary objectives, it will be able to fill these gaps (to some extent) as it deeply investigates the preproduction period and its overall influence over a film's lifecycle – thus providing more insight on Pressburger's contributions as well as the historical research practices employed during construction and production. Alongside this, the interrogation of the films' narratives and materialistic elements from *mise en scène*, will present readers with a better understanding of The Archers' experimentation and evolution with the history genre, particularly their efforts towards authenticity effects and informed historical representations.

### *Methodology: A Structuralist Approach*

In the wider discourse surrounding historical based cinema, this study creates a platform for further scholarly research on the adaptation and integration of primary/secondary historical resources for the screen. It borrows interrogative techniques from the History discipline, as well as Film, in an effort to highlight the shared issues creators in both spaces face when constructing historical representations. As noted recently by Eleftheria Thanouli, 'historians, novelists, and cinematographers have common problems to solve, similar questions to address, and shared difficulties' when producing their accounts, which should be a point of consideration now that 'the public consumption of historical knowledge' has altered significantly over the course of 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries.<sup>36</sup> Building upon arguments from Susman, Stubbs, Hughes-Warrington and Rosenstone, Thanouli's work highlighted how the dissemination of historical knowledge has shifted significantly from page to screen, and she made sure to emphasise how imagination and fabrication was required across both mediums, making them both eligible for significant interrogation as 'valuable sources of historical knowledge'.<sup>37</sup> In correlation with her work, it is fair to say that filmmakers, like historians, rely on the contents of libraries, archives and private collections for the production of their visual texts, therefore, a film cannot wholly disassociate itself from more traditional forms of historical record keeping. Filmmakers could not, and still cannot, 'make it up' to satisfy the needs of the industry or society's appetite for entertainment – someone, whether it be an academic, critic or a member of the wider public, will inevitably comment upon the misrepresentation. But how does a researcher even begin to deconstruct films, highly complex and intertextual visual pieces, for a source driven research task? Based on

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<sup>36</sup> Eleftheria Thanouli, *History and Film: A Tale of Two Disciplines*, Bloomsbury, New York, 2019, 11-13.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 249.

the structuralist theory put forward by McFarlane, the following methodology was constructed to assist with this process and provides a followable formula that researchers can adopt and adapt when approaching films. While many films have been subject to close analysis but, while such studies are useful, the details surrounding the author's research practices are often obscure.<sup>38</sup> Where do researchers begin when attempting to determine the historiophoty of a film? Do they begin with content? Or the *mise en scène*? Should there be a mixture of both? And how does one reconcile with the 'specter of fictionality' that lingers around history films?<sup>39</sup>

The source orientated approach put forward in this thesis is specifically fashioned to assist with the investigation of a film's historical representation and authenticity, within both its narrative and the wider visual aesthetic (*mise en scène*). Due to its flexible nature, it can also be applied to contemporary settings if required. This is an area that many historians may struggle with because the skills and rhetoric for the discipline favour written text; however, as Rosenstone argued,

Rather than assuming that the world on film should somehow adhere to the standards of written history, why not see if it has created its own standards over the last century, techniques for turning the past into history which are appropriate to possibilities and practices of the medium.<sup>40</sup>

The methodology within this thesis expands upon this notion. As film cannot adhere to the standards of written history, investigating the adaptation processes within the industry—its 'self-developed standards'— is key to understanding how some historical films can be considered as legitimate representations of the past. This methodology questions how traditional historical sources have been tailored and transferred to the screen and rejects the notion that films *must* present historical data in the same manner as written history in order to be successful. Instead,

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<sup>38</sup> The list of academics analysing historical based film/television programs is quite extensive because it straddles multiple disciplines – History, Film and Media Studies, Drama, Adaptation, and Education. Some notable examples that were consulted for this dissertation include: Alan S. Marcus & Thomas H. Levine, *Celluloid Blackboard: Teaching History with Film*, Information Age Publishing, Charlotte:NC, 2007; Claire Monk, *Heritage Film Audiences: Period Films and Contemporary Audiences in the UK*, Edinburgh University Press, Great Britain, 2011; Dominic Lees, 'Cinema and Authenticity'; various publications from Robert A. Rosenstone (see bibliography).

<sup>39</sup> White, 'Historiography and Historiophoty', 1195.

<sup>40</sup> Rosenstone, 'Reflections on What a Filmmaker Historian Does', 190.



this investigative process encourages researchers to recognise how changes made during the adaptation process (from text to screen) can enhance historical representation.

Broadly, this methodology breaks the interrogation of a film into two parts, a) investigating a film's content and b) considering the industrial and social context in which the picture was made. While the latter can be investigated comfortably, the former is a more complex task due to the multi-layered nature of cinematic narratives and their supporting visual aesthetic (the *mise en scène*). This requires further deconstruction. Breaking down the narrative helps researchers to identify and engage with the resources that were used when constructing the script, as well as the descriptions for the supporting *mise en scène*. This process, and the motives behind it, will be explained further in the following discussion.

Roland Barthes' 1966 essay *An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative* reiterated the significance of narrative within world culture. Barthes asked, 'how can we tell a novel from the short story, the tale from the myth, suspense drama from tragedy (it has been done a thousand times) without reference to a common model?'.<sup>41</sup> To remedy this he put forward a linguistic theory that he believed could be accepted as a broad model for the critical analysis of narratives – one that would provide researchers with a common lexicon whilst allowing flexibility for later interpretations.

... then to proceed gradually from that model down, towards the species, which at the same time partake in and deviate from the model. It is only at the level of such conformities or discrepancies, and equipped with a single tool of description, that the analyst can turn his attention to the plurality of narrative acts, to their historical, geographical, and cultural diversity.<sup>42</sup>

Barthes divided the narrative into two sets of units: 'distributional functions' and 'integrational functions'. The former refers to actions/events that propel the narrative towards its end. They are 'horizontal' or linear throughout the text and are described as functions operating in a state

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<sup>41</sup> Roland Barthes, 'An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative', *New Literary History*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1975, 237.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 239.

of 'doing'.<sup>43</sup> Integrational functions refers to material that is 'vertical' in nature, which Barthes describes as a 'more or less diffuse concept which is nonetheless necessary to the story'.<sup>44</sup> The information carried by integrative units includes psychological descriptions of characters and their identities and details regarding atmosphere and place.<sup>45</sup>

Brian McFarlane utilised Barthes' theory decades later to make it suitable for the comparative analysis of canonical literary texts and their silver screen adaptations. One of McFarlane's assertions in *Novel to Film* was that although academic interest in adaptation was not 'a rarefied one'; there was little systematic analysis of the links between literary sources and filmmakers' efforts.<sup>46</sup> Barthes' theory provided him with an 'accessible and usable' pathway for 'establishing what may be transferred from a long, complex work in one medium to a long, complex work in another'.<sup>47</sup> McFarlane found that the most important functions for transfer from page to screen were 'located in the category of functions proper' and argued, 'when a major cardinal function is deleted or altered in the film version of a novel... this is apt to occasion critical outrage and popular disaffection' from viewers, and although subject to distortion by surrounding *catalysers*, filmmakers intent on producing 'faithful' adaptations will strive to successfully transfer cardinal functions from text to screen.<sup>48</sup>

Table 1: Key terms from McFarlane's application of Barthes' theory for narrative analysis – text to screen.<sup>49</sup>

<b>Distributional Functions</b> <i>(Functions Proper)</i>	<u>Cardinal Functions</u> : These are moments that can be considered as 'hinges of the narrative'. They are actions that open/maintain/close different routes or uncertainties within the narrative and prompt the continuation of the overarching story.
	<u>Catalysers</u> : Small actions that work to support and link the cardinal functions.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 247.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Analysis*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, 2.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 13-15.

<sup>49</sup> Figure 1 was collated using Barthes 'An Introduction to the Structural Analysis' and McFarlane's adapted method from *Novel to Film*, 11-15.

<b>Integrational Functions</b> <i>(Indices)</i>	<u>Indices Proper</u> : Information regarding a character's nature or notations of atmosphere.  McFarlane noted that indices proper are almost impossible to transpose to screen; however, notations of atmosphere or a character's nature may be carried over through clever set manipulation or costuming techniques.
	<u>Informants</u> : Names of characters or places, dates and times of day, ages, professions, social standing = pure data.  This information is often transferred through the <i>mise en scène's</i> characterisation or performance, costumes, props, settings/décor, lighting, and music.

This theory was appropriated to explore authenticity in historical films and due to the intertextual nature of the genre, specific alterations were made to better assist with the in-depth interrogation of historical resources (archival material, oral histories etc) and their transferral to the screen. McFarlane's assertion regarding cardinal functions and catalysers can also be applied to historical-based films; however, the primary source for adaptation and transfer can be harder to discern. The very nature of film adaptation is intertextual, and as John M. Desmond and Peter Hawkes said, 'any adaptation has additional relationships with other works ... with previous forms of literary text and with different film adaptations of the same source'.<sup>50</sup> Although primarily concerned with the cinematic adaptation of canonical literature, Desmond and Hawkes' statement is also applicable to historically set films. Often, a significant amount of the 'bare bone' structure can be found in a singular text, i.e., a historical novel or as a non-fiction account, but filmmakers also rely on a variety of other sources to construct this framework. At first glance, this may be difficult for researchers to determine because cinema cannot footnote its films. Nevertheless, filmmakers often share this information through other means, which include film credit mentions ('based upon...publication' or the inclusion of 'historical advisors/consultants'), interviews, promotional materials, or through memoirs and autobiographies. The resources they discuss are varied but it is common to find items like

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<sup>50</sup> John M. Desmond & Peter Hawkes, *Adaptation: Studying Film and Literature*, McGraw-Hill Education, Boston, 2005, 46.

newsreels, magazines, newspapers, autobiographies, official biographies, documentary films, and oral histories. Such resources can play a significant role in the construction of cardinal functions and catalysers, and filmmakers can face serious criticism if they deviate too far from the information provided in such resources.

As always, resources are subject to interpretation, which creates an inevitable bias within history films. John E. Connor addressed the presence of this bias, 'the approach may be unintended or carefully designed; it may be explicit in the narration or implied in the visual context... the challenge in understanding and fully appreciating moving-image documents ... is to comprehend that point of view'.<sup>51</sup> If the bias is unintentional, filmmakers leave themselves vulnerable to the scorn of critics and viewers because they did not endeavour to thoroughly research the topic or mediate partiality. On the other hand, if care and consideration are taken when cardinal functions/catalysers are in development, then any historical argument made through events or characters (either fictional or real) can potentially relieve the pressures of prejudice or misrepresentation.

In the past, approaches to this issue have been somewhat relaxed; however, evidence shows that it has changed significantly in recent years. In the past, Rosenstone had noted how many filmmakers and audiences believed that 'as long as you get the look right, you may freely invent characters, incidents and do whatever you want to the past to make it more interesting'.<sup>52</sup> This was not always the case – as Zemon Davis pointed out, some do care – but in recent years the awareness and interest towards historical authenticity on-screen has dramatically increased. Audiences have honed their viewing habits over time and now, as Marnie Hughes-Warrington wrote, 'have more sense of historical films as representations than other history media'.<sup>53</sup> In the past, the popular historically set pictures from filmmakers like Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg, and Ridley Scott have been widely debated in academic or film specialist circles; however, in the last twenty years awareness towards authenticity has reached unprecedented levels and has flooded everyday spaces. For example, *Who* magazine released limited edition issues that were solely devoted to Netflix's hit series *The Crown*. The magazines, printed to coincide with the series' release dates, contained articles like 'The Real-Life Story Behind *The Crown*' and

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<sup>51</sup> John E. Connor, *Teaching History with Film and Television*, American Historical Association, 1987, 25.

<sup>52</sup> Robert A. Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1995, 60.

<sup>53</sup> Marnie Hughes-Warrington, *History Goes to the Movies*, Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York, 2007, 3-4.

addressed the show's representation of events and characters.<sup>54</sup> The magazines were widely released and their presence in grocery stores demonstrates how discussions surrounding historical fidelity have spilled beyond academic discourses. Alongside this, thousands of online forums, film review blogs, *YouTube* videos and podcasts, have dedicated themselves to the close critique and analysis of historical (and contemporary) authenticity on screen.

With this awareness comes a certain danger for filmmakers. As audience members have refined their skills, any limitations and exaggerations made within a film's cardinal functions/catalysers can be quickly exposed. This can significantly affect a production's reputation as a reliable source for historical information, especially if the filmmakers fail to acknowledge how their work may contain gaps, biases or a completely fictional scenario (this is most pertinent for history films based on true events/individuals). Ben Affleck's 2012 film *Argo* garnered such criticism. Based on a real incident, *Argo* depicted the rescue of six U.S diplomats that were held hostage in Tehran (Iran) in 1979 and was primarily adapted from *The Master of Disguise*, an account published by a former C.I.A operative. Although acclaimed by the Academy, *Argo* came under significant scrutiny when audiences questioned the film's representation of the primary event (the evacuation of hostages) and those involved with its execution. In particular, attention was brought to the film's glorification of U.S involvement and the downplay of Canada's efforts. Former U.S President Jimmy Carter – who was in office at the time of the event – even weighed in on the issue.

It's a great drama [*Argo*]...The only thing that I would say is that 90% of the contributions to the ideas and the consummation of the plan was Canadian and the movie gives almost full credit to the American C.I.A ... Ben Affleck's character in the film was only in Tehran a day and a half and the main hero – in my opinion – was Ken Taylor, who was the Canadian Ambassador who orchestrated the entire process.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *Who Magazine*, *The Real-Life Story Behind The Crown*, Pacific Magazines, Australia, 2018. *Who Magazine*, *Inside The Crown: Everything you need to know about Season 3*, Pacific Magazines, Australia, 2019.

<sup>55</sup> Jimmy Carter & Piers Morgan, 'Jimmy Carter on *Argo*', *CNN*, 21 February 2013, via *Youtube*, [online] date accessed: 10/03/2019, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cr5XJ8dbJtg>>.

As a thriller, or as Jimmy Carter said, ‘a great drama’, the film worked well but it fell short as a reliable representation of the past. This contradicts some of the early statements made by Affleck when discussing the film’s historicity with the press. Affleck had said ‘I knew the backstory, I knew the politics, I knew that I wasn’t going to step on any landmines in that regard’ and this gave the impression that the narrative would depict events in an informed manner.<sup>56</sup> *Argo* failed to do this and ultimately damaged its reputation as a historical film. This example is just one of many, and it demonstrates how vigorously a narrative’s cardinal functions and catalysers can be interrogated.

As noted previously, McFarlane named cardinal functions as the most important point of transfer from page to screen; however, this changes for films based on historical individuals and events. As discussed earlier, historical films have some responsibility to represent the past in an informed manner, which has ultimately heightened the importance of integrational functions within the genre. When transferred to the cinematic landscape these functions – the indices proper and informants – are embedded within the film’s *mise en scène* to convey historical data through cinema’s visual language. Informants, in particular, are crucial to the development of believable historical settings because they provide data about a location or place, as well as character names, social standings, and professions. Commonly, this information is derived from various historical records/resources and if found within a historian’s secondary written account they would most likely be accompanied by bibliographic references.

Due to a filmmaker’s inability to footnote their work, it is pertinent for historical researchers to critically examine integrational functions and the methodology proposed here encourages that in-depth investigation into a picture’s aesthetics. In his work, Stubbs highlighted how the *mise en scène* carries ‘a high information load in terms of material detail... regardless of how serious they are about representing the past authentically’ and for this reason, it is important to understand how small details can reflect history’s wider trends.<sup>57</sup> Determining which integrational functions to explore depends on the size and scope of an individual project, and can differ from film to film due to their content or unique production processes. Concerning this thesis, the *mise en scène*’s settings, costumes, hair and makeup, and props, will be

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<sup>56</sup> David Bedard, ‘Argo: Iran Hostage Crisis Film Fiddles with the Facts’, *CTV News Vancouver*, 22 February 2013, [online] date accessed: 10/03/2019, <<https://bc.ctvnews.ca/argo-iran-hostage-crisis-film-fiddles-with-the-facts-1.1167994>>.

<sup>57</sup> Stubbs, *Historical Film: A Critical Introduction*, 39.

interrogated for their links to historical data (or reality, in some instances) as they were key areas that Powell and Pressburger developed when constructing authentic representations. This differs when compared to McFarlane's theoretical approach. Originally, he demoted the role of integrational functions because the information and concepts were 'more diffuse ... therefore more broadly open to adaptation' (regarding novels)<sup>58</sup>, for history films this flexibility is dramatically reduced and can vary depending on the type of movie that is being produced.

On one hand, films that C.A Lejeune described as those with 'fictitious figures set in a background of times not our own',<sup>59</sup> can be somewhat cavalier with their integrational functions, but many adhere to some historically factual elements. Some may label these films as mere 'costume dramas' and this phrase has negative connotations – it gives an impression of absolute frivolity. This is a poor assessment to make and is one that Pam Cook rebukes in her 1996 publication *Fashioning the Nation: Costume and Identity in British Cinema*. Cook championed such films and praised their contribution to the wider historical genre.<sup>60</sup> She noted how individuals working on the *mise en scène* utilised historical resources when constructing their products and highlighted how this research does not always receive recognition, especially if a film's historical setting is secondary to its narrative. Stubbs seconded the importance of such films, 'in the same way that no historical film can be entirely factual, no costume drama can be entirely fictional'.<sup>61</sup> These imagined history films (they contain fictional figures against a real historical setting) are reliant on their integrational functions for the construction of times gone by.

This can be seen in serious pictures, as well as the light-hearted. For example, Disney's *Mary Poppins* (1964) is relaxed in its approach to creating the past, but the costumes, settings and décor still reflect Britain's Edwardian period. Mrs Banks proudly sported the iconic Suffragette 'Votes for Women' sash, the houses on Cherry Tree Lane resembled the iconic Georgian townhouses found throughout London, and although partially cartoon, St. Paul's Cathedral was easily identifiable due to its iconic dome roof. These elements encapsulated Britain's deep ties with history and worked to provide viewers with an identifiable historical environment. The sets and costumes were acting as visual informants. They provided

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> C.A Lejeune, 'The Week on Screen: Out of the Past', *Manchester Guardian*, Great Britain, 1 July 1922, in Stubbs' *Historical Film: A Critical Introduction*, 17.

<sup>60</sup> Pam Cook, *Fashioning the Nation: Costume and Identity in British Cinema*, British Film Institute, UK, 1996.

<sup>61</sup> Stubbs, *Historical Film: A Critical Introduction*, 17.

instantaneous data regarding the characters' professions, social status, and the various locations that they visited. This information cannot be entirely imagined, and if these historical signifiers were omitted, the past setting within the film would be difficult to determine. *Mary Poppins* may be one of the most relaxed examples to discuss, nevertheless, even as a basic historically set film it showcases the important role of integrational functions when creating historical backdrops. Examples with a more serious tone, like *Gone With the Wind* (1939) and James Cameron's *Titanic* (1997), also relied heavily on their integrational functions for the establishment of an authentic historical backdrop.

Film and television programs labelled as 'inspired by' or 'based on true events', or as Lejeune described, 'woven around events peopled with characters who have lived and been famous in their day'<sup>62</sup>, also rely heavily on their informants for the creation of an immersive historical setting. The idiom 'the Devil is in the detail' is apt for such history films because highlighting the discrepancies and inaccuracies has, as Martha Driver once stated, 'long been the scholar's parlor game'.<sup>63</sup> As mentioned above, Dominic Lees wrote that 'for the filmmaker to persuade the spectator of their film's authenticity, a sequence of "authenticity effects" needs to be displayed'.<sup>64</sup> Within the scope of this thesis, Lees' authenticity effects are the informants that McFarlane describes. They are the details embedded within the *mise en scène* and they work to support a film's overarching distributional functions.

The research skills, the materials used, and the techniques employed to recreate the past for the *mise en scène* are often outlined in the publicity campaigns for austere history films. One of the most recent examples to highlight this is *Netflix's* production *The Crown*. When discussing his work as the show's primary script editor, Edward Hemming told *Time* magazine, 'with a drama of this scale... here there will be an awful lot of people looking for that level of detail, it was incredibly important we got it right'.<sup>65</sup> *Time* then went on to describe the efforts of the research teams and researcher Annie Sulzberger, explained the intertextual nature of their investigation,

Sometimes we would find amazing anecdotes in the biography of

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<sup>62</sup> Lejeune, 'The Week on Screen: Out of the Past', in Stubbs' *Historical Film: A Critical Introduction*, 17.

<sup>63</sup> Martha Driver, 'Teaching the Middle Ages on Film: Visual Narrative and the Historical Record', *History Compass*, 2007, 159.

<sup>64</sup> Lees, 'Cinema and Authenticity', 203.

<sup>65</sup> Kate Samuelson, 'How The Crown Uses Real History to Make Drama', *Time*, 4 November 2016, [online] date accessed 10/01/2019, < <http://time.com/4542526/the-crown-netflix-queen-elizabeth-history/>>.



a peripheral character... For example, we know [Prime Minister] Winston Churchill would take a bath while his secretary read to him from the papers, as we depict in the show, because we saw it in a documentary about women who worked for him.<sup>66</sup>

This alludes to events within the series' distributional functions; however, other articles discuss the level of research employed for its integrational functions.

Costuming, for example, is an incredibly important informant within historical features, and it is often featured heavily in promotional material. To follow on with *The Crown*, the articles, blogs and 'video plugs' on *YouTube* that discuss the series' costumes are abundant. For example, in a short video for *Vanity Fair's* 'Note on a Scene' series, Jane Petrie (leading costumier for season two), highlighted the significance of historical resources,

When you're designing costumes for *The Crown* one of the, the sort of balancing acts that sometimes you're being historically accurate and sometimes you're designing something fresh and new. This was one of the cases when we were historically accurate, and we were as close as we could be to what Elizabeth actually wore when the Kennedy's came to visit.<sup>67</sup>

While the term 'historically accurate' will not be employed in this thesis, its use in part of *The Crown's* marketing campaign highlights the current vernacular that is used by wider audiences. Evidently, they (filmmakers, their teams, and viewers) are invested in how informants are being produced and are curious about the use of primary and secondary resources in this process; however, while attention is drawn to this element by contemporary creators and viewers, it is not a modern phenomenon. As mentioned previously, earlier filmmakers were concerned about authenticity too and addressed the issue without the fanfare or scrutiny that modern creators

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Jane Petrie, 'The Crown's Costume Designer Breaks Down the Fashion of Season 2', *Vanity Fair*, 7 June 2018, via *Youtube*, [online], date accessed: 10/05/2019, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5cK0aWxJg3w>>.

experience<sup>68</sup>, therefore, it is only fair that we consider how they operated as it will help contemporary audiences to better understand the development of the filmmaking practices within the genre.

As mentioned previously, this dissertation's methodology builds upon the structures put forward by Barthes and McFarlane, making them more appropriate for the historical film genre. Through the extensive interrogation of Powell and Pressburger's history-based films, this thesis will demonstrate how a structuralist approach can be used when investigating how filmmakers interact with resources, embed them into their distributional and integrational functions, and transfer them successfully to the screen. Furthermore, the investigation of the film's lifecycle can also reveal how external pressures shaped the construction of the final product and reveal whether audiences were receptive to their efforts. By utilising the openly available resources, i.e., biographies, autobiographies, memoirs and secondary scholarly articles, and cross-examining these resources with the primary sources sequestered in the BFI's Powell and Pressburger collections and documents from Britain's other archives/collections (Mass Observation, newspaper archives etc) it is possible to create a more comprehensive account about The Archers' efforts towards producing authenticity on screen. More widely, this investigation will demonstrate how films are complex creations that can provide audiences with well-developed, informed visual representations of the past, how the filmmakers that create such projects can be considered as a type of historian due to their efforts, and that many films of this type can be utilised as educational tools when better understood for their medium's strengths and limitations. The following page contains the framework for this structuralist approach, as well as a series of questions that assists with research and the communication of findings.

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<sup>68</sup> Most notable in their picture's publicity campaigns, personal interviews and audience responses (critics and regular cinemagoers). As discussed in previous examples, i.e. *The Crown*, Robert Eggers' *The Witch*.

Table 2: A flexible structuralist framework for the interrogation of historically set feature films, as employed in this thesis.

<b>Content:</b> Informed by McFarlane’s structuralist theory		
<p><b>Distributional Functions</b></p> <p>Break down the film’s primary cardinal functions and compare them to history’s real events. In some instances, they will follow a traceable timeline involving real individuals and events; however, in others they may exist in a broader historical context (common in historically set fictional films) and may rely on era appropriate trends or customs. Catalysers are harder to discern within the History film genre and are often embedded in dialogue and can also be explored if desired.</p>	<p><b>Integrational Functions</b></p> <p>This refers to the elements within a picture’s <i>mise en scène</i>, which has many components, including lighting, composition of shot, costumes, hair and makeup, props, décor/settings, characterisation, and music. Determining which elements to investigate differs from project to project; however in most instances (whether explicit examples or pastiches/allusions) links to historical data are traceable because these functions are produced to support a picture’s distributional functions.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Due to size and scope, this dissertation will interrogate material components from the <i>mise en scène</i>: settings, costumes, hair and makeup, and props.</p>	
<b>Context:</b> Informed by the work of ‘New Cinema Historians’		
<p><b>Preproduction</b></p> <p>Determine how the project developed and the filmmakers’ initial intentions regarding historical representation. Were they concerned or dismissive of authenticity? Did they undertake any type of research to further develop/support their distributional and integrational functions? What was the state of the wider cinema industry at the time? Did they face any issues,</p>	<p><b>Production</b></p> <p>Are there any production issues that have arisen that have changed the filmmakers’ initial plans/vision? Are there any historical, cultural, or technical specialists on set to provide recommendations to cast and crew? Has the filming</p>	<p><b>Release and Reception</b></p> <p>How substantial was the publicity campaign? Was there any mention of the filmmakers’ efforts towards authentic representation? Were there any significant events that coincided with the picture’s release, that helped or hindered its reception? How did</p>

<p>i.e., funding or time, that limited their capacity to develop an authentic account for their audiences?</p>	<p>period run smoothly? Is support from the production company withstanding? Are any actors contributing to historical representation through their characterisations?</p>	<p>audiences respond? Were they receptive to the filmmakers' efforts regarding authenticity (within both distributional and integrational functions)?</p>
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Each film chosen provides a unique set of circumstances regarding their narrative's origins and position within the genre, which helps to demonstrate the flexibility of this approach.

1. *The Spy in Black* – based on an original novel by Storer Clouston.
2. *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* – an original screenplay from Emeric Pressburger, collated after consulting multiple primary/secondary resources.
3. *The Battle of the River Plate* – based on true events and one that contained still living figures. It was collated after consultation with individuals involved, as well as primary/secondary texts.

The differences in origin affected how Powell and Pressburger constructed their distributional and integrational functions, but the relationship between the stories and primary/secondary data is still there – it simply varies in its degree of engagement. To fully understand this relationship, this thesis will also consider the wider industrial and social context that existed during the films' production.

Chapter one will investigate the steps taken during the preproduction stage and investigate how The Archers' initial ideas began to develop into a coherent, followable plan of action for each picture. It will examine their initial visions and expectations, with a particular focus on Pressburger's efforts and research practices when constructing a well-informed screenplay. Furthermore, it will consider how the wider filmmaking industry, supporting studios, and the wider public, received these initial ideas and whether any issues or opportunities arose in relation to the project. Examining this stage in the filmmaking process provides an opportunity to understand how Powell and Pressburger's approaches towards historiophoty and authenticity

changed from project to project, in response to personal, industrial, and wider social contexts or demands.

Chapter two will explore the production phase. Focusing primarily on the skills and actions of Powell and Pressburger's filmmaking teams, this chapter will investigate how initial preproduction plans were followed, altered, and executed at this stage in development. Alongside this, it will discuss any issues or opportunities that emerged through industry channels, as well as any praise or criticisms that came from those beyond the industry as they may have influenced previously set preproduction plans. This fills a gap in the current discourse surrounding the broader efforts of Powell and Pressburger's teams and their contributions when establishing a project's authenticity or historical representations.

Chapter three examines a film's content, particularly its narrative. The breakdown of the pictures' distributional functions allows for the deeper interrogation of themes, characters, and events, with a particular focus on their ties to historical resources or topical contemporary issues. Breaking the story down in this manner creates an opportunity to consider how, within the confines of the visual medium, filmmakers can translate and communicate information from more traditionally accepted texts, i.e., military records, newspaper clippings, oral histories, and present them to audiences in a manner that produces an authentically believable and factually supported account. This posits the notion that filmmakers can contribute to the wider historical discourse due to their research efforts and suggests that *The Archers* could be considered as early 'filmmaker historians'.

In a similar vein, chapter four will consider film content; however, it will focus on integrational functions – the supporting elements of the *mise en scène* that act as authenticity effects. Filled with key components used to support the distributional functions, a picture's settings, costumes, hair and makeup, props, and music, can either help to produce an effective authentic experience or ruin one through inappropriate adoption or transposition. Due to the length of this thesis and the originality of early British film scoring, this thesis cannot consider the music of films selected, but it will investigate how *The Archers* utilised settings, costumes, hair and makeup, and props to create an authentic representation (either historical or contemporary) for viewers. This provides an opportunity to better understand how important integrational functions are, especially when considering the construction of historical

representation, and highlights how early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century filmmakers and their teams were cognisant of this when they developed and produced a picture.

Finally, chapter five will discuss the release and reception period of each film to determine whether the filmmaker's efforts were publicised, recognised, and received well by viewers. As noted earlier, audience awareness towards authenticity, particularly historical authenticity, has heightened in the past thirty years and influenced the broader industry; however, evidence shows that some early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century filmmakers were interested in factual representation and made an effort to produce something informed by historical data – regardless of any recognition that they may receive. This chapter will explore the publicity campaigns and audience response to Powell and Pressburger's films. This creates an opportunity to determine how and when their research efforts were made clear, whether they were received well or used as a tool to draw in the crowd, and, more broadly, provide some insight into society's changing taste and their developing focus on authenticity.

Overall, this thesis aims to provide an accessible and portable theoretical approach (one that can be used and adapted to suit various educational settings/stages) for the interrogation of historical based films with a focus on the unique relationship that they have with the primary and secondary resources used to create them. Furthermore, it aims to demonstrate how some early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century filmmakers were interested in producing well-informed representations of the past, as well as objects that reflected tensions within the contemporary setting in which they were produced. As their work contributes to the world's wider historical discourse, it is only fitting that they be considered as historian filmmakers. Alongside this theoretical application, this thesis also aims to provide a framework that can be followed and practically applied by filmmakers. Through its methodology, it provides an insight into what viewers are interested in when considering authenticity and how they can interrogate a picture, which creates an opportunity for filmmakers to ensure that their distributional and integrational functions are created in a manner that can meet such expectations or scrutinies.

Chapter One:  
Preproduction: The Very Beginning

*'The anxiety of filmmakers struggling to create a believable cinematic world can lead to contradictory decision-making, and within a single film we can observe different strategies at work'.*

Dominic Lees.<sup>1</sup>

In a brief introductory guide for its students, the New York Film Academy described the preproduction stage of filmmaking as a 'complicated and daunting' time for filmmakers, especially independent ones.<sup>2</sup> It is a busy period that involves editing/finalising scripts, locating appropriate production staff, cementing the cast, scouting locations and finalising budgets.<sup>3</sup> Although continually updated and altered to suit contemporary needs, this preproduction phase contains universal preparation tasks that have been present since cinema's earliest years.

The following chapter will investigate the preproduction period of *The Spy in Black*, *Colonel Blimp*, and *The Battle of the River Plate* to illustrate how every filmmaking project comes with a unique set of challenges and opportunities, shaped by both industry standards and the wider contemporary social context, which ultimately influences a filmmaker's ability to plan and produce an authentic picture – either historical or contemporary. Using a series of autobiographies, biographies, and the letters and research materials from the British Film Institute's Powell and Pressburger collections, this section will investigate how The Archers conducted themselves during this preproduction stage and laid the foundations for their films. While this adds to the wider discourse surrounding The Archers' projects, their filmmaking style and processes, and their broader impact on cinema's history, it can also provide contemporary filmmakers with scenarios that they may encounter themselves (in some form) and offer some insight into how such issues have been resolved in the past – thus providing a practical, applicative component to this research.

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<sup>1</sup> Lees, 'Cinema and Authenticity', 205.

<sup>2</sup> Jack Picone, '9 Stages of Pre-Production', *New York Film Academy*, [online] date accessed: 09/09/2018, <<https://www.nyfa.edu/student-resources/9-stages-of-pre-production/>>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

For Powell and Pressburger, this period of their history-based projects was often filled with significant research, meetings with industry heads and government/military officials, and wider conversations with potential cast and crew. Although Powell's presence is prominent during this stage, especially when concerning location shoots, it is Pressburger's work that comes to the forefront. As the primary scriptwriter in the filmmaking duo, Pressburger was responsible for constructing the foundations of a project's narrative structure, its settings, and its characters. In the case of *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* and *The Battle of the River Plate*, evidence shows that Pressburger approached his scripts with historical authenticity in mind and used their construction as an opportunity to refine his research skills and enable his 'inner historian'. This ability to explore and embed historical information into his work was possible in the established stages of his career, but his first collaborative project with Powell, the 1917 set spy-thriller *The Spy in Black*, did not have the same level of creative flexibility. Both he and Powell were burgeoning filmmakers in the British industry and were subservient to Britain's movie mogul, Alexander Korda.

British cinema in the 1930s (both in an industrial and social context) was a period of growth and technological development that paved the way for the 1940s 'Golden Age'. According to Jeffrey Richards, it was 'a definable decade, bound at one end by the arrival in Britain of the talkies and at the other by the outbreak of the Second World War'.<sup>4</sup> The habit of cinemagoing was integral in the lives of many citizens, and cinemas quickly became central to the make-up of their local communities.<sup>5</sup> For just 'a few coppers' citizens were able to take a seat 'in a garden of dreams' and immerse themselves in whatever graced the screen.<sup>6</sup> It was a space where, as Roy Armes highlights, the social contradictions, struggles, and aspirations of the everyday citizen were organised in a manner that fostered the acceptance of social constraints, provided a place where conflict and chaos could be overcome, and offered solutions (often simplified) for complex situations.<sup>7</sup> During this period producers and directors, such as Alexander Korda and Michael Balcon, invigorated the reputation of British cinema through quality productions like *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933), *The 39 Steps* (1935), and *Fire Over England* (1937). The success of such features provided opportunities for new studios to be established

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<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace: Cinema and Society in 1930s Britain*, I.B Tauris & Company, London: New York, 2009, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Roy Armes, *A Critical History of British Cinema*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1978, 113-114.



(Korda's own Denham based London Films) and older studios to update their facilities (Gaumont-British). Korda's studio, in particular, was known for fostering creativity and skill-building amongst burgeoning directors, as well as its employment of talented foreign artists that were escaping Germany's spreading influence within Europe. By 1938 both Powell and Pressburger were part of Korda's empire, Powell as an up-and-coming director and Pressburger as an unknown scriptwriter, which led to their eventual introduction and first collaborative project.

### *The Origins of 'The Spy in Black'*

Korda's penchant for excessive spending was well-known and one of the primary motivators behind the *Black* project. In 1937 he had offered a generous long-term contract to the famed German star Conrad Veidt in order to bolster the talent pool within London Studios and to remain competitive against other industry leaders, like Gaumont-British.<sup>8</sup> Veidt had left Germany in the early 1930s, with his Jewish wife and liberal beliefs, and had entered Britain's cinema circuit as a part of the 'larger influx of continental workers' emigrating from Hitler's Germany.<sup>9</sup> Before his time at London Studios the émigré had starred in a series of pictures, such as *Jew Süß* (1934) and *The King of the Damned* (1935), under Gaumont-British, but after the company experienced a series of financial setbacks, his contract lapsed.<sup>10</sup> Free agency within the industry was a precarious position, as no work was guaranteed, and this prompted Veidt's initial contact with Korda's offices.<sup>11</sup> His first picture under the London Studios banner was *Dark Journey* (1937), which was a spy thriller set during the Great War and the introductory film for Vivien Leigh.<sup>12</sup> After this, Korda struggled to find roles that matched Veidt's style and calibre as an actor. According to Sue Harper, Veidt was also concerned about the quality of the parts offered and had begun to consider other projects (from different studios) that were more aligned to his tastes.<sup>13</sup> To resolve this 'dry spell' and reduce the risk of a financial loss through contract, Korda turned to Storer Clouston's original 1917 novel, *The Spy in Black*, and tasked scriptwriter Roland Pertwee with the adaptation.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Jerry C. Allen, *Conrad Veidt: From Caligari to Casablanca*, The Boxwood Press, USA, 1987, 168.

<sup>9</sup> Sue Harper, 'Thinking Forward and Up: The British Films of Conrad Veidt', in Jeffrey Richards's *The Unknown 1930s: An Alternative History of the British Cinema 1929-1939*, I.B Tauris, London: New York, 1998, 123.

<sup>10</sup> Allen, *Conrad Veidt*, 168.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 170.

<sup>13</sup> Harper, 'Thinking Forward and Up', 134.

<sup>14</sup> Karol Kulik, *Alexander Korda: The Man Who Could Work Miracles*, W.H Allen, London, 1975, 217.

The adaptation of novels and plays had been a common practice in both Hollywood and Britain since cinema's earliest pictures, and Korda tended to favour them over original screenplays because a) they had already received some form of publicity through their initial print release; b) an audience (fans of the book) was guaranteed, and c) they were cheaper than an original screenplay and posed fewer financial risks to the studio.<sup>15</sup> Various adaptations had done well in the British box office in previous years. For example, in 1935 Alfred Hitchcock had successfully adapted John Buchan's *The 39 Steps*, George Bernard Shaw's popular play *Pygmalion*<sup>16</sup> was adapted by Anthony Asquith in 1938, and in the same year, King Vidor directed the cinematic rendition of A.J. Cronin's popular novel *The Citadel*. With this in mind, Korda's decision to source his material from London Studios' collection (which was filled with novels and plays that they had previously acquired the rights to) was not surprising.

As mentioned above, the initial 'man for the job', Roland Pertwee, was a seasoned playwright, scriptwriter, and actor, within Britain's entertainment industry. Pertwee had been a common figure at the neighbouring Teddington Studios – a subsidiary of Warner Brothers – and had assisted with the development of adaptation-based screenplays like *Man of the Moment* (1935), *King Solomon's Mines* (1937), and *The Ware Case* (1938).<sup>17</sup> Despite this experience, the screenplay that Pertwee offered Korda underwhelmed the Hungarian and, according to Karol Kulik's biography, that Korda labelled it 'a disaster'.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Michael Powell was also unimpressed with Pertwee's efforts: 'it was awful: wordy and quite obviously adapted from a novel...the script had lots of pleasant dialogue, but pleasant British dialogue does not make a pleasant film'.<sup>19</sup>

Powell's disappointment in Pertwee's script was influenced by the screenwriter's inability to adapt the story for cinema; it was not a commentary on the novel itself nor a critique of Storer Clouston. Powell expressed his admiration for the author in his autobiography and was well aware of the literary reputation that Clouston had developed in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: 'of course I knew who J. Storer Clouston was. I knew who everybody was in the literary world,

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 216.

<sup>16</sup> Contemporary audiences may be unfamiliar with Shaw's *Pygmalion*; however, the 1958 musical adaptation, *My Fair Lady*, has become a classic in theatre and on screen.

<sup>17</sup> Unknown, 'For Hollywood. English Actor-Author. Roland Pertwee's Contract', *Morning Bulletin*, Australia, March 1934.

<sup>18</sup> Kevin Macdonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death, Screenwriter*, Faber and Faber, London: Boston, 1994, 144.

<sup>19</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 300.

thanks to my Aunt Ethel and *The Times Literary Supplement*'.<sup>20</sup> Over the years, Clouston had been consistently featured in the acclaimed Scottish magazine *Blackwood*, publisher of famed authors such as George Eliot, Walter Scott, Miles Franklin and E.M Forster, which was, in Powell's opinion, one of the most 'impeccably produced' literary magazines and one familiar to all bibliophiles.<sup>21</sup> In regard to *The Spy in Black* story, Clouston's original novel was a successful publication that had received international acclaim after its release in 1917. At the time, The American Library Association labelled the espionage thriller as a 'good war yarn' and recommended it to convalescing soldiers<sup>22</sup>, while Australia's *Sydney Morning Herald* praised how Clouston's narrative did not 'fall into the error of suggesting that our enemies are composed exclusively of fools, knaves, weaklings or cowards'.<sup>23</sup>

Similar reviews emerged in the UK. In the early stages of its publication, the *Pall Mall Gazette* described the serial as one that 'promises to turn out an excellent yarn'<sup>24</sup>, and later, the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* labelled its end as 'one of the most genuine surprises we have ever come across in fiction'.<sup>25</sup> Success on the page does not mean success on screen, as the various chapters in James Michael Welsh and Peter Lev's edited volume *The Literature/Film Reader: Issues of Adaptation* demonstrate.<sup>26</sup> Powell thought that Pertwee's script focused too much on dialogue, had little action, Veidt's character 'wasn't even a good part', and the lead female role, filled by the up-and-coming Valerie Hobson, was the 'usual brainless, nerveless, boneless English heroine'.<sup>27</sup> Powell was dissatisfied with Pertwee's work and his creative confidence in Korda's choice of secondary producer was also minimal. This was Irving Asher, an American with a somewhat poor reputation for creativity and someone that Powell had worked under when stationed at Warner Brothers' English studios.<sup>28</sup> Asher is a somewhat obscure and relatively unmentioned figure in the history of the industry; however, he had a long and industrious career in both Hollywood and Britain. According to his obituary in the *Los Angeles Times*, Asher had produced some acclaimed films, including *The Four Feathers* (1939), a British epic starring John Clements and Ralph Richardson, the Academy Award-nominated drama *Blossoms in the Dust*

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Unknown, 'ALA Says These Are Good War Yarns', *The Fort Sheridan Recall*, vol. 1, issue 5, 7 May 1919.

<sup>23</sup> NSW Bookstall Co, 'New Novels', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Australia, 4 May 1918.

<sup>24</sup> Unknown, 'Blackwood's Magazine', *Pall Mall Gazette*, Great Britain, 1 August 1917.

<sup>25</sup> Unknown, 'Blackwood's Releases', *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, Great Britain, 5 December 1917.

<sup>26</sup> James Michael Welsh & Peter Lev, *The Literature/Film Reader: Issues of Adaptation*, Scarecrow Press, USA, 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 300.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 299-300.

(1941), and the film noir crime drama *The Turning Point* (1952), featuring the popular William Holden.<sup>29</sup> These successes came after *The Spy in Black* and prior to 1939 Asher's catalogue was fairly unremarkable, and his reputation was rather poor due to his penchant for producing 'quota quickie' films. When describing Asher's creativity and knowledge about the industry Powell wrote, 'what he knew, he knew, but he didn't know much'.<sup>30</sup>

'Quota quickies' was the nickname given to a plethora of British films created to simply fill the quota obligations that the *Cinematograph Films Act 1927* dictated, and, as the name suggests, they were made quickly, with low budgets and little narrative substance. They have been somewhat overlooked by specialists, and many have been lost over time, but BFI curator John Oliver has addressed this oversight. He argues that these cheaply made pictures were important within the industry's history because they provided a number of up-and-coming artists and industry specialists with a low-pressure environment where they could hone their skills.<sup>31</sup> Powell was amongst them, as well as actors John Mills and James Mason, directors Brian Desmond Hurst and David Lean (as editor), and cinematographers like Guy Green and Oswald Morris.<sup>32</sup> In a similar vein, Steve Chibnall also defended the quota quickie, and although he clearly states that such films were 'shoddy, tawdry things of little substance' that were 'churned' out of the studios, he defended their place in the industry's history due to their ability to keep the industry afloat, bolster its technological growth and development and allow early career filmmakers, like Powell, to hone their skills.<sup>33</sup>

Chibnall's comparison of the contemporary connotations of the 'quality vs. quota' labels are particularly relevant when considering the mindset and reputation that Asher may have had at the time of the *Black* project. Such labels had cemented a series of 'black and white' preconceptions in the mindsets of both filmmaking professionals and their audiences, which included some of the following:

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<sup>29</sup> Unknown, 'Irving Asher; Longtime Film Studios Executive', *Los Angeles Times*, 23 March 1985, [online] date accessed: 07/08/2018, < [http://articles.latimes.com/1985-03-23/local/me-21164\\_1\\_irving-asher](http://articles.latimes.com/1985-03-23/local/me-21164_1_irving-asher)>.

<sup>30</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 239.

<sup>31</sup> John Oliver, 'British Films in the 1930s', British Film Institute, [online] date accessed: 07/08/2020, <<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1361819/index.html>>.

<sup>32</sup> Steve Chibnall, *Quota Quickies: The Birth of the British B Film*, St. Edmundsbury Press, UK, 2007.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<u>Quality</u>	<u>Quota</u>
Slow	Fast
Careful	Careless
Crafted	Mass produced
Expensive	Cheap
Star value	Lack of star value
Innovative	Conventional
Artful	Artless. <sup>34</sup>

According to Chibnall, very few filmmakers were able to successfully transition away from the quota quickie approach, as well as between production environments, because the prejudices present in the studio system dogged them.<sup>35</sup> Powell's comment, 'what he knew, he knew, but he didn't know much', demonstrates this critical outlook over Asher's creative ability during this transitional period in his career.<sup>36</sup> Asher had been 'churning out' quota quickies at Warner Brothers and he and Powell had had several creative disagreements before their employment at London Studios.<sup>37</sup> When compared, it is clear that Powell was the more advantageous and creative filmmaker; however, when the *Black* project entered its preproduction stage Asher had the larger catalogue and more experience. Korda placed him in the role of producer, but Powell was convinced that the studio head had some kind of 'scheme' in place to divert Asher's influence, as well as rework Pertwee's contributions.<sup>38</sup>

Powell's suspicions were fitting because Korda did have a scheme in place. He commissioned a complete rewrite of the script and, with little fanfare, Emeric Pressburger joined the project.<sup>39</sup> This was a risk, because Pressburger was relatively unknown, with no major successes in the British industry. Like many others, he was a part of the influx of European artists emigrating from Hitler's spreading influence, and after being introduced into Korda's circle, through the Hungarian-American composer Miklos Rozsa, he began his work at Denham in

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>36</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 239.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 300.

<sup>39</sup> Kulik, *Alexander Korda*, 217.

1938.<sup>40</sup> According to his grandson, Kevin MacDonald, before *Black* Pressburger's assignments were often standard edits for pre-existing scripts and were projects that he seldom spoke about in his later years, 'if you let him (Pressburger) he liked to pretend that *The Spy in Black* was the first film script he wrote in Britain' because the work before that was 'nothing to be proud of'.<sup>41</sup> Despite this anonymity, Korda paid Pressburger's £250<sup>42</sup> fee for a new film treatment, which was a hefty additional cost because the project had already gone through this process with Pertwee.<sup>43</sup>

When Powell and Pressburger first met at Korda's roundtable meeting regarding *The Spy in Black* project. (Pertwee and Asher were also present), Powell's attention was fixated on the 'small Hungarian wizard' who was able to completely restructure Clouston's work for the silver screen.<sup>44</sup> Pressburger's script was fast-paced, Veidt's role was gallant, Hobson 'was no dummy', and a series of off-screen action sequences had been incorporated.<sup>45</sup> According to film specialist Charles Barr, Pressburger was able to produce a script that was captivating within the first four minutes of its projected screen time, which Powell positively responded to.<sup>46</sup> This did not mean that the roundtable meeting was a comfortable one. Powell described a rather terse affair. According to his autobiography, Pressburger calmly explained his changes while Korda simply doodled a picture on his notes, but Pertwee resembled a bristling 'English cricketer going out to defend his wicket in a test match' and Asher sat in anger with bulging eyes.<sup>47</sup> In the end, Korda breezily dismissed Powell and Pressburger: 'well now, Micky and Emeric, that all sounds very nice. So why don't you go away and find Conrad Veidt and Valerie and work out the rest of the script with them?', but kept Asher behind.<sup>48</sup> Powell believed that Korda purposefully distracted the American (at this moment and throughout the rest of the filmmaking process) in an attempt to curtail his anger and frustration, 'He [Asher] was not used to having command of the script

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<sup>40</sup> Macdonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 143.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 122.

<sup>42</sup> To fully comprehend the cost of this endeavour the British National Archives' *Currency Converter: 1270-2017* is an excellent tool to utilise. While it does not provide the exact options for a '1938 to 2020' comparison, it does allow for a '1935 to 2017' and a '1940 to 2017' example. According to this tool: 1938's £250 = £12,665 in 2017, 1940's £250 = £9,836 in 2017.

<sup>43</sup> EPR/1/17/1, Harefield Productions Limited, 'Emeric Pressburger's Contract Clause', *Emeric Pressburger Collection*, British Film Institute, London.

<sup>44</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 302.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 302-303.

<sup>46</sup> Charles Barr, 'The First Four Minutes' in Ian Christie & Andrew Moor's *The Cinema of Michael Powell: International Perspectives on an English Film-Maker*, BFI Publishing, Great Britain, 2005, 33.

<sup>47</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 302-304.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 303.

transferred from himself to people who were actually going to make the film'.<sup>49</sup> Charles Barr also addressed Asher's anger and Korda's defence tactics in his chapter *The First Four Minutes*, highlighting how Korda's decision to give his junior employees 'a free hand to go ahead' effectively heightened his responsibility to 'run interference' between the filmmaking teams.<sup>50</sup> While Korda kept Asher busy, Pressburger's skeleton script was finding its way to cast members and undergoing further edits.

With the aforementioned pressures in place, particularly the need for an appropriate role for Conrad Veidt, the extra expenditure for Pressburger's new film treatment and their position as junior employees, it is unsurprising that the newly introduced filmmakers opted to make a contemporary feature, rather than a lush historical costume drama. Pressburger's skeleton script, now housed in the British Film Institute's 'Powell and Pressburger' collection, contained very few details that actively helped to establish an authentic verisimilitude of the past. Pressburger's notations were small and there was only one prominent mention of the novel's original Great War setting:

17<sup>th</sup> February, 1917, marked the end of the war as gentlemen played it. On that date the German High Command decided to institute ruthless submarine warfare on all neutrals, sinking all ships without warning in an attempt to starve England out by submarine blockade.<sup>51</sup>

This information was designed for the film's introductory frames and existed to provide viewers with a small amount of contextual information to better support the narrative's wider distributional functions. In the final cut this short explanation was reduced further to 'Kiel. Base of the German Grand Fleet. 1917' and acted as a mere segue into the first scene.

The further reduction in historic detail highlights Powell and Pressburger's decision to avoid historical settings, thus evading the particular authenticity effects that filmmakers use to establish them, i.e., dated points in the narrative, complex costumes and props containing dates. Instead, they formulated their authenticity effects in a manner that replicated the Orkney Islands

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 304.

<sup>50</sup> Barr, 'The First Four Minutes', 21.

<sup>51</sup> S-24, Emeric Pressburger, 'The Spy in Black (A Skeleton Treatment) by Emeric Pressburger', *Michael Powell Collection*, British Film Institute, London, scene I.

in a contemporary fashion, and this worked well within the parameters created by the industry pressures that they encountered at this early stage in their career. This decision to shoot on location also fit within the industry's common practices. According to Alan Burton and Laraine Porter, capturing footage on location had been popular in British cinema since its inception and had helped to perpetuate the myth of an idealised and romantic pre-industrialised England, as well as establish the landscape as an integral component of British national identity.<sup>52</sup> Overall, these preproduction decisions worked in Powell and Pressburger's favour and resulted in a relatively smooth preproduction period; however, only a few years later *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* had a far more complex preproduction period due to its historical sequences, contemporary scenes and controversial subject matter.

#### *The Controversial Beginnings of 'The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp'*

*'Pray propose to me the measures necessary to stop this foolish production before it gets any further. I am not prepared to allow propaganda detrimental to the morale of the Army, and I am sure the Cabinet will take all necessary action. Who are the people behind it?'*

Winston Churchill.<sup>53</sup>

According to Charles Barr, Winston Churchill was an ardent cinephile and more than a simple 'passive and private consumer'.<sup>54</sup> He was a passionate casual consumer as well as a savvy political viewer who recognised the 'important effects the medium could exercise at a variety of levels'.<sup>55</sup> With this in mind, it is interesting to learn that despite its artistry and good storytelling, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* was a film that he acutely opposed and attempted to shut down at various stages of its life cycle due to the critical questions it posed regarding the effectiveness of British high command and the portrayal of a sympathetic, anti-Nazi German character. Discovered in the archives by Ian Christie in the late-1970s, official ministerial documents provide insight into the disturbance that the *Colonel Blimp* project created within the wartime government.<sup>56</sup> Churchill's ire may have intimidated other filmmakers enough to cease,

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<sup>52</sup> Alan Burton & Laraine Porter, 'Introduction', in Laraine Porter & Bryony Dixon's *Picture Perfect: Landscape, Place and Travel in British Cinema before 1930*, The Exeter Press, UK, 2007, 1-4.

<sup>53</sup> Prem 4/14/15, Winston Churchill, 'Prime Minister's Personal Minute: The Blimp Film', 10 September 1942, *The National Archives*, Kew: London.

<sup>54</sup> Charles Barr, "'Much Pleasure and Relaxation in These Hard Times': Churchill and Cinema in The Second World War", *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, vol. 31, no. 4, 562.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 573.

<sup>56</sup> Christie, *Powell, Pressburger and Others*, 105-120.



but Powell and Pressburger had successfully cemented themselves as prominent figures within the industry through a series of well-produced and well-received films, including an Oscar win for *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* (1941), which undoubtedly strengthened their position when defying Churchill.

Between *The Spy in Black* and *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, Powell and Pressburger made three successful wartime features: *Contraband* (1940) – another espionage film featuring Conrad Veidt and Valerie Hobson; *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* (1941), an escape-centred wartime drama (Germans on the run) aimed towards US audiences and starring Laurence Olivier, Raymond Massey, Leslie Howard and Anton Walbrook; and *One of Our Aircraft is Missing* (1942), another wartime drama and a reversal of *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel*'s escape scenario (Allies on the run), featuring Eric Portman, Godfrey Tearle and Googie Withers. All three films were popular within the UK; however, the attention that *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* and *One of Our Aircraft is Missing* received by the US Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences had significantly elevated Powell and Pressburger's reputation.<sup>57</sup> Without this significant international reputation, the pressure exerted by Churchill and his ministers would likely have successfully shut down the *Colonel Blimp* project.

According to Powell, rather than dissuade the filmmakers, Churchill's objections (and the wider ministerial disapproval) became challenges to overcome. After receiving a clear warning and rejection from ministerial powers in a meeting during this preliminary stage, Powell and Pressburger rallied their spirits and industry supporters.

We stood outside the gaunt building in Bloomsbury. Emeric looked at me.

"Well, Michael, what do we do now?" Emeric had the heart of a lion, but

he was a little bewildered by all the double talk.

"Do?" I said. "We make the film".

"Good" said Emeric, and we walked straight to Wardour Street, where Arthur

Rank and C.M Woolf were sitting biting their nails and waiting for us to come

back from what might be our Dunkirk.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, '1942 (15<sup>th</sup>) Award Nominations and Wins', *Oscars Award Database*, [online], date accessed: 11/11/2020.

<<http://awardsdatabase.oscars.org/Search/Nominations?awardShowFrom=15&view=3-Award%20Category-Chron>>.

<sup>58</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 403.

This confidence was undoubtedly bolstered by their string of successful projects, support from independent investors and the establishment of their own independent production company The Archers.<sup>59</sup> The agreement signalled the beginning of Pressburger's immense task of researching and writing a narrative that encompassed three prominent stages in British history after the turn of the century – the Second Anglo-Boer War years, WWI and the contemporary WWII period.

In 1942 the focus on authenticity, the utilisation of archival resources, and having a wide research lens was approached and received in a very different manner when considered alongside 21<sup>st</sup> century practices.<sup>60</sup> Although barely mentioned in a film's publicity campaign (or entirely absent), evidence shows that filmmakers were experimenting more with this aspect when planning and executing their projects, but producers were generally sceptical of historical films, and the success of the genre, especially at this early time, was highly questionable for investors. For example, the American producer and co-founder of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios, Louis B. Mayer, had once declared 'you can never make a nickel on a Civil War picture', but in 1939 David O. Selznick proved him wrong with his epic feature *Gone With the Wind*, which undoubtedly helped to further cement the history film genre.<sup>61</sup> In regard to historical research, *Gone With the Wind's* costume designer, Walter Plunkett, 'scoured museums' for resources during the early stages of production, was pedantic in his research, and even obtained swatches of fabric from women's Civil War gowns in order to reproduce them for the film.<sup>62</sup> Research then became commonplace in Hollywood and it was a standard production practice. Philip Rosen

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<sup>59</sup> According to Macdonald, 'nobody can quite agree on the origins of the famous name and logo' used by The Archers. Its visual elements reflect the coexistence of tradition and modernity – a theme that Powell and Pressburger often tackled within their projects. The red, white, and blue, archery target resembles the iconic RAF roundel, while the arrows embedded within it hark back to England's longbow tradition. What is undisputed (according to Macdonald) is their adoption of James Agate's verse as an unofficial motto for their philosophy: 'The arrow was pure gold. But somehow missed the target. But as all golden arrow tippers know. It's better to miss Naples than hit Margate' in Macdonald's *Emeric Pressburger: Life and Death*, 188.

<sup>60</sup> As highlighted in correspondence between the author and Giselle Bastin and addressed more broadly in her work on *The Crown* (2017-), contemporary filmmakers like to highlight their efforts when it comes to historical research and authentic representation and defend themselves most ardently when critics question (or often condemn) invention within their work. Due to fewer debates regarding the relationship between film, history, and memory, pre-1980s filmmakers did not encounter such widespread analysis or criticism and, as a result, were less likely to 'make noise' and draw attention to this part of their filmmaking process. In regard to The Archers, they did not actively discuss research practices until Pressburger penned a short article for *Kinematograph Weekly* addressing the preparation needed for *The Battle of the River Plate*. See: Giselle Bastin, 'Friday Essay: The Hidden Agenda of Royal Experts Circling The Crown Series 4', *The Conversation*, 11 December 2020, [online] date accessed: 17/06/2021, <<https://theconversation.com/friday-essay-the-hidden-agenda-of-royal-experts-circling-the-crown-series-4-151293>>.

<sup>61</sup> Mike C. Carnes, 'Shooting (down) the Past. Historians vs. Hollywood', *Cineaste*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2004, 45.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 47.

highlights the existence of these early research records, made for the “true films” created in Hollywood between 1938-1956 and explored one sample from Warner Brothers’ archival collections.<sup>63</sup>

There was a corporate form called ‘General Research Record’ filled in for each production. This was a tabular form with five columns: the date of the query to the research department, the name of the inquirer, a summary of the request, the initials of the researcher, and the disposition of the request, including the source of the answer or materials provided by the research department... Departments and researchers were consulted throughout the filmmaking process by almost every “creative” specialization in the studio division.<sup>64</sup>

This standardised system may have been the norm in Hollywood after 1938, where the studio system was well-established and robust, but evidence suggests that Britain’s less-streamlined industry lacked arrangements of this type. The research was organised, conducted, and the findings were incorporated, at the discretion of the filmmaker.

In February 1942, Pressburger conducted his own research and dedicated time and effort to understanding the historical settings and trends he wished to explore in *Colonel Blimp*. Powell recalled Pressburger’s enthusiasm at the time and expressed his own excitement at the scriptwriter’s discoveries: ‘Burrowing in the British Museum, Emeric had discovered a little book in German on the etiquette of duelling. It contained every one of the points which we used so effectively in the debate between the seconds before the duel. It is grimly funny, and we went to town on it’.<sup>65</sup> Notations in Pressburger’s 1942 desk diary (an unexplored resource in previous Powell and Pressburger studies) also provides insight into his activities and findings during this preproduction stage. Although brief, his short comments highlight the dominance that this task had on his time and mind,

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<sup>63</sup> Philip Rosen, *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis: London, 2001, 148.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 405.

*Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> February:* 'We talked with Junge about Blimp. I said a lot. It is amazing how nicely it develops'

*Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> February:* 'Spent morning in British Museum. Took out Dixie, drove it into the museum's courtyard'

*Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> February:* 'Went to the British Museum. It's snowing again'

*Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February:* 'Went at 9 to Brit. Museum. Streets again like ice'

*Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> February:* 'Went in the morning with Dixie to Br. Museum. Very cold and icy. At 12 I left'

*Monday 9<sup>th</sup> February:* 'Went to Brit. Museum and finished (for the time being) research'

*Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> February:* 'I was working in the morning with not much success. Blimp is a tough nut to crack'

*Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> February:* 'Sunny but cold day. I'm reading Gen. Fuller's book about the Boer War.<sup>66</sup> Quite interesting and for Blimp purpose excellent ... went to the Empire to see "Dr. Jackhill & Mr. Hide". Not bad. Audience sometimes roared with laughter at the bad moments. Ingrid Bergman very good. Some of the fog scenes in lighting the best I ever saw. Period much like we'll have in the first part of Blimp...'<sup>67</sup>

While this desk diary provides an outline of his whereabouts and his tasks, the specific *Colonel Blimp* research notes (housed in the British Film Institutes *Emeric Pressburger Collection*) provide

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<sup>66</sup> Unfortunately, Pressburger did not state the title of Fuller's book in his diary or research notes. General Fuller was a prolific author throughout his military career, and after his retirement in 1933, so there are multiple possibilities for the resource that Pressburger mentions. After considering Fuller's published catalogue (before 1943) it is possible that Pressburger is referring to: *The Dragon's Teeth; a Study of War and Peace* (1932), *Generalship: Its Diseases and their Cure* (1936) or *Memoirs of an Unconventional Soldier* (1936).

<sup>67</sup> EPR/8/6, Emeric Pressburger, 'February 2<sup>nd</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>: Pressburger's 1942 Desk Diary', *Emeric Pressburger Collection*, British Film Institute, London.

more insight into the resources he accessed. For example, partial comments referred to various articles in *The Times* (UK), which indicates time spent within the library's newspaper collection.<sup>68</sup> Lists of British Museum Library catalogue references also suggest a wide research lens that was filled with topics that fell within the film's historical timeline, i.e., 'entertainment of Col. troops 17j4c', 'inquiry into conduct of war 21j9e – 18s6b' and 'letter on our armies in India 24d13f'.<sup>69</sup> And a lengthy essay on women's Suffrage in the UK demonstrates Pressburger's efforts to understand and incorporate this history into his narrative, which was a subject that he grappled with, 'the story of Blimp goes quite well but I can't get on with the woman's part'.<sup>70</sup>

Pressburger was the primary person involved in this process, but he did not conduct this research solely by himself. His desk diary revealed that he employed an out-of-work acquaintance to assist him. Due to the passing of time and Pressburger's fondness for lead pencil, it is difficult to determine the name in his diary, but some legible entries describe his activities. For example, in March this assistant delivered two weeks' worth of research to Pressburger who, at this time, had finished his work in the Museum library.<sup>71</sup> Impressed with the quality of the work, Pressburger extended their arrangement, 'I gave him something to do for another week and 5 more pounds'.<sup>72</sup> While the second researcher's content is not explicitly described, his notes are likely a part of the BFI's *Emeric Pressburger Collection*. In particular, the essay on UK Suffrage and a collection of notes regarding World War I military councils may be his work because they were typed; as mentioned earlier, Pressburger favoured hand-written, lead-pencilled notes.<sup>73</sup>

Alongside this, Michael Powell also made recommendations and conducted research. While holidaying in Dumfries, to do some good for his 'dusty cerebellum', he wrote to Pressburger and declared, 'I have obeyed your advice by abandoning thinking all together except for consciously choosing books covering the Blimp period. Do not neglect 'Punch', it is a mine of banality, an artisan of "Blimped" sources'.<sup>74</sup> A small contribution but one nonetheless. Even

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<sup>68</sup> EPR/1/22/2, Emeric Pressburger, 'Pressburger's Research notes', *Emeric Pressburger Collection*, British Film Institute, London.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> EPR/8/6, Emeric Pressburger, 'February 26<sup>th</sup>: Pressburger's 1942 Desk Diary', *Emeric Pressburger Collection*, British Film Institute, London.

<sup>71</sup> EPR/8/6, Emeric Pressburger, 'March 9<sup>th</sup>: Pressburger's 1942 Desk Diary', *Emeric Pressburger Collection*, British Film Institute, London.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> EPR/1/22/2, Emeric Pressburger, 'Pressburger's Research Notes', *Emeric Pressburger Collection*, British Film Institute, London.

<sup>74</sup> EPR/4/1/1, Michael Powell, 'Personal Correspondence: Dumfries', *Emeric Pressburger Collection*, British Film Institute, London.

though reference to such historical resources was limited within the final *Colonel Blimp* product, some character arcs, wider themes and motifs, and aspects within the *mise en scène* echo the materials that Pressburger consulted (which will be addressed in greater depth in the following chapters). This incorporation adds further support to the film's authenticity effect because the cinematic representation of past trends and incidents can be linked back to real events through historical evidence.

Although undated on the original manuscript in the BFI's collection, according to his desk diary Pressburger finished the first complete skeleton outline for the film on the 30 April 1942, 'Mick & I finished the expose of 'Blimp' and in the afternoon it was typed, bound and delivered... It has no story but a lot of philosophy'.<sup>75</sup> With this skeleton outline in hand, Powell began to pitch The Archers' new venture to various stakeholders. Whilst Pressburger worked on adding dialogue and refining the film's script, Powell was corresponding and meeting with the project's various stakeholders, i.e., financiers, government officials, cast and crew. In some instances, enlisting help was a simple task. Like his filmmaking partner, he grappled with several issues that jeopardised the *Colonel Blimp* project at this early preproduction stage and while evidence indicates that Pressburger was aware of/involved with these incidents, Powell was the dominant spokesperson for the team.

In regard to the production crew, previous experience had produced a select group of 'Archer favourites', which included the likes of cinematographers Jack Cardiff and George Périnal, production designer Alfred Junge and film editor John Seabourne, and little convincing was needed to recruit them for the *Blimp* project. Other parties that were approached, such as *Blimp*'s original cartoon creator David Low, Canadian diplomat and friend Vincent Massey (brother of actor and Archer favourite, Raymond Massey), and previous Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Lord Robert Vansittart, also expressed an interest in the project. This could not be said for other stakeholders. Due to the narrative's focus on outdated mentalities towards warfare, its 'Blimpish' representation of the British military's High Command, and the presence of a 'Good German' character (all key points outlined and explained in Pressburger's initial scheme), key ministerial figures refused to support the project with wartime funds and production materials. Although they could not cancel the film outright,

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<sup>75</sup> EPR/8/6, Emeric Pressburger, 'April 30<sup>th</sup>: Pressburger's 1942 Desk Diary', *Emeric Pressburger Collection*, British Film Institute, London.

particular figures within the War Office and the Ministry of Information did their best to dissuade Powell and Pressburger from making it.

When considering the letters from David Low, Vincent Massey and Lord Robert Vansittart it is clear that, while topical, The Archers' project was not viewed as particularly threatening to morale by those beyond the War Office and the inner circle of the Ministry of Information. Each individual would have read the scheme with a mindset that was influenced by professional experiences, and the array of occupations represented in this small group is significant.

Described by Churchill as 'jester' with a 'mutinous' pencil, David Low (cartoonist, socialist, and anti-imperialist), introduced Colonel Blimp to audiences in April 1934 via Lord Beaverbrook's conservative *Evening Standard* newspaper.<sup>76</sup> The plump, bald, walrus-moustached, towel-clad Colonel espoused contradictory and jingoistic opinions regarding British politics, especially those concerning war and foreign policy, and was a controversial character in Britain's wider cartoon landscape. He was a distinctive satirical figure and one that Low used frequently to highlight the 'self-contradictory aphorism which he noted among men in positions of leadership'.<sup>77</sup> According to Professor Peter Mellini, Low's caricature was quickly adopted as a class motif and the phrase 'Blimpish' became synonymous 'for military or administrative incompetence and heartfelt, unthinking patriotism'.<sup>78</sup> By the time Powell and Pressburger developed the idea for their film, the cartoon character had existed within Britain for almost a decade; however, Low's figure was not the primary inspiration for the picture.

The idea first developed during the editing stage of their previous film, *One of Our Aircraft is Missing*, and was prompted by a scene (cut from the final product) that dealt with age and overcoming the gap between young and old mindsets. According to Powell, editor David Lean had argued that the premise of the scene was worthy of exploration elsewhere: 'It's got nothing to do with the plot. It's the sort of idea you could make a whole film about'.<sup>79</sup> As a familiar figure that had highlighted this gap in the wider military command and government administration, Low's Colonel Blimp was the vehicle that The Archers chose to develop cinematically. Powell's

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<sup>76</sup> David Lockwood, 'David Low and India' in Richard Scully & Andrekos Varnava's *Comic Empires: Imperialism in Cartoons, Caricature, and Satirical Art*, Manchester University Press, Great Britain, 2020, 192.

<sup>77</sup> Lawrence H. Streicher, 'David Low and the Sociology of Caricature', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1965, 3.

<sup>78</sup> Peter Mellini, 'Colonel Blimp's England', *The Political Cartoon Society*, [online], date accessed: 08/12/2020, <<https://www.original-political-cartoon.com/cartoon-history/colonel-blimps-england/>>.

<sup>79</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 399.

admiration for Low is clear in his autobiography: 'Low was well-informed, disrespectful and delightful. He was also a great draughtsman, a man of high ideals, and absolutely fearless.'<sup>80</sup> When invited to lunch in April 1942, Low was fascinated and intrigued by the pair's ideas and had few objections to the project:

When Michael Powell proposed to make a film epic about him [Blimp], and Emeric Pressburger, his script-writer partner, spun his tale of *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* into my fascinated ear, I was too dazed with admiration Emeric's phenomenal power of story-telling... to find any reason for not agreeing.<sup>81</sup>

Overall, in his autobiography Low admitted that he had thought of only two stipulations for the filmmakers before the end of this luncheon. Firstly, 'Blimp had to be proved a fool in the end' and secondly, Powell and Pressburger took all the responsibility for their own version of the character.<sup>82</sup> Low understood that his 2D figure would undergo a transformation for the new medium and that Powell and Pressburger required 'a different blend' of social ideas to produce a story and character that would appeal to a different type of audience.<sup>83</sup> Unlike Low's pompous, antagonistic old tyrant, Pressburger's Blimp, Clive (Sugar) Wynne-Candy, was a likeable and romantic idealist that struggled to reconcile his traditional gentlemanly beliefs with those needed in the contemporary 1942 total war climate. Low wrote to Powell in early May to express his feelings about Pressburger's newly completed skeleton scheme,

I have thought it over carefully and have nothing but approval at this stage...

After having chewed over our conversation I conclude that there are no

fundamental differences of opinion between Pressburger, yourself and myself.<sup>84</sup>

Other than these few exchanges Low was happy to let The Archers adapt his character for cinema without his input; however, at this early stage, he was one of the few interested parties that

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 398.

<sup>81</sup> David Low, *Low's Autobiography*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1957, 273.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> David Low, 'Letter to Michael Powell', 12 May 1942, in Ian Christie's *Powell and Pressburger: The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, 20.



warned the filmmakers about possible opposition from the War Office and Ministry of Information.<sup>85</sup>

On the other hand, Vincent Massey and Lord Robert Vansittart's responses to Pressburger's skeleton scheme were less concerned about the project attracting the scorn of the Ministry of Information and War Office. Considering their views on *Blimp* is pertinent because as prominent career diplomats their acceptance and interest in the project indicate that they did not consider the theme as too sensitive or damaging to morale. Vincent Massey was a Canadian diplomat who had represented his nation through multiple international roles, and by 1942 he was the chosen Canadian delegate to the League of Nations, as well as the High Commissioner for Canada in London. He had become acquainted with Powell and Pressburger through his brother, actor Raymond Massey, and had even accepted a small, non-credited narrative role for the prologue in their Canadian set film *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* (1941).<sup>86</sup> In regard to *Colonel Blimp*, Massey expressed an interest in the story and assured the filmmakers that he would write to Sir James Grigg (a known Tory currently at the War Office) with an endorsement for the project.<sup>87</sup> It was a recommendation that he believed would be received well, 'I am sure you will find him [Grigg] sympathetic to the ideas you have in mind', and it is highly likely that The Archers believed that his seniority and influence would encourage the British minister to provide financial and equipment support.<sup>88</sup>

It was likely that Lord Vansittart's opinion was considered in a similar manner. Like Massey, Vansittart was a statesman and diplomatic representative (for Britain) who had served in office for a significant period. He was a friend of Churchill and a close friend to Alexander Korda, and also had a fairly consistent literary career.<sup>89</sup> Amongst his plays, novels and poetry, Vansittart also wrote screenplays, contributed to film dialogue, and movie song lyrics, and Powell was slated to direct his film *Burmese Silver* in 1937 before the project was dismissed due to international tensions.<sup>90</sup> Vansittart's response to *Colonel Blimp* was more reserved than Massey's and he praised the endeavour too:

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<sup>85</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 199.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, 386.

<sup>87</sup> Vincent Massey, 'Letter to Michael Powell', 5 May 1942, in Ian Christie's *Powell and Pressburger: The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, 25.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>89</sup> Kulik, *Alexander Korda*, 232.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, 217.

I think that the idea is excellent. It is a good story with both humour and pathos in it and is, of course, all the stronger for not being the least unkind to Colonel Blimp, while at the same time putting your finger on his real shortcomings... I wish you every success with it and I am sure that you will indeed be successful.

Their enthusiasm for the project was clear, and it is evident that Massey and Vansittart did not share the same wariness that Low did – despite their professional experiences. When Powell and Pressburger met with the War Office’s Sir James Grigg and the head of the Ministry of Information’s film division, Jack Beddington, it quickly became clear that the ministries would not support the project without significant changes.

Financial and operational support from the War Office and the Ministry of Information was incredibly important for filmmakers during World War II. While the War Office had an overarching influence on the projects emerging from Britain’s film industry, it was the Ministry of Information’s Films Division that worked predominantly with filmmakers and studio heads. According to Aldgate and Richards, ‘the story of the British cinema in the Second World War is inextricably linked with that of the Ministry of Information’.<sup>91</sup> Established in September 1939, the role of the Ministry of Information was to ‘promote the national case to the public at home and abroad in time of war’, and it immediately became responsible for propaganda and censorship across different types of media.<sup>92</sup> Initially nicknamed the ‘Ministry of Dis-information’ due to its inefficiency, its departments quickly overcame their administrative issues and by 1942 their Films Division was quite industrious under the leadership of Beddington.<sup>93</sup> The Film Division had been tasked with creating, finding and supporting films of ‘authenticity and optimism’ towards Britain’s war effort at home and overseas, and many first-rate filmmakers produced material with their backing.<sup>94</sup> Filmmakers such as Noel Coward, Anthony Asquith, David Lean and Michael Balcon provided the Ministry with an extensive catalogue by the War’s end.<sup>95</sup> Powell

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<sup>91</sup> Anthony Aldgate & Jeffrey Richards, *Britain Can Take It: The British Cinema in the Second World War*, Basil Blackwell Ltd, UK, 1986, 4.

<sup>92</sup> Henry Irving, ‘The Ministry’s Launch’, *MOI Digital*, 23 June 2014, [online] date accessed: 23/09/2018, < <http://www.moidigital.ac.uk/blog/ministrys-launch/>>.

<sup>93</sup> Aldgate & Richards, *Britain Can Take It*, 9.

<sup>94</sup> Stephen Woolley, ‘Behind the Lines’, *Sight and Sound*, May 2017, vol. 27, no. 5, 40.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

and Pressburger's other wartime features are counted amongst them; however, *Colonel Blimp* was excluded from this list.

When the Secretary of State for War, Grigg, rejected Pressburger's skeleton scheme, it created a ripple effect that impacted on Beddington's response as head of the Ministry of Information's Films Division. Neither individual was as sympathetic or interested as Massey and Vansittart imagined. Irritated by the very notion of 'Blimpery', Grigg dismissed The Archers' project outright and encouraged them to approach the Army Kinematography and Public Relations division for a more 'suitable storyline' about the Army.<sup>96</sup> Less than a week later Beddington responded too but was a little more reluctant to dismiss the project outright: 'Before we go any further, I shall be very grateful if we can see a full shooting script... you know, none better, what a difference dialogue can make', but his possible acceptance was short-lived.<sup>97</sup> Powell continued to argue *Colonel Blimp's* case throughout June and early July, but Griggs and Beddington could not be swayed. In a June report from the Ministry of Information, several key points of contention were listed for their rejection. In summary, these included,

- a) Controversial themes and their discussion in wider media, i.e *Variety* magazine, that could be prompted by the film after its release,
- b) 'Blimp' theme and 'German' theme are problematic,
- c) Ambiguous classifying genre – was it a drama or a satire?
- d) The 'Blimpery' theme is somewhat superficial because Britain no longer has this issue within its military command, 'it is bad propaganda policy to draw attention to a national failing which has now been rectified',
- e) The script exaggerates the British 'fair play' tradition to the point of ridicule and criticise notions of the 'civilised qualities' of men during wartime, i.e., that the British do not torture prisoners.
- f) The film is too sympathetic to its German character, 'one cannot say that the judgement is given for Germany, but undoubtedly there is an indirect sympathy'.
- g) Specific controversial themes and scenes: Theo (the German) is only

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<sup>96</sup> James Grigg, 'Letter to Michael Powell', May 1942, in Ian Christie's *Powell and Pressburger: The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, 29.

<sup>97</sup> Jack Beddington, 'Letter to Michael Powell', May 1942, in Ian Christie's *Powell and Pressburger: The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, 29.

weakly anti-Nazi, the Pro-Boer Propaganda is too explicit in regard to Britain's treatment of Boer women, the duelling scene is too ambiguous, some scenes create the notion of the 'German's on top' of events/incidents, Edith's opinion on the Battle of Colenso is oversimplified, the German PoW camp concert scene demonstrates English kindness but paints the enemy in a 'superior psychological position'.<sup>98</sup>

When considering the points listed, it is unsurprising that The Archers refused to alter their narrative so drastically. According to Macdonald, some concessions were made. For example, The Archers agreed to remove the scene containing bedraggled Britons clamoring outside the embassy in Berlin – the scene that the Ministry of Information claimed made the Germans look more apt and 'on top' of things.<sup>99</sup> Such minor changes did not appease the ministry though.

In a final bid to try to influence the Ministry of Information and War Office, Powell appealed to Beddington's superior, Brendan Bracken, the Minister of Information and a staunch Tory. This final attempt failed. When Bracken replied in early July, he acknowledged that the film would be entertaining but stood firm behind the arguments made by Beddington and Griggs that, 'it would not make the sort of film which this ministry could properly support'.<sup>100</sup> Like Griggs, Bracken encouraged the pair to continue to work with the Films Division in the future, albeit, with a more appropriate storyline for the times.

Without permission from either entity, The Archers received no government funding, could not easily access appropriate wartime props, vehicles, and the uniforms required for *Blimp's* contemporary sequences; but most importantly, any 'leave of absence' requests for cast or crew currently serving in the armed forces could easily be denied. In one of the first significant setbacks beyond financial support, the Ministry of Information and Bracken firmly refused The Archers' requests for actor Laurence Olivier – who was currently serving in the Navy's Fleet Air

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<sup>98</sup> Jack Beddington & R.B (unknown), 'The Life and Death of Sugar Candy Report', Ministry of Information, June 1942, in Ian Christie's *Powell and Pressburger: The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, 31-36.

<sup>99</sup> Macdonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 222.

<sup>100</sup> Brendan Bracken, 'A Letter to Michael Powell: Blimp', July 1942, in Ian Christie's *Powell and Pressburger: The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, 31-36.

Arm<sup>101</sup> – to take a leave of absence for the film.<sup>102</sup> This was a blow to production because Olivier's allure and popularity guaranteed a cinema audience. Although an initial blow at this preproduction stage, Olivier's inability to take on the role was effectively a 'blessing in disguise'. In a 1968 interview with Bertrand Tavernier, Powell discussed the film's sentimentality and admitted that Olivier's time in service had made him 'full of bitterness for everything concerning the army ... this would have made for the most bitter and most aggressive film... I don't think it would have come out in England under these conditions'.<sup>103</sup> Unintentionally, the MoI and WO changed the tone of *Blimp* through their decision to withhold Olivier.

Concerned about whether they were expressly forbidden to make the film, Powell and Pressburger had a last-minute interview with Beddington. According to Powell, Beddington told them 'Oh, my dear fellow... we can't forbid you to do anything, but don't make it, because everyone will be really cross, and the Old Man [Churchill] will be very cross and you'll never get a knighthood'.<sup>104</sup> With this final clarification made, Powell admitted that their next immediate step involved appealing to Britain's cinema mogul, J. Arthur Rank, for funding support.

Often overshadowed by famed actors, producers, directors and artistic stage crew, J. Arthur Rank is a rather important and curious character within British cinema during the industrious war years. Described by Geoffrey Macnab as an easy target for satirists due to his conservative appearance, somewhat awkward nature, and successful background in trade; the Methodist, Yorkshire flour-miller was a surprising addition to the industry and an unlikely hero within the wider scheme of its history.<sup>105</sup> When he entered the industry in 1933, Rank's ambitions were modest in comparison to those of Alexander Korda – Britain's quickly developing movie mogul. While the artistically driven Hungarian built Denham Studios and the wider reputation of British film, Rank sought to furnish Methodist halls with movie projectors and establish a 'Cinema for Christ'.<sup>106</sup> His ambitions were not limited to the religious halls of the UK though. Throughout the decade he helped establish and run the Religious Film Society and Rank

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<sup>101</sup> Ali Kefford, 'Laurence Olivier's war years in Winchester', *Hampshire Chronicle*, [online] date accessed:

20/09/2018,

<[https://www.hampshirechronicle.co.uk/news/12900013.Laurence\\_Olivier\\_\\_brilliant\\_actor\\_\\_woeful\\_military\\_aviator/](https://www.hampshirechronicle.co.uk/news/12900013.Laurence_Olivier__brilliant_actor__woeful_military_aviator/)>.

<sup>102</sup> Macdonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 222.

<sup>103</sup> Michael Powell & Bertrand Tavernier, 'An Interview with Michael Powell', 1968, in David Lazar, *Michael Powell Interviews*, University Press of Mississippi, USA, 2003, 36-37.

<sup>104</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 403.

<sup>105</sup> Geoffrey Macnab, *J. Arthur Rank and the British Film industry*, Routledge, London: New York, 4-5.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

Organisation (RO), was a key figure in the General Cinema Finance Corporation, RO purchased Britain's Odeon Cinema complex chain, and he became a primary investor in the construction of Pinewood Studios (becoming the chairman in 1937).<sup>107</sup> After the British industry all but collapsed due to economic pressures in 1938, which further exacerbated a series of financial missteps for Korda and prompted his departure for Hollywood in 1939, Rank sought to stabilise the industry and bought Denham Studios. After this acquisition, the Rank Organisation swiftly grew to include Paramount Cinemas' UK sites and the Gaumont-British Picture Corporation's assets. According to Rebecca Smith, writer for *Films in Review* magazine, Rank was 'the driving force behind the golden age of British cinema' and a generous benefactor.<sup>108</sup> The cinema mogul was an excellent ally for independent filmmakers for two main reasons. Firstly, Rank was known for writing large cheques and secondly, he distanced himself from the earlier production periods, effectively giving independent filmmakers 'unprecedented control over their films and plentiful support from the studio', something that was 'unheard of' within the industry.<sup>109</sup>

Concerning *The Archers*, Rank had already missed an opportunity to support their lucrative wartime projects. He had decided against investing in their previous film *One of Our Aircraft is Missing*, which then became one of Korda's final successes before his departure to Hollywood but was enthusiastic about their 'unusual and spectacular' *Blimp* project.<sup>110</sup> Rank's hope for a good return was high and his investment generous. When provided with their first estimated budget Rank conceded to their requests and £163,402 secured *Blimp* – despite the controversy surrounding its subject matter and rejection by government bodies.<sup>111</sup> Rank's generosity would be tested again during the production stage; however, during this early period, it provided *The Archers* with the monetary means to further develop the era encompassing narrative Pressburger had envisioned in his screenplay.

When considered alongside their previous historically set film, *The Spy in Black*, the preproduction period for *Colonel Blimp* was a very different process due to industrial and social pressures. When preparing *Black*, Powell and Pressburger had limited issues and people to contest with. Apart from a poor initial script (Pertwee's), Irving Asher and his grievances, and

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 24.

<sup>108</sup> Rebecca Smith, 'J. Arthur Rank: The Driving Force behind the Golden Age of British Cinema', *Films in Review*, vol. 47, no. 5-6, 1996, 5-6.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 406.

<sup>111</sup> Macdonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 223.

their somewhat lowly positions as junior employees, the pair had a relatively easy time as they adapted Clouston's original story. Comparatively, *Colonel Blimp's* preproduction period was far more complex. Firstly, Pressburger decided to create an entirely original screenplay somewhat inspired by two existing products, a) David Low's Colonel Blimp cartoon character, and b) society's general understanding of 'Blimpery' and its application to military/ministerial figures. In order to explore this theme and its development in an individual character, Pressburger opted to create an era-encompassing narrative that required a significant amount of research and prompted his endeavours at the British Library. Despite his efforts to create a sympathetic and believable Blimp figure, ministers at the Ministry of Information and War Office took offence at the insinuation that Britain's senior military command may contain such individuals – no matter how sentimental they may be. The power and influence of such figures were quite different to that of Pertwee and Asher; however, Powell and Pressburger were no longer minor figures within the industry and could not be intimidated so easily. With the support of J. Arthur Rank and their preferred production crew, The Archers were ready to bring their first serious historical film project from script to screen by September 1942.

*The Artistically Lacking but Factually Rich Beginnings of 'The Battle of the River Plate'*

While *The Spy in Black* was produced on the cusp of British cinema's 'Golden Age' and *Colonel Blimp* emerged during that flourishing wartime period, *The Battle of the River Plate* was developed in a strikingly different environment. The 1950s signalled a new era for British cinema, one that was challenged by a series of technological advancements and a significant shift in audience tastes and expectations. According to Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, British cinematographers were struggling to embrace American innovations, like Cinemascope and VistaVision, and an 'old versus new' mentality was dividing the industry: '... the 1950s industry was a battleground in which different factions – in finance, in class politics, in gender representation, in technology- struggled for dominance'.<sup>112</sup> Alongside these wider issues, the genesis of *River Plate* occurred during a tough time in The Archers' partnership. As independent filmmakers they had struggled to promote projects because of the industry's economic downturn, demands from their personal lives, and a string of (commercially) mediocre releases – particularly *The Elusive Pimpernel* (1950) and *The Tales of Hoffman* (1951). In part II of his

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<sup>112</sup> Sue Harper & Vincent Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s: The Decline of Deference*, Oxford University Press, 2003, 2.

autobiography, *Million Dollar Movie*, and Powell described as the Archers as ‘broke’ and ‘without honour in their own country’.<sup>113</sup> The search for a viable storyline had become somewhat desperate but a spontaneous invitation from Argentina’s President, Juan Perón, to the acclaimed 1954 Argentinian Mar del Plata film festival (all expenses paid) triggered a series of events that led The Archers to the story of the River Plate battle.<sup>114</sup> Pressburger was insistent that they could only travel if it would lead to a new project, ‘it’s a chance in a million to have everything paid, and then come back with an idea that everyone would like’, he had told Powell, and the director was inclined to agree with him.<sup>115</sup> Initially, Pressburger had asked for time to further consider the invitation but, according to Powell, he called only a few days later to discuss the battle at River Plate and the pursuit of Germany’s pocket battleship to Montevideo’s (Uruguay’s capital) harbour.<sup>116</sup> With this naval battle in mind, they accepted Perón’s invitation and began planning for the collection of firsthand accounts of the event.

Incorporating elements from firsthand accounts was important when creating war films in Britain throughout the 1950s. According to Fred Inglis, filmmakers had to be considerate of the nation’s popular sentiment and highly conscious of the way they depicted history’s events because a large bulk of the population could critically assess the scenarios presented on screen due to their lived experiences. ‘Men and women in their thirties and forties’, he wrote, ‘were in a position to judge the films for truthfulness... for the first time in cultural history a huge and historic sequence of events was narrated and represented not on the behalf of a powerful elite ... but on behalf of a whole population’.<sup>117</sup> At this early preproduction stage, it was unclear just how Pressburger would construct his narrative, but some cursory enquiries (before their departure to Argentina) had revealed that a handful of key naval officers involved in the incident, except Admiral Sir Henry Harwood, who had died in 1950, were living in England and available for interview upon their return.<sup>118</sup> This was a lucky advantage for Powell and Pressburger, because comprehensive secondary publications about the event, such as Dudley Pope’s *The*

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<sup>113</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, Heinemann, London, 1992, 259.

<sup>114</sup> Macdonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 352.

<sup>115</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, 261.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Fred Inglis, ‘National snapshots: Fixing the Past in English War Films’, in Ian MacKillop & Neil Sinyard, *British Cinema of the 1950s: A Celebration*, Manchester University Press, 2003, 39-40.

<sup>118</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, 261.



*Battle of the River Plate* and Gordon Landsborough's *The Battle of the River Plate: The First Naval Battle of the Second World War*, were still unreleased.<sup>119</sup>

Alongside this, due to the battle's position as fairly recent history, special permission was needed from the British Naval Admiralty to access official records.<sup>120</sup> This limited access to historical resources was startlingly different when considered alongside their last piece, *Colonel Blimp*, and other parameters surrounding *River Plate* – particularly its basis on real events, place in the public's living memory and primary characters still living – called for a different approach to research and writing. While archival material was reviewed, collecting oral histories, was the dominant research process that the filmmakers utilised and they began their endeavours (albeit in a light, cursory manner) during their trip to Argentina. There is little information available regarding The Archers' exploits during the Mar del Plata film festival. According to Macdonald, 'what with the receptions and fiestas there wasn't much time for real research, but the partners liked what they saw and decided to return in June for a more serious recce'.<sup>121</sup> This may have been the case for Pressburger but for Powell, this initial reconnaissance in Argentina was filled with enough groundwork and public interest to solidify the project in his mind, 'we looked up contemporary accounts and talked to the Admiralty ... and dug up quite a lot of people who knew about it.'<sup>122</sup>

Powell and Pressburger also went on an excursion to Montevideo (just across the Rio de La Plata estuary) and spoke to locals about the docking of the Graf Spee in their neutral harbour and its subsequent scuttling days later.<sup>123</sup> Their enquiries, even at this early casual stage, clearly demonstrate Pressburger's desire to understand events from a variety of different social and political standpoints. Regardless of the depth of their research (evidently perceived differently by both filmmakers), the tale of the Admiral *Graf Spee* and the battle of the River Plate contained

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<sup>119</sup> These publications were extensive and considered the parties involved, the battle's events, the resulting political stand-off in Montevideo and the final acts of Langsdorff. Either would have been useful to Pressburger; however, they were both published in 1956 – the same year as the film. It is unclear whether Powell or Pressburger had direct contact with either author but a letter (from Pope to Captain F.S Bell) in the BFI's *Michael Powell Collection* suggests that the filmmakers were made aware of Pope's work through Captain Bell.

<sup>120</sup> Dudley Pope mentioned this in his letter to Captain Bell, 'some months ago the Board of Admiralty granted me access to all necessary classified records in order to write a book on the Battle of the River Plate and the events leading up to it ... in return for access to all the documents I require, I submit the completed MS [manuscript]. For a security check'.

S-195, Dudley Pope, 'Letter to Captain F.S Bell', 27 September 1955, *Michael Powell Collection*, British Film Institute.

<sup>121</sup> MacDONald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 353.

<sup>122</sup> Ian Christie, 'Chronicle: The Battle of the River Plate', *Powell, Pressburger and Others*, BFI, London, 1978, 44.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

enough material to make a film that was more than a simple naval thriller. With this material in hand, The Archers decided to stop off in New York (upon their return to the UK) to pitch the idea to Twentieth-Century Fox.

This initial research on the historical events at River Plate and Montevideo produced enough confidence to secure tentative funding from Twentieth-Century Fox at this extremely early stage in preproduction. Powell and Pressburger's enthusiasm for the project won over Spyros Skouras, one of the prominent studio executives based in New York, and he forwarded them £5,000 for a finished script.<sup>124</sup> Within the context of the wider film catalogue of the 1950s, it was unlikely that the *River Plate* project would be rejected or opposed by significant bodies, i.e., financiers or the British Admiralty. The story was well suited to the contemporary war film genre and The Archers' 'maritime ballet' would easily stand alongside box office successes like *The Dam Busters* (1955), *The Colditz Story* (1955) or *Reach for the Sky* (1956).<sup>125</sup> It was an investment that showed promise and was sure to provide a return. Although Twentieth-Century Fox footed the bill at this early stage, their involvement in the project was short-lived and did not extend beyond this initial step.<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless, the £5,000 advance was enough to solidify the production of a script and The Archers keenly returned to England to begin collecting histories from the servicemen involved in the incident.

According to the accounts available, conducting interviews upon their return to England was a fairly straightforward affair that Powell described as 'calling spirits from the vasty deep'.<sup>127</sup> While officers Charles Woodhouse and F.S (Frederick Secker) 'Hookie' Bell provided their firsthand accounts and assured that they would assist throughout the production process, it was the retired Admiral Parry (Captain of the HMZS *Achilles* at the time of the event) that provided Pressburger's breakthrough.<sup>128</sup> According to Powell, Parry's account was somewhat dull and uninspiring; however, he provided some useful papers and an unassuming paperback by Patrick Dove, titled *I was Graf Spee's Prisoner*.<sup>129</sup> Powell recalled his partner's excitement at the time,

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Michael Powell, Roland Lacourbe & Danièle Grivel, 'Rediscovering Michael Powell', 1977 in David Lazar, *Michael Powell Interviews*, University Press of Mississippi, USA, 2003, 61.

<sup>126</sup> Macdonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 353.

<sup>127</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, 268.

<sup>128</sup> There are no complete records of these initial interviews; however, information from Powell and Pressburger's autobiographies/biographies, letters, notes and draft scripts from the BFI's collection, and credits in the final film's credit list indicate that these meetings took place. The presence of the officers at various moments within the production stage further supports the claim that Powell and Pressburger enlisted their help early on.

<sup>129</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, 267.

'Emeric pounced on this and pocketed it with every appearance of satisfaction, and I knew that he had found the clue that he had been waiting for'.<sup>130</sup> According to Ian Christie, this was the 'hook' that the story truly needed because it humanized the story in a way that no other resource had.<sup>131</sup> Thus far, The Archers had been able to talk to locals at Montevideo and the British officers involved, but they had no resources that could help to develop the narrative's German characters. As a campaigner for the 'Good German' in British cinema, Pressburger was determined to represent Captain Hans Langsdorff and the crew of the Admiral *Graf Spee* in a well-developed manner and by providing this crew with significant scenes that demonstrated their troubles, motivations, activities, and losses, Pressburger avoided the portrayal of simplistic Nazi villains on screen. To do this, he relied heavily on Patrick Dove's account, *I Was Graf Spee's Prisoner* (1940).

Dove's book was an account of his time as a PoW aboard the Admiral *Graf Spee* from November-December, 1939. Dove was a merchant seaman at the time of his capture and his vessel, the oil tanker MV *Africa Shell*, was intercepted, emptied of goods and crew, and destroyed by the *Graf Spee* off the East African coast.<sup>132</sup> While Dove's crew was allowed to head to shore, their Captain was taken aboard the German pocket battleship, but instead of harsh treatment and dire amenities, the seaman described a fairly cordial and polite welcome.<sup>133</sup> Over a short period Dove developed a tentative friendship with Captain Langsdorff that was founded through a mutual respect for naval tradition and protocol. This respect was a common theme throughout the book and Dove's observations often provided comparative reflections of Langsdorff's manner over time. For example, he made the following observation after the River Plate battle occurred:

Captain Langsdorf received me in the cabin I had grown to know so well.

I was shocked at the change in him. For a moment I could hardly believe that

it was the kindly, jocular, supremely confident Captain Langsdorf I had known

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Christie, *Arrows of Desire*, 75-76.

<sup>132</sup> Throughout Dove's memoir he spelt the Captain's name as 'Langsdorf'; however, multiple resources addressing the Admiral *Graf Spee*'s history, and the River Plate incident have listed it as 'Langsdorff'.

Patrick Dove, *I was Graf Spee's Prisoner*, A Cherry Tree Book, Withy Grove Press Limited, London & Manchester, 1940, 26-27.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, 28-35.

before ... But though his confidence and cheerfulness had both left him, his kindness and chivalry remained unquenched.<sup>134</sup>

Such insight was even more valuable to Pressburger because Langsdorff's decision to scuttle the Graf Spee at Montevideo, and his death only days later which was reported as a suicide, had effectively silenced wider discussions regarding his character in subsequent years. For developing the film's 'good German', Dove's account was thus essential.

To add to this, after some enquiries Powell and Pressburger learned that Patrick Dove was still living and resided in West Hampstead.<sup>135</sup> In typical Archers fashion, they went to visit him. The old Captain was, as Powell described him, 'a tall, massive man, with fine white hair' and a genuine interest in their project.<sup>136</sup> Initially interested in playing himself in the film, Powell and Pressburger quickly swayed Dove towards a consultancy position – for both the script and as an on-set advisor during the film's production stage. With the interviews well-underway and Pressburger's script beginning to take form, there was one other major issue that The Archers faced at this preproduction stage – how to shoot the action sequences at sea without relying too much on the standard studio tanks and model ships.

Powell's decision to shoot real ships on the water, 'I am rather prone to these Olympian decisions ... "We'll make all the movements of the ships at sea, otherwise it'll be just another naval thriller with model ships"'<sup>137</sup>, and Pressburger's subsequent support, 'I'm not going to have a lot of stupid models in our big, beautiful film', created a set of filming circumstances that were unique to the *River Plate* project.<sup>138</sup> In 1956 the techniques used to film scenes on the water were extremely limited, and the use of studio tank lots and model sequences was most common. This approach ensured that production stayed on site, it was cheaper than taking teams on-location shoots, and the environment was controllable. Furthermore, audience favourites, like *The Sea Hawk* (1940), *We Dive at Dawn* (1943) and *The Cruel Sea* (1952), relied on these techniques and audiences were well-accustomed to viewing naval sequences in this manner.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 140.

<sup>135</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, 268.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 614.

<sup>138</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, 269.

<sup>139</sup> David Parkinson, '10 Great Battleship and War-at-sea Films', British Film Institute, 10 August 2018, [online] date accessed 02/10/2018. < <https://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/lists/10-great-battle-sea-films>>.

In typical Powell and Pressburger style, this method was far too limited and uninspiring for their historical epic.

Requesting the assistance of the British Admiralty was the key to avoiding a studio tank lot and while it may sound like a daunting task, especially after the considerable troubles that The Archers had with the MoI and WO during *Colonel Blimp*, the Admiralty was extremely interested in the project and fairly accommodating. Powell and Pressburger were swiftly put in contact with the Admiralty's Director of Naval Information, Captain Arthur Wellesley Clarke<sup>140</sup>, who Powell described as a fairly 'unassuming' figure that soon proved to be a man of exceptional 'resourcefulness and imagination'.<sup>141</sup> Armed with their list of requirements for the film, Clarke quickly determined that their needs were too costly to accommodate in reality.<sup>142</sup> To counteract this disappointing news, he suggested that a skeleton film crew be kept on standby because ships would be practising maneuvers in the Mediterranean soon, which may provide the only opportunity for location shoots.<sup>143</sup> Furthermore, Clarke suggested that Powell directly write to the American Secretary of the Navy about finding a formidable stand-in for the Admiral *Graf Spee* – the USS *Salem* was, according to Clarke, the closest operating vessel that resembled the German pocket battleship.<sup>144</sup> While Powell's letter to the Americans is unaccounted for, it is important to note that the USS *Salem* was used in the film as a stand-in for the *Graf Spee*, so contact and an access agreement must have been made (likely after the British Admiralty greenlighted the production team's presence on-board their vessels in 1955).

With these processes in motion, Powell and Pressburger continued to develop the *River Plate* script and tentatively gathered the appropriate production teams together (consultants through interviews and the skeleton film crew for location shoots), but due to the 'stand-by' status advised by the Admiralty, the completion of Pressburger's first draft coincided with the call for Powell to begin his shoots in the Mediterranean.<sup>145</sup> This sudden start to filming abruptly ended the preproduction period for *River Plate* and swiftly kick-started the production process.

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<sup>140</sup> Captain Clarke was also the acting liaison for author Dudley Pope, who, as previously mentioned, was in the process of writing an outline and analysis of the events at River Plate for the public. Pope explicitly named him in his letter to Captain F.S. Bell.

S-195, Dudley Pope, 'Letter to Captain F.S. Bell', 27 September 1955, *Michael Powell Collection*, British Film Institute.

<sup>141</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, 281.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 268-271.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> Macdonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 357.

As the first Powell and Pressburger film based on real events and individuals, it's critical timing in their catalogue, and as one of their largest productions since *The Tales of Hoffmann* (1951), it was incredibly important for The Archers to do their utmost with the *River Plate* story. It was a wartime adventure that could result in another commercial success, but there were creative conditions that were specific to this story. The most predominant limitation was shaped by the subject's position as a real-life event and its lingering presence in recent public memory. As mentioned above by Fred Inglis, war films made throughout the 1950s (particularly in Britain) had to take some care in their representations because audiences were able to critically assess the 'truthfulness' of represented events due to their own lived experiences.<sup>146</sup> Therefore, The Archers' signature artistic flair had to be dialed back, and approaches that were used to develop previous fictional figures, like *Colonel Blimp's* characters, were put aside to make way for a more factual style of storytelling.

Creating a script that produced an authentic representation of events was critical to the project, and at this preproduction stage, it is evident that, as a scriptwriter, Pressburger was quite proactive when gathering historical accounts. Regarding his historical research, collecting oral histories was one of the few options available to the scriptwriter, which differed greatly from the resource-rich atmosphere surrounding *Colonel Blimp*. Despite these limitations, The Archers' efforts to establish an authentic and truthful account (as factual as cinema could allow) were high and involved many conversations with multiple representatives from military, political and public groups. Collating and supporting these viewpoints required careful writing on Pressburger's part, especially since oral histories run the risk of being actively manipulated or simply misremembered, but Powell's directorial decisions played a major role here too. In particular, his choice (supported by Pressburger) to appeal to the Admiralty for a chance to shoot at sea effectively changed the style of the film. Instead of the common and somewhat unrealistic movements of model ships, the atmospheric quality that could be produced by actual battleships would create a unique authenticity effect for the picture and help it to stand-out within the wider British cinematic catalogue at the time.

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<sup>146</sup> Inglis, 'National snapshots: Fixing the Past', 39-40.

### *Conclusions on the Preproduction Phase*

This chapter has highlighted how the authenticity of a historically based film cannot be considered with a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. Too many variables dictate how and why a film is made, which further influences the level of authenticity that a filmmaker can adopt when initially approaching their projects. At this preproduction stage, filmmakers need to establish the foundations of their projects and plan for the historical information/effects they wish to use – in both their distributional functions (narrative and character functions) and the integrational functions (descriptions/instructions for the *mise en scène*). Without developing historical signifiers at this time, filmmakers will struggle to integrate details later, and missing information will create communication problems amongst production teams at a later stage. For researchers, considering this phase of a film's lifecycle is important when analysing its historiophoty, because it signals the filmmakers' intentions and efforts, and provides an opportunity to see how their approach was influenced by industrial and social contexts.

For *The Archers*, the parameters constantly shifted and each of the historical films considered here – all based during periods of international conflict – approached authenticity differently. Their first picture together, *The Spy in Black*, was an adaptation of Storer Clouston's 1917 spy novel (of the same title) and the historical representation of the novel's era was largely ignored. Alexander Korda, the film's primary producer and head of London Films, was not interested in producing a luscious historical film – he simply needed a project that was worthy of his German star Conrad Veidt. After receiving a disappointing script from Roland Pertwee, Korda enlisted the then-unknown Emeric Pressburger to prepare a new version. Pressburger worked hard to create a script that transformed the novel's original themes and motifs appropriately for cinema and created roles that showcased the talents of Conrad Veidt and one of the studio's rising stars, Valerie Hobson. The new take on Clouston's story immediately won over Michael Powell, a skilled but newly established director within the British industry, and Korda quickly solidified their partnership for the project. Due to their newly established relationship, their lower positions within the wider industry, and Korda's disinterest in making a lush historical piece, it is unsurprising that the authenticity effects present in *The Spy in Black* were not focused on producing an immersive Great War setting. Pressburger did make some token references towards the 1917 setting, but no developed scene descriptions were present in his skeleton script, which further supports the claim that historiophoty was not their goal at the time.

In comparison, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* was driven by military tradition and Pressburger was able to indulge his inner historian when constructing Colonel Clive Wynne-Candy's (fictional) biography. Candy's life revolved around three primary themes, i.e., the development of Blimperry through traditionalism, the existence of honourable good Germans, and the ever-changing nature of women's roles, and each was underpinned by historical data. Pressburger demonstrated his active approach towards historical research through his visits to the British Museum and subsequent compilation of research papers, his source searching at home and the employment of a research assistant. His efforts and selective processes added an extra layer of historiophoty to the film's narrative but outside influences threatened the project – regardless of its informed treatment of British military history. The Archers' focus on Blimperry and the dangers of outdated mindsets within the Army's highest ranks irritated ministers at the War Office and the Ministry of Information, and their rejection meant that limited funding and industry resources (film stock, vehicles, location access and cast/crew) were withheld. Luckily, Powell and Pressburger's ideas, reputation, and previous successes secured support from Britain's newest cinema mogul, J. Arthur Rank. His enthusiasm and generosity ensured that The Archers could commit significant time and energy towards their historically rich, and poignant, narrative about Blimperry in Great Britain.

After *Colonel Blimp* Powell and Pressburger moved away from historically set war films and concentrated on their passion for Britishness, ballet, opera, and drama. Films like *The Red Shoes* and *Black Narcissus* were popular with audiences and garnered critical acclaim; however, due to a series of mediocre pieces, like *The Elusive Pimpernel*, Powell and Pressburger found themselves in a slump during the 1950s. By chance, the invitation to Argentina's Mar del Plata film festival led them to the story of the 1939 River Plate battle and subsequent pursuit of the Admiral *Graf Spee* to Montevideo's harbour. After conducting a series of interviews and measuring public interest The Archers were convinced that this story was the key to their creative slump. Upon their return to England, Powell and Pressburger immediately began their research, but the processes differed from those employed over a decade earlier (*Colonel Blimp*). River Plate's position as a real event, within the scope of public memory, and with involved individuals still living, limited the creative and artistic boundaries that The Archers were renowned for. Nevertheless, this did not mean that they could skip steps within this preproduction stage. Due to limited secondary publications and restricted access to official records, Pressburger relied on the oral histories of key individuals from the incident, i.e., F.S Bell, Parry, Woodhouse, and Dove.



Furthermore, the support of the British Admiralty eased concerns regarding Powell's location shoots and this, alongside Pressburger's research and writing, guaranteed that *The Battle of the River Plate* would be a serious historical feature film that was underpinned by historical data and focused on authenticity.

As demonstrated above, Powell and Pressburger's interest in history could not always shine through in their projects; however, when they could represent the past in a detailed manner, they worked hard to embed information and effects in a manner that would bolster their pictures' authenticity (whether contemporary or historically based) during this preproduction phase. As the scriptwriting half of The Archers' partnership, Pressburger dominated the creative side of this period, while Powell (predominantly) liaised with various stakeholders such as studio heads, financiers, actors, and production crew. The work was essential and created a vision that both men, Powell in particular, could rely upon during later production stages. Without this groundwork, incorporating historical details into a film's distributional (narrative) and integrational (*mise en scène*) functions would have been a time consuming and risky endeavour.

## Chapter Two: Production: When Ideas are Realised

In 2007 the New Film History school of thought encouraged historians to consider 'the struggles which took place during a film's production' alongside the content that appeared on screen.<sup>1</sup> This assessment, they argued, would provide extra insight into the filmmakers' practices and help to determine how their agency, which was affected by industry parameters and wider social trends, shaped the content that emerged in the final product.<sup>2</sup> During this period the initial plans laid down in the preproduction phase can be altered by a variety of factors, such as budget restrictions, desired cast/crew availability, accessibility to equipment or an inability to shoot on location.

In regard to authenticity effects, changes at this stage can influence their representations of historical or contemporary settings. This may work in the picture's favour, or it may cause issues regarding style, believability, and continuity, ultimately affecting viewer experience and immersion. Considering the processes used at this stage provides researchers with a more detailed account of a film's construction and prompts questions beyond 'what was factually correct?'. Further investigation of the production period creates an opportunity to also consider 'how?' and 'why?' particular authenticity effects were used and constructed and provides insight into the filmmakers' processes. Providing this platform allows new filmmakers, researchers, educators, students, and audience members to further interrogate a picture's historiophoty and think critically about how it came to be, as well as what it represents. This task may be difficult due to incomplete or scattered records surrounding production periods, which are often the result of communication issues between the studios' complex web of production heads and their teams.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, examinations of this lifecycle stage can help to expand discussions regarding the construction of history on screen and the genre's development over the decades.

The fluidity of Powell and Pressburger's production periods depended on a series of factors and differed significantly from project to project. Whether it was casting issues, tensions between actors, problems between investing studios, the government, or creative teams, The

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<sup>1</sup> Chapman, Glancy & Harper, *The New Film History: Sources, Methods and Approaches*, 69-70.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Steven Bernstein, *Film Production*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Focal Press, 1994, xii.

Archers navigated their way through a variety of scenarios in order to complete their pictures. While some issues contradicted general elements of their preproduction plans and altered some themes/tones, others changed how authenticity effects were incorporated and used when representing the past. The following section will consider how various cast and crew, alongside Powell and Pressburger, brought their initial visions to life and overcame any obstacles that emerged along the way. Many individuals discussed in this section are relatively unknown; however, their experiences and contributions were integral to the pictures' construction and should be further incorporated into The Archers' history.

### *The Fairly Smooth Production of 'The Spy in Black'*

When considered alongside Powell and Pressburger's later films, *The Spy in Black's* production period was relatively problem-free for the filmmakers. Though it was their first collaborative project, the pair demonstrated an uncanny ability to work together and managed to overcome filming issues (particularly regarding location shoots), convince the production team leaders of their preferred settings/style, and create an enjoyable and smoothly executed shooting schedule for cast and crew. The accounts of this filmmaking stage – gathered from various biographies and autobiographies – describe an easy production period with only one problematic exception, Irving Asher.

As discussed in the preproduction chapter, as the secondary producer of *The Spy in Black* and as an established filmmaker in Britain (regardless of his reputation for limited creativity), Irving Asher was in a position where he could easily interrupt the production plans developed by Powell and Pressburger. His negative interference had already occurred in the preproduction stage and this earlier incident likely created a lingering animosity for the rest of the project. Previously, Asher had complained to Korda about the extra expenditure for Pressburger's hire and championed his preferred writer, Roland Pertwee, over the unknown Hungarian, but Korda's decision to support Pressburger's new narrative and Powell's enthusiasm towards it swiftly quashed Asher's arguments.<sup>4</sup> Within this stage of the project's lifecycle Asher was unable to object to Pressburger's work and presence, instead, he focused on cost-cutting and Powell's (expensive) yearning to shoot on location in the Orkney Islands.

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<sup>4</sup> Kulik, *Alexander Korda*, 217.

In later years, it became clear that location shooting was a significant part of Powell's directorial style but even his first major project, *The Edge of the World* (1937), demonstrated this passion. Shot predominantly on Scotland's isolated Foula island with available cast members, Powell's scenes for *The Edge of the World* captured the beauty of the area and amplified the ruthlessness of nature in such a remote place. The shots captured on location acted as authenticity effects (geared towards ambience, rather than historical representation) that projected an atmosphere that could never be captured in the studio. When *The Spy in Black* project presented itself, Powell saw it as an opportunity to return to Scotland with his cast and crew, but Asher quickly objected to such plans. According to Pressburger's biography, 'Michael was desperate to get away on location and was endlessly promising Hobson and Veidt that they would do exteriors on Orkney'; however, Asher was tight with the film's budget and refused the expedition.<sup>5</sup> Denying this excursion was a sound response from an economical point of view. According to filmmaker Steven Bernstein, location shoots have running costs that are already catered for, or entirely absent, in an enclosed studio setting. They include crew transportation, translation and location specialists, the housing and feeding of cast/crew, equipment storage costs, and communication support.<sup>6</sup> When considering the remoteness of the Orkney Islands and the limited access/transportations available, it is unsurprising that Asher wanted to avoid such costs.

It soon became clear that neither Powell nor Asher were willing to give up on their schemes and Alexander Korda eventually stepped in to resolve the issue and kick-start production. The Hungarian studio head had a known talent for persuasion and in the end, a compromise was made – Powell would venture to the Orkney Islands with a skeleton camera crew to gather exterior shots only, the rest of the filming would occur on the studio lot.<sup>7</sup> Unable to do little else, Powell gathered his team and headed to Scotland. Three men accompanied him:

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<sup>5</sup> Macdonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 150.

<sup>6</sup> Bernstein, *Film Production*, 272-73.

<sup>7</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 309.

camera operator Bill Paton<sup>8</sup>, burgeoning director and secondary camera operator Vernon Sewell<sup>9</sup>, and Sewell's 'right arm' and general film assistant Buddy Farr.<sup>10</sup>

Upon their arrival in the Orkney's Powell learnt that the original *Spy in Black* author, Storer Clouston, was alive and well, and could be found in his small home just outside of Kirkwall.<sup>11</sup> Unable to pass up the opportunity to meet an author that he admired, Powell decided that they would visit. His approach was somewhat unorthodox and he admitted in his autobiography that he, along with his companions, introduced themselves to Clouston by effectively 'marching up to his front door, demanding a cup of tea'.<sup>12</sup> This technique, he assured his readers, had two advantages: firstly, that it 'puts your host under an obligation to you for assuming his hospitality', and secondly, 'you get a cup of tea'.<sup>13</sup> Their unexpected arrival was not unwelcome though. Clouston and his wife were unaware of the studio's decision to green-light the adaptation and Powell utilised the author's enthusiasm to ask about the local area.<sup>14</sup> Although born in Cumberland, Clouston's ancestral ties to the Orkneys, as well as his wife's familial links to the area, encouraged his relocation to Smoogro House (Kirkwall) in 1903 and he proved to be a valuable, and knowledgeable, member of the community there.<sup>15</sup> For Powell, Clouston's understanding of local geography and history would have been invaluable and it could be said that the author was one of the first consultants, in an informal context, that Powell (and later Pressburger) called upon. Although the *Black* picture was not concerned with creating a

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<sup>8</sup> Bill Paton is an elusive figure and is mentioned only briefly in Powell's accounts. Even the extensive records from the British Film Institute fall short with Paton's history. They provide only one listing in his filmography, '1950: The Elusive Pimpernel [Personal Assistant to Mr. Powell]'. This suggests that Paton's work within the industry was part of an everyday routine, hence the gap in history, and it is likely that he simply became a reliable figure for Powell. British Film Institute, 'Bill Paton: Filmography', *Films, TV and People Index*, [online], date accessed: 10/01/2020. <<https://www2.bfi.org.uk/films-tv-people/4ce2bcb75d454>>.

<sup>9</sup> Like Powell, Sewell was a burgeoning filmmaker at this time. He had directed a small number of documentary films, i.e., *Facts and Figures* (1935) and *Men Against the Sea* (1936) and was part of the production personnel on Powell's first major project *The Edge of the World* (1937). According to the BFI's index, Sewell was an active filmmaker in the British industry until 1972. British Film Institute, 'Vernon Sewell: Filmography', *Films, TV and People Index*, [online], date accessed: 10/01/2020, <<https://www2.bfi.org.uk/films-tv-people/4ce2b9ef16c94>>.

<sup>10</sup> Apart from in Powell's anecdotes and reflections, Buddy Farr is an unknown figure within the history of the industry.

<sup>11</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 309.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Obituary Column, 'Scots Novelist: Mr J. Storer Clouston: Historian & Playwright', *The Scotsman*, Scotland, 24 June 1944; Dusty (Orkney Archival Staff Member), 'J. Storer Clouston - Treasurer of Heart and Mind', Orkney Archive, [online], date accessed: 22/04/2020, <<http://orkneyarchive.blogspot.com/2017/11/j-storer-clouston-treasurer-of-heart.html>>.

historical setting, Powell's interest in authentically capturing a location's ambience (especially within such an ancient, remote rural setting) motivated his actions during this production stage.

This desire to capture the local atmosphere was also a detail that Powell openly shared with the local press, who were interested to understand what the British filmmaker was doing on the island. In particular, the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* followed his excursion to the island of Hoy and a correspondent interviewed him over the telephone.<sup>16</sup> Powell explained that he was looking for landscapes that would 'produce the proper atmosphere' for his new film.<sup>17</sup> Days later, the newspaper printed a follow-up piece reporting on his visit to Clouston's home and, again, he provided them with a short interview. Powell described the residence as 'delightful' and was particularly excited about his time spent in the place where Clouston penned the story – 'the room in which the spy was shot'.<sup>18</sup> Powell also added that they would model some of the studio sets on these rooms and that, overall, his trip had been successful.<sup>19</sup> With this short reconnaissance complete, Powell, Sewell and Farr returned to Korda's studios.

Constructing the unique Orkney Island's architecture within a confined studio space was a task reserved primarily for Vincent Korda, Alexander Korda's youngest brother and one of the studio's most prominent art directors, and the renowned matte artist Walter Percy Day. Vincent was a somewhat Bohemian artist, especially when compared to his eldest brother, and he quickly became an 'ally in an unexpected quarter' during *Black's* production stage.<sup>20</sup> After his return from the Orkneys, Powell was concerned about the studio's penchant for recycling and repurposing old sets. Regarding Denham's catalogue, this meant that their library was filled with tidy 'English' designs (predominantly Tudor and Georgian themes) that barely resembled the stark, compact, and weathered cottages found in Scotland.<sup>21</sup> According to Powell, Vincent understood his concerns and willingly threw away 'stock doors and windows' in order to make way for an entirely new set that properly represented the Orkney's impoverished, dingy, tiny roomed houses (despite the extra costs to the studio).<sup>22</sup> To create such structures he relied on a variety of reference materials; however, he was not alone in his artistic endeavours.

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<sup>16</sup> Unknown, 'Orkney Setting for Spy Film', *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, Scotland, 19 October 1938.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Unknown, 'The Spy in Black Gets Film: Mr. Powell gets Orkney Atmosphere', *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, Scotland, 21 October 1938.

<sup>19</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 309.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 312.

While Vincent was tasked with the construction of the physical sets within Denham's lot, special effects technician and matte artist Walter Percy Day (known colloquially as 'Poppa Day') began producing the glass plate matte paintings that were needed to depict the Orkney landscapes that Powell could not collect. Day had been a fixture at Denham since the studio's inception and had garnered a reputation as one of the 'best trick men in the business', and a 'matte painting wizard', through his work in popular films like *The Private Lives of Henry VIII* (1933) and *Things to Come* (1936).<sup>23</sup> Matte artists were an integral part of the filmmaking process and were employed in great numbers up until the late 1990s (when digital technologies dramatically improved and began replacing traditional practices). These artists provided the 'fill in' details for wider scenescapes, which, on-screen, created the illusion of immense depth and space. Working predominantly with paints or pastels, these scenescapes were created using large glass panels that were integrated into shots alongside live-action footage. Like Vincent, Day was absent from Powell's Orkney expedition and relied on external reference materials to create his scenescapes. Together, he and Vincent discussed the area with Powell and viewed the footage he collected, and examined independent photographs of Scottish manses, crofts, and the wider region during WWI.<sup>24</sup> Together they produced Stromness and filled the Flow with a British Fleet, all whilst adhering to Powell's desire to recreate the region as authentically as possible. This prevented the film from looking 'too English', one of Powell's primary concerns during this production stage, and greatly assisted with the film's ambience through the encapsulation of the Orkney's unique architecture and harsh, isolated landscape.

With so many individuals involved in the filmmaking process, it is unsurprising that the healthiness of working relationships is integral to the quality of the scenes collected and the 'smooth operation' of a film's lifecycle. Throughout cinema's history, there have been infamous examples of creative clashes or tense and abusive relationships within the industry. For example,

- Bette Davis and Errol Flynn were notoriously difficult on the sets of *The Sisters* (1938) and *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* (1939) due to their duelling egos,<sup>25</sup>
- Ernest Hemingway was openly condescending about the filmmakers that

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<sup>23</sup> Mark Cotta Vaz & Craig Barron, *The Invisible Art: The Legends of Movie Matte Painting*, Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 2002, 70.

<sup>24</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 312.

<sup>25</sup> Alan K. Rhode, *Michael Curtiz: A Life in Film*, University Press of Kentucky, USA, 2017, 211.

adapted his work and the actors involved (despite personally approving the projects, i.e., *The Sun Also Rises*),<sup>26</sup>

- Alfred Hitchcock dismissed the top-billed screenwriter Raymond Chandler after disagreements regarding the development of *Strangers on a Train* (1951),<sup>27</sup>
- Pamela Travers, the author of *Mary Poppins*, rejected Walt Disney's offers for a movie deal for nearly twenty years before conceding (with great reluctance and condescension).<sup>28</sup>

The list above contains just a few prominent examples from the decades that Powell and Pressburger were active, and, like many filmmakers, they had their fair share of disagreements onset throughout their careers. On this first project together, they were fairly fortunate though. As mentioned previously, on the one hand, interruptions/complaints from Asher were a primary concern; while on the other hand, the remaining cast and crew were enthusiastic to create the filmmakers' preproduction visions. This was particularly evident in the picture's leading stars, Conrad Veidt and Valerie Hobson.

Although Hobson and Veidt were unable to accompany Powell on his trip to Scotland they remained enthusiastic about the project and, according to Macdonald, their attitudes created an exceedingly positive atmosphere on set when filming began in November 1938.<sup>29</sup> Their rehearsal period (at 'the old house') likely added to this energy and Powell was ecstatic at the dynamic chemistry that they produced for the screen. Veidt lived up to his reputation as an industry legend and cut a fine, mysterious, and imposing figure in Vincent Korda's claustrophobic, Orkney-esque 'doll house'.<sup>30</sup> Alongside him, Hobson delivered a high-quality performance that impressed seasoned editors, like Teddington Studios' Jerry Jackson, who claimed that she was more beautiful and captivating than ever before.<sup>31</sup> This enthusiasm may have spread throughout the crewmembers on set but it did not reach Irving Asher, who was still intent on altering the film to suit his style.

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<sup>26</sup> Debra A. Modellmog & Suzanne del Gizzo, *Ernest Hemingway in Context*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2012, 80-81.

<sup>27</sup> Donald Spoto, *The Dark Side of Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1984, 344-345.

<sup>28</sup> Sharyn Pearce, 'The Business of Myth-Making: Mary Poppins, P.L Travers and the Disney Effect', *Queensland Review*, vol. 22, no. 1, 66.

<sup>29</sup> Macdonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 149.

<sup>30</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 313.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 314.



By this stage in the production process, Powell and Pressburger's project was well underway, and it is evident that there was a clear commitment from the cast and crew to create an atmospheric, Orkney based spy thriller. The novel's original historical setting had effectively been cast aside and efforts to authentically replicate the Scottish Isles and develop believable interactions between characters had become the primary focus. Despite the team's productivity, Irving Asher still inserted himself into the production process in an attempt to leave his mark on the film, but his interruptions were not welcome.

Alexander Korda had done his best to distract Asher and had given him the *Q-Planes* (1939) project in an attempt to reduce his interactions with Powell and Pressburger, thus providing creative freedoms for the burgeoning filmmakers.<sup>32</sup> This had worked to an extent, but Asher was tenacious and managed to make a nuisance of himself on set and in the editing room. According to Pressburger's biographer, Asher 'ignored Emeric whenever possible and fought constantly with Michael', so much so that he even entertained the idea of removing Powell from the picture completely.<sup>33</sup> Jerry Jackson (editor, producer and Asher's successor at Warner Brothers' Teddington Studios<sup>34</sup>), had dissuaded him from pursuing the idea and only shared the information with Powell after the film's completion.<sup>35</sup> Jackson had admitted that Asher had consulted him about the daily cuttings because he could not understand Powell's abundance of close-ups, strangely angled shots, and his significant lack of master shots.<sup>36</sup>

This incident reveals further creative differences between Powell and Asher's filmmaking processes. Over the years, Powell has made it abundantly clear, both in his work and within interviews/publications, that he has always had an aversion to the over-reliance of master shots.<sup>37</sup> 'I detest master shots,' he wrote in *A Life in Movies*, 'they're a waste of time and money. They are just an excuse for a director to make up his own mind about how he is actually going to

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<sup>32</sup> Macdonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 151-152.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Unknown, 'Irving Asher Out, Jerry Jackson in as WB English Production Head', *Variety*, USA, 23 March 1938.

<sup>35</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 313.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 314.

<sup>37</sup> In cinema 'master shots' are long camera shots that capture an entire scene's sequence, including all the action and individuals involved, in a single angled take. They often double as the establishing/first shot of a film and introductory dialogue or on-screen text is usually present to create extra narrative context for the audience. Since the 1920s filmmakers had been experimenting with the composition of shots and expression in their work, i.e., *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920); however, due to the large amount of theatre trained professionals in the industry (especially in Britain) master shots were commonly used throughout films. This is one of the reasons why many productions from this early period seem exceptionally staged to the modern eye – in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we are accustomed to an array of styles and angles, i.e., extreme close-ups, that work to create depth and an emotional response to characters and events.

tell the sequence that morning'.<sup>38</sup> This comment is clear in its assertion that the over-employment of master shots was a product of thoughtless or lazy filmmaking and his inclusion of Asher when discussing such techniques, i.e., 'Irving was used to seeing master shots', was a direct criticism on the producer's creative abilities.<sup>39</sup> Despite their differences and disagreements, Powell was able to collect the footage he needed over the picture's five-week filming schedule and left it in the cutting room with Asher and editor Hugh Stewart.

By the time the editing process was underway, Powell's contract with the studio had reached its end and had not been renewed due to Korda's economical struggles. After the success of *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933), the Government convinced a British insurance firm, Prudential Assurance Company, to invest in Korda and the national film industry, which provided him with the funds to build Denham and London Films Productions.<sup>40</sup> By 1938 Korda's long list of expenses, incomplete or failed projects, and unconventional financial practices at Denham had overtaken the studio's ability to create a financial return for investors and despite the popularity of picture's like *The Ghost Goes West* (1935) and *Things to Come* (1936) there was no chance of financial recovery.<sup>41</sup> The Prudential Assurance Company removed Korda by the end of 1938, after the amount owed passed £1,000,000<sup>42</sup>, and artists like Powell were 'dropped at the end of the year'.<sup>43</sup>

Even though Powell was officially finished with the project he still managed to have input into the picture's cutting and editing stage. In his autobiography he claimed that he was 'perfectly content to leave it in the hands of Irving Asher and Hugh Stewart' and that he could 'trust them to do a good piece of finishing and presentation'; however, Powell provided Stewart with a twenty-three-page letter detailing some concerns and suggestions for this stage, which somewhat betrays the comments regarding his confidence in their judgement.<sup>44</sup> Stewart, despite his youth, had developed a decent reputation within the industry and had worked under prominent directors, such as Alfred Hitchcock and Victor Saville, in both Gaumont-British and Denham Studios.<sup>45</sup> Later in life, he would become known for his work in the No. 5 Army Film and

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<sup>38</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 314.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Michael Korda, *Charmed Lives: A Family Romance*, Allen Lane, London, 1979, 106.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 127.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 315.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Brian McFarlane, 'Hugh Stewart', *The Encyclopedia of British Film*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Methuen, 2005, 673.

Photographic Unit, the unit responsible for capturing some of the earliest footage of WWII's newly liberated concentration camps, but at this early stage, he was simply a talent found through the studio's internship scheme.<sup>46</sup> It is difficult to determine whether Stewart followed Powell's instructions – the document no longer exists – but the director's general acceptance and happiness of the final product, as well as Pressburger's contentment, suggests that he may have.

*The Spy in Black's* production period ran fairly smoothly but some issues emerged that required Powell and Pressburger to change their initial preproduction plans. The most prominent change, prompted by Irving Asher, affected Powell's ability to shoot on location. The burgeoning director had planned to transport the entire cast and crew to Scotland for filming, as he had done for his earlier feature *The Edge of the World*, but Asher denied the expedition due to its cost. Instead, Powell was only allowed a short trip, with a small team, to gather the necessary exterior shots he desired. He had made it clear that his goal was to capture the landscapes in a way that would highlight their natural ambience, especially in regard to the overwhelming notions of isolation and danger that were evoked by the harsh elements. He concluded that this style would work best alongside Pressburger's reconstructed narrative. In an effort to understand the area more fully Powell casually consulted the story's original author, Clouston, who lived in the area.

When returning to the studio Powell pitched his ideas and voiced his concerns to the film's design team, Vincent Korda and Walter Percy Day, and both men agreed to avoid the studio's 'too English' sets and opted to create Powell's Orkney-esque setting. As a result, when filming began Veidt transformed into a dark, intimidating figure and Hobson became a transfixing presence within these dingy, claustrophobic style settings. At the same time, Asher was still trying to insert himself into the film's production process but his attempts to make more major changes were ultimately futile. He became the producer in name but ultimately failed to leave a creative mark on Powell and Pressburger's first project together. This collection of issues demonstrates how there are many different problems, both positive and negative, that can influence the production period of a film. At times, these issues require the filmmakers to adjust their original preproduction plans. Powell had to rely on a series of authenticity effects, i.e., the

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<sup>46</sup> Obituaries, 'Hugh Stewart', *The Telegraph*, 29 June 2011, [online], date accessed: 03/09/2020, <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/culture-obituaries/film-obituaries/8606935/Hugh-Stewart.html>>.

insertion of location footage amongst replicated Scottish cottages, to create the intimidating ambience that the isolated location naturally produced.

This picture was not focused on reproducing the novel's original Great War setting. Due to time, money, and position in the industry, Pressburger had avoided a rich historical setting in his rewrites and Powell had further dismissed it by focusing on the authentic representation of the Orkney Island/Scapa Flow setting. While *The Spy in Black* had some indicators for the Great War setting, there was very little effort towards truly developing or expanding upon it. Their next feature containing historical elements, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, was a very different matter.

#### *Difficult times for 'The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp'*

When discussing *Colonel Blimp* many publications focus primarily on Churchill's disdain for the project and the controversy that this caused, which often overshadows the efforts of the film's other stakeholders, i.e., production team members, the cast, external investors.<sup>47</sup> As demonstrated in the discussion above, the production period of a picture can be fraught with issues – some foreseen, others surprising – which prompt filmmakers to alter initial preproduction plans and tailor their schedules or techniques whilst shooting. The production period of *Colonel Blimp* was fraught with issues, but many had emerged during the preproduction phase, like that lack of ministerial support and the money/resources that were entailed with it, so The Archers were prepared for challenges. Throughout the production stage, the team faced issues regarding the lingering threat of shutdown by Churchill and his ministers, correcting errors highlighted by advisors, their first application of Technicolor, casting changes, sourcing equipment and material, and internal disputes between production team members. Despite these issues, Powell and Pressburger endeavoured to adhere to their plans to create an authentic contemporary and historical *Colonel Blimp* picture.

During the preproduction stage of this picture, Powell and Pressburger were told that their plan would inevitably draw Churchill's ire if it was made. As previously discussed, they considered this warning seriously before obtaining funding and green-lighting production and were aware of the consequences of continuing (no MoI and WO support). As production

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<sup>47</sup> Most notably: Ian Christie's, *Arrows of Desire* and *Powell and Pressburger: The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, mentioned previously.

increased and the shooting schedule began in earnest in September there had been some issues; however, Churchill's anger towards the project was kept relatively quiet.

Unbeknownst to the filmmakers, the film had been brought to Churchill's attention and was serious enough to be discussed in War Cabinet meetings and confidential correspondence.<sup>48</sup> On September 10<sup>th</sup> Churchill sent a personal minute to Bracken, the Minister of Information and Beddington's superior, demanding to know the filmmaker's behind 'this foolish production'.<sup>49</sup> Bracken's response was swift, immediately naming Archer Films Limited (The Archers) and the project's financier J. Arthur Rank.<sup>50</sup> He then described the Ministry's interactions with the filmmakers, 'we have been unsuccessful in discouraging it by the only means open to use: that is, by withholding Government facilities for its production' and suggested that a personal signal from Churchill may result in their desired shutdown.<sup>51</sup>

If you or the War Office were to let it be known to Mr. Rank that it is your wish that the film should be dropped, I feel sure that it would be dropped.

But I do not think that any approach of this kind to Rank should come from the Ministry of Information. As the Departments responsible for censorship, the Ministry is liable to be suspected of abusing its censorship powers and requests from us frequently meet with a resistance which they could not encounter if made by a Department that has no connexion with Censorship.<sup>52</sup>

Bracken's suggestion encouraged Churchill to take the matter to the War Cabinet but when put forward the ministers could not unanimously agree to an outright ban on the picture. In the minutes for the September 21<sup>st</sup> meeting, it was recorded that there were 'no existing Defence

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<sup>48</sup> This was not discovered until Ian Christie accessed the previously sealed records in the late 1970s and brought it to the forefront of the discourse surrounding Powell and Pressburger's work. See Christie's, 'The Colonel Blimp File', *Sight and Sound* 48, no. 1, London, 1978-79, 13-14, as well as the previously noted *Arrows of Desire* and *Powell and Pressburger: The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*.

<sup>49</sup> Prem 4/14/15, Winston Churchill, 'Prime Minister's Personal Minute 357/2: The *Blimp* Film', 10 September 1942, *The National Archives*, Kew: London.

<sup>50</sup> Prem 4/14/15 Brendan Bracken, 'Response to Minute 357/2: The Colonel Blimp Film', 15 September 1942, *The National Archives*, Kew: London.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

Regulation under which the film could be suppressed' and that the 'Minister of Information was averse from taking the very wide powers which would be necessary to stop this film'.<sup>53</sup> This second notation further suggests that Bracken – without legislature/regulatory support – did not want to be seen to be abusing his right to censor material.

Without regulatory support, there were few pathways left that could result in *Colonel Blimp's* complete shutdown, but Churchill also resorted to off-the-record forms of intimidation in an attempt to stop production/release. Macdonald provides some explanation regarding how Powell and Pressburger were made aware of Churchill's displeasure during this production phase (Beddington had warned them, but knowledge of confidential cabinet meetings and ministerial correspondence was far beyond The Archers' circle of casual informants).<sup>54</sup> The incident occurred whilst the shooting was underway and involved The Archers' resident 'good German' Anton Walbrook, and a frustrated Churchill. During this period, Walbrook was also working on the West End in the evenings, starring in Lillian Hellman's popular anti-fascist, American set drama *Watch on the Rhine* (which ran in London for almost seven months with approximately 674 performances).<sup>55</sup> He was a familiar German figure in Britain and had gained significant fame after portraying Prince Albert in Herbert Wilcox's Queen Victoria costume dramas/biopics, which prompted further work in film and demand on theatre stages. He was easily identifiable and his requirements at the theatre made his timetable fairly predictable, Churchill used this information. According to an obituary in *Weltwoche* magazine<sup>56</sup> during one interval Churchill barged into Walbrook's dressing room and berated the actor for his role in *Colonel Blimp*, asking whether he thought it was 'good propaganda for Britain?' to be involved with such a project. According to the report, Walbrook had reacted coolly, 'No people in the world other than the English would have the courage, in the midst of war, to tell people such an unvarnished truth'.<sup>57</sup> If true, the encounter demonstrates how Churchill was incensed enough to seek outcast members in an attempt to hinder production – a possible route after the War Office and Ministry of Information had already attempted to sway The Archers and Rank. Overall, attracting

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<sup>53</sup> Prem 4/14/15, War Cabinet Minutes, 'Film of "Colonel Blimp"', 21 September 1942, *The National Archives*, Kew: London.

<sup>54</sup> Curt Reiss, 'The Last Charmer: The Eight Careers of Adolph Wohlbrueck', *Weltwoche*, 21 February 1964 in Macdonald's *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 442.

<sup>55</sup> J.P Wearing, *The London Stage 1940-1949: A Calendar of Production, Performers, and Personnel*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham: Maryland, 2014, 70.

<sup>56</sup> Macdonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 224.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 224.

Churchill's attention was inevitable, but Powell and Pressburger could not have known its extent until the Prime Minister expressed it beyond confidential ministerial circles. Without fully comprehending Churchill's anger and confidence that the Ministry of Information could not completely ban their picture, *The Archers* carried on with their production and handled a variety of other issues – the expected and unforeseen, either good or bad – that affected the wider production of *Colonel Blimp*.

An indication of Powell and Pressburger's determination to 'get things right' for *Colonel Blimp*'s era encompassing narrative was the employment of advisers: one military, Lieutenant-General Sir Douglas Brownrigg; and two period specialists, E.F.E Schoen and Dr. Charles R. Beard. There is very little information available regarding Schoen and Beard's contribution to *Colonel Blimp* or their work beyond Britain's film industry. While Schoen has no record beyond Powell and Pressburger's project<sup>58</sup>, Beard has been listed as a researcher on a handful of films, such as *Drake the Pirate* (1935), *Treasure Island* (1950), *The Story of Robin Hood and His Merrie Men* (1952) and *Around the World in 80 Days* (1956).<sup>59</sup> Although listed on the film's credits, Schoen and Beard's actual contributions are unknown, instead, the materials housed in the BFI's collections suggest that Lieutenant-General Sir Douglas Brownrigg, the picture's military adviser, was the predominant adviser during the production stage.

Brownrigg was a decorated veteran and zone commander with the Home Guard by the time *Colonel Blimp* began production. Brownrigg was in his mid-fifties and his career in the British Army bore a striking resemblance to Pressburger's Blimp, Clive Wynne-Candy. At a young age Brownrigg had attended the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, then joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of Sherwood Foresters (1905, Singapore) where he encountered his first memorable Blimp-like figure.<sup>60</sup> In his 1942 memoir *Unexpected (A Book of Memories)* he recalled a court-martial hearing with some fondness. According to Brownrigg, the accused soldier had muttered that his Company Commander was 'nothing better than a "goggle-eyed, jelly-bellied bastard"', which had led to charges of insubordination and possible court-martial being levelled against him.<sup>61</sup> Due to

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<sup>58</sup> British Film Institute, 'E.F.E: Filmography', *Films, TV and People Index*, [online], date accessed: 10/01/2020, <<https://www2.bfi.org.uk/films-tv-people/4ce2bb205d465>>.

<sup>59</sup> Information Movie Database, 'Charles R. Beard', IMDB, [online], date accessed: 18/01/2020, <<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0063878/>>.

<sup>60</sup> Lt.- Gen. Sir Douglas Brownrigg, *Unexpected (A Book of Memories)*, Hutchinson & Co Ltd., London: New York: Melbourne, 1942, 17.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 19-20.

a previously spotless record and the guilty plea, the unnamed soldier received the lightest possible sentence, but in his memoir, Brownrigg posited that it was also because 'it was an exceedingly good description' of the Company Commander.<sup>62</sup> After Singapore, Brownrigg's military career effectively 'took off'. Over the years he occupied posts in a variety of areas, including Gallipoli, Mesopotamia, Shanghai, Manchuria, and America before returning to Britain's War Office before the outbreak of WWII.<sup>63</sup> Like Wynne-Candy, he was well travelled, encountered his own Blimps, and had had experience with the changing nature of warfare through his lengthy service, all exceptionally apt for a consultant on The Archers' unique, controversial *Colonel Blimp* project.

Most strikingly, Brownrigg, like Candy, had been relegated to the retired list in 1940 after an incident at Dunkirk. Officially closed until 2016, War Office records state that on May 25<sup>th</sup> Brownrigg failed to transport 'a senior of A.G's staff, a senior medical officer and a pay representative' to the Commander in Chief's post at Dunkirk, despite being in the area on two separate occasions.<sup>64</sup> Brownrigg provided an explanation for this failure, but the War Office found his reasoning to be insufficient and relegated him to the retired list – effective from June 9<sup>th</sup>.<sup>65</sup> In his memoir, he described it as an 'abrupt termination' that was followed by a 'dark time' filled with consoling letters and visits from friends and staff.<sup>66</sup> Although the scenarios were somewhat different, the results were the same; both Brownrigg and the fictional Wynne-Candy turned towards the Home Guard in response to their relegation to the 'retired list'. This likeness was uncanny, but Pressburger's preproduction notes suggest that it was entirely coincidental.

The advice from Brownrigg was invaluable for the establishment of the film's overall authenticity, particularly regarding military details, and provided The Archers with an opportunity to refine their authenticity effects to better reflect history's trends. In a lengthy memo to Powell, he provided critiques and advice on dialogue, costumes, characterisation and content. Brownrigg's corrections were quite specific, but their circulation to 'all script holders' further demonstrates The Archers' serious consideration of/adherence to his

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 18-155.

<sup>64</sup> WO 259/60, War Office Records, 'Lt. Gen. Sir Douglas Brownrigg: circumstances leading to his relegation to the Retired List', September 1940, *The National Archives*, Kew: London.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Brownrigg, *Unexpected*, 156.



recommendations.<sup>67</sup> For example, Brownrigg was adamant that ‘Johnny Cannon’, Kerr’s character from 1939-42, ‘cannot be an ATS driver if she is to continue as the General’s driver when he is in the Home Guard. She must be MTC or WVS’.<sup>68</sup> This change was evident in the film. Similarly, another correction focused on the clear outline of Wynne-Candy’s career, behaviour and his military regalia – especially during the early Boer War sequences:

‘Clive (‘Sugar’) Candy, V.C., C.B., D.S.O.

Late Wessex Infantry; served South Africa War 1899-1902; European War

1914-1918; Major General retired pay, 1935; re-employed Base Sub-Area Commandant in France 1939; retired pay, 1940; Zone Commander Home

Guard 1940-42... If in uniform Clive and Hoppy can only be in full dress uniform, and then only if they are going to a Levee [formal reception] ... Medals of course, also swords.’<sup>69</sup>

More examples from Brownrigg’s recommendations will be addressed in the ‘distributional functions’ and ‘integrational functions’ chapters, but this small sample demonstrates Brownrigg’s role during the early production period. Although providing a key clarifying component in the production process, Brownrigg was not the only crew member working hard to assist with the refinement of Powell and Pressburger’s preproduction plans.

Before *Colonel Blimp*, Powell and Pressburger had never produced a Technicolor film together. Powell had some experience with the technology on *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940), but this was limited due to his shared directorial role with Ludwig Berger and Tim Whelan. The use of colour was still a relatively new, expensive technological advancement in 1942, but notable pictures, like Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer’s *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and Warner Bros. Picture’s *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938), had created a new allure and demand from cinema patrons.<sup>70</sup>

Described as seeing ‘the world with a fresh lick of paint’, the Technicolor application provided an ‘effulgent gleam’ on its subject matter but was a costly component of a film’s

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<sup>67</sup> S3034, Michael Powell, ‘Revision of Script – “Sugar Candy” to all Script Holders’, *Michael Powell Collection*, The British Film Institute, London.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Some newspaper/magazine reviews that demonstrate this: Unknown, ‘Sundry Shows’, *The Bulletin*, Australia, 29 November 1939; Unknown, ‘“Wizard of Oz” Technicolor Extravaganza’, *Glenn Innes Examiner*, Australia, 12 December 1940; Unknown, ‘The Adventures of Robin Hood’, *National Advocate*, Australia, 23 November 1938.

production budget.<sup>71</sup> The Archers would become known for their creative use of Technicolor in the years following *Colonel Blimp*, especially in *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946) where they suggested and portrayed the afterlife as a colourless landscape in comparison to reality – ‘One is starved for Technicolor up there’ reported heavenly messenger ‘Conductor 71’ (Marius Golding) to the world.<sup>72</sup> At this early stage though, Powell and Pressburger were still getting acquainted with the technology and had only just started to experiment with this type of scarce film stock. After war was declared in 1939 Technicolor film stock became pricier and less readily available to the British due to the shipping crisis in the Atlantic, which led to it becoming ‘the rarest and most rationed commodity’ in the industry.<sup>73</sup> Powell and Pressburger were lucky though because the film stock, technicians, and laboratory were still available for use at Denham in 1942.<sup>74</sup>

Due to the film stock shortages within the industry, The Archers had to remain highly conscious of their usage during this time, lest they fall short before completing the film. In order to utilise their limited amount of Technicolor filmstock Powell and Pressburger employed the talented and experienced cinematographer Georges Périnal. The French cinematographer had worked under Korda since 1933 and had stayed at Denham after Korda’s departure to the USA. Throughout his time at Denham, Périnal had worked on many Technicolor films and had even received recognition from the Academy with an ‘almost Oscar nomination’ for his contribution to *The Four Feathers* (1939) and an Oscar win for his cinematography for *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940).<sup>75</sup> According to Powell, Périnal was a meticulous cinematographer, ‘a law unto himself’, who was always keen to support a filmmaker’s vision.<sup>76</sup> While there are no records from Périnal within the BFI’s *Colonel Blimp* materials, or autobiographical accounts, it is hard to determine the full influence that he had during this phase (especially in regard to authentically representing

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<sup>71</sup> Samuel Wigley, ‘A Glorious Adventure: Colour Films in Britain’, The British Film Institute, [online], date accessed 05/07/2018, <<https://www.bfi.org.uk/news/glorious-adventure-colour-films-britain>>.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Nicholas Pronay & Jeremy Croft, ‘British Film Censorship and Propaganda Policy during the Second World War’, in J Curran & V Porter, *British Cinema History*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1983, 157.

<sup>74</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 406.

<sup>75</sup> According to the Academy’s database Périnal’s work for *The Four Feathers* was not an official nomination. It had been on the list of submissions/nominees; however, *Gone with the Wind* and *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* were the two films selected for the ‘CINEMATOGRAPHY (Colour)’ category that year. Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, ‘Georges Perinal’, *Awards Database*, [online], date accessed: 25/07/2018, <<http://awardsdatabase.oscars.org/search/results>>.

<sup>76</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 407.

past eras). Nevertheless, his employment demonstrates Powell and Pressburger's determination to use their resources as much as possible. Périnal's skills and experience guaranteed that the coveted Technicolor film stock would not be wasted through ignorance or unnecessary experimentation. While Périnal worked was charged with the careful curation of Powell and Pressburger's Technicolor film stock, the props department also faced issues regarding a lack of resources.

Another issue that *The Archers* had to address at the earliest stage of production was the picture's primary cast. Their initial plans were altered during the late preproduction stage and urgent attention was needed when studio teams began their preparations, i.e., set design, resource management, costuming.

As mentioned earlier, the MoI and WO had officially withheld permission for Laurence Olivier, a star on stage and a leading man in films such as *Rebecca* (1940), *That Hamilton Woman* (1941) and *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* (1941), to leave his Navy post, which removed a substantial amount of star power from the production.<sup>77</sup> Alongside this, while developing his script Pressburger had received news and an apology from Wendy Hiller, star of Anthony Asquith and Leslie Howard's *Pygmalion* (1938) and Gabriel Pascal's *Major Barbara* (1941), the actress he imagined as the ever-changing embodiment of Candy's lost love and symbol for the evolution of women's roles in British society. Hiller had personal commitments, 'very bad news from Wendy Hiller. She can't play in *Blimp* because she is getting a baby' Pressburger reported in his desk diary.<sup>78</sup> Anna Neagle, star of *Victoria the Great* (1937), *Sixty Glorious Years* (1938) and *Irene* (1940) was requested; however, her husband/producer/director, Herbert Wilcox, denied them due to her exclusive contract.<sup>79</sup> The only concrete casting choice they had when entering the production stage was the popular German star Anton Walbrook, who had made a name for himself (in cinema) by starring alongside Neagle in Herbert Wilcox's Queen Victoria biopics, Thorold Dickinson's *Gaslight* (1940) and Powell and Pressburger's *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* (1941). Overall, another leading man and a leading lady were urgently required for *Colonel Blimp*.

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<sup>77</sup> Macdonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 222.

<sup>78</sup> EPR/8/6, Emeric Pressburger, 'March 15th: Pressburger's 1942 Desk Diary', *Emeric Pressburger Collection*, British Film Institute, London.

<sup>79</sup> EPR/8/6, Emeric Pressburger, 'April 4<sup>th</sup>: Pressburger's 1942 Desk Diary', *Emeric Pressburger Collection*, British Film Institute, London.

In regard to Olivier's replacement, Powell had a surprising recommendation. In a meeting with Pressburger and Rank, Powell suggested the relatively unknown Welsh actor Roger Livesey, 'one of the broad-shouldered, scarlet-uniformed figures that thronged Denham in Alex's [Korda] Empire building days'.<sup>80</sup> Livesey had been involved in some films throughout the 1930s but did not fulfil a primary role until Korda's Empire adventure film *The Drum* (1938), instead, he had a prevalent stage presence in Britain and performed often alongside his wife Ursula Jeans.<sup>81</sup> Powell had a penchant for pushing overlooked talent to the forefront and, unlike Olivier, Livesey was not in an active service role and had opted to contribute to the war effort by working at an aircraft factory.<sup>82</sup> Without the restrictive influence of the Mol and WO, Livesey was free to join the project.

The hunt for a leading lady occurred alongside the search for an appropriate leading man and The Archers had had a somewhat unlucky run with their choices. This led Powell to make his second recommendation for an unrecognised talent, Deborah Kerr. Kerr was young but had met the filmmakers before. She had a minor part in *Black's* follow up picture, *Contraband* (1940), but her scenes had ended up on the cutting room floor due to time constraints.<sup>83</sup> Powell was enamoured with Kerr's beauty and talent, and persuaded Rank and Pressburger with the casting choice; however, her inexperience was a cause for concern in an already risky project.

This concern came to the forefront during the shooting stage of the production period. According to one biography, Korda had voiced his concerns during a visit and asked, 'why an "unknown" girl for the lead?' to which Powell quickly responded, 'If you think she's unknown now, I promise you won't by the time the picture is released!'.<sup>84</sup> Pressburger's doubts lingered too and his concerns regarding her characterisation caused some issues on set. For example, during an intimate scene between Candy and his wife Barbara (a firm but gentle disagreement on her part) Pressburger was dissatisfied by Kerr's delivery, 'the scene's all wrong! I wouldn't let any woman talk to me like that'.<sup>85</sup> In this instance Powell quickly rebuffed Pressburger's complaints, 'thanks to Deborah...that is why the scenes are all right', but her unknown status and

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<sup>80</sup> Powell, *Life in Movies*, 403.

<sup>81</sup> McFarlane, 'Roger Livesey', *The Encyclopedia of British Film*, 419.

<sup>82</sup> Powell, *Life in Movies*, 404.

<sup>83</sup> Eric Braun, *Deborah Kerr*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1978, 43.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 69.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*.

lack of experience added extra tension to the already risky project.<sup>86</sup> These concerns regarding cast choices, especially with Kerr, would have lingered throughout the production period; however, they were not the only issues that disrupted *The Archers'* initial preproduction plans.

Era appropriate props are integral authenticity effects when creating believable settings on-screen – either contemporary or historically set – because of the depth and support that they provide to the picture's distributional functions (narrative and characters). In most instances, the production crew(s) tasked with sourcing props/vehicles work within a microcosm due to the narrative's particular setting and timeline, i.e., David Fincher's *Mank* (2020) was set specifically in Hollywood, 1940, and Bennett Miller's *Capote* (2005) depicted Truman Capote's experiences from 1959-1966 as he researched and wrote his acclaimed non-fiction text *In Cold Blood* (1966). These specified periods narrow the scope of the resources needed; however, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* spanned three historical periods and Pressburger had included specific historical details in the script's scene directions. It was a big task, but his directions were followed extremely well (these will be further investigated in this thesis' *mise en scène* chapter), instead, it was the procurement of contemporary pieces that posed a challenge.

The confidential correspondence between Churchill and the WO was clear that there would be no support of any kind to *Colonel Blimp's* production, 'the War Office have refused to give their support to the film in any way' and had 'refused all facilities for the film' wrote James Grigg (WO).<sup>87</sup> When considering the complete picture it is difficult to reconcile the final product with this adamant decree because period-appropriate vehicles, uniforms, and weapons were effectively incorporated throughout the contemporary 1940s sequences.

Under the general direction of the experienced production designer Alfred Junge, who was a seasoned art director within the British industry and had worked on popular films such as *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), *King Solomon's Mines* (1937), and *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* (1939). Junge's props and vehicle crew found ways to circumnavigate the restrictions, but the details surrounding how they managed this remain relatively unclear due to a lack of resources addressing the process. The only major explanation regarding the attainment of these restricted items came directly from Powell. In *A Life in Movies* he admitted, with some relish, that 'the

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Prem 4 14/15, James Grigg, 'To PM: Notes on Blimp', 8 September 1942, *The National Archives*, Kew: London.

answer is quite simple: we stole them'.<sup>88</sup> He did not elaborate much further but did mention 'one or two forged passes' and favours from 'friends in all sorts of quarters' that provided access to resources during their production period.<sup>89</sup> Turning to illegal means to gain access to appropriate resources seems like a drastic step to maintain authenticity and, if Powell's words are true, it stands as a testament to the crew's devotion towards the project. While this section of the wider production unit worked well under Junge's general direction, disagreements in the costume department resulted in the exit of a talented artist.

Powell and Pressburger had expressly given Junge 'complete charge of the art department ... all the art direction, the sets and props and also all costumes and accessories, including the make-up'.<sup>90</sup> This was an immense workload and, considering the number of staff under his direction, it is unsurprising that a dispute occurred. In a personal letter to Pressburger, Honoria Plesch – a designer and burgeoning film costumier that left the *Colonel Blimp* project and was known later for her couture collections and work in John Boulting's controversial adaptation of *Brighton Rock* (1948)<sup>91</sup> – cited Junge's bullying and ingratitude as the motivation behind her departure.<sup>92</sup> She wrote;

I do want to thank you for all your help & great kindness in connection with  
"Colonel Blimp", I am deeply sorry for all the trouble I've caused you. I wish it  
had been made clear at my first interview that I was to be bossed & bullied  
& have no credit in the end. The whole thing has made me very unhappy & I am  
truly heartbroken I have lost the picture.<sup>93</sup>

In this same letter Plesch admitted that she would have happily worked with Junge in 'regards to colour schemes etc' because 'he was a clever art director'; however, she did not appreciate

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<sup>88</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 407.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> British Film Institute, 'Honoria Plesch: Filmography', *The British Film Institute*, [online], date accessed 07/07/2019, < <https://www.bfi.org.uk/films-tv-people/4ce2b9f4b7184>>.

<sup>92</sup> Historical resources within the BFI explicitly refer to Plesch's departure and her apology letter is now sequestered in their *Emeric Pressburger Collection*. This suggests that some aspect of the incident, possibly the regrets expressed in her letter, prompted Pressburger to add it to his *Colonel Blimp* notes as a significant keepsake.

<sup>93</sup> EPR/1/22/3, Honoria Plesch to Emeric Pressburger, c.1942-3, *The Emeric Pressburger Collection*, The British Film Institute, London.

his criticisms of her management of the costuming department.<sup>94</sup> Junge's experience and status in the industry likely prompted this behaviour. Unlike Plesch, Junge had been in the film business since the 1920s (specifically in Britain since the 1930s), while she had only received her first film credit in 1941. His managerial routines and expectations may have been tested by Plesch's own, and further exacerbated by the weight of responsibility for *Colonel Blimp*, but without further historical evidence, it is difficult to determine the specific details/response from Junge's perspective. In the final version of the picture, Plesch is completely absent from the credits list, instead, designer and couturier Matilda Etches and artist Josef Bato shared credit for costume. The dispute between Plesch and Junge was isolated in the wider scope of *Colonel Blimp's* production period. Nevertheless, it is an excellent example of the smaller issues that The Archers now had to address as independent filmmakers.

After considering the points above it is evident that the production period for *Colonel Blimp* was filled with a variety of issues that The Archers had to manage in order to produce their critique of 'Blimpery'. Some matters threatened the steadiness of production, such as filling lead roles, ministerial disapproval and notions of a possible shutdown, and the limited access to film stock and materials. Others impacted the working atmosphere within the studio and caused tensions amongst crewmembers, like Deborah Kerr's inexperience and Honoria Plesch's departure due to Junge's overbearing behaviour. Such managerial matters required energy and attention, and both Powell and Pressburger were responsible for their resolution. During their last foray into the historical genre (no matter how superficial it may have been), Alexander Korda mediated any issues on the set of *The Spy in Black*, so Powell and Pressburger had time and creative freedom. Under the umbrella of their own independent company – The Archers – Powell and Pressburger could no longer rely on studio heads to mediate issues because they jointly took on the roles of scriptwriter, producer, and director.<sup>95</sup>

This responsibility meant that they could not personally dedicate as much time to further research or clarification of the authenticity effects they wished to use, either historical or contemporary. To combat this shortfall, they employed on-set consultants to assist with the military and historical components of the picture, i.e., Brownrigg, and relied on their expertise

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Powell and Pressburger shared the on-screen credit for writing, producing, and directing all their films. While they may have had input across all three aspects there was a distinct role for both parties. Pressburger wrote the script and was present on set for amendments, Powell assisted with some script development, but his main role was direction.

to 'catch' any missteps made during development. This use of specific military/historical consultants worked to enhance the picture overall but also indicates Powell and Pressburger's growing seriousness towards historical authenticity within the genre. While many of their previous films were made in conjunction with official bodies, like the Royal Air Force or the Government of Canada, specific advisers were rarely accredited by name. *Colonel Blimp* signalled a turning point in The Archers' use and recognition of such specialists during development and production, and their efforts for *River Plate* – twelve years later – epitomised this practice.

#### *The Globe-Trotting Production Period of 'The Battle of the River Plate'*

Richard Combs once described *River Plate* as 'an awkward, unsatisfying, intriguing thing' that is often 'politely passed over' by scholars and Archers devotees, but the film is worth examination, especially when considering the filmmakers' efforts to create an authentic feature for their audiences (historically and atmospherically).<sup>96</sup> The preproduction period had unfolded relatively well: a story was found, interviews were conducted, the Admiralty were approached and happy to assist, and funding for script development had been secured. For a short time, Pressburger was able to research and formulate a script (completed in full by June), but the Admiralty's abrupt call for Powell's skeleton team to join a small naval fleet for location shooting kickstarted the production period. Over this stage, Powell and Pressburger managed a series of tasks and worked with a variety of stakeholders, on and outside of the studio setting, to produce an engaging film that was as factually supported as they could make it.

Before delving too deeply into *River Plate*'s production period it is important to note that there was a change in financiers sometime in the early Summer, just after Pressburger had completed his first draft and Powell went on-location shooting (approx. June). According to Macdonald, a copy of the script had been sent to the Greek-American executive and President of Twentieth-Century Fox Spyros Skouras, in the hope that Fox may be interested in the project; however, Skouras seemed to prevaricate the issue.<sup>97</sup> In response to this, The Archers took the script to the Rank Organisation's Managing Director, John Davis, and its Head of Production, Earl St. John.<sup>98</sup> Stoking their interest and obtaining the much-needed financial support was nerve-racking for The Archers though. A letter from Powell to Pressburger, written during his time in

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<sup>96</sup> Richard Combs, 'Battle of the River Plate', *Film Comment*, March 1995, vol. 31, no. 2, 22.

<sup>97</sup> Macdonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 357.

<sup>98</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, 285.



Cyprus with the Admiralty, mentioned the film's precarious financial position, Pressburger's efforts at RO's offices, and Powell's apprehensions,

I think you did a good job with Earl + John and all the credit from it is yours.

You're a demon when you get going. I only hope we don't make a big mistake returning to Rank as we did leaving him. We shall have to tread warily.<sup>99</sup>

Luckily, the issue was resolved fairly quickly, just days before Powell was scheduled to leave Cyprus on the HMS *Sheffield*, 'a message from Emeric via the Admiralty..."JD [John Davis] approves project and script"...the film will be in Vistavision...Chris Challis, plus camera, plus a crew of four, plus Bill Paton, would arrive by Viscount [aircraft used by Cyprus Airways] on Wednesday'.<sup>100</sup> With their funding secured, The Archers were safe in the knowledge that their efforts would result in a full-length feature film – a scenario that many independent filmmakers struggled to obtain in the industry's 1950s landscape.

In his work on J. Arthur Rank's role in the British industry, Geoffrey MacNab highlighted how the support for *River Plate* also doubled as a symbol for the struggle of independent filmmakers, as well as a symbol for the significant change of style across the studios. He highlighted how, 'Rank's free-spending artists of the 1940s found that their wings had been severely clipped', that they were 'out of their time' as 'a different style of production emerged at Pinewood'.<sup>101</sup> This new style favoured regulation and efficiency, rather than artistic free license and open-ended spending, because at the end of the 1940s the Rank Organisation (RO) was £16 million in the red and had to alter their approach to avoid a shutdown.<sup>102</sup> The 'fiscal pruning', as MacNab described it, was working well and the company had reduced its overdraft to only £4 million by 1954; however, the artistic experimentation of the previous decade had been lost in the process.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> EPR/1/35/4, Powell to Pressburger, 'River Plate Letter: Marked Urgent', c. June 1955, *Emeric Pressburger Collection*, British Film Institute, London.

<sup>100</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, 286.

<sup>101</sup> MacNab, *J. Arthur Rank*, 216.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

It was clear that Powell and Pressburger were in a creative flux by this stage anyway but the RO's support, no matter how regulated, was vital for their *River Plate* project, especially after Fox lost interest. The Admiralty's support of this project and their accommodation of Powell and Pressburger's requests is one of the primary reasons that the *River Plate* film stands out within the wider 1950s catalogue of British war films. With numerous sequences of real ships at sea, the project was elevated above its counterparts and provided a level of authenticity that could not be replicated in a studio tank lot. When gathering this footage Powell found that the Admiralty, unlike the Mol and WO years before, were extremely savvy and helpful if approached in a specific, careful manner. In a 1989 interview with Canadian television presenter Elwy Yost, Powell described this approach as such,

If you ordered it from the Admiralty it would cost you millions but if you agree with the Admiralty, that this is the way to do it, they tell you when they are ready to give you the sequence... and when they would say 'now you can do the refueling of the ships at sea' or 'you can go to Malta' ... you'll have three cruisers under your command for the whole day.<sup>104</sup>

The 'beck and call' nature of the relationship did not dampen Powell's enthusiasm, instead, it excited him immensely, especially after industry man John Brabourne<sup>105</sup>, son-in-law of Admiral of the Fleet (Louis Mountbatten, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Burma and First Sea Lord from 1955-1959), joined the team as production manager and brought the project to the attention of High Command.<sup>106</sup> Initially, The Archers had no idea where filming would take place and Captain Clarke (their Admiralty liaison) could not provide a definitive time or place either. Instead, he could only offer a vague plan that required extreme flexibility and quick action on the filmmakers part;

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<sup>104</sup> TVO, 'Transcript: Powell and Pressburger', 20 April 1989, [online], date accessed: 02/08/2018, <<https://tvo.org/transcript/009504/video/archive/talking-film/powell-and-pressburger>>.

<sup>105</sup> John Brabourne's work in the industry was most prominent after *River Plate* because he shifted from production team member/manager positions into the role of producer. His catalogue is extensive, with notable films like *Sink the Bismark!* (1960), *Romeo and Juliet* (1968), *Death on the Nile* (1978) and David Lean's last picture *A Passage to India* (1985). In the early part of his career, he had worked under the direction of Alexander Korda, Herbert Wilcox and Ian Dalrymple, so his skills were fairly well-developed when The Archers took him on in 1955. For *River Plate*, he was one of the initial Admiralty liaisons to Powell and Pressburger but quickly joined the project in earnest, which left Captain Clarke in the role of official Admiralty liaison to the film. Brian McFarlane, *An Autobiography of British Cinema: By the Actors and Filmmakers who made it*, Methuen, London, 1997, 92-96.

<sup>106</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, 281.

It may be the Med, it may be Scotland... it might even be in the Falkland Islands.

The hardest thing, of course, is to have three cruisers available to you for twenty-four hours in the Med; that's why we have to plan ahead. When we say 'come', you go, shoot your scenes, and it won't cost a penny. The taxpayers will pay for it.<sup>107</sup>

When the call came to 'hitch a ride' with the British Navy, Powell rushed to the rendezvous point – Larnaca, Cyprus.<sup>108</sup> Once there he was introduced to Captain Lewis, 'an important person with a finger in every pie', and Admiral Sir Guy Grantham DSO (Distinguished Service Officer), a 'thin, fair and cordial' man, and directed aboard the HMS *Sheffield* for a briefing on the vessel's upcoming exercises en route to Malta.<sup>109</sup>

At this time, Britain's navy was transitioning into a new regime and adapting to better suit the unique political climate brought on by Cold War tensions and the Empire's swift decline as a colonial superpower. It was common for British naval exercises to take place in the Eastern Mediterranean because Britain's 'network of carefully woven political links with the elites in the region' created an accommodating atmosphere and key locales, such as Malta, were still accessible Crown colonies with well-established anchorages.<sup>110</sup> Also, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Mediterranean Command was situated in Malta (1952-1967) and Britain had positioned itself as one of NATO's naval defenders for the region, so Malta was often a hub of activity filled with diplomats and servicemen.<sup>111</sup> NATO had steadily solidified its activities and objectives since its establishment in 1949 and clear information campaigns were created to reiterate its aims, methods, and primary goals to the wider public. In an English pamphlet from 1955/1956 these points were outlined simply for readers as such,

Aims: To seek peace, preserve freedom, promote social progress, and create security through deterrence.

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 270.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 284.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Dionysios Chourchoulis, 'High Hopes, Bold Aims, Limited Results: Britain and the Establishment of the NATO Mediterranean Command, 1950–1953', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2009, 435.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 448.

Methods: To settle disputes through peaceful means and refrain from threats of war, develop friendly international relationships and promote stability, encourage economic collaboration, and to agree that an armed attack against one NATO power is an attack on all.<sup>112</sup>

Overall, NATO's primary goal was to strengthen peace and collaboration through deterrence, 'NATO was set up to prevent armed attack...all of NATO's military planning is based on the assumption of a war launched by somebody else', and Britain's Navy aligned its operations to match this approach.<sup>113</sup> According to Tim Benbow, this shift in British policy was presented in the 1954 strategy paper, 'in addition to deterring war... the principal concerns of strategy and defence policy were given as peacetime responsibilities ... rather than preparations to fight a major war'.<sup>114</sup>

Despite these busy undertakings, Benbow also highlighted how the post-WWII decade contained 'an attack of unprecedented severity on the Royal Navy's core capability, naval aviation, and even more broadly on the very place of sea power in British strategy'.<sup>115</sup> This attack, Benbow noted, reached a peak in April 1954 with the establishment of the 'Cabinet Committee on Defence Review', aka the 'Swinton Committee' (after its Chair, Lord Swinton), whose primary aim was to reduce defence spending – with a focus on Naval expenditure.<sup>116</sup> Their cost-cutting agenda, which included the dispossession of naval-based aircraft and their carriers in favour of land-based alternatives and wider cuts to construction programs, was bitterly opposed by the Admiralty, who argued that their position as a dominant sea power that was a vital deterrent and defence for sea communications against USSR interlopers.<sup>117</sup> When Harold Macmillan became the Secretary of Defence in October the Swinton Committee's recommendations were quickly dismissed (Macmillan agreed with the Admiralty's assessment), which allowed the navy to comfortably continue with their transitional operations.<sup>118</sup> After considering such issues, it

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<sup>112</sup> Frédéric Mégret, 'NATO Means Peace 1955-1956', *Desfossés-Neogravure*, France, c. 1955-1956, 29-33, sourced from the NATO archives, [online], date accessed: 28/01/2021, <[https://archives.nato.int/uploads/r/null/1/3/137318/0064\\_NATO\\_Means\\_Peace\\_1955-1956\\_ENG.pdf](https://archives.nato.int/uploads/r/null/1/3/137318/0064_NATO_Means_Peace_1955-1956_ENG.pdf)>.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*, 34.

<sup>114</sup> Tim Benbow, 'The Royal Navy and Sea Power in British Strategy, 1945-1955', *Institute of Historical Research*, vol. 91, no. 252, 2018, 393.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, 397.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*, 392.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, 395.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, 396-397.

could be said that The Archers' project was remarkably well-timed. The Navy had overcome its most trialing period in the post-WWII decade and a cinematic depiction of the battle at River Plate would only remind audiences of Britain's prowess as a dominant sea power.

Powell's time in the Mediterranean was incredibly fast-paced and his window of opportunity for capturing footage was extremely limited because he had to work within the strict schedule of the HMS *Sheffield*. There was a precise route that the combined fleet, comprised of British and Indian vessels, had to take in order to get to their rendezvous point on time. According to Powell, there were three ports of call:

1. Starting point:

Cyprus, Limassol (Indian ships) + Larnaca (British ships) – both groups came together to form a single fleet before moving on to Turkey.

2. Stopover:

Turkey, Marmaris – A port city in Southwest Turkey, that hugs Mediterranean coast.

3. Destination:

Malta, Valletta Harbour – From 1952-1967 Malta was the command base for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and regular summits, diplomatic events, naval exercises, and stopovers occurred there.<sup>119</sup>

The HMS *Sheffield's* path was fairly straightforward and although the Admiralty records for this particular endeavour are limited, Powell's descriptions, and multiple photographs from the Imperial War Museum's (IWM) object collection, suggest that this trip was just one of the many that the HMS *Sheffield* took during 1950 (for both political courtesies and drill practices).

Over the short trip, Powell captured footage of a wide variety of naval maneuvers executed by the HMS *Sheffield* and its fleet companions, the HMS *Jamaica* and INS *Delhi* (previously the HMNZS *Achilles* before being sold to the Indian Navy and recommissioned in 1948). Many movements were already part of the Navy's practice regime; however, the Admiralty was very accommodating when Powell requested particular movements. This was most noticeable when producing the shots needed to represent the departure of the battle-stricken HMS *Exeter* (played by the HMS *Jamaica*) from the River Plate assault. Burning vast

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<sup>119</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, 283-293.

amounts of oil to produce a ‘pall of black smoke’, the HMS *Jamaica* followed Powell’s directions – ‘I was handling the two ships and the camera by remote control from the bridge’ – before moving on to take up its station in the West Indies in time for the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the colonisation of Jamaica.<sup>120</sup> The Admiralty’s willingness, Powell believed, stemmed from the influence of John Brabourne and his father-in-law the First Sea Lord Louis Mountbatten. ‘Without the help and authority of these two formidable allies’, he wrote, ‘I could never have achieved what I did. As it was, all doors were opened to me. I moved, arrived and departed with all the authority of Admiralty. The result is up there the screen’.<sup>121</sup>

Figure 1: Command-in-Chief of the Turkish Navy (Admiral Sadık Altıncan) being introduced to Senior British Naval Officers on board the HMS *Sheffield* during a courtesy visit to Turkey in June 1955 (this was likely the stop during Powell’s time aboard). Admiral Sir Guy Grantham is on the extreme left, Altıncan is second from the left. Courtesy of the IWM.



While Powell enjoyed his time aboard the *Sheffield*, keen newspaper correspondents took note of his activities and reported his whereabouts throughout the later stages of the year. For example, in July the *Aberdeen Evening Express* announced that ‘The battle of the River Plate is being fought again – this time in the Mediterranean- for a film’<sup>122</sup>, in August the *Bradford Observer* focused on the INS *Delhi*’s participation, ‘former British cruiser Achilles...has re-enacted

<sup>120</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, 294-295.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, 292.

<sup>122</sup> Unknown, ‘River Plate Epic’, *Aberdeen Evening Express*, Scotland, 21 July 1955.

the engagement with the German pocket battleship Graf Spee before British film cameras in the Mediterranean'<sup>123</sup>, and in October the *Motherwell Times* highlighted how 'advance filmmaking taking place in Malta' for Powell and Pressburger's next picture.<sup>124</sup> These articles were quite optimistic about Powell's activity throughout the Mediterranean, despite The Archers' previous box office failures, and a genuine excitement towards a film with real British battleships began to develop.

After his stint with the British Fleet, Powell returned to London for meetings with the RO's production manager, John Davis, and his right-hand-man, Earl St. John; however, he was not there long.<sup>125</sup> According to Powell, on July 6<sup>th</sup>, the US Secretary of the Navy 'surfaced from ten thousand fathoms and, as a favour to Lord Louis Mountbatten, First Sea Lord, gave The Archers permission to cast the USS Salem... as the German pocket battleship Graf Spee'.<sup>126</sup> At this time the battleship was part-way through a European tour and anchored at Villefranche-sur-Mer, a small picturesque city along the French Riviera, and Powell was instructed to contact Admiral Ofstie (Commander of the Sixth Fleet) to organise an appropriate shooting schedule.<sup>127</sup> He and his small film crew rushed to do this. Once there, the Americans agreed to stage Dove's capture (Admiral Graf Spee takes the MV *Africa Shell*) using their own launches and crew, 'I called for volunteers on the ship's radio, to play German sailors and the seamen from the captured vessel, and got an enthusiastic response', as well as providing permission for Powell to shoot exterior shots whilst the ship was moored if he wished.<sup>128</sup> Wider movements at sea would have to wait.

Like Britain's cruisers, the USS *Salem* was conducting a variety of military exercises that could not be waylaid by a vagabond British film crew. As reported in the Navy Department's (USA) VI official volume of the *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, the USS *Salem* was participating in Franco-American exercises and separate NATO maneuvers from May-September that year.<sup>129</sup> For unspecified reasons, Powell could not remain on the USS *Salem* while they were in transit to their next stop, Sardinia, so he and his crew were transferred to the USS *William R.*

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<sup>123</sup> Unknown, 'Battle of River Plate filmed', *Bradford Observer*, Great Britain, 4 August 1955.

<sup>124</sup> Unknown, 'River Plate Battle', *Motherwell Times*, Great Britain, 14 October 1955.

<sup>125</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, 296-298.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, 298.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*, 298-299.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*, 299.

<sup>129</sup> Naval History Division, *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, Department of the Navy, Washington: USA, 1976, vol. VI, 260.

*Rush*.<sup>130</sup> When the group rendezvoused with USS *Salem* a short time later, they were able to stay aboard for the journey's leg and captured the exterior shots that Powell desired whilst heading to Malta.<sup>131</sup> Once there, Powell collected footage of the USS *Salem* exiting Malta's harbour (which can be seen in the film's final product); however, he does not describe this with the same enthusiasm as his earlier experiences.

The immense amount of footage caught in the Mediterranean was invaluable, but Powell's collection of exterior shots was still incomplete and secondary filming was needed for various *Graf Spee* scenes, i.e., refueling and goods transfer, as well as the crowd scenes in Montevideo's streets/harbour. Concerning the extra naval scenes, the small film crew travelled to Invergordon's naval base and joined a small fleet as they carried out exercises in the Moray Firth inlet.<sup>132</sup> Again, Powell was on a tight schedule, but with the Admiralty's assistance (Brabourne) and enthusiastic crewmen, he produced/captured excellent footage, 'all our officer friends enjoyed themselves giving the Nazi salute and standing with very square German shoulders... Rockets boomed, ropes flew through the air; we did nineteen shots by tea-time and we called in a day at 4:30 pm'.<sup>133</sup> Similarly, filming in Montevideo was an immense, but enjoyable process. According to Pressburger's biography, the team made it to Montevideo in early December (around the time of the event's anniversary', where they captured the 'Manolo's Bar' sequences and the 'spectacular crowd scenes' from the harbour.<sup>134</sup> Powell, far more enthusiastic about the *River Plate* project<sup>135</sup>, was delighted by the local turnout, 'Montevideo celebrated it [the battle and Graf Spee scuttling] too. It was one of their great events... thousands showed up at the waterfront for the crowd scenes'.<sup>136</sup> Without this immense voluntary turnout, the crowd scenes would likely have been either a) extremely expensive due to 'extras' hire, or b) rather slim and paltry (avoided due to high cost). Luckily, neither scenario occurred.

Without this immense undertaking in the Mediterranean and Scotland, the footage for *River Plate* would have been confined solely to Pinewood's studio tank lot and far more restricted in its ability to prompt an emotive response from audiences. The picture's realism was inevitably

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<sup>130</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, 302.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, 311.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, 312.

<sup>134</sup> Macdonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 357.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, 337.



enhanced by the footage of actual battleships (with two from the original 1939 incident) and this worked well as an authenticity effect geared towards ambience and historical representation. The expertise of the Admiralty was a sure thing whilst Powell collected this footage – essentially circumnavigating any real blunders regarding British naval procedures or traditions – but back at the studio a set of specific individuals were employed for their knowledge on the *Graf Spee*/Harwood Fleet operations, as well as the events at River Plate and Montevideo. This group consisted of Charles Woodhouse (Captain of the HMS *Ajax* at River Plate), F.S ‘Hookie’ Bell (Captain of the HMS *Exeter*), and Patrick Dove (Captain of MV *Africa Shell* and PoW onboard on Admiral *Graf Spee*).

By this stage, the presence of military/historical consultants on hand during production had become commonplace in Powell and Pressburger’s war-based films. Unofficially, Clouston had casually provided Powell with a run-down on local history for *Spy in Black*, Brownrigg was hired due to his knowledge and military experiences for *Colonel Blimp*, and now The Archers used the key British officers (still living) involved with the *Graf Spee* chase, battle and subsequent destruction. While two were Captains within Harwood’s fleet in 1939, Woodhouse and Bell, the other, Patrick Dove, was Captain of a merchant vessel and an eventual prisoner on the *Graf Spee*. While each man contributed to the project in different ways during this production period, all three men placed authenticity and representation at the forefront of their recommendations.

To begin, Admiral Woodhouse’s recommendation pages and annotated script (housed in the BFI’s collection) provides insight into the issues he found within Pressburger’s ‘June Final Edition’ version of the film.<sup>137</sup> His critiques were extensive and ranged in size and subject; however, many were related to the misuse of technical language specific to the navy. A series of notes proposed dialogue changes to better suit the portrayal of life at sea, i.e., ‘change to “alter course straight for her”’, ‘a Commodore flies a “Broad Pendant”, not a flag’, and ““sunrise” tomorrow instead of “daybreak”’.<sup>138</sup> Such changes were easily applied and refined the depiction of the navy’s unique language, and while this added an extra layer of authenticity to the overall picture, Macdonald noted that general viewers were presented with a dialogue that was ‘circumscribed by the necessity of having to divulge too many dull naval details’.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> S-198, Woodhouse & Pressburger, ‘The Pursuit of the Graf Spee: Woodhouse Edit’, June 1955, *Michael Powell Collection*, British Film Institute, London, sequences 130 & 87, and report point 12.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Macdonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 359.

Alongside dialogue changes, Woodhouse's other complaints focused primarily on Pressburger's characterisation of Commodore Harwood, who had received a promotion (Commodore to Rear Admiral) and a knighthood for his role in the Admiral *Graf Spee's* demise and had died in 1950. Woodhouse's criticisms may seem 'nitpicky' to an objective viewer; however, his reactions help to highlight how pictures depicting historical events within living memory must carefully consider their representation of the individuals involved. In this instance, Woodhouse was fixated on any scenarios that sullied Harwood's reputation as a fair officer. In multiple instances, scenes dictated that Harwood deny his men breakfast at their usual time to divvy up and execute more pressing tasks and Woodhouse was adamant that this was wrong, 'I have stated elsewhere that it would be out of keeping with Harwood's character to deprive ship's companies of their breakfast hour in this deliberate manner'.<sup>140</sup> In another scenario, Harwood was to exclaim 'blazes!' when relayed information regarding the Admiral *Graf Spee's* movements, but Woodhouse was frank in his rejection of this depiction, 'he [Harwood] would not have used this language'.<sup>141</sup> Several changes were made at this production stage on Woodhouse's advice, particularly the refinement of the dialogue's technical language, and his contribution was listed in the picture's final credits.<sup>142</sup>

Ensuring the authentic representation of individuals/events was also an on-set job for Captain F.S 'Hooky' Bell, who had been further roped into the project (after his initial consultation during preproduction) over a saddle of lamb during a luncheon with Powell and Pressburger.<sup>143</sup> At this time Bell was also in correspondence with the author Dudley Pope, who was in the process of writing a book about the battle, so the role of advisor was not unfamiliar to him.<sup>144</sup> In regard to the film, Bell was an active and polite advisor, albeit, less in-depth than Woodhouse in his written assessments. For example, in a short, simple letter he provided a series of 'afterthought' amendments that he and Woodhouse had discussed together, and cordially requested that 'perhaps you [Powell and Pressburger] would consider incorporating in the finished product'.<sup>145</sup> Although unsigned, a similar letter in the same BFI collection likely came

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<sup>140</sup> S-198, Woodhouse & Pressburger, 'The Pursuit of the Graf Spee: Woodhouse Edit', point 16.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, report point 21.

<sup>142</sup> *The Battle of the River Plate*, directed by Michael Powell & Emeric Pressburger: The Archers, Rank Film Distributors Ltd, 1956, DVD ed., distributed by ITV DVD, 2006.

<sup>143</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, 267.

<sup>144</sup> S-195, Dudley Pope, 'Letter to Captain F.S Bell', 27 September 1955, *Michael Powell Collection*, British Film Institute, London.

<sup>145</sup> S-195, F.S Bell, 'Letter to Powell and Pressburger regarding River Plate', 28 September 1955, *Michael Powell Collection*, British Film Institute, London.

from Bell too (distinguishable by its tone and language), but this one mentioned amendments that were needed after a conference with Captain Patrick Dove, the picture's third prominent naval consultant.

While Woodhouse and Bell critiqued *The Archers'* rendition of life on Britain's battleships, Captain Patrick Dove was solely responsible for advising on the Admiral *Graf Spee* sequences – officially listed as the picture's 'Technical Advisor on Prison Sequences' in the final product.<sup>146</sup> Dove's experiences as a prisoner on the elusive pocket battleship had equipped him with unique insight into its operations and personnel, and as mentioned previously, his account *I Was the Graf Spee's Prisoner* had initially provided Pressburger with the 'human angle' for his script. An interview snippet from RO's publicity division sheds the most light on Dove's time on set and it was clear that, while enjoying himself immensely, the seaman was intimidated by the filmmaking process, describing it as 'far more terrifying than being blown up by the Graf Spee'.<sup>147</sup> Despite this uneasiness, Dove was especially proud of his ability to assist on set. In one reported instance, actor Peter Finch, who portrayed Langsdorff on-screen, completed an intense and demanding scene (the speech regarding Britain's victory over the Admiral *Graf Spee*) and immediately consulted with Dove about his performance.

After the take, Finch walked over to the real Captain Dove, who acted as advisor on the 'Graf Spee' scenes.

'Was I alright?' he asked.

Captain Dove nodded. 'That was one of the most moving interviews I ever had in my life,' he said 'for Langsdorff was a great gentleman. I never thought it would move me so much to see it acted again with such feeling and dignity'.<sup>148</sup>

Powell was convinced that without Dove's story and his authoritative insight, the picture would have been little more than a 'cat-and-mouse' super-documentary, 'Dove's own personality, his sensitive reaction to his captor, and his admiration for Langsdorff in victory and defeat, was the

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<sup>146</sup> Powell & Pressburger, *The Battle of the River Plate*, motion picture.

<sup>147</sup> S- 208, 'Rank Publicity Division's information folder: *River Plate*', British Film Institute, London, 83.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid*, 103.

stuff of a real story'.<sup>149</sup> His input, alongside that from Woodhouse and Bell, ensured that Powell and Pressburger's representation was underpinned by historical insight, which was provided through their initial oral accounts and on-set advice.

In comparison to the processes used for *Black* and *Colonel Blimp*, *River Plate*'s production period was extremely complex but relatively unproblematic, i.e., no overbearing producers (*Black*) or threats of shutdown (*Colonel Blimp*). It was filled with many intermediaries and stakeholders, expanded across territories, and handled historical material in a manner that was new to The Archers. The film was created, as Powell admitted, predominantly in the documentary style, with its flair of humanity and liveliness emerging mostly from Captain Dove's unique insights.

This signalled a significant change in the duo's highly artistic, boundary testing, and somewhat surreal approaches, seen best in *Black Narcissus*, *The Red Shoes*, and especially *A Matter of Life and Death*; however, their devotion towards creating a well-constructed historical film can be seen through their efforts to underpin their narrative's cardinal functions with research, the use of specialist consultants, and creating an authentic at-sea experience for audiences by shooting on location. A similar research-based approach was used for the historical sequences within *Colonel Blimp*; however, the fictionality of that picture's characters provided Powell and Pressburger with more freedom to experiment. *River Plate* did not. As the figures and events of the Admiral *Graf Spee* pursuit/River Plate incident were real, with many participants still living and a general understanding of the incident understood amongst the public, The Archers could not take heavy artistic liberties with their sequences. This prompted them to implement certain strategies to assist with the development of the picture's authenticity, like capturing footage of/on traditional battleships at sea – rather than resorting to model scencescapes – and refining its historiophoty by employing consultants with specialised insight to provide critiques on preproduction plans and oversee production processes. It was an extraordinarily active production period, far more than *Black* and *Colonel Blimp*, and although it signalled a change in The Archers filmmaking style, such momentum could not be maintained, and it was to be the final box-office success in their catalogue.

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<sup>149</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, 357.

### *Conclusions on the Production Phase*

This chapter has demonstrated that each picture's production period comes with a series of unique influences that are shaped by the social, political, and industrial climate at the time. In general, these influences can help or hinder the filmmaking process, i.e., a lack or excess of funding can impact upon quality and development, cast/crew conflicts can create an untenable workplace for some (prompting departure), and a lack of resources can cause tension and/or ingenuity. In relation to historically set pictures, they can also directly shape the way authenticity effects are produced. For researchers, considering this period in greater depth provides an opportunity to investigate how preproduction plans were executed and, if altered, provides some explanation for the changes made. Concerning *The Archers*, their efforts towards historiophoty varied, but producing an authentic and immersive experience – sometimes historically based, sometimes fixated on capturing a location's atmosphere – was an integral rule in their filmmaking approach. Over twenty years, Powell and Pressburger refined their production methods when adapting historical material and it is important to consider their efforts more closely when interrogating the overall historiophoty of the final picture.

For their initial picture, *The Spy in Black*, Powell and Pressburger faced some production challenges and worked within a very specific set of parameters laid down by Alexander Korda. As mentioned in this dissertation's preproduction chapter, due to their position as burgeoning filmmakers they could not challenge Korda's instructions and did not have the budget to create a lush historical spy thriller. In response, Pressburger turned his attention towards updating the narrative to better resonate with the contemporary period, while Powell focused on capturing an authentic representation of the Orkney Island's unique atmosphere – harsh, isolated landscapes, changeable weather, and unique architecture. Some production issues emerged, primarily linked to Irving Asher, that changed initial production plans, i.e., a full location shoot altered to simple reconnaissance; however, most were managed with the help of Korda.

On the other hand, the production period for *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* was littered with a series of managerial issues that Powell and Pressburger (now *The Archers*) had to manage themselves due to their status as independent filmmakers. For example, they entered this production period knowing that their subject matter was rejected by the MoI and WO due to its topicality in a wartime setting. This rejection had a ripple effect and impacted a series of production aspects. For example Laurence Olivier, the film's primary 'star', was denied leave

from his military duties, resources were denied due to wartime restrictions, Technicolor film stock was limited and had to be used carefully, and general Ministry funding was denied, making J. Arthur Rank as the sole financier of the project. Also, personal issues/disagreements altered original plans and caused tension on set: Wendy Hiller withdrew from the project due to her pregnancy and was replaced with the young, unknown Deborah Kerr – which prompted doubts on set – and costumier Honoria Plesch left the project entirely because she was unable to work under Alfred Junge’s direction. The Archers solved these issues, i.e., by stealing or ‘borrowing’ hard to obtain resources and employing new cast/crew to fulfil empty roles, and their final product was well executed; however, the abundance of managerial problems created a complex, stressful production period that reduced time at the camera and disrupted the fluidity of the schedule.

Twelve years later *The Battle of the River Plate* had a disrupted schedule too, but it was not interrupted by a series of unfavourable managerial issues. Instead, *River Plate*’s production period was rather hectic due to the last-minute filming permissions given by the Admiralty and Powell’s scramble to rendezvous with them at overseas locales. The Archers had hoped for these permissions and their Admiralty contacts, Captain Clarke and John Brabourne, had assured that they would get them but could not promise particular dates. When the initial call came to join the British Mediterranean fleet, Powell left immediately, and his small team was quick to follow. This scenario repeated itself when the green light was given for work with the USS *Salem* and, to some degree, when the team was called to Invergordon. Rather than divert The Archers’ attention away from authenticity, these opportunities (even with their ‘eleventh hour’ style of warning) heightened it and prompted Powell’s extensive collection of sequences at sea. Alongside this footage, The Archers also relied on consultants to double-check and further refine Pressburger’s script, as well as actions on set. Similar to Sir Douglas Brownrigg’s contribution to *Colonel Blimp*, Patrick Dove, Admiral Charles Woodhouse and Captain F.S Bell provided critiques and general feedback based on their firsthand knowledge of the 1939 events. *River Plate*’s production period signalled a definite change in The Archers’ approach towards constructing authenticity on screen, especially regarding historiophoty.

Overall, it is clear that significant efforts were made during production to ensure that The Archers’ representations were either underpinned by historical resources or supported by information collected on-location shoots. While *The Spy in Black* captured the ambience of the

Orkney area and provided Veidt and Hobson with excellent roles, *Colonel Blimp* and *River Plate* required a more in-depth and careful approach due to their complex nature. The evidence collected and discussed shows that Powell, Pressburger, and their wider filmmaking teams, worked hard to ensure that any challenges were overcome, and opportunities were taken to construct authentic historical sequences and contemporary scenes for their audiences to experience. More broadly, the examination of this production period highlights how filmmaking teams may alter their original preproduction plans, to varying degrees, to solve any issues that emerge at this later stage. Changes may affect how authenticity is created or the detailed extent that the filmmakers can go to in their representations (particularly those that historically set); however, in this instance it is evident that Powell and Pressburger did their best to ensure that specialists, archival resources, and witnesses to an event, were consulted and that their wider teams were supported during this lifecycle stage.

### Chapter Three: Investigating Distributional Functions: The Story on Screen

This dissertation's previous chapters have focused on the industrial context surrounding the preproduction/production periods to highlight how many factors shaped the construction of Powell and Pressburger's historically set war films. The following section will now focus on their content and investigate what, where, and how, different authenticity effects (for historical and contemporary scenarios) were employed to enrich The Archers' cinematic narratives. All vary in their inception and construction, each film interacts with historical material/data in different ways, and this influences how they can be considered by contemporary viewers, especially in an educational setting. Using the methodology outlined in this study's introduction, the following investigation of the pictures' distributional functions (actions/events) will identify links between the cinematic narrative and available historical records (both primary and secondary). and considered how they were transposed for the screen.

The following investigation will be split into three parts, one for each picture; however, the elements discussed in each section will differ due to the nature of the films. Part I and II consider the entirely fictional pictures, *The Spy in Black* and *Colonel Blimp*, and will focus on themes and motifs, character functions, and any direct references or historical allusions made throughout the features. In comparison, Part III will focus on the adaptation of real events for *River Plate*, which requires deeper historical analysis due to the picture's specificity and depiction of real individuals and incidents. The aim of this separation is not to create a taxonomy to judge which is 'most representative' or 'the best' at delivering history, which, according to Marnie Hughes-Warrington, is a common occurrence in the work of film scholars.<sup>1</sup> Instead, this separation is made because it allows for in-depth exploration of the relationship between cinema's narratives and the use of historical materials to shape this content. Typically, an entirely fictional historical film will rely on records in a manner that is quite different to one that claims to depict real-life events, and this is evident within The Archers' historical war films. Pressburger's research and writing developed over time, thus changing the manner and style of The Archers' history films, and while his use of historical material differed it is important to consider how he embedded the gathered information into the distributional functions.

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<sup>1</sup> Hughes-Warrington, *History Goes to the Movies*, 55.



*Considering the Many Historical Allusions made within 'The Spy in Black'*

Storer Clouston's original novel was a popular and entertaining adventure for its readers when released during the Great War. The narrative was atmospheric, the characters were mysterious, and the overall plot was one where the 'bad guys' (Germans) lost and the 'good guys' (British) prevailed. As a 1917 release, its plot and design worked well and appealed to a vast audience; however, due to its style and mode of narration, it was a poor choice for a close screen adaptation. Alexander Korda knew this, Powell recognised it too, and Pressburger was the one who effectively 'stood Storer Clouston's plot on its head' and 'completely restructured the film' for the screen.<sup>2</sup> In accordance with Desmond and Hawkes' definitions, Pressburger's cinematic version of *The Spy in Black* can only be described as a 'loose' adaptation because few vestiges from Clouston's original novel can be found within its characters and cardinal functions.<sup>3</sup> This was fair, as the filmmakers' top priority was not the close adaptation of the original text, a point that Powell reiterated in his autobiography: 'The object of the exercise was to provide a stunning part for a great star, Conrad Veidt ... to provide an intriguing part for Miss Hobson ... and so long as we were bound to the iron rails of Storer Clouston's plot, it would never exist'.<sup>4</sup>

Clouston's novel was written in five parts, but its full list of cardinal functions (see appendix A) was relatively short due to the length and simplicity of the book. While it contained a small spy network and a double-cross (a common trope in spy stories) Clouston's novel was fairly straightforward.

Table 3: A summary of Clouston's *The Spy in Black* novel.<sup>5</sup>

<b>Act I: 'The Narrative of Lieutenant von Belke (of the German Navy)</b>
Cardinal functions 1-4: Germany's, Lieutenant von Belke, is introduced to audiences and his mission is established. He infiltrates the island base of the British Grand Fleet and collects information on their military manoeuvres while waiting for an unnamed German contact.
<b>Act II: 'A Few Chapters by the Editor'</b>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Desmond & Hawkes, *Adaptation*, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 302.

<sup>5</sup> All cardinal functions listed here are determined from J. Storer Clouston's novel *The Spy in Black*, William Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh & London, 1917.

Cardinal functions 5-14: Reverend Alexander Burnett is introduced. He is an established Reverend in a small community, but desires change. After a series of conversations with a visiting travelling man (a disguised German spy), Burnett decides to relocate to the 'Windy Isles' (Orkney Islands). He is kidnapped upon departure and found seriously injured by the authorities. In a conversation with one of his friends and colleagues, it is revealed that the British Navy will investigate the matter. Simultaneously, a governess, Eileen Holland, is introduced to audiences while she is en route to her new position in the Windy Isles and meets the Reverend Burnett imposter on board. It is later revealed that she left her governess position after only four days of service.

### **Act III: 'Lieutenant von Belke's Narrative Resumed'**

Cardinal functions 15-18: 'Herr Tiel' (Rev. Burnett imposter) meets Belke and provides him with information and a room. 'Ashington' (a supposed British turncoat) and 'Eileen Burnett' (really Eileen Holland) are introduced as co-conspirators in Germany's spy plot. They provide attack plans to Belke and convince him to stay longer. He passes this information on to his commanding officer during a rendezvous and returns to Tiel's home.

### **Act IV: 'Lieutenant von Belke's Narrative Concluded'**

Cardinal functions 19-22: Belke becomes suspicious of Tiel and Burnett after Eileen's original employer, Mr. Craigie, visits to understand why she left his house so suddenly. They are not revealed by his actions and manage to calm him, but Belke realises the house is being watched. After some time, Belke is told that the information he was given was false, that his supposed German conspirators were British agents, and that a trap had been laid for his German comrades. While he waited an attack had occurred, his German comrades were defeated, and he was now a prisoner of war.

### **Act V: 'A few Concluding Chapters by the Editor'**

Cardinal functions 23-25: The full extent of the British operation is revealed and Belke is taken away. 'Tiel', actually a British naval investigator named Blacklock, confesses his love and admiration to Eileen Holland, and she accepts him.

The alteration of these cardinal functions during the adaptation process effectively changed the narrative's arc and outcome. Following McFarlane's beliefs, filmmakers attempting a close adaptation would have tried to transfer this outline carefully – only making changes to the narrative when necessary. Pressburger did not adhere to this practice and *Black's* film version does not transpose much of Clouston's story. Some elements and cardinal functions were similar to the original adventure, but most points were reworked to better suit cinema.

In his autobiography, Powell candidly pointed out that Pertwee's script was 'awful' and 'wordy', with far too many 'pleasant dialogue scenes' and little action.<sup>6</sup> Like the novel, this early script only made mention of off-screen action, which was appropriate in book format but detrimental for faster-paced screen adaptations, as Powell frankly stated, 'pleasant British dialogue scenes do not make a pleasant film'.<sup>7</sup> Pressburger's adaptation was far from boring and rarely 'wordy'. He worked many themes and scenarios from the book into his own cardinal functions, i.e., deception, attempted murder, betrayal, and reconstructed the wider story-arc in a manner that was driven less by dialogue and more by character(s) actions. The following synopsis contains the picture's significant cardinal functions (refer to Appendix B for a more comprehensive breakdown).

The film begins swiftly with introductory scenes (functions 1-3) that establish Captain Hardt (Vedit), his supporting crew, and his mission to infiltrate Hoy to obtain information regarding the movements of the British Grand Fleet. This was quickly followed by scenes introducing Hobson's character (functions 4-6). Audiences watch as the real Anne Burnett (June Duprez) is kidnapped while on her way to Hoy, where she has been employed as the schoolmistress, and then replaced by Hobson (introduced later as Fräulein Tiel). Tiel then travels to Hoy where she is met by the local Reverend and his wife at the ferry station, and as they have never met Anne Burnett, they do not suspect foul play or enemy infiltration. Tiel and Hardt finally meet (set during the night of Hardt's landing) in the scene that followed and the next morning the British turncoat, introduced as Ashington, promises the delivery of classified secrets in the days to come (functions 7-9). In the scenes that follow, Tiel practices and fulfils her role as the school's mistress, and Hardt spies on the British fleet while perched in the cottage's top windows. When Ashington arrives with the promised secrets Hardt informs them that he will take them to

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<sup>6</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 300.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

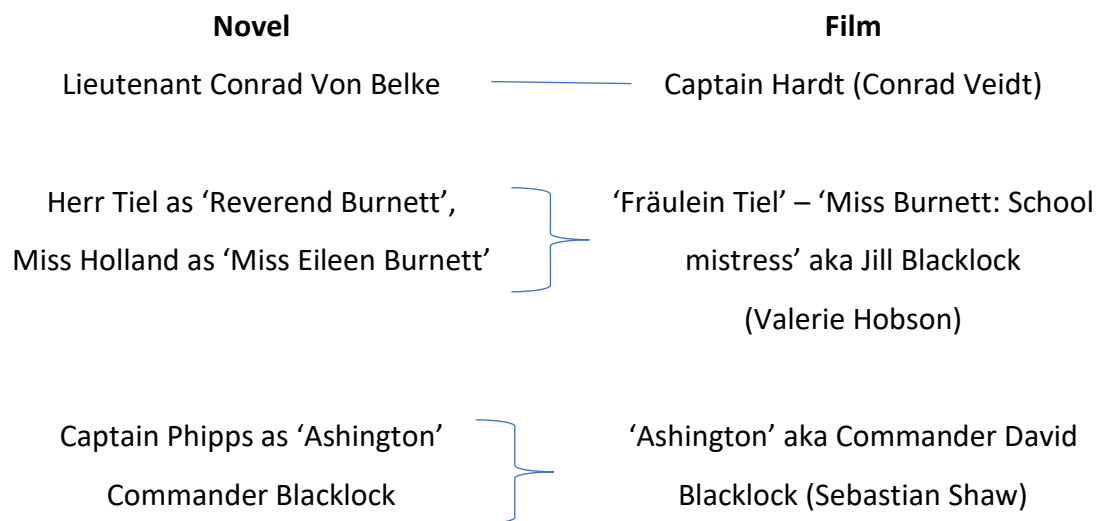
his crew at the scheduled rendezvous point later that night (functions 10-12). Meanwhile, Reverend John Harris (Cyril Raymond) arrives on the island. He is the fiancé of the real Anne Burnett and, upon meeting the local reverend and his wife (from function 6), explains that he has come for a surprise visit. They invite him to dinner and encourage him to bring Anne, which he promises to do, and he makes his way to the cottage, but upon arrival, he interrupts a meeting between Ashington, Tiel and Hardt. After a tense conversation, they decide to capture him because he will jeopardise their plans if let go (functions 13-15). Hardt and Ashington make it to the rendezvous point after Harris is contained, but while completing this errand the local reverend and his wife visit the cottage. Tiel assures them that Harris was simply fatigued and convalescing in the next room and sends them on their way before the men return; however, the elderly couple are suspicious of her answers and behaviour (functions 16-18). After returning, Hardt makes advances towards Tiel but she rejects his attention and rushes to her room. Later, he hears her leave her bedroom and follows her outside. In the garden, she meets Ashington and through their conversation, it is revealed that they are both British agents, are married (Jill and Commander David Blacklock), and are waiting for a signal to move in and capture Hardt. After hearing this the German escapes before Blacklock's men arrive (functions 19-21).

The sequences that follow come in quick succession because they are the picture's action sequences – scenes that Clouston only alluded to in his novel and those that Pertwee omitted in his own, wordy adaptation. In Pressburger's version, Hardt escapes to the ferry, disguised as the reverend Harris (function 22), and commandeers the vessel with the help of some German prisoners being held onboard (functions 24-25). Simultaneously, the Blacklock's have separated and Jill is travelling on the same ferry as Hardt (as a civilian), while her husband has returned to the local naval headquarters. Hardt confronts Jill when he comes across her (function 26) and she vehemently argues against his plan to escape and rendezvous with his U-boat because the Orkney Islands sea mine defences are too unpredictable and dangerous to circumnavigate – he ignores her. At the same time, British naval authorities have been alerted to Hardt's actions and instructed local cruisers to chase the ferry (function 28), meanwhile, Hardt's U-boat identifies the ferry as an opportune target and prepares to destroy it (they are unaware of their Captain's control of the civilian vessel, function 27). Hardt attempts to contact his German crew but cannot obtain a clear radio connection and they fire upon the ferry, damaging it immensely, this prompts Hardt's decision to move all the civilians to the lifeboats (function 29). A set of small British cruisers enter the area, Commander Blacklock is aboard one of them, but a larger destroyer

successfully fires upon the German U-boat as it attempts to resubmerge and escape (function 30). Defeated, Hardt remains on the ferry and directs any remaining passengers to the last lifeboat while he remains on the sinking vessel, and as the ship sinks Jill is reunited with her husband (function 31).

Although many of these cardinal functions were Pressburger’s invention, vestiges of Clouston’s original functions can be found in this adaptation. As mentioned earlier, innovations were needed to better suit cinema and the insertion of action sequences was a tenable way to ensure that the film maintained an engaging pace. This was particularly noticeable in the picture’s character(s) roles and functions. To establish a narrative suited for cinema and to appease Korda’s demands for fitting roles for the stars, Conrad Veidt and Valerie Hobson, Pressburger made the following adjustments to Clouston’s characters,

Main characters:



The significance of the woman’s role was heightened in Powell and Pressburger’s version and the functionality of Hobson’s part was increased due to the amalgamation of multiple characters. She acted as the primary German contact on the island, a role that was fulfilled in the novel by Herr Tiel, and she disguised herself as the new schoolmistress, which was somewhat like the governess position that Eileen Holland occupied. Due to the gender swap, Reverend Burnett’s assault and the theft of his identity could not occur in the picture; however, Pressburger’s rearranged cardinal functions to accommodate for the theft of the real Miss Burnett’s identity echoed Clouston’s original scenario.

The consolidation of Commander Blacklock and Captain Phipps also influenced Powell and Pressburger’s adaptation. In Clouston’s novel, Blacklock had taken Tiel’s place, but the role was altered to better suit Hobson and this made the original character obsolete in the picture. To remedy this, the filmmakers removed Captain Phipps from the narrative and Commander Blacklock took his place as the ‘Ashington’ imposter. To further strengthen the role, Powell and Pressburger also added the romantic link between the two British agents much earlier (they are husband and wife already in the picture). This echoes the romantic relationship at the end of Clouston’s original novel, function 24, but the film version was more refined due to its earlier introduction.

The alteration of these major characters also influenced various supporting characters and their functionality within the narrative. Like the book, the film has several individuals that provide catalysers (pertinent pieces of information that support the cardinal functions) through their actions and conversations.

Table 4: Character changes from text to screen, Clouston to Powell & Pressburger.

Novel	Film
Reverend Alexander Burnett, Eileen Holland	Miss Anne Burnett (June Duprez)
<p><u>Function/role:</u> As noted above, Valerie Hobson’s reimagined character was made from the novel’s Rev. Burnett and Eileen Holland. Burnett’s assault, function 11, and the theft of his identity were transferred from the novel; however, Pressburger rearranged the persona and vocation to better meet his needs. On-screen, the real Anne Burnett was a young educator moving to the Orkney Islands for work, who is then assaulted on the way to the Windy Isles.</p>	
Richard Craigie Esq, Mr. Drummond  Mrs. Craigie	Reverend Hector Matthews (Athole Stewart)  Mrs. Matthews (Agnes Laughlin)
<p><u>Function/role:</u> Although minor characters, the Reverend Matthews and his wife play a significant part; they are the quintessential ‘suspicious locals’. Their somewhat bothersome nature and actions act as catalysers for the major cardinal functions and provide an</p>	

opportunity for the audience to receive details that could not be expressed through primary characters. They also replace original characters, i.e., Craigie and Drummond,	
Commander Wiedermann	Schuster (Marius Goring)
<u>Function/role:</u> The German Navy was not represented well in Clouston’s novel and the only developed German characters were Belke and Wiederman. Their meetings were brief, their conversations concise and there was little representation of Belke’s crewmates beyond these interactions. Powell and Pressburger remedied this by adding a ‘German side’ to their version, which added a layer of depth to their characters but required their rearrangement. Pressburger flipped the roles. Belke became Captain Hardt – a higher rank than the original his predecessor – and Wiedermann was replaced by a lower-ranking officer, Schuster. Like Wiederman, Schuster acted as a conduit for information and was the German officer that Hardt primarily communicated throughout his mission.	

The earlier chapters in this dissertation made it clear that Powell and Pressburger did not have the reputation, nor the means, to position *The Spy in Black’s* new narrative against a historically rich backdrop. Due to the novel’s position as a complete work of fiction, its cardinal functions could be transposed and repurposed without jeopardising historical fact through misrepresentation, so the duo remodelled it to reflect the contemporary 1939 era, which had its own specific (but strikingly similar) set of pre-war tensions. Although constructed in this manner, Powell and Pressburger did salute the military history of the Orkney Isle region and kept this historic detail in their narrative. The naval base sequestered within the Orkney Island’s naturally isolated Scapa Flow was a very active zone during WWI but became a somewhat deteriorated (still functional though) site in WWII. Both versions of *The Spy in Black* acknowledged the significance of the area during wartime and reminded audiences of its importance.

In his novel, Clouston made sure to maintain an air of mysteriousness about the setting by omitting exact details regarding Belke’s mission – only dropping a few clues regarding the geographical location of the German spy’s infiltration. Although few, these clues could be linked to real places and Powell and Pressburger explicitly highlighted these ties in their picture, thus removing any doubt about the story’s regional setting. In contrast, Belke divulges some clues in the novel, but never fully reveals the location.

...it was not ordinary British turf either. I was on the holy of holies, actually.

landed on those sacred, jealously guarded islands (which, I presume, I must not even name here), where the Grand Fleet had its lair.<sup>8</sup>

This may seem vague to audiences nowadays, but Belke's clues would have been understandable to many readers in 1917 because general reports on the Grand Fleet's whereabouts, its missions, and its general health, were printed in national newspapers.

When compared to Clouston's purposefully vague description, Pressburger's dialogue was incredibly forthright. After opening the mission packet and reviewing the orders, Captain Hardt and his junior U-boat officers name the location.

Officer I: 'What have you got there Schuster?'

Schuster: 'A chart of the Orkney mine defences'

Officer II: 'I've got a photograph of the *Old Man of Hoy*, seems to be a rendezvous'

...

Captain Hardt: 'Gentlemen, we are on a special mission. Our orders are to proceed immediately to this point near Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands.

It's a big job and a dangerous one. I know I can count on you and the men, that's all.'

...

Captain Hardt: 'Schuster?'

Schuster: 'Yes sir?'

Captain Hardt: 'Now for your motorbike. It will take me to Long Hope on the island of Hoy, base of the British Grand Fleet.'<sup>9</sup>

Divulging this information early served three purposes. Firstly, it quickly provided audiences with an explanation regarding the protagonist's main goal. Secondly, its swift and concise delivery ensured that the film would not be burdened by large sequences of explanatory dialogue later in the piece. This was (and still is) an important technique for filmmakers to implement. According to writer-director Mike Kuciak, dialogue is the 'biggest culprit in slowing down a script'

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<sup>8</sup> Clouston, *The Spy in Black*, 8.

<sup>9</sup> *The Spy in Black*, directed by Michael Powell, London Film Productions, 1939, DVD ed., distributed by Magna Pacific Pty. Ltd, 1991, 00:06:35 – 00:09:00.



and is an element that should 'feel organic' and 'on point' with the film's main narrative.<sup>10</sup> The third purpose behind this clarity relates to the history of the area and public memory. Naming the region so quickly created an immediate link between the new film, the original novel, and the military history of Scapa Flow. This brought the scenario 'closer to home', reminded audiences of the military significance of the region, and reiterated the real threat of infiltration and betrayal of Britain's interests during wartime.

Scapa Flow<sup>11</sup> has been described as a harbour that is 'said to be big enough for all the ships, of all the navies, of all the world', but one that is 'forever linked to the great ships of the Great War'.<sup>12</sup> Its geographical position, size (approx. 120sq mi, 310km) and the natural protection provided by the surrounding Orkney Islands, made it one of the most prominent naval waypoints in the Northern Hemisphere.<sup>13</sup> When the threat of war in Europe significantly escalated due to the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), Britain was quick to refortify Scapa Flow and other bases along the east coast. In March 1914, before the outbreak of war, the First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill answered questions in the House of Commons regarding the Admiralty's expenditure in the region.<sup>14</sup> 'The existing pier at Scapa Flow is being extended for naval purposes at Admiralty expense at a cost of about £9000' Churchill announced, before adding 'a balance of £4500 is being provided in next year's Estimates to complete the work.'<sup>15</sup> This investment in infrastructure was well-timed. Less than four months later, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia (July 28, 1914), sparking a chain of declarations of war across Europe leading to the highly industrialised, modern conflict.

Just four days before Britain's official declaration of war on Germany (August 4, 1914), the British Grand Fleet (the combined first and second fleets), manned by over 40,000 men,

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<sup>10</sup> Mike Kuciak, 'Pacing Your Script', *Script Magazine (A Division of Writer's Digest)*, 2010, [online], date accessed: 01/10/2019, <<https://www.scriptmag.com/features/pacing-your-script>>.

<sup>11</sup> Due to the natural protection provided by the surrounding Orkney Islands, Scapa Flow has long been a safe anchorage point for vessels. Accounts and archaeological evidence show that many moored there, i.e., from Viking expeditionary groups to 16<sup>th</sup> Century Loyalist Scottish Earls, in an effort to escape the harsh weather conditions created by the warring Atlantic and North Sea, Powell and Pressburger's film did not explicitly address this long history; however, it is important to note that the Scottish region had a significant place within the UK's naval history prior to World War I. Orkney Islands Council, 'History of Scapa Flow', *Scapa Flow Historic Wreck Site*, 2012, [online], date accessed: 31/01/2021, <<http://www.scapafloowrecks.com/resources/scapa-flow-complete-history.pdf>>.

<sup>12</sup> *The Dreadnoughts of Scapa Flow*, Andy Twaddle, BBC Worldwide (documentary), Episode 1, London: England, 2015, 00:02:25-00:03:00.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 00:03:00-00:05:00.

<sup>14</sup> Unknown, 'House of Commons', *The Times*, London, 11 March 1914.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*.

arrived in the isolated Orkney region and established the Scapa Flow harbour as their primary northern base.<sup>16</sup> At this early stage, solidifying the area's defences was a primary concern, especially as the British fleet was filled with surface ships that were susceptible to serious attacks by Germany's U-boats – should an enemy get into the harbour. The introduction of scuttled 'block-ship' barricades, anti-submarine booms (giant, curtain-like nets that hung from smaller, manoeuvrable vessels to block the inlet) and sea mines, dramatically altered the physical region and life on the islands. The threat of a U-boat attack was ever-present and local papers now listed sea mine warnings for their readers. For example, the *Sunderland Daily Echo* listed Scapa Flow's entrances in its 'Mine warnings and directions on compulsory pilotage' column, reporting that 'all entrances were dangerous' and that some, Stromness in particular, were inaccessible to public vessels.<sup>17</sup> In regard to U-boat rumours, one example, from the *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, denounced a German claim that one of their U-boat's had successfully torpedoed a British battleship in Scapa Flow, 'the Admiralty makes the following announcement: The actual facts are that a small auxiliary [ship] off the North of Scotland was attacked by an enemy submarine on the date mentioned. She was not hit'.<sup>18</sup> While similar reports can be found across the UK throughout the war years, the immediate post-war events at Scapa Flow garnered significantly more attention.

After the Armistice, reports concerning the fate and location of the surrendered German High Seas Fleet began emerging in newspapers. By November 1918, it was revealed that Scapa Flow was to be its anchorage for a time, and The *Times*' special correspondent covered the event with excitement, 'those ships [German] will set out under a strong escort for Scapa Flow, to remain there until the Peace Treaty decides their fate'.<sup>19</sup> Although the *Times*'s correspondent speculated its fate, this had already been decided by Germany's High Command. According to military historian Dan van der Vat, German High Command was increasingly suspicious of Britain's continual requests to reduce the number of men within the interned crews, and they believed that seizure of the High Seas Fleet was imminent.<sup>20</sup> In preparation for this event, the

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<sup>16</sup> Twaddle, 'The Dreadnoughts of Scapa', 00:03:00-00:05:00.

<sup>17</sup> Unknown, 'Mine Warnings and Directions on Compulsory Pilotage', *Sunderland Daily Echo*, 9 January 1915.

<sup>18</sup> Unknown, 'German Submarine', *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, Great Britain, 27 July 1916.

<sup>19</sup> Unnamed 'Special Correspondent', 'Der Tag', *The Times*, London, 22 November 1918.

<sup>20</sup> Dan van der Vat, *The Grand Scuttle*, Hodder and Stroughton, London: Sydney: Auckland: Toronto, 1982, 156.

acting Admiral, Ludwig von Reuter, issued a twelve-point outline to ‘all Captains and Torpedo Boat-Leaders’ which contained scuttling (destruction) instructions.<sup>21</sup>

This was not an action sanctioned by other nations and it is suspected that the decision was solely made by Admiral Reuter.<sup>22</sup> After the scuttling occurred, June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1919, newspapers like the *North Devon Journal* reported the event with vigour:

Acting on a pre-arranged plan ... the German “skeleton” crews on the vessels of their High Seas fleet in Scapa Flow on Saturday scuttled their ships... There were 70 ships in all anchored in the Flow, and of these. 45 have been sunk...Some of the Germans were killed and wounded by the fire of our ships when they refused to stop the abandonment of them. imprisoned warships.<sup>23</sup>

According to Dan van der Vat, reactions to the scuttling were mixed. The British were ‘publicly indignant and privately relieved’, Americans ‘shrugged their shoulders’, and the Germans were ‘officially regretful while protesting their innocence, but unofficially proud’.<sup>24</sup>

Alongside the film’s general allusions towards the significance of the Orkney Islands during wartime, a similar link between destruction, honour and pride can be found within its cardinal functions. By function 25 Britain’s espionage schemes have succeeded and although Hardt is ‘on the run’, he still adheres to a code of honour. Avner Offer describes Germany’s military honour code as an integral part of the nation’s wider identity ‘Whilhelmian code of honour’ and an ingrained tradition.<sup>25</sup> Hardt’s behaviour throughout the film, especially within the final scenes, adhered to the code’s strict professional and personal expectations of conduct, which include ‘loyalty to the state, professional integrity, and courage’.<sup>26</sup> When it becomes clear that he will not return to his own U-boat, Hardt’s honour is cemented through his compassion towards the ferry’s captured civilians. When the ferry is attacked and severely damaged, he

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<sup>21</sup> Ludwig Von Reuter, ‘The Order to Scuttle’, 17 June 1919, translated by author Dan van der Vat, found in *The Grand Scuttle*, appendix II.

<sup>22</sup> Van der Vat, *The Grand Scuttle*, 194-195.

<sup>23</sup> Unknown, ‘German Fleet Sunk at Scapa Flow’, *The North Devon Journal*, Great Britain, 26 June 1919.

<sup>24</sup> Van der Vat, *The Grand Scuttle*, 183.

<sup>25</sup> Avner Offer, ‘Going to War in 1914: A Matter of Honor?’, *Politics and Society*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1995, 215.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

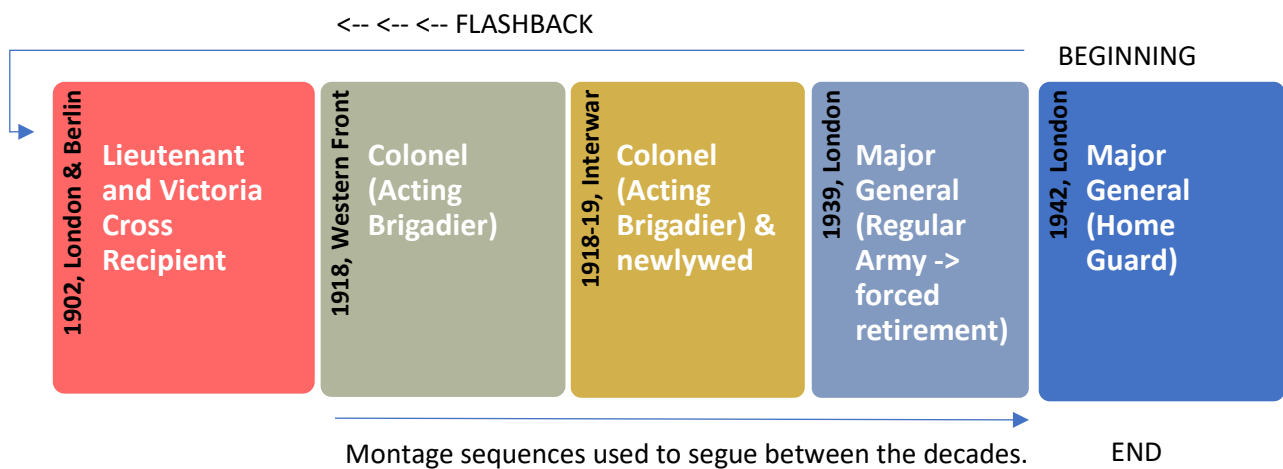
orders them to the lifeboats but remains on the sinking vessel himself. Hardt’s defeat, and subsequent death, echoes the fate of loyal German seamen during the 1919 scuttling. In accordance with the Wilhelmian code, those sailors retained their honour through their loyalty to the state and adherence to the maritime tradition.

Although never explicit, Pressburger was able to include some historical information into *The Spy in Black* even though there was no great pressure to do so. Like Clouston’s original novel, Powell and Pressburger relied more on the atmospheric qualities of the spy-thriller genre to capture their audience’s attention, rather than a richly embellished historical tale. The decision to adopt the book in a contemporary style reduced the importance of historical data within the film’s distributional functions, but allusions towards history’s events/trends were lightly scattered throughout the movie and worked to subtly remind audiences of Scapa Flow’s significance – a particularly poignant reminder at the brink of a second world war too. Their next historically based movie, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, was an entirely different affair.

*‘The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp’: The Archers Original Historical Epic*

Structured as a story in four parts and strongly driven by its characters, *Colonel Blimp* is the biopic of the imagined British Army officer, Clive Wynne-Candy. Utilising the flashback/montage technique, Powell and Pressburger began and ended their film in a contemporary 1942 setting, emphasizing the topicality and importance of its main messages, which allowed them to explore earlier eras with ease.

Figure 2: Colonel Blimp’s film structure.



Due to the film’s structure, historical settings, duration, and the criticisms incorporated into the narrative via its characters, it has a lengthy list of cardinal functions. This was always Pressburger’s intent though (evident in his extensive *Sugar Candy* script) and with the significant financial support from Rank, and support from friends in and outside of the industry, The Archers were able to realise Pressburger’s preproduction vision. The following synopsis highlights the picture’s key cardinal functions, characters, and themes; however, for a more comprehensive breakdown of the film see Appendix C.

*Table 5: A summary of Colonel Blimp’s cardinal functions.*

<p><b>Part I: Capturing the Colonel, 1942</b></p>
<p>Cardinal functions 1-5: Under the direction of their young and defiant commanding officer (CO), ‘Spud’, a Home Guard unit defies the parameters of a predetermined war game exercise and head out to capture its primary target (Major General Wynne-Candy) long before the game’s agreed start time, ‘war starts at midnight’. On their way to London, they stop at a local teahouse so Spud can meet with his girlfriend, who is a uniformed ATS driver, but she hastily exits after a short time and speeds away in her vehicle. Suspicious of her actions, men from the unit check on their CO and find him injured. He shouts for them to make haste as his girlfriend has left to ‘warn the Wizard’ (Candy) of their plans and a chase ensues. The woman reaches a Turkish bathhouse in London, ‘The Royal Bathers Club’; however, the Home Guard unit is close behind and she is unsuccessful in her attempts to warn Candy. The unit storms the bathhouse and find the aged Major General in its spacious sauna room. Candy and Spud confront one another. While Candy argues for tradition, respect, and a soldier’s ability to follow orders, Spud argues that current military tactics are outdated and ineffective and that the aged military commanders (many who are also in the bathhouse) have become fat and out-of-touch. This angers Candy to the point of physical violence and as he berates Spud for his assumptions, they begin fist-fighting. Together, they fall into the bathhouse’s cool-off pool, which signals the beginning of the flashback sequence.</p>
<p><i>Segue sequence to the past</i></p>
<p><b>Part II: Young Candy in Imperial Britain and Germany, 1902</b></p>

Cardinal functions 6-15: A young Clive Candy emerges from the bathhouse pool and is introduced to audiences through a conversation with a fellow patron, 'Hoppy', who is also a friend and comrade. Both men cause a small ruckus with their reunion and are berated by a senior military officer (twice) before leaving the facility. Through Hoppy, Candy learns that British citizens in Germany are facing significant discrimination due to the spread of anti-British propaganda, and he decides to act upon this news. After meeting with senior staff at the War Office, he is told to leave the matter alone as he is not qualified or experienced in delicate political exchanges. Candy ignores this advice and travels to Berlin. There he meets Edith Hunter, a British governess working in Berlin and Hoppy's source of news and agrees to speak to British embassy officials about the spread of anti-British propaganda. Again, he is told to leave the matter alone. Later, when meeting Hunter at a popular café, Candy explains the warnings he received, but she is disappointed by the lack of action upon the issue. When the German man responsible for the spread of this propaganda, Kaunitz, enters the café Candy decides to confront him and, in the process, insults the entire German army. This causes an international incident. To assuage the German army's honour code, Candy must duel (with swords) one of their officers and the embassy officials to prepare for this event. In the early hours of a cold morning, Candy is escorted to the gym of a local barrack, is introduced to his opponent – Theo Kretschmar-Schuldorff – and they begin to duel. Both men are injured (Candy has a significant slash across his top lip, while Schuldorff has a smaller, similar wound on his forehead) and are sent to a countryside nursing home to recuperate. Hunter joins them because the dignitaries involved cover up the incident and claim that it is about a girl, not the spread of anti-British propaganda. After being properly introduced, Candy and Schuldorff become excellent friends – despite the language barrier between them.

Sometime later (function 14), on the day of his departure Candy learns that Hunter and Schuldorff have developed a loving relationship and intend to marry. Initially, Schuldorff believes he will have to duel Candy again as he is under the impression that Hunter is Candy's fiancé, but his friend quickly dismisses the notion, explains the misunderstanding, and wishes the couple well. Upon returning to England, Candy realises that he also loved Hunter and admits this to his beloved elderly aunt, whilst visiting her at Cadogan Place (her

family home that Candy will eventually inherit). She assures him that he will always have a place there and this triggers the flashforward sequences.

*Flashforward sequence*

### **Part III: A Middle-aged Candy during the Great War and the Immediate Post-war Years, 1918-1919**

Cardinal functions 16-24: A middle-aged Candy is introduced to audiences whilst travelling through war-torn France, 1918. Upon reaching a non-descript outpost he is tasked with the interrogation of German prisoners and balks when a South African officer suggests torture. When his interrogation proves fruitless, Candy leaves to visit a local hospital for some warm food and local intel (if possible). Traditionally a convent, the hospital is filled with British volunteer nurses (VAD) and through the mass of people in the dining hall Candy spots a woman that looks exactly like Hunter did in 1902; however, he cannot reach her before the nurses retire for the night. A nearby nurse cannot help him identify the lookalike, but she does mention that they are a VAD detachment from West Riding, Yorkshire. He continues through France with this knowledge. Later, when stuck at a crossroad while his batman (assistant), Murdoch, works on their vehicle, the bells signalling the end of the war begin to ring. Candy, still adhering to his strong beliefs in gentlemanly warfare and fair fighting, delivers a passionate speech that emphasises how the British won the conflict because ‘might is right’.

The landscape transitions into the picturesque countryside of West Riding (function 19) in post-war England and through a short newspaper announcement, audiences learn that Candy is engaged to a local mill owner’s daughter, a Miss Barbara Wynne, and is set to be married soon. Candy has found his ‘lost nurse’ and assures her family that their introduction and upcoming marriage are two of the best events in his life. When next on-screen the pair are married, and Candy is introducing his new wife to Cadogan Place (inherited after the death of his aunt) and Murdoch – his wartime batman and now house butler. While there he receives news that officials have found Schuldorff in an English prisoner of war camp for German officers and Candy decides to visit him.

While Wynne stays behind in the Commandant’s office, Candy searches for Schuldorff. An outdoor concert is in session at the time and Candy manages to find Schuldorff during the

intermission, but Schuldorff shuns him and returns to the crowd as the music begins. Dejected, Candy leaves for Cadogan Place. Sometime later (function 22), Schuldorff telephones Candy from the train station where hundreds of German prisoners of war are waiting to be repatriated to Germany. Candy berates him, insists that his friend join him for dinner before his departure, and personally travels to the station to collect him. They reminisce on the car ride back to Cadogan Place and Schuldorff is somewhat uncomfortable when he learns that Candy is currently hosting a dinner party filled with senior British dignitaries and servicemen (approx. a dozen). Candy assures him that they are gentlemen and will treat him with respect, but the German officer is clearly uneasy and overwhelmed when introduced to the men at the table. They try to make him feel at ease and insist that Germany will 'soon be back on its feet'; however, in a later scene (function 23) Schuldorff scoffs at their naivety and outdated sentimentalities. This 1918-1919 section of the film ends with an idyllic, quiet scene between Candy and his wife.

*Flashforward sequence*

**Part IV: Candy's Retirement from the Regular Army, 1939-1942**

Cardinal functions 25-35: Audiences are transported to a stark tribunal room, where Schuldorff (now an elderly gentleman) is undertaking an interview that will determine whether he may remain in England as a refugee. He gives a passionate speech explaining how he travelled to Britain after the death of his beloved wife and the loss of his sons to the Nazi regime and reiterated that he was a tired old man that hoped to in England because it reminded him of pleasant memories of his wife and experiences from his younger years. Candy arrives, unexpectedly, and vouches for Schuldorff's good nature. His application is then accepted, and Candy takes Schuldorff back to Cadogan Place for dinner. After their meal Candy confesses that he was in love with Hunter too, that she was an 'ideal' that he had never seemed to find again. This is reiterated when he shows Schuldorff a portrait of his wife, Barbara Wynne, and is further highlighted when Candy's ATS driver, Angela 'Johnny' Cannon', arrives to take Schuldorff to his lodgings as she (also played by Kerr) is an aesthetic doppelgänger to both Hunter and Wynne.

Sometime later, Candy is scheduled to give a BBC radio broadcast, but he is replaced at the last minute (function 30). Cannon, Schuldorff, and Murdoch were waiting and listening



together in Cadogan Place, and while Murdoch and Cannon are surprised at the change Schuldorff admits that he suspected that this might happen. Before he can explain fully Candy comes home, dejected, and receives the news, via letter, that he has been placed on the Army's retiree list. Schuldorff explains, gently but powerfully, that Candy's traditionalist mindset and focus on 'fair fighting' was a significant problem when applied to this current conflict as it was 'not a gentleman's war', instead, it was a decisive fight against a devilish ideology and one that needed new approaches and knowledge (function 33). After a few moments of silence, Cannon perks up and suggests that Candy apply his knowledge to the newly developing Home Guard. Schuldorff quickly agrees with her, insisting that Candy's experience and connections would be a great benefit to the programme, and Murdoch, who entered during their discussion, admits that he has already joined this growing militia. Encouraged, Candy vows to assist in this new venture and this scene triggers the flashforward montage that depicts his success via news magazine coverage – through this sequence audience also learn that Cadogan Place has been destroyed in the Blitz and that Murdoch died during the incident.

*Short flashforward sequence*

**Part V: Home Guard Exercises and Blimp Related Revelations, 1942**

Cardinal functions 36-45: A meeting with Candy and the Home Guard's wider high command reveals that a planned war game exercise will officially begin at 00:00 as 'war starts at midnight'. From this moment the film's cardinal functions align with those in its opening sequences. Cannon has the afternoon off and meets with her boyfriend, Spud (introduced to audiences in part I), in a local tearoom. He divulges their plans to capture Candy before the game begins, they argue, and as she skirts around tables to escape the tearoom Spud trips on a discarded chair and hits his head. She leaves him there and breaks away to warn Candy of his unit's impending arrival. She is ultimately unsuccessful and only moments after her arrival at the Turkish bathhouse Spud arrives with his men and they capture Candy.

The next day (functions 43-45), Schuldorff finds Candy in the small park opposite Cadogan Place (the land was cleared and turned into an emergency water tank after its destruction). Candy admits that he could not bear to speak to anyone else and the pair chuckle over the

previous day's events, and while embarrassed Candy admits that he understands Spud's actions as he was young and defiant once. Candy, Schuldorff and Cannon then walk to the water tank where Candy's home previously stood, and he reflects on his lack of judgement regarding the changing world. Simultaneously, Spud's unit is on a victory march after capturing the Major-General and their route takes them past the trio. Candy tells Cannon that he will not have Spud reprimanded; however, he insists that the pair visit him for dinner later. As the Home Guard unit passes, he salutes them – thus signalling the end of the picture.

Without a pre-existing text to follow it is unsurprising that *Colonel Blimp* was a lengthy film. With only David Low's cartoon character and a single comment from *One of Our Aircraft is Missing* as initial reference points, Pressburger's task was immense, and the creation of well-developed characters and settings was extremely important but ultimately extended the picture's running. Unlike *the Spy in Black*, *Colonel Blimp* did not have a foundational text to refer to and the believability of its characters, events, and settings hinged on Pressburger's scriptwriting skills and Powell's direction. The characters were the centrepieces in Pressburger's tale. They propelled the narrative forward, of course, but also symbolised a series of populations and historical social and political changes that occurred in Britain from 1900-1942. The following section will discuss the picture's primary characters, Clive 'Sugar' Wynne-Candy (Livesey), Theo Kretschmar-Schuldorff (Walbrook), Edith Hunter, Barbara Wynne and Angela 'Johnny' Cannon, (Kerr), and its only prominent supporting character, Murdoch (John Laurie), to further highlight how they represented the development of prominent societal groups through their actions and interactions.

To begin, despite Churchill's worries about Low's infamous character gracing cinema screens in a demoralising manner, *The Archers'* rendition was quite compassionate. While Low's cartoons invited ridicule and criticism, *The Archers'* 'Clive "Sugar" Wynne-Candy' prompted sympathy and empathy, and his experiences encouraged viewers to understand the backstory of society's Blimps before casting extreme judgement upon them. Questions like, 'how do Blimps develop?', 'why are they so stuck in the past?' and 'could they change?', were addressed through Candy's actions and interactions throughout his career across three distinct decades in British history.

The ministries' concerns regarding the sharpness of The Archers' Blimp were fair but were ultimately made irrelevant by the script and performances. Pressburger's Blimp was charming, even sweet, and Livesey's portrayal – along with his unconventional appearance and 'deep husky burr' of a voice – produced a character that was both gentlemanly, naïve, yet lovable, without toeing the line of idiocy or satirical bitterness.<sup>27</sup> While Candy may share aspects with the original caricature, such as his patronage at a Turkish Bathhouse, position as a career Army man and member of gentleman's club, his charming and personable nature invited audiences into his upper-class world. Ian Christie described the film's rendition as 'more a hapless prisoner of his class tradition, steadfast to a point of obstinacy, unable to redirect his life, or love, beyond the first *idée fixe*<sup>28</sup>... the centrepiece in a gallery of familiar stereotypes.'<sup>29</sup> Livesey's affable nature provoked sympathy and empathy for this somewhat stereotypical character though, which heightened the emotional response towards his eventual acceptance that the world had changed while he had not and that he must adapt or become redundant. Audiences could rejoice in Candy's realisation and find solace in the notion that some Blimps can comprehend the necessity of change.

This personability would have been entirely missing if Laurence Olivier, had played the part. In a letter to Powell, Olivier had described several scenarios to insert into Candy's story because he found it lacking in the character's back-story. Olivier complained, 'you don't say *what* [author's italics] makes him a Blimp... the character just Blimpifies himself – all by himself' and declared that The Archers' 'disappointed lover isn't enough'.<sup>30</sup> He then proceeded to outline aspects that he believed would be better for explaining the creation of Blimps, which included the 'carelessly flung public school and family clichés' and the 'mollifying effect of "Rewards of a grateful nation" on the average man'.<sup>31</sup> Fortunately, Olivier never set foot in the studio for this project, and in his autobiography, Powell expressed relief at the casting change, 'instead of his lips [Candy's] dripping corrosive acid, they dripped saccharine'.<sup>32</sup> His relief at the casting change was linked with the actors' approach towards the role. Livesey was far more sympathetic and

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<sup>27</sup> Macdonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 223.

<sup>28</sup> *Idée fixe* is a French term referring to fixed ideas that are incredibly difficult to modify.

<sup>29</sup> Christie, *Arrows of Desire*, 46.

<sup>30</sup> Laurence Olivier, 'A Letter from Laurence Olivier', 28 May 1942, in Ian Christie's *Powell & Pressburger: The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, 21.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 22-23.

<sup>32</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 404.

charming as Candy, but if Olivier had played the part, his suggestions and approach would likely have altered this aura and created a more complex, jaded, and arrogant Blimp figure.

The development of Candy's Blimpish behaviour and the importance of his late epiphany could not be fully underscored without a contrasting character. Portrayed by the popular Austrian star Anton Walbrook, Theo Kretschmar-Schuldorff was Pressburger's 'anti-Blimp' and Candy's unlikely lifelong friend. Like Conrad Veidt's character in *The Spy in Black*, this 'Prussian stiff-neck' (a moniker bestowed upon him by Candy) was a well-developed, intelligent, and honourable individual. While Hardt represented the principled and self-sacrificing German officer in 1917, Schuldorff's storyline evolved over time and his nationalist beliefs diminished after WWI and his WWII experiences linked with the plight of European refugees and the social stigmas they faced as 'enemy aliens' in Britain.<sup>33</sup> He represented 'the good German' in society and served to remind audiences that not all Germans are Nazis, and his role was one that Judith Vonberg describes as a 'notable exception' amongst the industry's 'clichéd depictions' and 'absurd caricatures' of Germanness.<sup>34</sup>

According to Pressburger's biography, it was a role specifically designed for Walbrook and reflective of the scriptwriter's convictions. Pressburger, a Hungarian Jew and anglophile, and Walbrook, a homosexual<sup>35</sup> Austrian actor of Jewish heritage, had both escaped persecution in Europe, were both staunchly anti-Nazi, and had found solace in England but had experienced the stigmas that came with 'alien' status.<sup>36</sup> The poised and controlled Schuldorff was, according to Macdonald, Pressburger's 'screen alter ego' and the character provided him with an outlet to comment on, not only Britain's outdated military mindset but also their treatment of German refugees.<sup>37</sup> When compared alongside Candy's character arc, it is clear to see how, when, and why Schuldorff's mindset changed throughout his own story. When their lifelong friendship began in 1902, both men shared similar beliefs regarding military honour and conduct; however, their experiences differed greatly after that. Unlike Candy, Schuldorff had to reconsider his ethos

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<sup>33</sup> See: Martin Conway & José Gotovitch, *Europe in Exile: European Exile Communities in Britain 1940-1945*, Berghahn Books, New York: Oxford, 2001; Richard Dove et al., *Totally un-English: Britain's Internment of 'Enemy Aliens' in Two World Wars*, Rodopi, Amsterdam: New York, 2005.

<sup>34</sup> Judith Vonberg, *Mirrors of Ourselves': Fictional Depictions of Germans and Britons in British and German Popular Culture 1945-1965*, Doctoral thesis, University of East Anglia, 2017, 41.

<sup>35</sup> Unknown, 'Double Life of Mysterious Film Star Revealed in Exhibition', *University News*, University of Exeter, 14 March 2013, [online], date accessed: 15/02/2021, <[https://www.exeter.ac.uk/news/university/title\\_274457\\_en.html](https://www.exeter.ac.uk/news/university/title_274457_en.html)>

<sup>36</sup> MacDonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 218-219.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

regarding 'a gentleman's war' after Germany's defeat in WWI. His time spent as a POW in England, from 1917-1919, forced him to reevaluate and despite Clive's reassurances that Germany would soon be restored to its former glory, Theo was never convinced. Decades later, when Candy realised his outdated ideology had forced his retirement, it was Schuldorff who explained the changing situation, and he did so in a manner that most connected with the old soldier because he had already experienced this revelation himself.

If you let yourself be defeated by them, just because you are too fair to hit back the same way they hit at you, there won't be any methods but Nazi methods! ... [when discussing WWI] You forgot to learn the moral. Because victory was yours you failed to learn your lesson twenty years ago ... you have been educated to be a gentleman – in peace and in war. But, Clive, dear old Clive, this is not a gentleman's war...<sup>38</sup>

The speech's construction hinged on Schuldorff's familiarity with Candy's character and their history as friends and soldiers, and Walbrook's intense delivery ensured that audiences understood that it was the most poignant and severe lesson in Candy's career. Alongside this militaristic transition, Schuldorff also represented those that could/had adapted to social changes too – most noticeable in his interactions with Candy's driver, Angela 'Johnny' Cannon (Kerr).

The friendship between Schuldorff and Cannon was one of the more subtle relationships in the picture, but it conveyed a significant message to audiences – friendships are not dictated by age. Although the pair are separated by decades, Schuldorff and Cannon became comfortable friends, and the development of this relationship can be seen through their interactions. For example, the pair spend time together (away from Candy) when Cannon drives Schuldorff to and from his visits to Cadogan Place, Schuldorff shared cigarettes with her and encouraged her to express her opinions, and he actively changed his 'old fashioned' vernacular when conversing with her. This can be seen in this small exchange, as he rephrased to better suit modern ideas and made light of them:

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<sup>38</sup> Powell & Pressburger, *The Life and Death of Sugar Candy*, sequence 101.

Theo: 'How is your fiancé?'

Angela: 'He's not my fiancé'

Theo: 'Oh, beg your pardon. How's your boyfriend?'<sup>39</sup>

In a similar instance, after Cannon firmly agreed with Schuldorff's speech regarding gentlemanly warfare and the need for change, the aged German declared 'Bravo!' and promised that he would call her by her masculine nickname, 'Johnny', from then on.<sup>40</sup> Previously, this was something that Schuldorff never did, but it was a promise that he kept (noticeable in later dialogues, even those including Candy) and a small quirk in his character that further demonstrated his ability to adapt. Overall, Schuldorff was extremely important. His experiences and behaviours were used to contrast against Candy's traditional nature and reiterated to audiences that only some old officers maintained a Blimpish outlook. He gave a voice to the émigré in England and his status as a refugee, and an 'alien', allowed for critique on contemporary society's beliefs and treatment of such individuals. When delivered in Walbrook's composed, quiet but powerful manner, these traits and criticisms added depth and sombreness alongside Livesey's charming, British traditionalism.

Deborah Kerr's role in *Colonel Blimp* is arguably one of the most complex female parts to emerge from Britain's 'golden era' of cinema. Initially intended for Wendy Hiller, Pressburger had imagined the actress playing three separate women, across three different eras, and had written it accordingly. When Hiller pulled out of the film Powell quickly asserted his influence and the twenty-year-old Kerr was hired. The young actress did not disappoint Powell and his admiration for her was obvious in his autobiography.

She was so young ... and yet she had, even then, the quality of complete malleability: playing three parts, a governess in 1902, a nurse in 1918 and an ATS driver in 1942, she had the ability to feel herself into the changes of role without relying on make-up.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, directed by Michael Powell & Emeric Pressburger: The Archers, General Film Distributors (UK), 1943, BLU-RAY ed., distributed by The Criterion Collection, 2013.

2:16:12-2:17:00.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 2:27:00-2:28:05

<sup>41</sup> Braun, *Deborah Kerr*, 68-69.

Each woman was a pivotal component in Pressburger's narrative, as they were all a) prominent influences in Candy's life, and b) cinematic symbols that represented the progressive social changes instigated and experienced by women from 1900-1942.

In regard to Candy, his love-life played a major part in the development of his overall personality and his fixation on one particular type of woman (maintained over four decades) further emphasised his 'deep-seated romanticism' and inability to move on.<sup>42</sup> When considering their use as symbols for women's rights and social change, it is important to note that while each was an aesthetic doppelganger of the first, they all had separate personalities and occupations. This allowed *The Archers* to cover a variety of historical developments in greater depth, thus producing a more nuanced evolutionary depiction through Kerr's characters.

The beginning of Candy's fixation with a certain type of woman began with Edith Hunter, Kerr's first character, and was a fact that he pointed out to Schuldorff decades after their initial introduction: 'I suppose you could say she was my ideal – if you were some sort of long-haired poet – all my life I've been looking for a girl like her'.<sup>43</sup> She was a forthright English governess, working and residing in Germany, and it was her letter that spurred Candy's actions in Berlin. When their friendship grew into comfortable companionship, Candy unwittingly fell in love with her but did not realise the depth of his feelings until returning to England alone while she remained in Germany. Instead, Schuldorff 'wins the girl' and she is removed from the narrative by her decision to marry him. Men aside, Hunter is intelligent, opinionated, argumentative, and beautiful, and when these traits are considered alongside her appearance, it becomes clear that she represented an English Suffragette.

This claim can be supported by Pressburger's research notes. Although incomplete, a typed essay that begins with 'The Emancipation of Women in England,' exists within the BFI's collection. The essay outlined various political events from the early 1830s to the 1920s and included notes on Miss Mary Smith's 1832 petition to obtain franchise for women, parliamentarian John Stuart Mills' campaigns throughout the 1860s, and the emergence of various Suffrage publications and activist groups, like the *Women's Suffrage Journal* (1870) and the *Women's Social and Political Union* magazine (1903).<sup>44</sup> It was not explicitly stated whether

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<sup>42</sup> Christie, *Arrows of Desire*, 49.

<sup>43</sup> Powell & Pressburger, *The Life and Death of Sugar Candy*, sequence 94.

<sup>44</sup> 1/22/2, Emeric Pressburger & research assistant, 'The Emancipation of Women in England', Pressburger's Research notes, *Emeric Pressburger Collection*, British Film Institute, London.

Hunter was affiliated with these groups, but she never denied her resemblance to the women in these associations, nor changed her behaviour when chastised by Candy. Clearly, Pressburger had some interest in this facet of England's history and his character displayed behaviours that were commonly linked to progressive women within the Suffrage movement. For example, Hunter was progressive and unafraid of change, evident in this exchange about the significance of good manners.

Did you learn that in South Africa, Mr. Candy? My brothers say good manners cost us Magerfontein, Stormberg and Colenso. Six thousand men killed, twenty thousand wounded and two years of war when, with a little common sense and bad manners, there would have been no war at all!<sup>45</sup>

Hunter does not make a reappearance after the 1902 section of the film, but she is discussed. When meeting in 1919 Candy asks Schuldorff about her wellbeing and it is revealed that they have two young boys, and she was in fine health (last known). In 1939 Schuldorff revealed that his wife had died, and his sons had joined the Nazi party, which prompted his move to England. In this retrospect, he and Clive were equal by 1939 as they had both lost their ideal woman.

Kerr's next character was the young nurse and socialite Barbara Wynne, Candy's 'second best' love after Edith Hunter. Wynne dominated the 1918-1919 period of the film and was a representative of two significant parts of society. Firstly, she represented the volunteer nurses of WWI. When Candy first sees her in France, she is one of the many nurses billeted in the crumbling converted chateau and she is almost ethereal. Her position as a nurse is unsurprising, especially when considered against the wider backdrop of the Great War as it was one of the few wartime occupations available to women. According to George Robb, nursing was one form of women's war work that 'met with almost universal approval'.<sup>46</sup> In propaganda, art and photographic images, these women wore uniforms that resembled 'religious habits' and were often likened to 'angels' or 'madonnas' due to their care and devotion to the sick and injured.<sup>47</sup> With this reputation in mind, Wynne's introduction into the narrative was even more telling.

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<sup>45</sup> Powell & Pressburger, *The Life and Death of Sugar Candy*, sequence 31.

<sup>46</sup> George Robb, *British Culture and the First World War*, Palgrave, Hampshire: New York, 2002, 41.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.



Candy managed to spot her amongst a sea of identically dressed women and her likeness to Hunter turned this initial sighting into an ethereal moment for the romantic Brigadier. Unable to converse with her in France, Candy makes it his mission to find her post-war, which he does.

In the 1919 sequences, audiences are introduced to Wynne in greater depth. She was the daughter of a wealthy and well-respected fabric manufacturer in West Riding. Physically, she was exactly like Hunter because the filmmakers and Kerr made no attempts to alter her appearance with makeup, but her overall nature and her mannerisms were quite different. Firstly, Wynne's interests were very similar to Candy's, despite their age gap. She liked to travel, was patriotic, liked to hunt, drove cars, and she loved the old fashioned 33 Cadogan Place – Candy's ancestral home (inherited through an aunt). Unlike Hunter, Wynne was not overly passionate or argumentative, and Pressburger utilised her softer disposition when critiquing human nature during wartime. For example, after accompanying Candy on his trip to find Schuldorff at the British prisoner of war camp, she voiced her confusion regarding Germany's behaviour in and out of the battlefield,

I was thinking, how odd they are! How queer! For years and years  
they are writing and dreaming wonderful music and beautiful poetry.  
and then all of a sudden, they start a war, shoot innocent hostages, sink.  
undefended ships, bomb and destroy whole streets in London, killing little.  
children – and then, dressed in the same butcher's uniform, they sit down.  
and listen to Mendelssohn and Schubert. There's something horrible about  
that, don't you think so Clive?<sup>48</sup>

Wynne has few memorable speeches within the film; however, this observation was particularly striking. On this point, Kennedy astutely said, 'Pressburger has presented us with one of the terrible faces of human nature. Taken en masse – and that is how they are taken in times of war – populations seem inexplicable'.<sup>49</sup> Alongside this, Wynne, with her demure but patriotic nature, also reminded audiences about the dangers of underestimating the enemy. While her manner and situation may seem somewhat subdued, especially when compared to Hunter, Barbara also

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<sup>48</sup> Powell & Pressburger, *The Life and Death of Sugar Candy*, sequence 76.

<sup>49</sup> A.L Kennedy, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, British Film Institute, London, 1997, 61.

played a significant role within the film. Like her predecessor, Barbara did not reappear on screen beyond her period setting. When the film entered its next flash-forward montage it was revealed, through a *Times* newspaper notice, that she had died in 1926.

Hunter's final reincarnation came in the form of Angela Cannon, aka 'Johnny'. Unlike her predecessors, Candy's relationship with Cannon was completely paternal, but it still reiterated his fixation with his lost love because, again, she was a doppelgänger of Edith Hunter. Chosen out of seven hundred different girls, Cannon is Candy's designated ATC driver – a role she enjoys immensely, 'he's an old darling. I could have done a hand-stand when he chose me.'<sup>50</sup> Cannon symbolised the fully mobilised 1940s woman and her primary function within *Colonel Blimp* was to reiterate how Britain's 'total war' mindset had ultimately changed the nation's social landscape and its acceptance of women occupying traditionally masculine roles. As Andrew Moor highlighted, 'Angela's nominal and potentially destabilising masquerade of masculinity, or abandonment of femininity, is something which the film presents plainly'.<sup>51</sup> To further emphasise this alteration, Pressburger incorporated Cannon's previous occupation into the script. In a conversation with Schuldorff, Cannon revealed that she used to be a photographic model, which starkly contrasted against her current position as a personal driver. Transitioning between workplaces was not unusual in Britain at the time though. Women had initially volunteered in the early stages of WWII, but by 1941 circumstances had changed and the National Services Act introduced conscription for widows without children and single women aged between 20-40.<sup>52</sup> The ATS had over 190,000 women working as vehicle maintenance crews or drivers in the early stages<sup>53</sup> and by September 1943 the number of women working in the military, across its various auxiliary branches, peaked at 470,700.<sup>54</sup> Angela represented such women and this connected with audiences in a manner that Hunter and Wynne could not.

Cannon's distaste for her Christian name, Angela, and her preference for the male nickname 'Johnny' also reiterated her position in the military's traditional male landscape. When Schuldorff remarked 'that's a lovely name. It comes from 'Angel', doesn't it?' Cannon frankly

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<sup>50</sup> Powell & Pressburger, *The Life and Death of Sugar Candy*, sequence 98.

<sup>51</sup> Moor, *Powell and Pressburger: A Cinema of Magic Spaces*, 81.

<sup>52</sup> Beate Fieseler, M. Michaela Hampf & Jutta Schwarzkopf, 'Gendering Combat: Military Women's Status in Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union during the Second World War', *Women's Studies International Forum*, no. 47, 2014, 117.

<sup>53</sup> The National Archives, 'Women in World War II', *The National Archives*, [online], date accessed: 02/04/2019, <[http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/womeninuniform/wwii\\_intro.htm](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/womeninuniform/wwii_intro.htm)>.

<sup>54</sup> Fieseler, Hampf & Schwarzkopf, 'Gendering Combat: Military Women's Status', 116.

replied 'I think it stinks. My friends call me Johnny'.<sup>55</sup> It was a small detail but a significant one. It integrated her further into this traditionally masculine space and effectively turned her into 'one of the boys'. While Schuldorff eventually accepted this moniker, Candy, never called her by this nickname, which further reflected his old-fashioned mindset. Overall, Cannon was The Archers' 'poster girl' for servicewomen. She was smart, reliable, and willing to 'do her bit' in the current war effort but reiterated that society had to accept this change to be successful.

Alongside Candy, Schuldorff, Hunter, Wynne, and Cannon, there was one other character that supported the wider cardinal functions and offered commentary on the wartime experiences of everyday Britons, John Laurie's Murdoch. Regarding secondary characters, Murdoch was one of the few recurring figures within the narrative and was introduced to audiences during the WWI 'khaki sequences'. He represented the experiences of the 'everyday man' and, similar to Schuldorff, his development over time contrasted against Candy's fixed sensibilities and ideologies. The genteel Scot was introduced in a subdued manner and unbeknownst to viewers at the time, he became a central part of Candy's life beyond Flanders. In the beginning, he was a low ranked, non-commissioned officer within the British Army and assigned to Candy as a personal 'batman'. An officer's batman was like a valet; however, they performed their duties within the wider public sphere – mixing professional chores with more intimate ones – while regular valets operated primarily within private households. It is difficult to locate any extensive studies specifically regarding batmen but, at times, they are mentioned in wider studies. For example, in the letters of Earl Leroy Wood batmen are mentioned. Woods was an American serving in the Medical Corps Reserve and the contrasting differences between the traditions of US and British troops were a point of interest for him. In a letter to his mother, he discussed the presence of servants and his utilisation of them during his time away,

One thing that officers in the British army have that is absent in the States.

Is servants. Each officer has a servant to polish his boots, puttees, belt,

Etc., keep his clothes in condition, and run his errands. This saves me time.

and drudgery, as of course, I have one over here.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Powell & Pressburger, *The Life and Death of Sugar Candy*, sequence 98.

<sup>56</sup> E. L. Woods, 'Letters to his Mother: 1917-1919', in Francis A. Woods's 'Medical Corps Reserve in World War I: Centennial notes and letter from the front', *Pharos*, 2018, 54.

Woods explained the position and noted that it was routinely seen in England and France throughout the period. Within *Colonel Blimp* Murdoch does not undertake chores like polishing boots or doing laundry yet does fulfil this role by acting as Candy's driver, assistant (albeit somewhat forgetful) and sole companion as they travel through the Western Front.

After the WWI sequences, Murdoch emerged again during the interwar years. Despite Candy's complaints concerning his inability to complete chores properly, the Brigadier employed him as the sole butler in Cadogan Place. In a subsequent scene, it is evident that Murdoch has worked hard to fulfil the role. When meeting Mrs. Wynne-Candy for the first time, he immediately reports on the state of household, which she is expected to manage, 'the agency has got a lot of cooks for you to see, Ma'am... And all the tradespeople have called and will call again for your orders.'<sup>57</sup> Audiences are only exposed to Murdoch in short sequences; however, his presence further highlighted Britain's class structure and the everyday man within the post-WWI landscape.

In the sequences that followed, the contemporary 1940s period, Murdoch was still a domestic figure within Cadogan Place, but his duties had shifted, yet again. It is revealed that the aged Scot is contributing to the war effort to the best of his ability. For example, late one night Murdoch chastises Candy about leaving the front door wide open – thus emitting excess light from the house out onto the street – during blackout conditions and it is revealed that he is a member of one of the various Air Raid Precautions (ARP) organisations.

Murdoch: 'Will you close the door, sir, please?'

Candy: 'Oh, shut up. Murdoch'. [he closes it all the same and looks around]

...

Murdoch: 'The door, sir, please?' [after Candy reopens and lingers in the doorway after Schuldorff's departure]

Candy: 'Did you see the warden?'

Murdoch: 'I'm the warden of this district, sir'.<sup>58</sup>

Wardens were a common sight in London during this time, especially after the Blitz began in September 1940, and their responsibilities under the ARP fell under the wider umbrella of civil

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<sup>57</sup> Powell & Pressburger, *The Life and Death of Sugar Candy*, sequence 74.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 97.

defence measures adopted throughout the UK. The Ministry of Home Security maintained control over a number of these civil defence services and a prominent number of people were employed or volunteering for the Air Raid Warden Service, the Fire Guard Service, the Women's Voluntary Service and the Civil Defence Rescue Service.<sup>59</sup> The increase in volunteerism was hardly surprising, especially as targeted propaganda encouraged skilled individuals to come forward to 'offer their services' in the defence of 'our island fortress'.<sup>60</sup> Murdoch's position as a local warden echoed the experiences of the many individuals that answered the call to defend the Homefront and because of this, he reflected the everyday life of many regular cinemagoers – connecting with them in a manner that Candy and Schuldorff could not.

Murdoch's final scene also highlighted the importance of everyday citizens joining the Home Guard.

Murdoch: 'Yes, sir. I was about to tell you myself, sir'.

Clive: 'You're drunk, Murdoch. Tell me what?'

Murdoch: 'That I'd joined the Home Guard, sir'.

Clive: 'You?'

Murdoch: 'Yes sir.'<sup>61</sup>

Murdoch's time in the Home Guard was not explored within the film's later sequences because it is revealed that he, like so many others, was killed during one of the many London bombings. Overall, it is easy to understand how Murdoch represented the lower classes, the 'everyday' subjects in Britain during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He lacked social standing, was a low ranked, non-commissioned officer, a servant, and then an aged volunteer during WWII. He did not 'move up in the world' or slip lower within the country's rigid class system, instead, Murdoch was a steady, reliable, and honourable working-class man who acted and died in a manner that many audiences could relate to.

Without its heavily developed characters and era encompassing storyline, *Colonel Blimp's* primary messages would have been inevitably weakened or lost within the wider wartime story.

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<sup>59</sup> The National Archives, 'Ministry of Home Security, 1939-145' catalogue description, *Air Raid Precautions Department, Ministry of Home Security, Civil Defence and Common Services Department and Emergency Planning Department, The National Archives*, Kew: London.

<sup>60</sup> British Pathé, 'Our Island Fortress Wants', *Pathé Newsreels*, 4 September 1940, via *Youtube*, [online] date accessed: 05/09/2019, <<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/our-island-fortress-wants/query/air+raid+warden>>.

<sup>61</sup> Powell & Pressburger, *The Life and Death of Sugar Candy*, sequence 102.

The fictionality of *Colonel Blimp* offered room for creative liberties within a wider historical context – room that The Archers and their team used well – but its relationship with history was still complex. The material collected during Pressburger’s research period found its way into the characters’ arcs, which added extra depth and meaning to their actions and interactions. Furthermore, the years represented, 1900-1942, also encompassed important transitional periods in Britain’s military history, i.e., the iconic Victorian redcoat of the Second Anglo-Boer War (also a symbol of England’s prolific era of colonial expansion and trade), the industrialised Great War, and WWII’s transition into a ‘total war’, which required underpinning from real primary and secondary resources. The incorporation of this information worked as an authenticity effect, per se, and added depth to the picture’s overall historiophoty even though its characters were created using an amalgamation of real-life experiences. When tackling *The Battle of the River Plate*, Powell and Pressburger’s opportunities and limitations were different yet, due to the story’s position as a real-life event, filled with real (some still living) people.

*More than a Mission Film: Investigating the History within ‘The Battle of the River Plate’*

As mentioned in previous chapters, *The Battle of the River Plate* sits strangely in The Archers’ wider catalogue and is often overlooked because, as Richard Combs pointed out, ‘actors like Anthony Quayle and John Gregson, jaws jutting on the bridges of warships... don’t appeal to the devotees of romantic-mystical-transcendental Powell and Pressburger’.<sup>62</sup> This may be so; however, when considering *River Plate* for its historiophoty and use of authenticity effects, the picture has an interesting development period and contained a significant cinematic account of the event. The previous chapters have already outlined how Powell and Pressburger implemented preproduction and production strategies to help enhance the authenticity of their picture, both atmospherically and historically, and the following interrogation of its distributional functions will delve deeper into the links made between narrative content, characterisation, and real historical events.

This may be somewhat difficult; however, it is not entirely impossible. As previously noted, Pressburger relied heavily on oral histories during his research and writing period, Powell relied on them in-person during production, and neither left an extensive collection of notes behind (as was the case with *Colonel Blimp*). Nevertheless, researchers can confirm or refute the

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<sup>62</sup> Combs, ‘Battle of the River Plate’, 22.

film's historiophoty by comparing its distributional functions against the historical materials that are now available. This includes primary materials, like Admiralty records and wider governmental records, and secondary publications investigating the events leading up to the engagement at River Plate, the battle itself, the complex political situation that followed in Montevideo, and the destruction of the Admiral *Graf Spee*.

The battle of the River Plate has been labelled as the first major British and Allied naval victory during WWII<sup>63</sup> and there has been much discussion between scholars about the events preceding the battle, the engagement itself, the political intrigues that immediately followed, and the immense media attention it received at the time.<sup>64</sup> Interestingly, Powell and Pressburger's picture – produced years before many of these publications – also addressed these issues, which makes the structure and historical content of *River Plate* even more intriguing. Described by Powell as a film that 'fell naturally into four acts', *River Plate* focused on producing more than the battle itself.<sup>65</sup> It included multiple story arcs and stakeholders and worked hard to provide an informed, 'bigger picture', for its audiences to consider. Structured as follows,

Act One: Captain Dove, or the Prisoner of the *Graf Spee*

Act Two: *Achilles, Ajax, Exeter*

Act Three: The Battle of the River Plate

Act Four: Montevideo, and the end of the *Graf Spee*.<sup>66</sup>

*River Plate* provided significant contextual information regarding British naval operations in the region before the incident, dedicated sequences to the political machinations that followed the battle and included civilian reactions. Also, unlike other popular 1950s films, such as *The Colditz Story* (1955) and *The Dam Busters* (1955), *River Plate* spent time developing its German characters, which was a common practice for Pressburger but fairly uncommon within the wider 1950s catalogue of British productions. When partnered with their genuine yearning to present

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<sup>63</sup> Eric Grove in *As It Happened: The Battle of the River Plate*, directed by James Hayes, BBC2, 2011, via *informatEduTV*, [online], date accessed: 20/06/2019, 00:00:00 – 00:02:10, <<https://edutv.informat.com.au/watch-screen.php?videoID=187766>>.

<sup>64</sup> Dudley Pope, *The Battle of the River Plate*, William Kimber publishers, London, 1956, Michael Powell, *Graf Spee*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1956; Eric J. Grove, *The Price of Disobedience: The Battle of the River Plate Reconsidered*, Sutton Publishing, UK, 2000; Richard Woodman, *The Battle of the River Plate: A Grand Delusion*, Pen & Sword Military, Great Britain, 2008.

<sup>65</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, 282.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

history's events as factually correct as possible (within the confines of the medium and genre), *River Plate's* distributional functions are strikingly informative and impressive considering the limited availability of historical primary/secondary resources at the time of its production and release. The following section will consider *River Plate's* distributional functions and investigate the relationship between the picture's content and the historical data/material that underpins them.

In broad brushstrokes, the battle of the River Plate was the first significant WWII naval engagement between Britain and Germany, occurring on December 13, 1939. Germany's pocket battleship, Admiral *Graf Spee*, had been active within the Atlantic (particularly the Southern region) since the outbreak of war and its primary purpose was to seek out and destroy the merchant traders that were using the shipping pathways within the area.<sup>67</sup> It was extremely successful and had sunk several ships before crossing paths with Commodore Henry Harwood's British squadron (made of three battlecruisers) just off the coast of Uruguay. The battle ensued and Harwood's fleet sustained substantial damages; however, no vessel was ultimately destroyed at the time due to Langsdorff's decision for the *Graf Spee* to make for Montevideo harbour (the closest neutral port).<sup>68</sup> Two of Harwood's ships chased the enemy, while the third British cruiser left for significant repairs, but the pocket battleship made it to Montevideo without serious incident.<sup>69</sup>

The *Graf Spee's* arrival at Montevideo created a delicate political situation for the Uruguayan government and various foreign diplomats, primarily those from England, France, and Germany became quickly involved. Under the parameters of the Hague Convention (section XIII), the *Graf Spee* was required to leave the harbour after twenty-four hours,

Article 12: In the absence of special provisions to the contrary in the  
legislation of a neutral Power, belligerent war-ships are not permitted to remain  
in the ports, roadsteads, or territorial waters of the said Power for more than

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<sup>67</sup> Pope, *The Battle of the River Plate*, 31.

<sup>68</sup> John Cannon, 'The Battle of the River Plate', *The Oxford Companion to British History*, 1<sup>st</sup> rev. ed., Oxford University Press, 2009, [online version], date accessed: 25/03/2020, <<https://www-oxfordreference-com.ezproxy.flinders.edu.au/view/10.1093/acref/9780199567638.001.0001/acref-9780199567638-e-3622>>.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.



twenty-four hours, except in the cases covered by the present Convention.<sup>70</sup>

This was untenable for Langsdorff and the *Graf Spee* due to the damages incurred at the battle – there was simply too much to fix in such a short window – and an argument for extra time was made; however, there was immediate opposition from other foreign dignitaries. Eugen Millington-Drake, Britain’s Minister in Uruguay, was particularly vocal during this initial period and insisted that the *Graf Spee* be expelled from the harbour within the Hague defined timeframe; however, he backflipped less than a day later after learning about the state of Harwood’s fleet.<sup>71</sup> Now reduced by a third, the British squadron could not guarantee capture or success in battle if the *Graf Spee* was intercepted a second time, so stalling its departure was the best course of action because it would provide time for nearby British reinforcements to arrive. Millington-Drake immediately went to work and cited a different Hague parameter that would keep the *Graf Spee* in the harbour – surprising the Foreign Minister and Chancellor of the Republic of Uruguay, Alberto Guani, in the swift turn around.<sup>72</sup> His specific argument was,

... in accordance with the Hague Convention of 1907, Section 13, Article 16  
a belligerent warship cannot leave a neutral port or roadstead until  
twenty-four hours after the departure of a merchant ship flying the flag of its  
adversary... Consequently, the *Graf Spee* should not... leave Montevideo  
till the following evening.<sup>73</sup>

As merchant ships heading for Britain and its trade partners had left the harbour after the *Graf Spee*’s entrance, the German raider could not leave until twenty-four hours had elapsed between departures. After various political meetings and a technical commission investigating its

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<sup>70</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), ‘Article 12 of Convention (XIII) Concerning the Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers in Naval War’, *The Hague Convention*, 18 October 1907, [online], via ICRC official website, date accessed: 15/09/2019, <<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=7E938629EA22A343C12563CD005175EE>>.

<sup>71</sup> Even though the Hague parameters listed a twenty-four-hour limit, the *Graf Spee* was granted extra time from the Uruguayan government. According to an excerpt from Commander F.W Rasnack’s *Panzerschiff Admiral Graf Spee* this was given because it was the window of time given to British ships when they collected provisions in Montevideo. Rasnack’s comments can be found within Sir Eugen Millington-Drakes extensive publication *The Drama of the Graf Spee and The Battle of the River Plate: A Documentary Anthology 1914-1964*, Peter Davies Ltd, Great Britain, 1964, 284.

<sup>72</sup> Sir Eugen Millington-Drake, ‘The Four Days in Montevideo: The First Day: Thursday, December 14’ in *The Drama of the Graf Spee and The Battle of the River Plate: A Documentary Anthology 1914-1964*, 295.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

damages, it was officially decreed that the *Graf Spee* had a period of seventy-two hours to conduct the repairs necessary for seaworthiness.<sup>74</sup>

Meanwhile, the 'rumour mill' in Montevideo had begun to circulate the news that multiple British warships were on their way to join Harwood's fleet. It was, according to Millington-Drake, a complete 'bluff' from the Argentine Ministry of Marine but was nonetheless quickly spread throughout the city.<sup>75</sup> In reality, Harwood had only been joined by the HMS *Cumberland* on the night of December 14.<sup>76</sup> These rumours ultimately increased the pressures placed upon Langsdorff, but it was still increasingly difficult for opposing powers to predict his course of action in response to this news.<sup>77</sup>

On the evening of Sunday 17 December (the *Graf Spee's* fourth day in Montevideo), the pocket battleship left the harbour shortly after 6:15 pm and continued to the three-mile neutral waters limit. There it stopped. Its remaining crew were transferred to an awaiting merchant vessel, the *Tacoma*, and a series of systematic explosions began on the abandoned *Graf Spee* – thus signalling the beginning of its intentional destruction (its 'scuttling').<sup>78</sup>

After ensuring that arrangements had been made for his crew, Captain Langsdorff committed suicide in his private room (December 20).<sup>79</sup> According to Holger M. Meding, the suicide greatly influenced public opinion, 'it simultaneously irritated and impressed Argentines, caused a wave of admiration even in circles not sympathetic to Germany, and led to the largest state funeral since that of deposed president Hipólito Yrigoyen'.<sup>80</sup> Although missing from the film, Powell included Langsdorff's final act in his 1956 book *Graf Spee* – a historical non-fiction account that he was inspired to write during the picture's production period.<sup>81</sup> There was much to adapt for cinema's screen and like many pictures within the history genre, *The Archers* began

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<sup>74</sup> Alberto Guani, 'No. 19: Response to German Legation', 15 December 1939, in *The Oriental Republic of Uruguay's Uruguayan Blue Book: The Documents Relating to the Sinking of the Admiral Graf Spee and the Internment of the Merchant Vessel Tacoma*, Hutchinson & Co, London: Melbourne, 1940, 29.

<sup>75</sup> Millington-Drake, 'The Four Days in Montevideo', 316.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> British Naval Staff, Admiralty, 'Battle Summary No. 26. The Chase and Destruction of the Graf Spee', B.R 1736 (Restricted), Tactical, Torpedo and Staff Duties Division (Historical Section), September 1944, in G.H Bennett's *Hitler's Ghost Ships*, University of Plymouth Press, UK, 2012, 79-80.

<sup>79</sup> Holger M. Meding, 'The Admiral Graf Spee' in Thomas Adam & Will Kaufman's *Germany and the Americas: Culture, politics, and history: A Multidisciplinary Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, California, 2005, vol. I, 45-47.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Powell, *Graf Spee*, 1956.

theirs with a significant prologue – one specifically designed to quickly convey contextual information to audiences before the distributional functions began in earnest.

Prologues, both written, verbal or a short sequence, are often included in many historically set pictures and have effectively become a trope within the genre. They exist to provide audiences with simple facts and data, i.e., biographical details, locations, and dates, to further contextualise the story that will follow. As Stubbs highlighted, the practice could be interpreted as an ‘attempt to stitch the events depicted in the main body of the film to written accounts of history’ which, in some ways, links back to the notion that written histories are more trustworthy than their visual counterparts.<sup>82</sup> This may be so, but it could also be argued that prologues are another form of authenticity effect too. They provide a factual precursor for the events to come and set the tone or emphasise the historiophoty of the piece. Admittedly, they can mislead the audience if incorrect or exaggerated; however, exposes the picture’s content to stricter scrutiny from viewers and creates an opportunity for critical analysis and discussion.

In most cases (regardless of genre), the information comes in pairs – a prologue and epilogue – and is presented in an unassuming introductory manner. Firstly, written text is typically projected against a plain background and is undercut by a musical score, as seen in films like Steven Spielberg’s *Lincoln* (2012). Secondly, verbal narrations are usually partnered with innocuous panning shots of a favoured setting, i.e., *It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946) introduces audiences to the picturesque town of Bedford Falls. Finally, prologues that are short sequences set the tone and prepare audiences for what is to come, like T.E Lawrence’s death in a motorcycle accident in the opening sequences of David Lean’s biopic/historical drama *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962).

In 1956 Powell and Pressburger opted for a narrated prologue as it allowed them to slip a significant amount of contextual information in a short amount of time. Broadly speaking, it mentioned general information, like Britain’s declaration of war, but also included information about Germany’s armament and operations at sea in the months that preceded Captain Dove’s capture and the battle at River Plate. It explained,

This is a story of sea power. In November 1939, the war was two months old.

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<sup>82</sup> Stubbs, *Historical Films: A Critical Introduction*, 21.

Blitzkrieg on Poland had given the world a new word and the generals a new idea of battle. At sea, the problems were still the same. In war Germany could feed herself, England could not. If the ships bringing England's food could be sunk or immobilised, England would starve, and the war would be won. For this, the German's had three powerful weapons, the magnetic mine, the U-boat and the surface raider. These pocket battleships were strong and swift - there had never been anything like them. They were the tigers of the sea. Ten days before war was declared one of these raiders sailed from a German port with secret orders. She sailed by night up the coast of Norway, passed unobserved through the Denmark Strait between Iceland and Greenland and vanished into the southern Atlantic where a supply ship was already waiting for her. Months passed and nobody suspected that a killer was lurking there until ship after ship failed to make its home port.<sup>83</sup>

Although it is difficult to pinpoint exactly where Pressburger sourced his information, his outline of the scenario in the Atlantic was factually correct and can be confirmed by data and the wider historical discourse. Two points, in particular, stand out, a) Germany's early decision to use trade war ('handelskrieg') tactics, and b) the presence of an unnamed, but effective, German raider carrying out this operation in the Atlantic.

Firstly, 'at sea, the problems were still the same. In war Germany could feed itself, England could not. If the ships bringing England's food could be sunk or immobilised England would starve, and the war would be won' was a clear reminder of WWII's commerce raiding, its rationing effect, and the loss of vital raw materials headed to the UK.<sup>84</sup> The strategy was not new to WWII or *The Archers*. It had been incorporated into all their wartime films in some form and, in reality, they lived in Britain during its lengthy rationing period (1939-1954). When mentioned in their first film, *The Spy in Black*, *The Archers'* reminded audiences of the effects the trade war

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<sup>83</sup> *The Battle of the River Plate*, directed by Powell & Pressburger: *The Archers*, 00:02:30-00:03:57.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

had in Germany during the Great War, but although prominent during this conflict the tactic did not originate there.

The notion of commerce raiding/trade war's was developed earlier by France's *Jeune École* ('young school') of naval thinking as a method to defend their contemporary geopolitical situation and imperial endeavours.<sup>85</sup> According to Bruce A. Elleman and S.C.M Paine, the strategy gained popularity in the late nineteenth century had one simple primary objective; attack or disrupt an enemy's merchant ships and laneways without drawing the attention of, or engaging with, their specialised warships.<sup>86</sup> As Elleman and Paine highlighted, France's military power was predominantly land-based during this period and they could not match Britain's immense Royal Navy directly at sea – thus this method was conceived.<sup>87</sup> The tactic allowed weaker maritime powers 'to impose disproportionate costs on the stronger sea power' through the swift raid-style attacks on their opponents' military assets and international trade partners/routes.<sup>88</sup> As mentioned, it was effectively adopted during the Great War and reinstated by Germany at the outbreak of WWII, but due to technological advancements in radar/antisubmarine technologies, its success was limited in this later conflict.

The Admiral *Graf Spee*'s success as a surface raider – an executor of *handelskrieg* orders – was somewhat shrouded in mystery before its destruction in December 1939, but evidence has emerged that confirms its effectiveness. According to Dudley Pope's 1956 publication, *The Battle of the River Plate*, the raider's main goal was the interruption of trade, something it could achieve by 'doing little more' than making its presence known through the sinking or capturing of 'as many merchant ships' as possible without taking unnecessary risks.<sup>89</sup> The *Graf Spee* had been prepared and fitted for this task at Wilhelmshaven (a major port for the *Kriegsmarine*, located in Lower Saxony) and it had pre-emptively left port ten days before Germany invaded Poland.<sup>90</sup> It took the following route to the Atlantic whilst it waited for events to unfold elsewhere,

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<sup>85</sup> Bruce A. Elleman & S.C.M Paine, *Commerce Raiding: Historical Case Studies, 1755-2009*, Naval War College Press, Newport: Rhode Island, 2013, 1.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Pope, *The Battle of the River Plate*, 31.

<sup>90</sup> David Miller, *Langsdorff and the Battle of the River Plate*, Pen & Sword Maritime, Great Britain, 2013, 85.

Table 6: The whereabouts of the Admiral *Graf Spee*.<sup>91</sup>

Date	Movements
23-24/08	Passed through the narrows between the Shetland Islands and Norway, then shortly travelled north before turning southwards to manoeuvre through the Iceland/Faroes Island gap.
28-29/08	Crossed the main trans-Atlantic shipping lane
01/09	Germany invades Poland. The news reaches <i>Graf Spee</i> and in preparation of further action it rendezvouses with its supply ship, the <i>Altmark</i> .
03/09	Britain declares war on Germany. This news reaches the <i>Graf Spee</i> and <i>Altmark</i> via radio and they intensify their training exercises.

Although vague for dramatic effect, this information was included in The Archers' prologue and further demonstrates the filmmakers' attention towards historical detail,

Ten days before war was declared one of these raiders sailed from a German port with secret orders. She sailed by night up the coast of Norway, passed unobserved through the Denmark Strait between Iceland and Greenland and vanished into the southern Atlantic where a supply ship was already waiting for her.<sup>92</sup>

On September 30, the *Graf Spee* nabbed its first target – the British cargo/passenger liner the *SS Clement*. It captured four more ships before coming across Captain Dove.

Table 7: Victims of the Admiral *Graf Spee*.<sup>93</sup>

Date	Name	Owned by	Type
30/09/1939	<i>SS Clement</i>	Booth Steamship Co.	Steam cargo ship
05/10/1939	<i>SS Newton Beech</i>	Ridley J., Son & Tully	Steam cargo ship
07/10/1939	<i>SS Ashlea</i>	Morrison Shipping Co., Ltd	Steam cargo ship
10/10/1939	<i>SS Huntsman</i>	Harrison T. & J. Ltd	Steam cargo ship
22/10/1939	<i>MV Trevanion</i>	Hain Steamship Co. Ltd	Diesel cargo ship

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, route and actions summarised from outline on p. 87-89.

<sup>92</sup> *The Battle of the River Plate*, directed by Powell & Pressburger: The Archers, 00:02:30-00:03:57

<sup>93</sup> Wreck Site database, see *MV Africa Shell*, *MV Trevanion*, *SS Ashlea*, *SS Clement*, *SS Huntsman*, *SS Newton Beech*, [online], date accessed: 29/07/2019, <<https://www.wrecksite.eu/wrecksite.aspx>>.

15/11/1939	MV <i>Africa Shell</i>	Shell Tankers N.V	Diesel tanker
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Due to the starting point of the picture's narrative, there was no space to depict these incidents, but reference towards them was made through dialogue within the picture's cardinal functions (for a full breakdown of *River Plate's* cardinal functions see appendix D), which will be explored in the following discussion. Similar to this chapter's interrogation of *The Spy in Black* and *Colonel Blimp*, the following section will break down *River Plate's* cardinal functions; however, due to the film's position as a picture based on real events, each act (as labelled by Powell) will be supported by an investigation of the incident's wider historical discourse. This will provide an opportunity to critically consider how The Archers' account represented real events and individuals, as well as provide an opportunity to further investigate the filmmaker's interaction with primary or secondary source material.

To begin, *River Plate's* first act was designed to introduce audiences to the Admiral *Graf Spee*, its Captain (Hans Langsdorff, portrayed by Peter Finch), its wider crew, and its current mission, and utilised Captain Patrick Dove (Bernard Lee), a British merchant seaman captured by the German raider, in order to do this. After Dove's capture in the picture's opening sequence, he is introduced to Langsdorff and through a series of discussions, set over a period of weeks (across functions 3-7), he learns about the raider's techniques and previous successes and begins to understand the nature of the Langsdorff's style as a naval commander. Despite their position as wartime enemies, the pair develop a friendly rapport based on a mutual respect that was informed by naval tradition and their similar experiences as Captains. Such meetings end when a large group of Allied prisoners (predominantly British) are transferred to the *Graf Spee* (function 8). Now in the company of fellow prisoners, Dove spends his days discussing the German's progress, surviving the *Graf Spee's* raids, and trying to determine whether any British naval squadrons are patrolling the area (functions 9-13).

There are a series of interesting links between the picture's cardinal functions and the wider historical discourse surrounding the events at River Plate and Montevideo, but within this first act, it is impossible to examine them without considering the peculiar friendship that emerged between Langsdorff and Dove. Born from extenuating circumstances, this friendship was the foundation for the picture's German sequences and, unbeknownst to Pressburger at the time, Langsdorff would be one of his final 'good Germans' on screen. Like *The Spy in Black's*

Captain Hardt and *Colonel Blimp's* Theo Kretschmar-Schuldorff, *River Plate's* Captain Langsdorff embodied a gentlemanly, traditional approach towards military honour and conduct, which was a notion that was further underpinned by his receivership of Germany's Iron Cross (a military decoration for courageous actions), after his involvement in the Battle of Jutland, 1916

The *Graf Spee* met with the *Africa Shell* on the morning of November 15, 1939, and promptly sunk the vessel despite its location (according to Dove's memoirs) within neutral waters just off Portuguese East Africa.<sup>94</sup> Dove recounted,

It started just as a grey shadow on the horizon... I picked up my glasses casually to have a better look – and I got the shock of my life... There, plain in the focus of my glasses was the outline I had been dreading I might see I judged the vessel must be some seven or eight miles away and coming up fast... I was about six miles from the beach and safety in neutral waters. If I could only get within the three-mile limit, I told myself, I wouldn't mind if it was the whole German Navy.<sup>95</sup>

The Captain was adamant that he had reached this neutral limit, 'I was so well inside that there could be no question of capture', but this did not deter the pocket battleship and in the face of its superior weaponry, the *Africa Shell* surrendered to the *Graf Spee*.<sup>96</sup> As remembered in his memoir, when boarded he had insisted that he was positioned in neutral waters and therefore unsinkable, but the German boarding officer just laughed, winked, and told him that this calculation made no difference because they had a different one anyway.<sup>97</sup> He was then taken on board the German ship, his crew were separated into lifeboats and sent to shore, and the *Africa Shell* was subsequently destroyed.

According to navy historian David Miller, the destruction of the *Africa Shell* was 'a trivial matter as it was a very small vessel and in ballast, so apart from a few nautical items the German raider gained nothing'.<sup>98</sup> This may be so, but it brought Dove into contact with Langsdorff, which

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<sup>94</sup> Dove, *I Was Graf Spee's Prisoner!*, 26-28.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>98</sup> Miller, *Langsdorff and the Battle of the River Plate*, 96.



led to his 1940 publication *I Was Graf Spee's Prisoner!* – a singular text that provided contemporary Briton's and later researchers with unique insight into Langsdorff's character and stark opinion of Germany's WWII naval strategies.<sup>99</sup> With this friendship and insight in mind, the following section will consider them alongside the wider historical discourse available evidence regarding the events.

The destruction of the *Africa Shell* and its position as a neutral ship is undisputed. Official Board of Trade records contain its registration as a merchant vessel, an outline of its basic routes and favoured ports, and its make and model numbers, which reiterated its neutrality and helped to confirm the location of the wreckage when investigated.<sup>100</sup> There were also survivors. The most prominent, Captain Dove, provided a clear account of the event and this has been utilised by many. This aside, it is interesting to note that at the time of the event there was significant confusion about the identity of the German raider. The *Graf Spee* was one of many vessels conducting Germany's trade war and Langsdorff's efforts to disguise his ship (described in function 6) were extremely effective in its misdirection. When the official announcement regarding the destruction of the *Africa Shell* was made by the Capetown Naval Staff Office, it was said that the ship was destroyed by 'an armed merchantman' and that the rumour of a pocket battleship had been 'authoritatively discounted'.<sup>101</sup> At the same time, other newspapers named the *Graf Spee's* sisterships, the *Admiral Scheer* and the *Deutschland*, as the predators in the Atlantic.<sup>102</sup> This was rectified after investigations occurred after the destruction of the *Graf Spee* in December 1939, but their existence supports Pressburger's reiteration of the ship's elusiveness in these opening cardinal functions.

In regard to the selection and capture of prisoners, investigations compiled from British and German records note that the division of the officer class from the regular crew was a common practice for Captain Langsdorff and reflected his beliefs in older imperial regimes and military honour. According to Miller, the Captain had set rules for himself concerning the capture and treatment of prisoners, 'in capturing an enemy ship he would take no merchant seaman's

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<sup>99</sup> All the secondary texts mentioned throughout this section regarding the River Plate incident have referred to Patrick Dove's account in some form.

<sup>100</sup> BT 110/1560/3, Records of the Board of Trade and successor related bodies, 'Ship: Africa Shell, Official Number: 167164. When built: 1939. Registry closed: 1939', 1931-1940, *The National Archives*, Kew: London.

<sup>101</sup> Naval Correspondent, "'Pocket Battleship" at Work?', *Times*, Great Britain, 17 November 1939.

<sup>102</sup> Unknown, 'How Africa Shell was Sunk', *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, Great Britain, 17 November 1939; Unknown, 'Pocket Battleship which sunk Africa Shell "Identified"', *Shields Daily News*, Great Britain, 18 November 1939; Unknown, 'Africa Shell was Sunk by Warship', *Gloucester Citizen*, Great Britain, 18 November 1939.

life unnecessarily...priority prisoners were masters, chief engineers, radio masters and chief refrigerating officers'.<sup>103</sup> Before the destruction of the *Africa Shell* Langsdorff had already demonstrated his adherence to this rhetoric. For example, after sinking the *Clement* (September 30) Langsdorff detained only two prisoners while the rest of the crew were placed in lifeboats and given directions to the closest coastline (Brazil).<sup>104</sup> He also broadcast a wider request to any intercepting radio listeners and asked them to 'please save lifeboats of *Clement* at 09°04', but signed off the message as the *Scheer* in an effort to maintain the *Graf Spee's* anonymity.<sup>105</sup> Initially, prisoners were shifted to the *Altmark*; however, at this point the *Graf Spee* was not scheduled to meet its supply ship for some time, so Dove was on his own for some time.<sup>106</sup>

Throughout these sequences, Pressburger supported his cardinal functions cleverly with dialogue and utilised Dove's interactions with Langsdorff, the crew, and other prisoners to remind/inform audiences of events that could not be depicted in the film. As previously mentioned, *River Plate* began with the destruction of the *Africa Shell*, but five vessels were sunk by the *Graf Spee* before this. Pressburger paid homage to these ships through a dialogue-based catalyser. As depicted in function 3, upon his arrival Dove was escorted to meet Langsdorff. After his introduction, they discussed the nature capture and Dove's complaints, before beginning a more open dialogue about the power of the *Graf Spee* and Langsdorff's objectives. The German Captain hospitably offered Dove some of the spoils from his previous raids during this meeting,

Langsdorff: 'Shall we drink? Scotch? Genuine, from the steamship *Clement*'

Dove: 'Oh? So, you sunk the *Clement*?'

Langsdorff: 'Cigarette?'

Dove: 'Also genuine?'

Langsdorff: 'Yes but not from the *Clement*, I think ... no, from the *Huntsman*'<sup>107</sup>

Although the loot of an enemy raider, Dove accepted Langsdorff's offer and took the cigarette and tumbler of Scotch, after all, it would have been rude to decline.

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<sup>103</sup> David Miller, *Langsdorff and the Battle of the River Plate*, 107.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> *The Battle of the River Plate*, directed by Powell & Pressburger: The Archers, 00:08:20-00:08:40.

A similar exchange was included in Dove's memoir, but it was altered for cinematic purposes. In reality, Dove's meeting with Langsdorff occurred after another senior officer, Walter Kay, took him on a short tour that ended at the cabin allocated for prisoners of war, where he then offered Dove some of the 'creature comforts' that had been seized from other vessels.<sup>108</sup> Dove recounted, 'I could see from the start that he was extremely anxious to put me at my ease. He glanced around for cigarettes. "I think I still have some English cigarettes left from the *Clement*," he remarked'.<sup>109</sup> Kay also offered tea and Dove particularly remembered how the officer was immensely proud for retrieving a whole case as a gift for his wife.<sup>110</sup> Though the exchange was altered to better suit the introduction of Langsdorff, the fragments of information regarding the previously captured, looted, and destroyed vessels were correct.

Function 5 was a fairly standard scene used to suggest the passing of time, as well as the *Graf Spee's* journey south to rendezvous with the *Altmark* – past the Cape of Good Hope (South Africa) and down towards Antarctica. This then provided a smooth segue into the next series of functions. In reality, these events were scattered across weeks; however, the film condensed them down for ease of continuity and pace. Dove was fitted for warmer clothes and when furnished with these he was able to traverse on deck for his daily exercise and converse with Langsdorff if the opportunity presented itself.<sup>111</sup> In one instance, he watched a refuel and rations transfer between the *Graf Spee* and the *Altmark*, and in another instance, Langsdorff took him on a short tour to show him how the crew created accoutrements to help disguise the ship.<sup>112</sup> Dove seemed genuinely impressed at the crew's ingenuity,

Any British warship which had been given a description of her previous looks ... would no longer recognise her. Even her superstructure was radically altered. I walked around with Captain Langsdorf ... He pointed out to me with obvious pride the dummy funnel... Other men were experimenting with different colours of grey paint ... to get the right tint, like a British

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<sup>108</sup> Dove, *I Was Graf Spee's Prisoner!*, 42.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 89-100.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 98.

man-of-war.<sup>113</sup>

Maintaining anonymity was a key component behind the *Graf Spee's* ability to manoeuvre throughout the Indian and Atlantic oceans. As noted earlier, it had already been misidentified after the destruction of the *Africa Shell* and Langsdorff's penchant for disguise and misdirection (like signing off a transmission with another ship's name) was working well to maintain this characteristic. According to Dove, Langsdorff referred to a copy *Jane's Fighting Ships*<sup>114</sup> for information on current warships and mimicked their aesthetic through the addition of carefully crafted funnels and paintwork.<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, official statements from captured merchant seaman also mentioned the use of last-minute false ensign flags. For example, when recounting his vessel's seizure, A.H. Thompson, Chief Officer of the *SS Huntsman*, said 'we could see no ensign as she held bow to us. When close to, she turned a little exhibiting a French ensign which was soon hauled down and a German ensign took its place'.<sup>116</sup> Although combined to maintain an engaging pace for the film, these cardinal functions were also underpinned by historical evidence.

The transfer of *the Graf Spee's* prisoners (function 7), who were previously stowed on the *Altmark*, was also confirmed by official records – both German and British. In a letter to Eugen Millington-Drake, Commander Höpfner, previously the 'Second Navigating Officer' on the *Graf Spee*, described the transfer of this group and their intended destination,

The party which had just come aboard consisted of captains, chief officers, second officers, radio officers, and chief second and third engineers ... still left aboard the *Altmark* [were] the junior officers, engineers and crews... all had been told that we were being taken to Germany, and the crews in the *Altmark* were to be landed at some neutral port.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> *Jane's Fighting Ships* was an annual publication with a long, and ongoing, history. It is a reference book that contains the specifics of the world's warships and includes information regarding silhouettes, armaments, dimensions, and the nation's that owned them. Images, specifically diagrams, and photographs, were included in this publication.

<sup>115</sup> Dove, *I Was Graf Spee's Prisoner!*, 98.

<sup>116</sup> MT 9/5992, Ministry of Shipping, 'Seamen Home' file, Mercantile Marine Department, 1940, *The National Archives*, Kew: London.

<sup>117</sup> Commander Höpfner to Sir Millington-Drake, an excerpt from a letter in Millington-Drake's *The Drama of Graf Spee and the Battle of the Plate: A Documentary Anthology 1914-1964*, 139.

This event quickly morphed into Dove's introduction to these men, and it was during this sequence that Pressburger inserted another dialogue-based catalyser to address the history that came before the *Africa Shell's* destruction. After Dove asked his fellow prisoners 'well, who are you all?', and a rapid succession of ship names were shouted – thus creating a list for audiences to remember.<sup>118</sup>

Additions were made to this list after function 7. As depicted in function 9, the *Graf Spee* went on to capture, loot, and sink the SS *Doric Star* on 2 December. The British owned cargo liner was returning from Australia and New Zealand and was loaded with important consumer goods, i.e., butter, lamb, cheese, mutton, and bales of wool.<sup>119</sup> Its destruction was covered in a range of Australian newspapers and again, it appeared that Langsdorff's disguises had worked yet again. Initially, the *Daily Mercury* (QLD)<sup>120</sup> described its disappearance as a 'mystery', while the *Glen Innes Examiner* (NSW)<sup>121</sup> and *The Examiner* (TAS)<sup>122</sup> – papers more in tune with British Admiralty's announcements – reported that it had been destroyed by a pocket battleship; however, the *Scheer* was named as the culprit. The *Graf Spee* went on to take two more ships before its encounter with Harwood's squadron. On December 3 it encountered the SS *Tairoa* (another cargo ship sailing from Australia to Britain with goods) off the coast of Namibia, but the Captain scuttled her to avoid their profiteering<sup>123</sup>, and on December 7 it located and destroyed its last merchant vessel the SS *Streonshalh* (it was en route from Montevideo to Sierra Leone with wheat).<sup>124</sup> These encounters were not directly mentioned in the film; however, function 12 likely alludes to the *Streonshalh's* destruction because Saint Nicholas' Day – the day that the German seamen mention they were celebrating – falls on December 6.

After establishing the success of the *Graf Spee* and developing the German characters beyond simple Nazi villains, The Archers focused on introducing the British contingency into their narrative. Like before, significant links can be made between history's events and those depicted

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<sup>118</sup> Powell & Pressburger, *The Battle of the River Plate*, 00:20:00.

<sup>119</sup> Richard Woodman, 'The Admiral Graf Spee: 2-12 December: 'No Alternative but to Obey'', *The Battle of the River Plate: A Grand Delusion*, Pen & Sword Military, Great Britain, 2008, [ebook version, p. unavailable].

<sup>120</sup> Unknown, 'The Doric Star', *Daily Mercury*, Australia, 7 December 1939.

<sup>121</sup> Unknown, 'The Doric Star', *Glen Innes Examiner*, Australia, 5 December 1939.

<sup>122</sup> Unknown, 'Doric Star Sunk. Attacked by Raider', *The Examiner*, Australia, 6 December 1939.

<sup>123</sup> Wreck Site database, see SS *Tairoa*, [online] date accessed: 30/07/2019,

<<https://wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?180405>>.

<sup>124</sup> Captain J.J. Robinson, 'Papers concerning the Sinking of the SS *Streonshalh*', *Whitby Literary and Philosophical Society*, England, 0108.

on screen, which further demonstrates the filmmakers' efforts towards authenticity and the picture's historiophoty.

Act II is short, with only three cardinal functions (14-16), and introduces audiences to Commodore Henry Harwood's British squadron – the naval team actively patrolling the southeast coastline of South America to protect the merchant vessels that were shipping food, i.e., grains and meats, to Allied powers. Through a scheduled flagship meeting (staff meeting), audiences are introduced to the Commodore and the Captains of each British cruiser: Commodore Harwood (Anthony Quayle), who leads from the HMS Ajax, the Ajax's Captain Charles Woodhouse (Ian Hunter), Captain F.S 'Hooky' Bell (John Gregson) from the HMS Exeter, and Captain Edward Parry (Jack Gwilliam) from the HMNZS Achilles. In this meeting, Harwood explains his suspicions surrounding the movements of an unnamed German surface raider and outlines a plan for engagement because he suspects that it will enter the region soon. Harwood also reiterates that the enemy is more powerful, in both speed and firing power, and that they must work together to achieve any victory. They disperse after agreeing to a series of practice manoeuvres.

As one single, self-contained event within a specific timeframe, act II was incredibly brief and straightforward when compared to its predecessor. It contained a series of truths, as well as clear invention. Cinematically, the officer's meeting worked well to introduce audiences to each Captain and conveyed a significant amount of information to viewers without being boorish. In reality, Harwood's instructions were conveyed differently, and Woodhouse's annotated script was quite particular about the invention.

The ships did not stop and there was no boatwork...Harwood's intentions were communicated in two signals. The first made at noon 12<sup>th</sup> December... the second made a little after 6 pm on the same day.<sup>125</sup>

He argued that the *Ajax's* log did not mention any visits from fleet Captains, that the *Exeter* did not join them until 7 am on December 12, and that the information concerning the enemy's

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<sup>125</sup> S-198, 'The Pursuit of the Graf Spee: Woodhouse Edit', notation 8.

refuelling was unknown at the time.<sup>126</sup> In order to combat this invention, he recommended a complete rewrite of the sequence,

The whole of the script up to para.73 requires rewriting to bring it into line with these hard facts. I have put in suggested alterations to the existing script in case you insist on retaining the unreal conditions which have been invented.<sup>127</sup>

It was a recommendation that Powell and Pressburger refused, and the sequences ultimately remained the same.

Despite Woodhouse's objections and insistence to bring the scene into line with the 'hard facts', the plan outlined on-screen did resemble Harwood's quite closely and adhered to Britain's engagement policy regarding engagement with German raiders. According to a report from the Historical Division of the Admiralty's Tactical, Torpedo and Staff Duties Division, Harwood did concentrate his forces (as depicted on screen) when patrolling the south-east coastline of Southern America.<sup>128</sup> If a German raider was spotted, policy dictated that they were to shadow it until dusk and attack during the night.<sup>129</sup> This policy had initially been in place but as the war progressed Harwood's mentality altered and he was prepared to attack at once, regardless of the time of day, by December 1939.<sup>130</sup> He focused intently on his coastline. Captain S.W Roskill, the author of the extensive *War at Sea* series, wrote that Harwood 'had always considered that,

sooner or later, a raider would be tempted by the rich traffic of Rio de Janeiro and the River Plate.<sup>131</sup> In reality and within the film, Harwood's calculations (which took into account the 3,000-mile gap between the *Doric Star's* capture site and his own fleet's territory) estimated that the raider would reach the River Plate estuary by December 13.<sup>132</sup> He was correct.

Overall, The Archers' decision to keep functions 14-16 as they were hardly jeopardised the integrity of their film's authenticity. Although some liberties were taken, they were done in a way that ensured that significant historical details were understandably conveyed to audiences. Woodhouse's insistence on recreating Harwood's signals would have caused pacing

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid, notations 7-10.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, notation 14.

<sup>128</sup> British Naval Staff, 'Battle Summary No. 26', 45.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> S.W Roskill, *The War at Sea: 1939-1945*, Her Majesty's Stationary Office, London, 1954, 118.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 117.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

issues within the script and ran the risk of misinterpretation from the general population. Introducing all the key figures and explaining the plan in one scene removed this risk.

The next act (III) is dedicated solely to the battle at River Plate and has a lengthy list of cardinal functions (17-59) because The Archers concentrated on the sequence of the assault, the reactions of British commanders and crew, and even inserted scenes focused on the responses from the British prisoners aboard the *Graf Spee*. Testing the historiophoty of the battle is a somewhat difficult task due to the multi-faceted nature of the event. The amount of information delivered in this thirty-five-minute sequence was immense and translated into forty-three cardinal functions – all of which are open to investigation when considering their links to reality's events. To consider them in an organised manner, the following discussion will be broken into two channels of investigation, a) the events centred on Harwood's fleet, and b) Dove and his experiences on the *Graf Spee*. Some information from German sources will be included to further support this section; however, it is important to remember that The Archers did not give their German adversary a human face during this battle sequence – it was only referred to as 'the raider' and only wide shots were included.<sup>133</sup>

The initial cardinal functions in act III align with reality's events extremely well. Publications since have confirmed that the *Graf Spee* was spotted in the early hours of December 13, after practice exercises had taken place and senior officers had returned to their quarters (functions 17-18).<sup>134</sup> According to S.W Roskill, action stations were assumed at 6.14 am after Harwood had returned to the deck of the *Ajax*, sent the *Exeter* to investigate, and received confirmation regarding the sighted ship's enemy status (function 20).<sup>135</sup> This was further confirmed by the Admiralty's publicly released account in 1940, which had reported that the *Exeter* (Bell) had signalled 'I think it is a pocket battleship' only two minutes after its direction to breakaway and investigate.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> There is little-to-no evidence directly addressing this decision; however, it was likely made for two reasons. Firstly, this was a film about Britain's endeavours and triumphs during WWII and was made for the national audience, so it had to fit within the 1950s wartime catalogue and German experiences were predominantly absent from this space (as mentioned previously). Secondly, during their preproduction and production periods there was no consultant or available materials addressing the German experience – there was only Dove's account and input on set, and official documents from the British Admiralty.

<sup>134</sup> Roskill, *The War at Sea: 1939-1945*, 118.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid*, 118-119.

<sup>136</sup> British Naval Staff, Admiralty, *The Battle of the River Plate: An Account of Events Before, During and After the Action Up to the Self-destruction of the Admiral Graf Spee*, His Majesty's Stationary Office, London, 1940, 3.



As the battle commenced the *Exeter*, as the closest vessel, was the first to fire on the *Graf Spee* at 6.18 am – followed by the *Achilles* at 6.21 am, then the *Ajax* at 6.23 am.<sup>137</sup> Tactically, Harwood had separated the fleet to divide the *Graf Spee*'s attention, which put the *Exeter* within the range of its enemy earlier than its sister ships and staggered the firing rate of the British response. Functions 25-28 confused this chain of fire and put the *Ajax*'s response ahead of the *Achilles*. It is a small error within the wider scheme of the film; however, when investigating historiophoty it is an issue as it does not correlate with historical accounts or records of the event. A similar misplacement occurred with function 29 – the release of the *Ajax*'s spotting plane. Records state that it was ordered into the air at the 'earliest possible moment' and was successfully deployed at 6.37 am, so the scene would have been better placed later in this sequence of events.<sup>138</sup>

By the time the spotting plane had entered the air the *Exeter* had already received serious damage and the incessant barrage from the *Graf Spee* simply continued. As depicted in functions 32-35, a series of accurate shots had crippled the ship and killed/injured many crewmembers. At 6.23 am an eleven-inch shell exploded just shy of its midsection, which created splinters that killed torpedo tube crewmembers and damaged funnels, searchlights, and communication lines.<sup>139</sup> A minute later it was struck again along 'B' turret. This was close to the bridge, where the Captain and many senior crewmen were stationed, and the splinters from this shell effectively 'swept the bridge, killing or wounding all the bridge personnel except Captain Bell and two others'.<sup>140</sup> This forced Bell to relocate and his journey to the new locale (function 35) and The Archers used this moment to showcase the death and destruction on board (within cinema's capabilities).

Despite this destruction, Bell continued to use whatever was available to defend the *Exeter* against the *Graf Spee* (function 36). In a memorandum to Millington-Drake, Captain Jürgen Wattenberg (formerly the Chief Navigating Officer on the *Graf Spee*) remembered how Langsdorff's first immediate change in his course of action occurred at 6:31 am, when their ship

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> British Naval Staff, Admiralty, 'Battle Summary No. 26. The Chase and Destruction of the Graf Spee' in *G.H Bennett's Hitler's Ghost Ships*, 69.

came within range of the *Exeter's* torpedoes.<sup>141</sup> Simultaneously, the *Achilles* and *Ajax* were moving rapidly towards them, which would place the *Graf Spee* in range of their torpedos too.<sup>142</sup> Although this forced a change in its course of attack, the *Graf Spee* continued to target the *Exeter* and the British ship's capabilities were deteriorating quickly due to damage (function 37). Later the Admiralty released a list of damages accrued at this, which included: turrets out of action, two inoperable eight-inch guns, no communications, a severely damaged hull, and a fire between decks.<sup>143</sup>

Simultaneously, the *Achilles* fell victim to the *Graf Spee's* accurate guns as it split its attention between its enemies (function 38-39). Somewhat overlooked in Roskill's history, an accurate shot caused death, serious injury, and incapacitated the ship for a short time.<sup>144</sup> At 6.40 am an eleven-inch shell exploded just shy of the *Achilles* – in line with its bridge – killing four primary gunnery controllers, as well as wounding the Captain and the chief yeoman of signals.<sup>145</sup> According to Harwood, the *Ajax's* spotting aircraft had tentatively reported the *Achilles'* issues, which prompted the gunners of the *Ajax* to alter their shots (function 41).<sup>146</sup> This momentary lapse of action and the confusion brought on by the communication breakdown allowed the *Graf Spee* to 'make smoke' and the British effectively lost them (they had no exact coordinates or visual confirmations because due to the smoke haze) until 7:08 am.<sup>147</sup>

While the *Ajax* manoeuvred to better support the *Achilles* as well as the *Exeter*, Bell's ship (*Exeter*) was now entirely crippled by the *Graf Spee's* attacks and had ceased its assault due to operational failures. Its health was the primary focus across functions 40 and 42-44, and The Archers worked hard to emphasise the cost – both in human lives and naval equipment – that was incurred as the *Exeter* neared complete destruction. When corresponding with Millington-Drake years later, Bell explained that at this time *Exeter's* only working gun turret was bearing away from the target and he had no opportunity to change course because the *Graf Spee* would

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<sup>141</sup> Captain Jürgen Wattenberg, 'A Memorandum to Millington-Drake', in Millington-Drake's *The Drama of the Graf Spee and The Battle of the River Plate*, 186.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> British Naval Staff, Admiralty, *The Battle of the River Plate: An Account*, 5.

<sup>144</sup> Roskill, *The War at Sea: 1939-1945*, 119.

<sup>145</sup> British Naval Staff, Admiralty, *The Battle of the River Plate: An Account*, 6.

<sup>146</sup> Rear Admiral Henry Harwood, 'The River Plate Battle: Preliminary Dispositions', 30 December 1939, reprinted as a *Supplement to The London Gazette*, His Majesty's Stationary Office, London, 17 June 1947, point 25.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

simply move out of range.<sup>148</sup> Understanding this, Bell knew he had only one option left, 'It was after my last gun had ceased to fire and not knowing the Graf Spee's intentions that I informed my Commander, Robert Graham, that I intended to ram if I had the chance... it would have meant the end of us but also of the Graf Spee as a raider'.<sup>149</sup> Luckily, this course of action never eventuated but Powell and Pressburger added Bell's decision to use this desperate tactic in function 44.

Simultaneously, the revived *Achilles* and the *Ajax* concentrated their firepower on the *Graf Spee* to draw it away from the *Exeter*, but artillery power was not in their favour and the only visual indication of any real success came when the *Graf Spee* altered its course away from them (function 49).<sup>150</sup> Unbeknownst to the British at this time, the German raider had been hit multiple times by their artillery, which had resulted in 36 deaths, many casualties, and caused serious structural damage to the ship.<sup>151</sup> These structural issues may have been difficult for Harwood to identify during the battle, but when inspected by commissioned technicians in Montevideo the list of damages included metre-long holes in the hull, a significant hole on the starboard side along the waterline, cracks in the stern, serious damage to the galley, bakery and laundry, and a serious reduction in operational firefighting equipment.<sup>152</sup> Clearly, Harwood's fleet had inflicted significant damage; however, without any clear indications of this during the engagement, Harwood was hard-pressed in his options. With the *Exeter* severely crippled, the *Achilles* damaged, and the *Graf Spee* in retreat, Harwood decided to 'break off the day action and close in again after dark' which marked the second phase of the River Plate battle – the chase to Montevideo (functions 51).<sup>153</sup> Both the *Ajax* and *Achilles* were able to partake in this pursuit, but the *Exeter* was directed to the Falkland Islands for repairs just after 11 am – 'at whatever speed was possible without straining her bulkhead' (functions 52-53).<sup>154</sup> This aside, some sporadic moments of the chase were included after this (functions 55-57), but The Archers opted

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<sup>148</sup> Captain Bell, 'A letter to Millington-Drake Concerning the Exeter's First Fifty Minutes', in Millington-Drake's *The Drama of the Graf Spee and The Battle of the River Plate*, 203.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Roskill, *The War at Sea: 1939-1945*, 119.

<sup>151</sup> British Pathé, 'Graf Spee - Pocket Battleship Scuttled by Nazis Aka Graf Spee in Montevideo', *Pathé Newsreels*, c. 1939, via *Youtube* [online], date accessed: 04/07/2020. <<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/graf-spee-pocket-battleship-scuttled-by-nazis-aka/query/graf+spee+funeral>>.

<sup>152</sup> Port Authorities (Montevideo), 'Statement of Damage Sustained by the Admiral Graf Spee', 14 December 1939, in the *Uruguayan Blue Book: The Documents Relating to the Sinking of the Admiral Graf Spee and the Internment of the Merchant Vessel Tacoma*, 29.

<sup>153</sup> Harwood, 'The River Plate Battle: Preliminary Dispositions', point 36.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, point 44.

to end this act from Dove's point of view and used the act's final sequence to remind audiences of the *Graf Spee's* prisoners of war. This was not the only time that The Archers inserted scenes with the prisoners; however, it provided a fitting closing point for the end of the battle sequence and tied in with the Pow scenes interspersed throughout the act.

According to Dove's memoir, the alarm that sounded on the morning of December 13 was unknown to the prisoners billeted in the depths of the *Graf Spee*, and their inability to see beyond their quarters severely limited their understanding of the sudden burst of activity (function 21).

All over the *Graf Spee's* decks and alleyways, the alarm buzzers started to sound insistently, in urgent series of five staccato bursts, as we had ever heard the before... We did not know it then, but as the dawn had broken over the grey South Atlantic that searching tower of the *Graf Spee* had picked out something equally grey, but more menacing, the lean outline of the British cruiser, Exeter.<sup>155</sup>

The meaning behind this alarm was quickly realised when the *Graf Spee* began firing (function 24) but, as the film suggests, Dove and his fellow prisoners were unsure of the events unfolding beyond their quarters. In regard to motivation, they were only informed about Langsdorff's decision to attack after the battle had ended. In a series of affidavits collected for the Foreign Office's 'Graf Von Spee' case file, it was disclosed that a German officer, Lieutenant Hertzberg, spoke to them after the battle and confirmed that the *Graf Spee* was the first to fire.<sup>156</sup> According to these statements, Hertzberg said that they thought Harwood's fleet was something else, 'they sighted what they took to be a convoy escorted by a cruiser, and probably two destroyers', and began their attack before they realised their mistake.<sup>157</sup>

When the efforts of the British fleet began to affect the *Graf Spee* (function 31), Dove recalled how his fellow prisoners were in a state of disbelief, 'they thought the explosions would

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<sup>155</sup> Dove, *I Was Graf Spee's Prisoner!*, 120.

<sup>156</sup> F.O 505, British Foreign Office, 'Montevideo Dispatch No. 213, 23 December 1939' in *Montevideo. 'Graf Von Spee', Case III:1939-1940, The National Archives*, Kew: London.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

have been more noticeable'.<sup>158</sup> This quickly changed when another explosion made the ship 'stagger with the impact' and introduced petrol fumes into their cabin space – caused by the damage of the ship's on-deck seaplane.<sup>159</sup> In the film, this anxiety was depicted well, but after this point, there was a significant lull in the cutscenes dedicated to the *Graf Spee's* prisoners. They resumed at function 46 and focused primarily on the attitude and reactions of the captive men. Described as 'rats in a trap', Dove recalled how they tried to remain positive and calm with comments like 'well hit, sir!' and 'that was a good one!' every time the *Graf Spee* faltered, while underneath this bravado they were secretly expecting a shell to burst through their quarters (function 46).<sup>160</sup> This eventually did occur. After a period of anxious debate when the battle had reduced in its intensity (function 54), an explosion caused damage to their quarters and some minor injuries were obtained. Depicted in function 56, this incident was the only real blast that affected the prisoners during the engagement. According to Dove, 'dust, debris and the smell of explosive choked us... by the most unlucky coincidence the only person to be wounded was the young lad who was already injured... a splinter had gashed his arm'.<sup>161</sup>

As time passed the prisoners could only wait for information from a *Graf Spee* crewmember, and eventually Lieutenant Hertzberg, mentioned previously, arrived to inform them of the day's events when nearing Uruguay. During this meeting, he explained that they would be freed the following day in Montevideo, a neutral port, where the *Graf Spee* would stop to repair, restock, and refuel (function 59).<sup>162</sup> This promise was honoured and after their release the British prisoners were fairly generous when speaking to the press about their time aboard the *Graf Spee*. For example, one junior lieutenant told the press that they were treated well and were provided with a gramophone, allowed to listen to radio news, and in the midst of the River Plate battle were remembered and given food/water.<sup>163</sup> Overall, the inclusion of this respect between adversaries – even after a significant military engagement with no immediate victor – added significant depth to the picture's overall historiophoty as it remembered a human aspect that the press focused on at the time of the event. This would continue in the film's final act,

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<sup>158</sup> Dove, *I Was Graf Spee's Prisoner!*, 125.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 130.

<sup>162</sup> F.O 505, British Foreign Office, 'Montevideo Dispatch No. 213, 23 December 1939'.

<sup>163</sup> Unknown, 'Graf Spee Sailors Interned: Officers will Remain on Parole', *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, Scotland, 20 December 1939.

which covered the delicate political situation and public sensation that the *Graf Spee* caused when it entered Montevideo's harbour in the late hours of December 13.

In the picture's final act (IV) the *Graf Spee* reaches Montevideo, a neutral power and a city with a buzzing nightlife, and immediately causes a sensation within the community (functions 60-62). While nighttime revellers scramble to catch a glimpse of the damaged pocket battleship, dignitaries emerge from their offices to immediately begin to discuss the legitimacy of the ship's mooring and the extent of aid that Montevideo can offer as a neutral power during wartime. On the one hand, the British ambassador (Millington-Drake) argues that the German ship must leave as quickly as possible (in accordance with international law); however, Germany's ambassador (Otto Langmann) claims that this is impossible due to the ship's damage and that it must be made seaworthy before being ejected from the harbour. A small window of time is granted by Montevideo's Foreign Minister and Chancellor, Alberto Guani, on the proviso that a thorough damage report be conducted by his own, objective maritime officers. In the scenes that follow a series of events occur, i.e., British surveillance of the battleship is quickly established (functions 68-69), the *Graf Spee* releases its prisoners and prepares to bury its dead (function 70), and an American, Mike Fowler, begins a live broadcast covering the event for locals and international listeners (function 67). Meanwhile, Harwood and his fleet stay stationed just beyond the harbour's three-mile neutral limit and wait for reinforcements in preparation for a battle or chase upon the *Graf Spee's* exit. When the British dignitaries and agents stationed in Montevideo realise that Harwood is waiting for reinforcements, they begin a misinformation campaign that exaggerates the number of ships stationed beyond the neutral zone and it quickly spreads throughout the local population (functions 77-80). When the *Graf Spee's* time comes to an end it prepares to exit the harbour and the citizens in Montevideo crowd to watch its departure, but, after travelling only a short distance it stops and a second, smaller vessel arrives alongside to transfer any remaining crew aboard. Explosions begin on the *Graf Spee*, signalling the start of the scuttling process (function 95). Dove then finds Langsdorff and in a final conversation they discuss his motives and actions – the safety of his crew influenced his decision – and part on good terms. Meanwhile, the British fleet (who had been listening to Fowler's ongoing radio broadcast) celebrate their victory before sailing away.

As a scenario with several characters and parallel actions/counteractions to consider, the cardinal functions for act IV can be somewhat difficult to break down and investigate due to the

jumps from scene to scene. Nevertheless, the following section will consider the act's historiophoty by investigating the ties between its primary cardinal functions and history's events (via historical materials/discourse).

Table 8: The dignitaries involved in the political incident caused by the *Admiral Graf Spee's* arrival in Montevideo.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Nation</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Portrayed by...</u>
Dr. Alberto Guani	Uruguay	Foreign Minister, Chancellor of the Republic of Uruguay	Peter Illing
Eugen Millington- Drake	Britain	British Minister in Uruguay	Anthony Bushell
Monsieur Desmoulins	France	French Chargé d'Affaires	Douglas Wilmer
Dr. Otto Langmann	Germany	German Minister in Uruguay	John Chandos
Captain Henry McCall	Britain	British naval attaché in Buenos Aires	Michael Goodliffe
Ray Martin	Britain	British Secret Intelligence Service agent	William Squire
Mike Fowler	United States of America	Radio Broadcaster	Lionel Murton
Manolo	Uruguay	Bar owner	Christopher Lee

Portraying political negotiations on screen can be difficult due to the lengthy dialogues involved in such situations and these scenes are commonly cut short in war-based pictures to make way for larger action/battle sequences. Powell and Pressburger ignored this approach. Instead, they chose to embrace this aspect of the River Plate scenario and dedicated approx. forty-five minutes towards the communiqués between foreign diplomats, considered the movements of British agents, highlighted Harwood's tactics at the time, and included the sensational response from Montevideo's local community. This created a sophisticated

cinematic account; however, due to the medium some adjustments were made to history's events to better suit the medium.

To begin, the arrival of the *Graf Spee* was portrayed correctly in the film. The battle began in the early hours of the morning, the chase continued throughout the day and evening, and according to the harbour's Naval Authorities' *Log of Arrival and Departure of Battleships*, the German raider entered the harbour before midnight.<sup>164</sup> The film suggested that the ship's arrival sparked a series of immediate meetings between local and foreign dignitaries that filled the late and early darkened hours (functions 63-65), but – in actuality – this did not occur until the following day. Uruguay's official report of the event (printed and released in English as the *Uruguayan Blue Book*) stated that Otto Langmann had 'officially acquainted the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' of the situation and requested time for repairs via telegram – hours before a physical meeting took place.<sup>165</sup> A footnote from Millington-Drake's account also corroborates this sequence of events.<sup>166</sup>

The public's immediate response and the movements of Mike Fowler are more difficult to determine as resources are somewhat limited.<sup>167</sup> At this initial stage reports focused on the ship's arrival, its damage, and hypothesised about the day's events – there was no mention of the local population's response. This was reserved for the next morning's stories. Some descriptions mentioned that the daylight hours had drawn in a 'dense' and 'silent and awed' crowd, one that watched with avid interest as the prisoners, the wounded, and the dead, went or were taken ashore.<sup>168</sup> Crowd scenes like this were captured extremely well in *The Archers'* film because, as mentioned in earlier chapters, Montevideo's community was incredibly excited by the project and were involved a great deal in Powell's location shoots.

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<sup>164</sup> Port Naval Authorities (Montevideo), 'Log of Arrival and Departure of Battleships', 13 December 1939 in the *Uruguayan Blue Book: The Documents Relating to the Sinking of the Admiral Graf Spee and the Internment of the Merchant Vessel Tacoma*, 30.

<sup>165</sup> The Oriental Republic of Uruguay's Ministry of foreign Affairs, '(A)The Facts' in the *Uruguayan Blue Book: The Documents Relating to the Sinking of the Admiral Graf Spee and the Internment of the Merchant Vessel Tacoma*, 13.

<sup>166</sup> Millington-Drake, 'The First Day: Thursday, December 14', *The Drama of the Graf Spee and The Battle of the River Plate*, 289.

<sup>167</sup> Due to a language barrier and time constraints, any personal insights from local citizens and reports from Montevideo's newspapers could not be included at this time.

<sup>168</sup> Unknown, 'Graf Spee Decoyed by Liner: Nazis Fought all day to Escape British Cruisers', *The Lancashire Daily Post*, Great Britain, 14 December 1939; Unknown, 'Thirty-Six Germans Dead', *Kalgoorlie Miner*, Australia, 15 December 1939.



Regarding the broadcaster Mike Fowler, although he may seem like a fictional addition to the picture – a storytelling tool, per se – he was a real person in Montevideo at the time of the event. Resources regarding his motivations and efforts are limited though. For example, in his book Ron Palenski mentioned how, ‘the American broadcaster, Mike Fowler, kept up a constant chat for his listeners in the United States, which apparently included President Franklin Roosevelt’ when covering the *Graf Spee*, but he did not elaborate any further.<sup>169</sup> Millington-Drake had offered some insight in 1964, but it too was limited. Fowler’s presence in Montevideo was, according to Millington-Drake, a complete coincidence, but an opportunity that he utilised well.<sup>170</sup> Millington-Drake explained that in the years before WWII the general public in Uruguay had developed an interest in establishing cultural relations with countries like Great Britain, France, the USA, Spain and Italy.<sup>171</sup> In response, an American meatpacking company (unnamed in his account) that was operating a *frigorifico* (fridge) in the region had employed Fowler to ‘take films and recordings of birdlife in Uruguay’ to further foster this cultural exchange.<sup>172</sup> When the *Graf Spee* entered the harbour Fowler simply seized the opportunity to broadcast the event.

In regard to the scenes depicting the actions of the British Secret Service agents, it is extremely difficult to determine whether the character Ray Martin was entirely fictional or was an actual individual working under a pseudonym (both in reality and in the film). The only resource that elaborated on this man was Powell’s *Graf Spee* book, which did not contain specific historical references. According to Powell, ‘Ray Martin was a secretive man and is not likely to write his memoirs’ but, at the time of the event, was a man heavily active in the surveillance of the *Graf Spee* and its visitors.<sup>173</sup> Beyond this Ray Martin is undocumented. Millington-Drake mentioned one Intelligence Officer in his account, a Lloyd Hirst, and Hirst’s dissemination of rumours about the power of the gathering British fleet, so it is likely that he was the real agent that executed many of the tasks that were conducted by the film’s Ray Martin (functions 69, 71, 79, 80, and 83).<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Ron Palenski, *How we saw the War: 1939-45 Through New Zealand Eyes*, Hodder Moa, Hachette, New Zealand & Australia, 2009, 65.

<sup>170</sup> Millington-Drake, ‘The Raider Cruise’, *The Drama of the Graf Spee and The Battle of the River Plate*, 168.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> Powell, *Graf Spee*, 168.

<sup>174</sup> Millington-Drake, ‘The Third Day: Saturday, December 16’, *The Drama of the Graf Spee and The Battle of the River Plate*, 316.

While the legitimacy of Martin's existence and actions are highly questionable, Powell and Pressburger's scenes depicting the release of the *Graf Spee's* prisoners and the panning shots of its funeral preparations were not (function 70-73). These events were extremely public and covered extensively in the media. Notably, *Movietone News* produced the newsreel 'The Hammering of the 'Graf Spee'', which contained footage of coffins draped in Nazi flags and a funeral procession, as well as footage of merchant seamen waving and smoking as they were taken away from the battleship.<sup>175</sup> Newspapers were quick to print too. The *Manchester Evening News* heralded audiences with a dramatic tale of the PoW's national pride in a time of great danger, stating 'knowing that they were doomed to drown in a prison of steel if the Graf Spee was sunk... the British merchant service still cheered and sang for every British shell that struck home'.<sup>176</sup> In a similar vein, the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* reported that an unnamed prisoner had proudly counted sixteen hits to *Graf Spee* and confirmed that the galley was destroyed during the battle, 'we were well fed but have had nothing to eat since the battle, as the Graf Spee's galley was blown to bits'.<sup>177</sup> These events signalled some victory for the Allied forces.

Dove also spoke to the press after his release; however, his final interaction with Langsdorff was reserved for his book. Depicted in function 73, Dove met with the defeated Captain just prior to his release.

Captain Langsdorf received me in the cabin I had grown to know so well.

I was shocked at the change in him... Splinters had wounded him in the face,  
and he had shaved off his moustache and beard... But though his confidence  
and cheerfulness had both left him, his kindness and chivalry remained  
unquenched.<sup>178</sup>

During their conversation, Dove noted Langsdorff's admiration for the British cruisers and their efforts, especially the 'magnificent, splendid fighters' aboard the *Exeter*.<sup>179</sup> According to Dove,

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<sup>175</sup> Movietone News, *The Hammering of the 'Graf Spee'*, 15-16 December 1939, via Youtube [online], date accessed: 16/09/2019, < <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jA2Fv4SHzVw>>.

<sup>176</sup> Unknown correspondent, 'Courage and cards in the Pocket Battleship's Prison', *Manchester Evening News*, Great Britain, 15 December 1939.

<sup>177</sup> Press Association War Special, 'British Prisoner Gives Lie to Graf Spee Mustard Gas Story', *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, Great Britain, 15 December 1939.

<sup>178</sup> Dove, *I was Graf Spee's Prisoner!*, 140.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

at this time Langsdorff suspected that he would not be granted his requested time for repairs and his primary concern was the destruction of the galley and the impact this would have on his men, 'I am mechanically sound, and my artillery is all right, but all my kitchens and stores have been shot away. I cannot feed my men and I am not going out to sea to commit with all my crew.'<sup>180</sup> The inclusion of this conversation within *The Archers'* film further reiterated their argument that he was an honourable adversary and worth remembering in this manner.

Meanwhile, Harwood's fleet was waiting just beyond Montevideo's three-mile neutral zone and was joined by the *HMS Cumberland* in the late hours of December 14. This arrival time was portrayed differently in function 74. On-screen the ship joined Harwood's fleet during the day – not in the night – and this likely occurred because the footage that Powell captured while shooting on location did not contain night-time sequences. Initially, the *Cumberland* was expected to arrive on the morning of December 15 and in a letter to Millington-Drake Commander E.C.H Featherstone explained their response and haste.<sup>181</sup> He confirmed that the ship had received Harwood's communication to 'raise steam and proceed Plate with all despatch', which then prompted their high-speed journey and was one that Featherstone believed to be 'the longest full-power trial on record'.<sup>182</sup> They travelled at thirty knots (approximately fifty-five kilometres per hour) and maintained this speed for thirty-six hours to arrive quickly at the River Plate.<sup>183</sup> This may have disrupted the immersive, authenticity feeling for audience members that understood this sequence of events and it is a small compromise in comparison to other possible inventions in this act (i.e., Ray Martin).

Another point to consider is Dr. Alberto Guani and his deliberation and decision regarding the *Graf Spee's* time in Montevideo's safe, neutral harbour. Many of the functions that represented political negotiations during this event were debunked later by Millington-Drake but the real form of many of these communications – often official memorandums and telegraphs – would have been cumbersome on-screen and difficult to insert. So, Pressburger altered them to better suit the medium and they became a series of meetings between Guani, Langsdorff, Langmann, Millington-Drake, and Desmoulins. This also provided an opportunity to create tension on screen but, as mentioned, Millington-Drake pointed this out in his account. For

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> E.C.H Featherstone, 'A Letter to Millington-Drake Concerning the River Plate' in *The Drama of the Graf Spee and The Battle of the River Plate*, 298.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

example, in function 75, a scene where he and the French delegate cross paths with Langmann and Langsdorff in Guani's stately offices, he wrote,

It is with much regret that I am obliged to debunk this incident which made such a good scene in the film. On the occasion in question I was in fact conducted out of Dr. Guani's study by a private secretary through a side door, the secretary whispering that this was in order to avoid meeting Herr Langmann and Captain Langsdorff who were in the ante-room!<sup>184</sup>

While this creative liberty was taken with other meetings and political manoeuvres depicted in the film (functions 64, 65, 79, and 83), the information that was conveyed through these scenes was quite correct and acted as an authenticity effect. Links can be made and confirmed through the wider historical discourse surrounding the *Graf Spee* incident and further confirms The Archers' earnest attempts towards historiophoty and representation, which is especially polarising because publications about the battle and its fallout were minimal when the film was produced in 1956.

One piece of information that was communicated differently but factually aligned with the events was Guani's decision to grant a seventy-two-hour extension to the *Graf Spee's* harbour time (function 76). This decision was scrutinised heavily by other foreign diplomats at the time, especially as they had already pressured him with reminders of the Hague Convention's guidelines for neutral powers through official communiqués.<sup>185</sup> Alongside this, Germany's representative, Otto Langmann, had requested fifteen days for the *Graf Spee's* repair – a bold request considering the mandated twenty-four-hour rule – but Guani did not bow to the pressure applied here either.<sup>186</sup> Informed by an independent report from naval technicians based in Uruguay, Guani's decree was issued on December 15 and contained two points, a) 'that a period of 72 hours be allowed for the carrying out of repairs necessary to ensure seaworthiness... the

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<sup>184</sup> Millington-Drake, 'The Second Day: Friday, December 15', *The Drama of the Graf Spee and The Battle of the River Plate*, 304.

<sup>185</sup> Multiple communications between the French and British legations to Guani's Foreign Office, 14-15 December 1939 in the *Uruguayan Blue Book: The Documents Relating to the Sinking of the Admiral Graf Spee and the Internment of the Merchant Vessel Tacoma*, 30-38.

<sup>186</sup> Dr. Otto Langmann, 'German Legation. A 495/39 II. Request for Graf Spee Stay', 14 December 1939 in the *Uruguayan Blue Book: The Documents Relating to the Sinking of the Admiral Graf Spee and the Internment of the Merchant Vessel Tacoma*, 30.

time limit to expire at 8 pm on 17<sup>th</sup>, and b) that this information was to be immediately communicated to all officials concerned.<sup>187</sup> According to Millington-Drake this decree caused ‘worldwide amazement’ and drew even more global attention towards the current standoff between Britain and Germany’s naval powers; however, it demonstrated that Uruguay would not be pressured by wartime adversaries that ventured into its regions.<sup>188</sup>

While this small amount of time was considered and granted for the *Graf Spee*, Harwood was trying to convince dignitaries to keep the enemy docked in Montevideo for as long as possible. His reasoning was clear in a despatch to the Admiralty (then forwarded to Millington-Drake), which read ‘use every possible means of delaying Graf Spee’s sailing, in order to gain time for reinforcements to reach me’.<sup>189</sup> The Archers chose to convey this request through the character McCall (function 77-78). In their scene, the naval attaché charts a small boat to take him to the *Ajax*, where he converses with Harwood and receives the request. It was a completely imagined exchange and one that Woodhouse was irritated by, especially as the back-and-forth conversation suggested that Harwood had helped design this new plan,

I do not remember McCall coming on board and can find no mention of it in the *Ajax*’s log or any record of engines being stopped to allow a bot to come alongside. The following is an extract from Harwood’s despatch...This shows that he initiated the idea and should have some credit for it.<sup>190</sup>

This may have been the case as remembered by Woodhouse; however, in D.P O’Connell’s section on the River Plate incident in *The Influence of Law on Sea Power*, McCall was said to have visited the *Ajax* during this waiting period.<sup>191</sup> Whether real or imagined, the information regarding Harwood’s plan was conveyed fairly well and assisted with the progression of the narrative in a manner that suited the medium.

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<sup>187</sup> Baldomir A. Guani & Alfredo R. Campos (Divisional General), ‘Decrees Regarding the Graf Spee’s Anchorage in Montevideo Harbour’, 15 December 1939, in the *Uruguayan Blue Book: The Documents Relating to the Sinking of the Admiral Graf Spee and the Internment of the Merchant Vessel Tacoma*, 38-39.

<sup>188</sup> Millington-Drake, ‘Checkmate at Montevideo: The Four Days There’, *Two Lectures on the Battle of the River Plate and the Drama of the Graf Spee*, unmarked pamphlet, c. 1960s.

<sup>189</sup> Rear-Admiral Sir Henry Harwood, ‘Despatch to the Admiralty’, 30 December 1939, in Millington-Drake’s *The Drama of the Graf Spee and The Battle of the River Plate*, 294.

<sup>190</sup> S-198, Woodhouse & Pressburger, ‘The Pursuit of the Graf Spee: Woodhouse Edit’, introductory comments.

<sup>191</sup> Daniel Patrick O’Connell, *The Influence of Law on Sea Power*, Manchester University Press, UK, 1975, 36.

Harwood's promotion was also revealed to audiences in this same style (function 78). Although misplaced within the film's timeline, Harwood received news of his promotion in the late hours of Saturday 16 – day three of their stakeout of the Montevideo harbour – as did his Captains.<sup>192</sup> These honours made it into the papers the following Monday via an official statement from the Admiralty, which read,

In recognition of the gallant and successful action fought by H.M ships  
Ajax, Achilles and Exeter... his Majesty the King has been pleased to  
appoint Commodore Henry Harwood to be a Knight Commander of  
the Most Honourable Order of the Bath... Harwood has also been promoted  
to be Rear-Admiral in H.M Fleet, to date from December 13, the date of  
action.<sup>193</sup>

It was a celebration for Britain, but evidence suggests that Harwood was uncomfortable about its timing. Years later, Lady Harwood wrote that her husband was so 'incredulous' when he received the news that he asked the Yeoman of Signals for verification<sup>194</sup> and in the 2011 *As it Happened* documentary series, Henry Harwood Jnr recalled his father's uneasiness at the timing of the promotion too.<sup>195</sup> He highlighted how 'Churchill, obviously and rightly, wanted to make much of, what really was, the first British victory in the war and he did this in spades', but maintained that his father believed these claims of victory and the promotions that ensued were premature, 'here we were, showered with honours and the job not completed', his father had said<sup>196</sup> This uneasiness did not make it into the film; however, as the comments were made years later by Harwood's immediate family, this was likely private information at the time of the film's production and release.

The final point to consider before moving on to the cardinal functions that focused on the *Graf Spee's* departure from Montevideo is the excitement and gossip that emerged amongst the

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<sup>192</sup> Millington-Drake, 'The Third Day: Saturday, December 16', *The Drama of the Graf Spee and The Battle of the River Plate*, 332.

<sup>193</sup> Unknown correspondent, 'Man in Command Given Knighthood and Promoted', *Edinburgh Evening News*, Scotland, 18 December 1939.

<sup>194</sup> Millington-Drake, 'The Third Day: Saturday, December 16', *The Drama of the Graf Spee and The Battle of the River Plate*, 332.

<sup>195</sup> Henry Harwood (Junior), in Hayes' documentary *As It Happened: The Battle of the River Plate*, 00:28:00-00:30:00.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

public, both in and out of Uruguay, and its impact on the event. Overexaggerating the power and size of the waiting British fleet was a ploy used by British intelligence to unnerve Langsdorff and possibly prompt the surrender and internment of the *Graf Spee* for the course of the war.<sup>197</sup> Functions 79-80 included the initial set-up and dissemination of this 'intelligence' through a phone call on an insecure line and the swift circulation of this 'leaked' information through news channels, but Millington-Drake also disproved this moment in his history,

It is with regret that I must state that this incident (which made a very good and unusual scene in the film) was fictional... Lloyd Hirst [Intelligence Officer and the Assistant Naval Attaché in Montevideo] ... was instructed to put up a bluff with the Argentine Ministry of Marine that the *Renown* and *Ark Royal* were in the vicinity.<sup>198</sup>

In reality, Hirst's rumours spread exactly as intended. The swift adoption and exaggeration of this false narrative quickly took hold of the public's imagination, especially across Great Britain. For example, in their December 15 edition, the *Edinburgh Evening News* reported that the fleet had been strongly reinforced by the battlecruiser HMS *Renown* and the aircraft carrier HMS *Ark Royal*, complete with 60 aircraft aboard.<sup>199</sup> The next evening, they reported that the French battleship *Dunkerque* had arrived, while in reality, it was only the *Cumberland*.<sup>200</sup> They were not alone in their adoption of this lie. Citing the South African Press, the *Portsmouth Evening News* also reported that the *Ark Royal* and *Renown* had joined Harwood<sup>201</sup>, as did the *Lancashire Evening Post*<sup>202</sup>, and *The Civil and Military Gazette*.<sup>203</sup> The excitement generated by such rumours was tenfold amongst Montevideo's population – seen best in the crowd-filled newsreel footage collected by *Movietone News* and *British Pathé*.

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<sup>197</sup> Millington-Drake, 'The Third Day: Saturday, December 16', *The Drama of the Graf Spee and The Battle of the River Plate*, 316.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Unknown, 'Will the Graf Spee Accept New Challenge? Two Courses Open. Must Put to Sea or be Interned', *Edinburgh Evening News*, Scotland, 15 December 1939.

<sup>200</sup> Unknown, 'Uruguay Fixes Departure Hour of Graf Spee: If She Leaves there are Four Choices Open to her', *Edinburgh Evening News*, Scotland, 16 December 1939.

<sup>201</sup> Unknown, 'Berlin's Instructions to Graf Spee Captain: Code Messages to Montevideo. Escape Impossible', *Portsmouth Evening News*, Great Britain, 15 December 1939.

<sup>202</sup> Unknown, 'Graf Spee in Desperate Dilemma', *Lancashire Evening Post*, Great Britain, 15 December 1939.

<sup>203</sup> Unknown, 'Five British Warships in Plate Estuary', *The Civil and Military Gazette*, Great Britain, 16 December 1939.

When considering the picture's final sequence, it is important to understand that Langsdorff's decision to scuttle his ship was an entirely unforeseen ending to the *Graf Spee's* time in Montevideo. The media had posited that if the German's did not surrender the ship to be interned, then it would have no choice but to 'dash' away whilst avoiding the British fleet that had accumulated just beyond Montevideo's three-mile neutral limit.<sup>204</sup> This was a sound hypothesis; however, issues that were kept from the public ultimately swayed Langsdorff's mind. According to Grove, Grove and Finlan, 'uncertain that his ship's temperamental diesel engines would last the long perilous voyage home and believing a British deception that a much stronger force now awaited his vessel, Langsdorff ordered the *Graf Spee* to be scuttled'.<sup>205</sup> Unable to be conveyed in many other ways, Langsdorff's motivations were explained to audiences in function 97 – the fabricated last discussion between Dove and the German Captain. In reality, the last time Dove saw Langsdorff was during the funeral service for the *Graf Spee's* fallen crew, days before the scuttling.

At the end of the ceremony... he came to where I was standing. As he came level with me he looked up, and saw me standing there with my hand at the salute. He stiffened himself to attention, looked me straight in the eyes with his face set, then returned my salute quietly. He passed on—and I never saw him again.<sup>206</sup>

Speculations regarding the *Graf Spee's* other courses of action were included in the film via Fowler's broadcasts (functions 86, 87, 92, 93), but the scenes focused on portraying the immense crowds, rather than explaining the tactical choices open to the Germans.

On the evening of December 17, the *Graf Spee* exited the harbour, closely followed by the steamship SS *Tacoma*, and continued forward until it reached the end of the neutral zone where it then stopped.<sup>207</sup> Once stationary, the raider's crew were transferred to the awaiting steamship and, when clear, a series of systematic explosions began on the *Graf Spee*. When

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<sup>204</sup> Unknown, 'Graf Spee may make Dash for Buenos Aires', *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, Great Britain, 16 December 1939.

<sup>205</sup> Philip D. Grove, Mark J. Grove & Alastair Finlan, *The Second World War (3): The War at Sea*, Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, New York: London, 2002, 20.

<sup>206</sup> Dove, *I Was Graf Spee's Prisoner!*, 143.

<sup>207</sup> Grove, Grove & Finlan, *The Second World War (3): The War at Sea*, 20.



investigated by the Uruguayan authorities the Captain of the *Tacoma*, Hans Konow, freely signed the official statement that outlined his illegal assistance to the *Graf Spee*.<sup>208</sup> It contained the following admissions: the *Tacoma* actively left the harbour at 6:30 pm to assist the *Graf Spee*, it did not submit clearance papers to Port Naval Authorities, it deliberately took aboard crew members from the pocket battleship and assisted with their transfer to waiting Argentinian tugs, and that they did all this at the request of Captain Langsdorff.<sup>209</sup> Evidently, Langsdorff had decided to scuttle and had made thorough preparations to ensure the safety of his crew even though he had received orders to 'fight his way through Buenos Aires, using remaining ammunition'.<sup>210</sup>

Alongside this, when considering the immense destruction of the *Graf Spee* it is also clear that Langsdorff was extremely wary of any attempts from adversaries to salvage Germany's naval technology. Steps were taken to ensure that the ship would be utterly devastated and although the plan did not entirely unfold correctly the desired results were achieved. In a 1999 interview Oscar Medina Soca, director of the Maritime Museum in Montevideo and merchant seaman in the harbour at the time of the event, described the technical process used for the scuttling.<sup>211</sup> He explained how 'the Germans used torpedo warheads to detonate explosions in two main powder magazines. A large rope was attached to each of the detonator charges... and by pulling each rope personally, the Captain activated the times for the explosions from a nearby motor launch'.<sup>212</sup> This was the plan, but errors occurred. The explosives set in the front of the *Graf Spee* did not detonate while the rear explosives did, and this propelled three large gun turrets off the ship's main body and caused a hundred-foot section of the stern to break away.<sup>213</sup> As a result, the ship sunk on an even keel in the somewhat shallow waters and burned above the water line for four days.<sup>214</sup> According to Ruff, the ship was only turned and fully submerged when a violent storm rolled it onto its side.<sup>215</sup> Despite this immense destruction the British Admiralty still considered salvaging parts of the vessel. Their 1940 report was extensive, with three separate

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<sup>208</sup> Port Naval Authorities, 'Summary of a Report Instructing Investigation of the Motives for the Departure of the *Tacoma*', 18 December 1939, in the *Uruguayan Blue Book: The Documents Relating to the Sinking of the Admiral Graf Spee and the Internment of the Merchant Vessel Tacoma*, 58-61.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *After 1945: Latency as Origin of the Present*, Stanford University Press, 2013, 40.

<sup>211</sup> Bob Ruff, 'A Mystery Solved: The Scuttling of the Admiral Graf Spee', *World and I*, Gale Academic Onefile, 1999, 208.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

sections and over fifty photographs of the accessible areas of the wreck and contained a lengthy series of discussion points regarding its construction, its layout, and what could be salvaged.<sup>216</sup>

While Powell and Pressburger's film ended with the immense destruction of the *Graf Spee* (function 95) and a British 'victory sail' into the sunset (function 99), there was more to the story. Three days after the scuttling, Langsdorff shot himself and was found wrapped in the flag of the German Empire (not the military's preferred Nazi swastika-bearing flag).<sup>217</sup> His crew were held in Montevideo, and many decided to remain there, even after repatriation efforts began in 1946. The story is, as Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht described, 'an early episode of World War II that fascinated the mid-twentieth century' and, evidently, it has continued to do this in the twenty-first.<sup>218</sup>

### *Conclusions Regarding Distributional Functions*

This chapter has demonstrated that a picture's distributional functions are entirely unique, interacting and communicating historical materials, ideas, and events, in several ways and to varying degrees of intensity. While this changes from film to film, evidence suggests that filmmakers can go to serious lengths to ensure that their distributional functions are supported well (factually), so it is pertinent to consider their efforts in greater depth to better understand filmmaking processes, as well as the information that is being conveyed.

In regard to the adaptation of an original fictional text, the cardinal functions of *The Spy in Black* showed that history's events could be smoothly and effectively added to an updated version of an original story with little difficulty. For example, Pressburger utilised humour to emphasise the significance of food shortages during WWI and through multiple butter-related jokes, he effectively reminded audiences of the past, whilst also warning them about the possibility of wartime shortages in the near future. The film also demonstrated how larger ideas, i.e. the reminder regarding the historical significance and military relevance of the Orkney Islands, could also be successfully embedded within the narrative without disrupting its overall ambience and style – in this instance, its spy thriller themes. By explicitly naming the British

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<sup>216</sup> ADM 281/84, British Naval Staff, Admiralty, *Report on visit to wreck of Graf Spee: Technical Report*, April 1940, *The National Archives*, Kew: London.

<sup>217</sup> Gumbrecht, *After 1945: Latency as Origin of the Present*, 40

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*

Grand Fleet's whereabouts, a detail absent from Clouston's original story, Pressburger reduced any opportunity for confusion about the picture's setting, thus emphasising the region's significance in Britain's naval history. This was especially apt, as 1939 audiences were highly conscious of the tenuous international situation between Britain and Germany and the likelihood of another serious conflict

As an original screenplay, *Colonel Blimp's* interaction with historical materials and its representation of past trends was far more in-depth because it was only inspired by a comment made in The Archers' previous film, *One of Our Aircraft is Missing*, and Low's satirical cartoon character. Without a whole original text to adapt, Pressburger had the freedom to explore and structure his narrative, characters, and themes, how he wished, which he did through his research trips (a significant feat considering the wartime restrictions in place in London at the time) and careful writing. The research notes contained in the BFI's collections show a broad range of subject interests, and in most instances, contain information on social/cultural trends and events, like the Suffragette movement and women's rights or theatre shows in London, that were included (in some form) in the final picture. In some instances, this information was obvious, and in others, like the approach taken for *The Spy in Black*, allusions were made, which helped to support and reiterate the film's primary messages regarding 'traditional vs. modern' mindsets without directly scorning Britishness.

In comparison, the amount of information embedded within *River Plate's* cardinal functions far outweighed that of *Black* and *Colonel Blimp*. Unlike the previous two films, Powell and Pressburger's narrative was based on true events and contained real figures (both living and dead), which added pressures regarding authentic representation and historiophoty. To appease the Admiralty, receive funding, utilise resources and opportunities, and meet audience expectations, The Archers focused on creating a history film that was as authentic as it could be within the genre. At the time of the film's release, the amount of information available for public access was limited; however, Pressburger's cardinal functions did not reflect the mindset of an uninformed man. Testing the film's cardinal functions against later resources (newly published or made available to the public), has revealed that The Archers' primary content was predominantly in line with history's events. When its cardinal functions deviated away from real events the changes were not detrimental and were often made to better suit the medium – rather than distort history.

While cardinal functions are extremely important, they are not the sole concern for filmmakers retelling a historical event. The narrative structure must also be supported by a well-developed *mise en scène*, otherwise the believability of the historical setting, its individuals, and events are jeopardised. The next chapter will investigate the *mise en scène* of each film and consider how *The Archers* bolstered their distributional functions with historically supportive integrational functions.

## Chapter Four:

### Investigating Integrational Functions: The *Mise en scène*'s Settings, Hair, Costumes and Makeup, and Props.

Aesthetic details have always played a significant part in the overall composition of historical films and anecdotes from filmmakers, cast, and production crews, often reveal the lengths that some will go to in order to create an authentic historical microcosm for their audiences to experience. Whether they fall under the label of costume dramas, heritage films, historical epics or biopics, elements embedded within a history film's *mise en scène* (costumes, props, settings, characterisation/performance, lighting etc) act as signifiers for bygone eras and produce realism in a way that is missing from written texts. As Stubbs described,

In many historical films, the past is embodied in their abundance of realistic, visible details... the foregrounding of historical detail is thus central to the representation of the past... even though it does not necessarily correlate with historical authenticity in the broader sense.<sup>1</sup>

In many instances (across the industry's history), filmmakers, cast, and crew have utilised historical materials to inform their representations of the past and their efforts (or lack thereof, in some cases) have not gone unnoticed by audiences. According to Claire Monk, the fastidious reproduction of the 'period *mise en scène*' is highly valued and demanded by viewers, with many critically assessing aspects like costumes, hair and makeup, vehicles, buildings and scenery, furnishings, and music, for their era appropriateness.<sup>2</sup> As such expectations exist, it is unsurprising that some filmmakers go to great lengths to embed authenticity effects within their work.

Examples of these efforts range across cinema's history and its industries. Early cinema has its fair share of cases. For example, it was rumoured that before filming *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1935) actor Charles Laughton had found receipts and measurements from one of Captain Bligh's visits to a Savile Row tailor and had the company reproduce the garment as

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<sup>1</sup> Stubbs, *Historical Film: A Critical Introduction*, 41.

<sup>2</sup> Monk, *Heritage Film Audiences*, 124-126.

closely as possible for his costume.<sup>3</sup> In Britain, Alexander Korda and Belgian filmmaker Jacques Feyder were preoccupied with all things historical whilst producing *Knight with Armour* (1937). According to Karol Kulik, both men were obsessed over the picture's visual aesthetic and paid special attention to set design, costuming, movement, and a general historical ambience.<sup>4</sup> This extended beyond this one feature. While Feyder returned to Europe, Korda continued with his big-budget history films. John Clements, the leading man in Korda's epic film *The Four Feathers* (1939), remembered this obsession and the costs it incurred upon the studio, 'virtually every prop you touched was something priceless out of the British Museum... Alex was a man who wanted the best... money was no object'.<sup>5</sup> Although Korda departed for Hollywood in 1940, other filmmakers in Britain adopted and refined his techniques when approaching their historical features – Powell and Pressburger among them.

Over time, new filmmakers began to transfer and refine such techniques and, in some instances, even became the protégés of their industry idols, i.e., Martin Scorsese and Francis Ford Coppola consulted with Powell and Pressburger (Powell in particular) in the earlier stages of their own careers.<sup>6</sup> When hyper-realism began to dominate the history film genre, after 1980, and controversial subjects like JFK's assassination (*JFK*, 1991), the Holocaust (*Schindler's List*, 1993) and D-Day (*Saving Private Ryan*, 1998) began to emerge on screen, such filmmakers were able to boast about the 'historical truthfulness' of their pictures; however, this could quickly unravel if the significant effort to produce an authentic narrative and a supportive *mise en scène* had not been made.<sup>7</sup> For example, this occurred with Scorsese's 2002 picture *Gangs of New York*. Although acclaimed for its attention to historical hair, costumes, and era-appropriate language (19<sup>th</sup> century), the picture's characterisation,

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<sup>3</sup> Stubbs, *Historical Film: A Critical Introduction*, 41.

<sup>4</sup> Kulik, *Alexander Korda*, 205. Note: Unfortunately, due to a series of issues regarding budget and execution, *Knight Without Armour* failed to recoup its costs at the box office and received mixed reviews from critics at the time.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 172.

<sup>6</sup> For further information on the influence of The Archers' work and Michael Powell's relationship, as both mentor and friend, with Martin Scorsese and Francis Ford Coppola see: Peter Brunette's collection *Martin Scorsese Interviews*, University of Mississippi, USA, 1999; Gene D. Phillips, *The Intimate Francis Ford Coppola*, University of Kentucky Press, USA, 2004; Ian Christie & Andrew Moor, *The Cinema of Michael Powell: International Perspectives on an English Film-Maker*, BFI Publishing, UK, 2005; Martin Scorsese's interview on the Criterion Collection's remastered edition of *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, DVD, 2013; Jeffe Menne, *Francis Ford Coppola*, University of Illinois Press, USA, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Benjamin Justice, 'Historical Fiction to Historical Fact: Gangs of New York and the Whitewashing of History', *Social Education*, vol. 67, no. 4, 2003, 213.

the dominance of white characters, and its wider interpretation of the past – as a place of heroes and happy endings – has been criticised and labelled as a whitewashing of New York’s complex and diverse history.<sup>8</sup> Evidently, the picture’s integrational functions were developed and received well for their authenticity, while the distributional functions that they supported were far less impressive. Finding the balance between a well-informed script and a well-developed *mise en scène* continues to challenge contemporary filmmakers today, but many have found and shared how they tackle this task, especially concerning the *mise en scène*’s construction. For instance, during the preproduction stage of Dominic Lees’ short film *The Burning* (2016), actress Jorjana Ingham vigorously researched Tudor Protestantism and attended a period-appropriate (1500s) costume-making workshop where she made her ensemble.<sup>9</sup> Lees believed that the rough and amateurish work added an unexpected air of authenticity to his film because, in reality, Ingham’s character, a poor widow and servant, would have relied on her sewing skills to make and mend garments.<sup>10</sup> In a similar vein, director Robert Eggers intently researched the material world of lighthouse keepers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century for his historically set psychological horror *The Lighthouse* (2019) and admitted that he relied on ‘tons of photos’ when constructing that world.<sup>11</sup>

This chapter will investigate the material authenticity effects embedded within Powell and Pressburger’s history films to further consider how, within the restrictions of their medium, they aesthetically represented the events, individuals, and trends of the past to their audiences. Previous chapters have already established that their approach towards historiophoty was shaped by industry demands and their personal interests, so this chapter will primarily address the authenticity effects on screen and the links they have to primary and secondary resource materials, and, if possible, Powell and Pressburger’s efforts to collect them through research and replicate them for the screen. To do this effectively, this chapter will have two main sections. In the first section, the pictures’ set design, costumes, hair, and makeup, will be considered in chronological film order, with a detailed analysis of various authenticity effects and their relationship to historical materials or trends. The second section

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Lees, *Cinema and Authenticity*, 209.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 210.

<sup>11</sup> Alissa Wilkinson, ‘*The Witch* Director Robert Eggers Spills his Beans about *The Lighthouse*’, *Vox*, 15 October 2019, [online], date accessed: 06/03/2020, <<https://www.vox.com/culture/2019/10/15/20914097/robert-eggers-lighthouse-interview-witch>>.

will focus on significant props and their relationship to history; however, due to their use and nature within each picture, these items will be split into two categories: a) props that are used to establish a historical timeline, and b) props that are used as historical signifiers that represent past trends. Investigating these elements will provide insight into how Powell and Pressburger utilised integrational functions to better establish authenticity, both historical and contemporary, within their pictures.

### *Establishing Bygone Times through Set Design*

The set designers/art directors employed by Powell and Pressburger were nothing but masters of their craft. Vincent Korda,<sup>12</sup> the art director for *The Spy in Black*, had already worked on several popular feature films, such as *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933), *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1934) and *Things to Come* (1936), and won an Academy Award for his work for *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940). Alfred Junge, an Archers' favourite, had spent time under the direction of Michael Balcon at Gaumont British before moving to MGM British. His filmography was already lengthy by the time he was employed for *Colonel Blimp* and included titles such as *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), *King Solomon's Mines* (1937) and *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* (1939). Like Vincent, Junge would go on to win an Academy Award later for his work in *Black Narcissus* (1947). When Arthur Lawson was tasked with the art direction for *River Plate*, he too had a lengthy filmography, which included *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946), *Gone to Earth* (1950) and Laurence Olivier's *Richard III* (1955), including an Academy Award for The Archers' *The Red Shoes*.<sup>13</sup> Apprentice to Junge during *Colonel Blimp*, Lawson worked consistently with Powell and Pressburger and was employed (as either apprentice, assistant or head) in nine of their films. *River Plate* was the last Archers production that Lawson worked on; however, he partnered again with Powell in 1960 for his independent film, *Peeping Tom* (1960), which is now considered a cult classic.

It is difficult to determine the personal opinions and favoured approaches that these designers had towards authentic historical representation because, to date, few secondary

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<sup>12</sup> As this chapter mentions both Alexander and Vincent Korda, the following section will refer to the latter as Vincent. This has been done to reduce confusion because throughout this thesis the name Korda has been synonymous with Alexander.

<sup>13</sup> This was a joint win for Arthur Lawson and Hein Heckroth. Both men were tasked with art design/direction in Powell and Pressburger's renowned production *The Red Shoes* and they received the Academy Award for their efforts in the 1949 award season.



studies or primary accounts discuss their efforts or processes. In many instances their names and occupations can be found in industry trade listings and administration materials; however, insight on a personal level is limited to the anecdotes given in the memoirs, autobiographies, and biographies left by their colleagues. Furthermore, Vincent Korda, Junge, and Lawson's production notes and personal records are either unavailable for public access or non-existent. Nevertheless, contemporary viewers can still closely analyse the work present in their films.

As previously established, *The Spy in Black* was not designed with historical authenticity in mind. Pressburger's adaptation was created for a contemporary 1930s audience and the film's costumes, hair, and makeup (predominantly Hobson's) supported the variations on Clouston's original text. In a similar vein, Vincent's set designs focused on developing a suspenseful atmosphere, befitting a spy film, rather than the rendition of elaborate historical scenes from Scotland's past. The designs that he produced resembled the architecture commonly found in the area, generally traditional in the wider sense of the region, and when paired with the footage that Powell collected it was clear that authentic geographical representations outweighed specific historical ones.

As mentioned previously, Powell's love of the countryside was a prominent characteristic in his directorial style and a common focus in films like *A Canterbury Tale* (1944), *I Know Where I'm Going!* (1945) and *Gone to Earth* (1950). Indulging this passion began with his first solo directorial piece, *The Edge of the World* (1937). It was set during the 1930 evacuation of St. Kilda and, as a strong advocate for location filming, Powell had managed to take his small cast and crew (twenty-three people in total) to Scotland for location filming.<sup>14</sup> Although refused entry to St. Kilda because Lord Dumfries, a young and enthusiastic ornithologist, had purchased the island and established it as a natural bird sanctuary in 1931, Powell was able to gain access to the island of Foula for a small fee.<sup>15</sup> When the opportunity to explore more of Scotland emerged during *The Spy in Black's* preproduction stage, it was unsurprising that Powell's passion for the region seeped into the film's settings and landscapes.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 244.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 245.

Visually establishing the Orkney Islands landscape was a straightforward task because Pressburger had explicitly named it in the film's dialogue. Within the first fifteen minutes, it was clear that Hardt's primary objective was the infiltration of the island of Hoy. His information packet (filled with orders and reference materials) contained a photograph of one of the island's iconic natural landmarks – the 450ft sea stack 'The Old Man of Hoy' – and a junior officer clearly named it, so there could be no confusion. The sea stack itself was a popular attraction in the area and had even been mentioned in the work of authors like John Stuart Blackie (a Scottish scholar and poet), who likened it to a mythical being that stood watch over the sea,

The old man of Hoy  
Looks out on the sea,  
Where the tide runs strong, and the wave rides...  
And he stands alone,  
Firm on his old rock-dwelling,  
This stout old man of Hoy.<sup>16</sup>

While a seemingly small detail, the insertion of the real footage of this locale added an extra layer of authenticity to the film's landscape and showcased a place where many audience members may have never ventured. Alongside this location footage, Vincent's sets also worked hard to create a thoroughly Scottish landscape for viewers through geographically specific architectural design.

As noted in this dissertation's Production chapter, one of the primary set design issues that Powell was concerned about related to Fräulein Tiel's home and the attached schoolhouse. According to his autobiography, he was worried about the use of the studio's stock sets because they resembled English Tudor homes, which bore little resemblance to the rugged architecture found in Scotland's Orkney region,

The scale was entirely different in the islands, because of poverty,

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<sup>16</sup> John Stuart Blackie, 'The Old Man of Hoy', *The Selected Poems of John Stuart Blackie*, John Macqueen, Hasting House: London, 1896, 65-66.

because of primitive materials, because of the terrible winds and weather. The houses hug the ground. The rooms are tiny...<sup>17</sup>

To avoid looking ‘too English’, and to soothe Powell’s worries, Vincent redesigned and built several sets specifically for *The Spy in Black*. ‘I was thrilled by this unconventional collaboration’ Powell confessed later and ‘this willingness of Vincent’s to throw away stock doors and windows and create a new scale of things for the actors to move and act in’.<sup>18</sup> It is difficult to determine the exact reference materials that Vincent used for this task though. The only description of them comes, yet again, from Powell’s autobiography, ‘I showed him photographs of Scottish crofts and Scottish manses and Vernon returned with a boxful of photographs of the 1914-18 war in Scapa Flow and a portfolio of photographs and sketches’.<sup>19</sup> While this does not provide a complete description of the resources used, it does illustrate how Powell and Vincent were invested in an authentic architectural rendition of the region, which had changed little over the inter-war period.

Even though there are no surviving personal records of Powell’s trip to the Orkneys (beyond his descriptions), the sets from the film can be compared alongside the real crofts and manses found across the area. At the time, the Northern and Western regions of Scotland contained many estates that demonstrated prominent design phases across its architectural history.<sup>20</sup> Manor homes, like the 17<sup>th</sup> century Skail House, were prominent features in the rugged landscape and in some instances were still the ancestral homes for prominent Lairds.<sup>21</sup> While the islands’ smaller dwellings, i.e., croft houses and manses, were sequestered amongst these larger estates and were visually quite different to their British counterparts. As noted by J.B Caird, croft houses (post-1750) were designed ‘for subsistence rather than commercial farming’, with many located close to the sea to encourage tenants to make a living from fishing.<sup>22</sup> They were architecturally boxy, vernacular in style (built with locally sourced material) and often had harled walls – which gave them their iconic white façade due to the

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<sup>17</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 407.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 312.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>20</sup> Glendinning, Miles et al., *A History of Scottish Architecture: From the Renaissance to the Present Day*, Edinburgh University of Press, Edinburgh, 1996, xiii-xiv.

<sup>21</sup> Unknown, ‘History of Skail’, *Skail House: 1620-2020*, 2020, [online], date accessed 12/04/2020, <<https://skailhouse.co.uk/the-house/history-of-skail/>>.

<sup>22</sup> J.B Caird, ‘The Making of the Scottish Rural Landscape’, *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 1964, 80:2, 74.

lime-wash used.<sup>23</sup> These characteristics can be seen in Smoogro House, Storer Clouston's home (pictured below). Vincent mimicked these characteristics in his studio sets, as evident in Fräulein Tiel's home.

As a supportive integrational function, Vincent's sets were important for the establishment of a believable Scottish landscape. The creation of a quintessentially Scottish atmosphere was Powell's priority and while some historical materials were used for reference, i.e., Vernon's box of 1914-1918 photographs, the exact replication of a particular historical building was unimportant – capturing the ambience of the landscape through geography and architecture was more pressing than creating a rich historical setting. This approach would change dramatically for the set designs *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* as Pressburger's wildly different and historically driven script relied on supportive authenticity effects to support its distributional functions.

Figure 3: (Left) Fräulein Tiel's dwelling in Powell & Pressburger's *The Spy in Black*, 1939.

(Right) Smoogro House, Orphir, c.1905 courtesy of the Orkney Library and Archive.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

See: <https://orkneylibrary.org.uk/orkney-archive/photographic-archive/r-h-robertson-2/>

As the production designer for the entirety of *Colonel Blimp*, Alfred Junge had an immense number of responsibilities, full of individuals and teams to oversee. Although Powell and Pressburger maintained their positions as the final authorities over the film's content, Junge had garnered an immense amount of trust and freedom from both filmmakers.

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<sup>23</sup> Harry Gordon Slade, 'Harling and Vernacular, or "We are all Gentlemen Now"', Vernacular Building 22, *Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group*, 1998, 32-33.

According to Powell, they had given Junge ‘complete charge of the art department ... all the art direction, the sets and props and also all costumes and accessories, including the make-up’.<sup>24</sup> His designs followed Pressburger’s scene descriptions (that he developed through research) and each major setting contained a series of set related authenticity effects aimed to support the film’s distributional functions. The following section contains the in-depth analysis of several prominent set designs from *Colonel Blimp* and traces the links they have to reality’s venues and natural environments, as well as the activities associated with those spaces.

To begin, the flashback sequences for *Colonel Blimp* began with the ‘Royal Bathers’ Club’, a fictional Turkish bath for society’s gentlemen was an apt setting to start with as it was one of the few elements within the film that directly linked back to Low’s original figure. Nowadays, it would be difficult to locate a traditional Turkish bathhouse within England; however, the custom was especially popular during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and had become an integral pastime in many British lives. Until recently, the history of the Turkish bathhouse had been largely overlooked by social historians; however, Malcolm Shifrin’s 2015 book provided an extensive account of the rise and fall in popularity of this pastime within British society.<sup>25</sup>

According to Shifrin, the popularity of Turkish bathhouses grew exponentially in Britain during the 1850s-1860s and was considered a was a good and healthy activity for the body and mind.<sup>26</sup> It was perceived as a leisurely pursuit for the upper classes, an opportunity for a relaxing ‘deep clean’ for the working classes, and a beneficial medical procedure for the patients in hospitals and asylums, and in all instances, the social element of the activity was highly valued by patrons.<sup>27</sup> Over time, the practice cemented itself as a common custom for the Victorians; however, its popularity began to truly decline after the Great War and bathhouses across the country began closing.<sup>28</sup> In the 1930s David Low reminded the public about the pastime in his *Colonel Blimp* comic strips for the *London Evening Standard*, but the adoption of this setting was not an advertisement for a leisurely activity. Instead, its

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<sup>24</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 312.

<sup>25</sup> Malcolm Shifrin, *Victorian Turkish Baths*, Historic England, Swindon, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 186-190.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 190.

association with Low's Blimp reiterated the 'old fashioned' nature of the exercise and painted it as a popular haunt for those with out-of-date mindsets.

By the time Powell, Pressburger and Junge created the Royal Bathers' Club the custom had truly run its course as a highly popular pastime, but some institutions maintained their facilities and adopted the exercise as a foundational club activity. The Royal Automobile Club (RAC, Pall Mall) was one club that kept up the tradition. Their baths are still operational today (2021) and have been updated; however, the RAC's archive contains photographs of the entrances to the Turkish bath, the pool itself, and the bath's cooling room in 1911.<sup>29</sup> The photographs are like Junge's set, which suggests that the designer was familiar with the aesthetic composition of such spaces. This may have been the case because a handful of public Turkish baths still operated. For example, the Jermyn Street Hammam was a well-known facility that had been in operation since the early 1860s and up until 1940 bathers could use the facilities until 9 pm.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, like so many other parts of London, Jermyn Street was extensively damaged during the Blitz and was completely demolished during an air strike on April 17, 1941.<sup>31</sup> In any case, certain designs in Junge's set suggest a familiarity with Turkish bath facilities as details specific to these locales, such as classical columns (Roman Doric), repeating encaustic (inlaid) tile designs, and arabesque detailing, were included in his work. Junge's suggested floorplan (projected through the film's sequence of shots) also resembled the 1862 patent by the London and Provincial Turkish Bath Company, a shareholder company that aimed to produce an exclusive London facility to avoid the 'social evils' supposedly produced by lower-class patrons.<sup>32</sup> Noted in the fine print of the following image (p. 176), areas listed within this floorplan design were replicated well enough on-screen to follow the path taken by the rebellious Home Guard troop.

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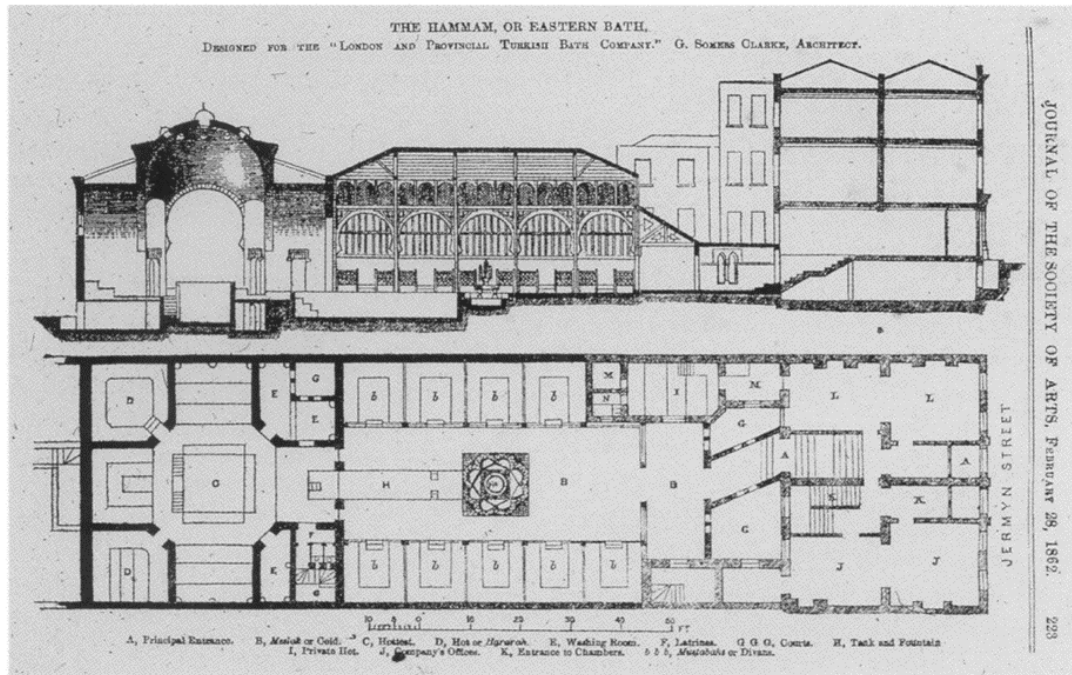
<sup>29</sup> The Royal Automobile Club, 'Original Photographs of the New Clubhouse', RAC 5/2/1/2, 1911, image 7, 8, 9 and 11, *The Royal Automobile Archive Collection*, [online], date accessed 15/04/2019, <<http://collections.royalautomobileclub.co.uk/rac-5.2.1.2>>.

<sup>30</sup> Shifrin, *Victorian Turkish Baths*, 83-84.

<sup>31</sup> City of Westminster, 'Air Raid Damage Report: Jermyn Street', April 1941, *Westminster City Archives*, sourced from Yi Luo's 'Jermyn Street SW1', *West End at War*, [online], date accessed: 19/03/2020. <[http://www.westendatwar.org.uk/page\\_id\\_\\_236.aspx?path=0p28p](http://www.westendatwar.org.uk/page_id__236.aspx?path=0p28p)>.

<sup>32</sup> John Potvin, 'The Victorian Turkish Bath, Homosocial Health, and Male Bodies on Display', *Journal of Design History*, Oxford University Press, 2005, 320.

Figure 4: (Above) The cross-section and floor plan for a hammam designed for the 'London and Provincial Turkish Bath Company', G. Somers Clarke, Architect, *Journal of the Society of Arts*, 28 February 1862. (Below) The Home Guard's path through the Royal Bathers' Club in their search for Candy, plotted from Powell & Pressburger's *Colonel Blimp*, 1943.



<b>A</b>	Principal entrance	Angela rushes in from the street, followed closely by Spud and his men.
<b>B</b>	Cold room	The troops rush down the staircase into the lower foyer and through to the wider cool room.
<b>H</b>	Tank and fountain	They pass the signature fountain and its attached tank/cool-down pool.
<b>b</b>	Divans	The ruckus disrupts the inhabitants of the private divan booths

C	Sauna room	Spud finds Candy in the sauna's social room.
		The pair fight and fall into the far end of the cool-down pool. As Candy's monologue continues the camera slowly pans towards the fountain. The scene's transition is complete when a young Candy emerges from the pool's end, by the fountain.

As a prominent habit associated with the mid-late Victorian period and one that was strongly linked with the original cartoon character, the Turkish bathhouse was a highly appropriate setting for Clive Wynne-Candy to occupy. As a historically driven authenticity effect, the Royal Bathers' Club reinforced Pressburger's distributional functions by providing a space that physically encapsulated Candy's attachment to the past and his love of tradition, as well as encapsulating a real historical social trend and its purpose-built facilities. Alongside the Royal Bathers' Club, there were four prominent German settings for the film's 1902 sequences, but only two of them are detailed enough for historical analysis, the Hotel *Kaiserhof* (function 8, Candy meets Hunter) and the Café *Hohenzollern* (cardinal function 10, Candy insults Germany's Imperial army). The other locales, the gymnasium barrack (function 12, Candy duels Schuldorff), and the nursing home (functions 13-14, Candy and Schuldorff recuperate while Hunter keeps them company), were generic spaces and would not work as well if considered for their historiophoty due to their ambiguity.

To begin, described simply as the hotel that 'stands on the corner of the *Mohrenstrasse*' (Berlin's underground railway station) in Pressburger's *Sugar Candy* script, it is hard to imagine the true grandeur of the Hotel *Kaiserhof* from the directions alone.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, with the help of a well-placed postcard prop, Junge transformed this meek description through his rendition of the 'Little Salon', which was a subsidiary room within the *Kaiserhof*'s public areas and the space where Hunter and Candy first meet. In reality, the *Kaiserhof* had been a prominent landmark in Berlin since its opening in 1875 and its reputation for luxury was widely reported. In its heyday (1875-1910) it received high profiled political guests, like Germany's Chancellor Otto von Bismarck and Lord Beaconsfield (British Prime

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<sup>33</sup> Powell & Pressburger, *The Life and Death of Sugar Candy*, sequence 24.



Minister, Benjamin Disraeli)<sup>34</sup>, and was a conference venue for intelligentsia like the Nobel Prize-winning physician and microbiologist Professor Robert Koch.<sup>35</sup> According to Brian Ladd guide, the hotel was somewhat less fashionable by the 1920s as newer, more modern hotels, had emerged in the area.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the *Kaiserhof* maintained a high level of prestige and reputation for luxury and was favoured by Adolf Hitler when hosting important political guests<sup>37</sup>, such as the Duke and Duchess of Windsor (Britain's Prince Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson) during their 1937 trip to Germany, which received a significant amount of press coverage in the UK.<sup>38</sup>

Junge's imagined salon replicated the luxurious interiors found within the original *Kaiserhof*, which favoured the Rococo style (or the 'Late Baroque') with significant attention to detail. According to the prestigious Mayfair Gallery (antiquity specialists), the Rococo style originally emerged in France but was quickly adopted throughout Europe and dominated interior design, painting, sculpture, and furniture throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>39</sup> Its characteristic features include: intricate motif decorations (such as stylised acanthus leaves, seas shells or flowers), S-shaped and C-shaped scroll work, curved and tapered furniture legs, and the heightened use of gold accents against neutral backgrounds.<sup>40</sup> It was, and remains, a style associated with luxury.

Junge's set contained a series of aesthetic elements common to this style. As evident in the image below, the tables and chairs contained the iconic Rococo curvature, the wall panelling was trimmed with scroll work, and the patterns and colours of the carpet and chair seats/backs contrasted against the gold-accented furniture. Additionally, Junge included large indoor palms in the Salon, which was a decorative feature popular in luxury hotels at the time, as demonstrated in the following postcard. Although unused and undated, the information provided by the Universal Postal Union suggests that the postcard was produced after 1890

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<sup>34</sup> Unknown, 'Beaconsfield and Bismarck', *South Australian Register*, Australia, 28 August 1878.

<sup>35</sup> Unknown, 'Professor Koch on Malarial Fever', *Western Mail*, Australia, 29 December 1900.

<sup>36</sup> Brian Ladd, *The Companion Guide to Berlin*, Companion Guides, UK, 2004, 121.

<sup>37</sup> Despina Stratigakos, *Hitler at Home*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2015, 29.

<sup>38</sup> Unknown, 'Duke of Windsor's German Tour', *Nottingham Evening Post*, Great Britain, 9 October 1937; Unknown, 'Duke of Windsor in Berlin', *Aberdeen Journal*, Scotland, 12 October 1937; Unknown, 'Duke of Windsor's Early Start', *Nottingham Evening Post*, Great Britain, 13 October 1937.

<sup>39</sup> The Mayfair Gallery, *Rococo Style: Furniture, Painting and Sculpture Guide*, London, [online], date accessed: 18/04/2020, <<https://www.mayfairgallery.com/blog/rococo-style-furniture-painting-sculpture-guide>>.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

as illustrated postcards were the norm before this period<sup>41</sup> and it could not be dated post-1945 because the hotel was destroyed during Britain's 1943 bombing campaigns.<sup>42</sup>

Figure 5: (Above) 'Hotel *Kaiserhof*, Berlin – Halle,' Phot Ritzenthaler, date unknown, from author's private collection. (Below) Candy (Livesey) and Hunter (Kerr) meet in the 'Little Salon', *Colonel Blimp*, 1943.



Image removed due to copyright restrictions

The second set worth close consideration was Junge's Café *Hohenzollern*<sup>43</sup>, which was described as such in Pressburger's *Sugar Candy* script,

It is a typical big Berlin musical café. It has two floors, an upper and a lower, connected by a wide shallow staircase covered with red carpet...

The Patrons of the Cafe are mostly from the middle class and upwards.

Students are there in their coloured caps... artists, officers, one or two parties of society people, ordinary townspeople with their families — all sorts. They eat and drink; glasses of hot punch and mugs of beer are the

favourites and there is a great bustle everywhere. On the upper floor, where

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<sup>41</sup> Universal Postal Union, 'History of Postcards', *150 Years of Postcards*, 2019, [online], date accessed: 20/04/2020. <<https://150yearsofpostcards.com/history>>.

<sup>42</sup> Unknown, 'Our Intelligence Service Surveys Germany Daily', *Aberdeen Journal*, Scotland, 20 April 1944.

<sup>43</sup> There was a café *Hohenzollern* in the city of Magdeburg, Germany (approx. two hours' drive from Berlin by modern standards), in the early part of the 1900s; however, there is no evidence indicating that one existed Berlin — as seen in the film.

the landing makes a big bay, there is an orchestra. Their standard of playing is quite high. The orchestra consists of a piano, a drum, a double-bass, a cello, a flute, a clarinet, two violas and four violins; and, of course, a conductor.<sup>44</sup>

Each detail that Pressburger meticulously provided can be located within Junge's set in some form. Within the wider context of *Colonel Blimp's* narrative, *Café Hohenzollern* was an important backdrop. Carrying the name of a German royal dynasty that collapsed in the wake of Germany's military defeat and political transition to a republic post-WWI<sup>45</sup>, the *café Hohenzollern* provided a lush imperial and nostalgic backdrop for significant distributional functions. It was the space where Hunter expressed her anger towards notions of gentlemanly warfare and where Candy insulted the entire German army, thus leading to his introduction to Schuldorff. Not only was the *Café Hohenzollern* an important setting for the film's distributional functions, but it was also an authenticity effect that paid homage to Germany's café culture at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Café culture was already well established in Europe before 1902 and the custom was favoured by a wide variety of people, across several chic cosmopolitan centres. Berlin, in particular, had developed a reputation as one of the most lively and fashionable spots on the continent and cafés played an integral part in the construction of this opinion.<sup>46</sup> As early as the 1890s, patrons had recorded their experiences of Berlin's cafes and had noted how the imported Viennese custom had steadily replaced the smaller, more traditional Conditorei houses.<sup>47</sup> In one account, German dramatist and novelist Paul Lindau suggested that Viennese cafés were more than welcome amongst the populace because they enticed a wide variety of interesting patrons through their ability to cater to large groups, reasonable prices, and later

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<sup>44</sup> Pressburger, *The Life and Death of Sugar Candy*, sequence 31 & 32.

<sup>45</sup> Erin Regina Hochman, *Staging the Nation, Staging Democracy: The Politics of Commemoration in Germany and Austria 1918-1933/34*, Department of History, Toronto, 2010, i-iii.

<sup>46</sup> Iain Boyd & David Frisby, *Metropolis Berlin: 1880-1940*, University of California Press, Berkley: Los Angeles: London, 2012, 1-4.

<sup>47</sup> Conditorei, sometimes written as Konditorei, are a style of patisserie that were popular throughout Europe prior to the introduction of Viennese style cafes. Conditorei were small, intimate cafes that offered a wide selection of pastries/desserts for their patrons – similar to the cafes that 21<sup>st</sup> century patrons are used to. In comparison, Viennese style cafes were large, extremely lively, served alcohol and provided amenities, such as billiard tables and reading rooms for its patrons.

opening hours (such establishments were open after theatre performances and concert halls closed).<sup>48</sup>

The most cautious, punctilious society-man can enter the café without fear at any hour of the day or evening. He may be entirely sure of finding his equals there—the higher officials, officers, well-known scientists and artists, leading merchants...Toward midnight the younger generation is in predominance. Students, young academicians, youthful civil servants, and clerks.<sup>49</sup>

It is difficult to determine whether the recreation of such an establishment resonated with Junge because he did not leave any accessible records, but it is likely that he visited or saw such establishments during his formative filmmaking years in Berlin (throughout the early 1920s). Pressburger, on the other hand, had memories of such places. According to Macdonald, ‘the marvellous café of the 1902 sequence, with its baroque décor, private orchestra and argumentative *Burschenschaften* (student associations), was based on the café *Konigsbau*, a haunt of Emeric’s student days in Stuttgart’.<sup>50</sup> Although inexact, the likeness between the real Café *Konigsbau* and Junge’s set was striking. As an authenticity effect, this set design worked incredibly well and effectively transported audiences to Berlin during a more peaceful, albeit nostalgic, time in Germany’s history.

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<sup>48</sup> Paul Lindau, ‘Unter Den Linden’, *The Great Streets of the World*, Osgood, McIlvaine & Co, London, 1892, 201-205, in Iain Boyd and David Frisby’s *Metropolis Berlin: 1880-1940*, University of California Press, Berkeley: Los Angeles: London, 2012, 166-168.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 168.

<sup>50</sup> MacDonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 212.

Figure 6: (Above) Café *Konigsbau*, Augsburg, photographed by J. Schedlbauer, 1936. From author's private collection. (Below) The Café *Hohenzollern's* interior, from Powell and Pressburger's *Colonel Blimp*, 1943.

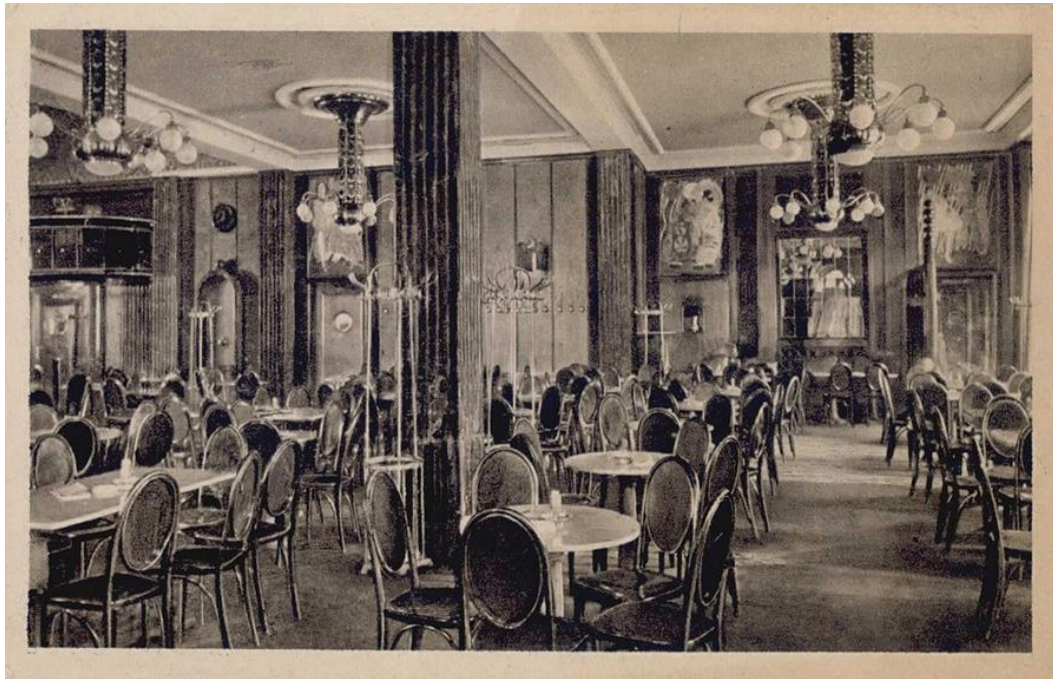


Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Junge's sets for the film's second historical period were drastically different to those that came before them. While the 1902 sequences contained luxurious, vibrant designs, the

1914-19 period – aptly described as ‘the khaki sequences’, had a far blander palette. Pressburger specifically stipulated this change in his original screenplay and spent time explaining the importance of colour to his overall aesthetic visions for this section. He wrote,

Sights, sounds, but above all, colours, make up the memories of a generation... 1902 was the commencement of the Edwardian era, full of charm, prosperity, spaciousness and leisure, to which it seemed there could never be an end... [1914-1918] After four years of senseless trench warfare, all the colour and variety of Europe and its peoples had been reduced to a uniform dull colour by day and to blackness by night. Khaki was the colour of clothes, faces, official forms, everything... By this deliberate elimination of all colours except Khaki, we hope to point this contrast.<sup>51</sup>

Junge’s sets were, as Pressburger stipulated, devoid of the bright colours that dominated the film’s earlier sequences; however, they still adhered to The Archers’ signature romantic style.

Instead of attempting to create a realistic representation of France’s battlefields, Junge’s designs echoed the surrealist landscapes produced by Paul Nash – an official war artist who had served in France and Belgium. Nash was, and still is, best known for his wartime landscapes, which captured his fascination with the natural order and humanity’s disruption of it. According to Paul Gough, Nash transformed traditional artistic motifs to better communicate this sentiment and customarily safe symbols that represented life and regenerations, like trees and copses, became symbols for danger and death in his art.<sup>52</sup>

Amidst the devastation, human relationships with nature were forced to change... fake trees concealed snipers and observers, copses hid batteries of artillery... single, isolated trees became a registration point for enemy artillery.

What were once icons of nature to be cherished as places of refuge and shade ...

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<sup>51</sup> Powell & Pressburger, *The Life and Death of Sugar Candy*, sequence 51.

<sup>52</sup> Paul Gough, ‘Cultivating Dead Trees: The Legacy of Paul Nash as an Artist of Trauma, Wilderness and Recovery’, *Journal of War & Culture Studies*, vol. 4, 2011, 326. (323-340)

were to become notorious death traps.<sup>53</sup>

Significant works like *The Menin Road* (1918), *Ypres Salient at Night* (1918) and *Wire* (1919) all demonstrated this subversion and Junge incorporated similar elements into his sets too. Details like skeletal trees, darkened skies and tangles of barbed wire were often present in his original scene sketches, as well as the final product on screen.

In 2005 Andrew Moor first discussed the similarity between Junge's sets and Nash's art and described Junge's designs as cinematic pastiches that drew upon Nash's 'recognisable, iconic, "imagined memories"'.<sup>54</sup> This was a fair conclusion as Nash's work had been displayed in specialised gallery events, like the Leicester Gallery's 1918 *Void of War* exhibition, and was later housed in London's Imperial War Museum (opened in 1917).<sup>55</sup> As Moor highlighted, Nash's images had come to form part of the popular shared memory of the war and Junge's three-dimensional rendition of Nash's landscapes reiterated the film's style – romantic, not documentary – and worked as a bitter contrast against Wynne-Candy's nostalgic and sentimental view of the world.

On this apocalyptic stage, though, Clive continues to wax lyrical, and is ironically counter-pointed by a skylark mocking the devastation beneath it. This is a forced and bitter pastiche, colliding to irreconcilable visual discourses, for Clive's blinkered ideals mock the traumatised environment.<sup>56</sup>

This stark landscape, with its endless amounts of mud and frequent rain, transitioned into Britain's lush countryside in the following sequence, further highlighting how adamant Candy was his own convictions and quick to return to old habits – no matter how bleak his wartime experiences/environments were (as showcased in the following page).

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Moor, *Powell and Pressburger: A Cinema of Magic Spaces*, 117-119.

<sup>55</sup> Paul Nash, 'Void of War Poster', *The Victorian and Albert Collection*, London, 1918, viewed 17th August 2018, <<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O75217/war-paintings-drawings-void-of-poster-nash-paul/>>.

<sup>56</sup> Moor, *Powell and Pressburger: A Cinema of Magic Spaces*, 118.

Figure 7: (Above) An Alfred Junge original design sketch for *Colonel Blimp's* battlefield sequences, courtesy of *The Alfred Junge Film Collection*, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. (Below) Paul Nash's *The Menin Road*, 1919, courtesy of the IWM, London.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

See: <https://hrc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15878coll33/id/68/rec/64>





In contrast to the bleak battlefields of France, Powell, Pressburger and Junge showcased the lush green fields of England's pastoral communities in the film's next sequences. Love of the English countryside was a common theme in many Powell and Pressburger features, like *Colonel Blimp*, *A Canterbury Tale* (1944), and *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946) and was often used to highlight the evolution of 'Englishness' during war-time. According to Maroula Joannou, the countryside, with its quaint cottage villages, rolling hills and sparse moors, was an integral component within England's national identity and an 'emotive signifier of what the war was being fought to preserve'.<sup>57</sup> Scenes that involved quaint country aesthetics were often infiltrated by modern technological advancements, like motor cycles leaning against cottages and Spitfires flying over farmland, which signified a 'cultural compromise' and reiterated that the old and new could exist harmoniously within Britain's national identity.<sup>58</sup> The Archers were well aware of this new phase in 'Englishness' and it was specifically addressed in *Colonel Blimp's* title screen. The shot contained a large tapestry denoting the type of harmony that Joannou described – spitfires flying overhead while fox hunters, rugby players, and British heraldry carried on below.

Figure 8: The opening sequence tapestry from Powell & Pressburger's *Colonel Blimp*, 1943.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

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<sup>57</sup> Joannou, 'Powell, Pressburger, and Englishness', 194.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 193.

While the countryside was associated with this modernisation, it was also a point of nostalgia and romance for the film's characters, particularly its good German, Schuldorff. For the aged German refugee, Britain's countryside was a comforting reminder of his English wife's passions and also reminded him of a peaceful pastoral Germany that was maintained until the destruction and fallout in post-WWI communities, and then inevitably altered by the rise of Nazism (in his mind). Schuldorff's time spent in England as a PoW did not negatively impact his impressions and within the scope of the picture this was unsurprising as Junge's camp was romanticised by Denham's lush backlot, where it was staged. Although generalised and slightly romanticised, the inclusion and depiction of a British internment camp in 1943 was a sensitive subject and clearly, *The Archers* took care with their representation because similar facilities had been constructed to house and manage 'enemy aliens' during World War II. For Junge, and many other emigres within the British film industry, this part of the Homefront experience was very real. Prior to the film's production, Junge had been an internee at Huyton, a housing estate near Liverpool that had been transformed into a camp for 'enemy aliens', and his release had been sanctioned just before the film's production.<sup>59</sup> Although a recent experience, Junge did not use Huyton as a reference for his imagined World War I internment camp. Instead, he utilised the outside spaces at Denham and produced a camp that was supposedly sequestered deep within the peaceful, lush English countryside. The camp was never explicitly named; however, in one later conversation (still during the period sequence) Candy cheekily threatened to send Schuldorff back to Derbyshire if he did not reconsider his bleak outlook.<sup>60</sup>

In regard to Britain's WWI internment camps, Richard Dove pointed out that this part of Britain's history has been largely treated as a 'footnote to the main narrative of Britain at war', and only a handful of scholars had attempted to address the subject at any great length.<sup>61</sup> In recent years historians have begun to make distinctions between the experiences of civilian and military prisoners in such environments. There were a handful of internment facilities set up in repurposed country estates in Derbyshire during the Great War and this part of the country was, and still is, known for its idyllic countryside. With this in mind, Junge's

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<sup>59</sup> Tobias Hochscherf, 'British Anti-Nazi Films', in Tim Bergfelder & Christian Cargnelli's *Destination London: German-Speaking Emigrés and British Cinema, 1925-1950*, Berghahn Books, USA, 2008, 190.

<sup>60</sup> Pressburger, *The Life and Death of Sugar Candy*, sequence 81.

<sup>61</sup> Dove, *Totally un-English'? Britain's Internment of 'Enemy Aliens'*, 11.

decisions were fitting; however, without a direct reference to any particular facility, it is difficult to determine whether he had a particular garden in mind, especially as there were multiple facilities with extensive grounds and programs in place for internees. The first notable facility was Kegworth, an officer's camp that held approximately six hundred prisoners of war between 1916-1919.<sup>62</sup> The second was Donington Hall, a well maintained 17<sup>th</sup> century castle that attracted negative attention in the press and the House of Commons due to its alleged luxurious accommodations.<sup>63</sup> Activities such as in-house theatre shows, education sessions, and music concerts were common in such camps and were considered as luxuries by the press and Government; however, according to Panikos Panayi, these activities were predominantly organised by the internees to alleviate the mental stresses of internment and were not costs shouldered by the authorities.<sup>64</sup> So while Pressburger and Junge's internment camp was an integral backdrop for significant distributional functions it was a reminder of the country's internment camp history, which had been renewed for WWII but had been largely ignored in the interwar years. The sets that followed were well designed too, but due to their status as contemporary locations, there was no need to produce sets that mimicked historical trends and aesthetics. Authenticity effects were still a priority, but they were adjusted for modern-day Britain and mirrored the environments inhabited by everyday Britons. To do this, Junge added particular details to his non-descript meeting rooms and city scenes, i.e., blackout windows, walls covered with maps, and sandbag barricades outside buildings and entryways, to ensure that the atmosphere of war-time London was sufficiently encapsulated.

This was especially noticeable in the destruction of Candy's home, 33 Cadogan Place, which was the primary space that he cherished and shared with his wife, as well as a place that symbolised his love of tradition through its contents and ancestral links (he inherited the property from a beloved Aunt). Although property number 33 has no notable tenants, stories, or links to Pressburger, the wider area is steeped in history and, within the context of the wider narrative, works well with Candy's traditionalist mindset. As a real space within the

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<sup>62</sup> Panikos Panayi, 'Prisoners of War and Internees (Great Britain)', *International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, 2015, 5.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>64</sup> Panikos Panayi, 'Prisoners of Britain: German Civilian, Military and Naval Internment during the First World War', in Richard Dove's *'Totally un-English'? Britain's Internment of 'Enemy Aliens' in Two World Wars*, Rodopi, Amsterdam: New York, 2005, 34.

wider suburb of London's fashionable Belgravia district, Cadogan Place was, and still is, filled with fine townhouses and quaint communal gardens (depicted clearly in cardinal functions 20 and 43), and had already developed a fine reputation by 1943 due to its long history. Originally part of the Manor of Chelsea estate, owned by King Henry VIII and Westminster Abbey, the area was purchased in 1712 by Hans Sloane and divided between his daughters after his death in 1753.<sup>65</sup> His second daughter Elizabeth, wife to Charles Cadogan (a Whig politician and later the 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount of Chelsea and 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Cadogan), inherited the eastern part of the estate and later leased a significant portion to builder Henry Holland and his architect son, Henry Holland Jnr, for their ambitious 'Hans Town' development (est. 1777).<sup>66</sup> Over time, their imagined terrace houses were completed and later, in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the garden spaces were further developed and refined, which further enhanced the area's reputation as a high-class residential space.<sup>67</sup> Noted by Charles Dickens's in his 1838-1839 serial *Nicholas Nickleby* (novel 1899), Cadogan Place was 'the one slight bond which joins two extremities; it is the connecting link between the aristocratic pavements of Belgrave Square, and the barbarism of Chelsea' and was filled with tenants that, while 'wearing as much as they can of the airs and semblances of loftiest rank', understood the 'realities of middle station'.<sup>68</sup>

Although its tenants were not from the highest tier of British society, many notable people frequented the area, i.e., abolitionist William Wilberforce died in Cadogan Place on July 29, 1833,<sup>69</sup> and politician (and later Prime Minister) Harold Macmillan was born there (1894)<sup>70</sup>, which enriched the area's local history. Alongside this, 1943 viewers would have been aware of the district through media reports and clean-up events that were prompted during the Blitz bombings because, according to the *Aggregate Night-time Bomb Census, 1940-1941*, the properties and gardens in Cadogan Place, and the neighbouring Cadogan

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<sup>65</sup> Unknown, Cadogan Place Gardens (Kensington & Chelsea), *London Gardens Trust*, [online], date accessed: 15/06/2021, <<https://londongardenstrust.org/conservation/inventory/site-record/?ID=KAC024>>.

<sup>66</sup> Patricia E.C Croot, 'Settlement and Building: From 1680 to 1865, Hans Town', *A History of the County of Middlesex*, 2004, vol. 12, 47-51, via *British History Online*, [online], date accessed: 15/06/2021. <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/middx/vol12/pp47-51>>.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Charles Dickens, *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby: Containing a Faithful Account of the Fortunes, Misfortunes, Uprisings, Downfallings and Complete Career of the Nickleby Family*, 1899, The Electric Book Company Ltd, London, UK, 2001, 384-385.

<sup>69</sup> Unknown, 'Death of William Wilberforce, Esq', *The Times*, London: England, 31 July 1833.

<sup>70</sup> Alistair Horne, *Macmillan: The Official Biography*, Pan Macmillan, UK, 2008, 9.

Lane, were damaged by six high explosive bombs from October 7, 1940 – June 6, 1941.<sup>71</sup> By providing audiences with the house's location, Pressburger reiterated Candy's position in society and linked him to another part of Britain's history. Junge's sets supported the location through their replication of the area and the eventual destruction of the estate, and its transformation into an emergency water tank, further reiterated that all of London's occupants, regardless of rank, wealth, and social status, were affected by the newest tactics and technologies that emerged from total war.

Overall, it is evident that the set designs for *Colonel Blimp* were well-executed and carefully curated to emphasise both past and present. As The Archers' largest and most experimental foray into the historical film genre. It was important that Junge's sets supported the distributional functions that Pressburger's had developed after hours of research, especially concerning the creation of believable historical settings. For Powell and Pressburger, another opportunity to address history did not come until *The Battle of the River Plate* – over a decade later – and their approach towards constructed settings and location shoots altered again.

By 1955 set designer Arthur Lawson was a prominent member of The Archers' filmmaking team and had been a fixture there since *Colonel Blimp*. Lawson had developed his skills under the direction of Junge and filled the role of lead Art Director after the veteran German designer returned to MGM-British in the 1940s. In the prominent productions that followed, Lawson was partnered with Hein Heckroth, another talented German art director/designer, and together they produced the sets for Powell and Pressburger's *The Red Shoes* and *The Tales of Hoffman*. When *River Plate* entered its production phase Lawson and Heckroth were both assigned to the project; however, due to the nature of the film Heckroth struggled to adapt his highly imaginative approach to the documentary style. Powell described the issue in *Million-Dollar Movie*, 'it soon became clear that there was little original design in the film. It was more like a documentary than a feature... it was breaking my heart, and Hein's too, to realise that on *The Battle of the River Plate* Hein was a passenger'.<sup>72</sup> When this became absolutely clear, Heckroth returned to Frankfurt and Lawson was left as the film's

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<sup>71</sup> Unknown, 'High Explosive Bombs at Cadogan lane', *Aggregate Night-time Bomb Census: 7th October 1940 to 6 June 1941*, Bomb Sight: Mapping the WW2 Bomb Census, [online], date accessed: 15/06/2021. <<http://bombsight.org/bombs/15219/>>.

<sup>72</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, 305.

sole set designer in the studio. The task was immense, 'it had been a hectic five weeks, making this enormous, complicated, technical subject in the studio...the night gang worked all night erecting our sets, which melted away the next day before our onrush', but Lawson proved his skill and reliability.<sup>73</sup> Although immense in size and engineered well, Lawson's studio sets were fairly generic and this makes them difficult to consider as authenticity effects, but the footage that Powell collected on location was a different matter.

The at-sea footage included in *River Plate* was one of the main factors that helped to strengthen the picture's authentic atmosphere and its collection was an experience that Powell thoroughly enjoyed: 'Michael enjoyed making the film far more than Emeric. The location shooting appealed to what Chris Challis called 'the boy scout in him'.<sup>74</sup> As mentioned in this thesis' 'Production' chapter, Powell and Pressburger insisted that ugly model ships would not ruin their film and approached the naval Admiralty for alternatives. Conventionally, any films (in both Britain and Hollywood) that contained scenes 'at-sea' were typically shot in outdoor/indoor studio tank lots, and while these were used for some sequences in *River Plate*, a great deal of footage was captured on location. It was not the specific geographical locale that was important – after all, one expansive section of the open ocean looks much like any other – it was the ships themselves. In a manner they were self-contained, mobile settings and two of the vessels were from the original event – the HMNZS *Achilles* (INS *Delhi*) and the HMS *Cumberland*. This created an aura of authenticity that was unmatched in cinema at the time and continues to be one of the primary factors that fans of this genre continue to hold in high regard.<sup>75</sup>

In the overall incident, there were several vessels involved with the pursuit and destruction of the *Graf Spee*; however, The Archers only included five primary ships in their narrative. Four were those involved in the battle at River Plate – Germany's Admiral *Graf Spee*, and Britain's HMS *Ajax*, HMS *Exeter*, and HMNZS *Achilles* – and in a later scene, the HMS *Cumberland* was also included. As authenticity effects, these self-contained settings were

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 329.





<sup>74</sup> Macdonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 357.

<sup>75</sup> Unknown, 'Battle of the River Plate', *Model Ships in the Cinema*, [online], date accessed: 30/05/2020, <<http://www.modelshipsinthecinema.com/2016/07/battle-of-river-plate-1956.html>>.

entirely apt and only a seasoned seaman or navy enthusiast would have been able to spot the differences between the real vessels and their cinematic counterparts.

Figure 9: The ships involved and their cinematic counterparts.

The British Fleet in Reality	On-Screen
<p><b>HMS <i>Ajax</i> (Light Cruiser)</b></p>  <p>'Rear Admiral Sir Henry Harwood received in Montevideo, Uruguay. Admiral Harwood arrived in HMS <i>Ajax</i>' sourced from the <i>Admiralty Official Collection</i>, IWM.</p>	<p><b>HMS <i>Sheffield</i> (Light Cruiser)</b></p>  <p>'HMS <i>Sheffield</i>' c. 1944, sourced from the IWM</p>
<p><b>HMS <i>Exeter</i> (Heavy Cruiser)</b></p>  <p>'HMS <i>Exeter</i>' sourced from the <i>Ministry of Defence Foxhill Collection of Ship Photographs</i>, IWM.</p>	<p><b>HMS <i>Jamaica</i> (Light Cruiser)</b></p>  <p>'HMS <i>Jamaica</i>, British Fiji Class Cruiser. 1944 and 1945, at sea' sourced from the <i>Admiralty Official Collection</i>, IWM.</p>

<p><b>HMNZS Achilles</b></p>  <p>'Pre-war HMNZS Achilles' sourced from the National Museum of the Royal New Zealand Navy, [online].</p>	<p><b>As itself.</b></p> <p>The HMNZS <i>Achilles</i> changes hands after WWII and was sold to India in 1948. It underwent a major refit before this sale and entered the Indian navy under the new name INS <i>Delhi</i>. Although rebranded and rehomed, the Achilles had changed very little since the River Plate battle.</p>
<p><b>HMS Cumberland (Heavy Cruiser)</b></p>  <p>'HMS <i>Cumberland</i> delivers the mail. 26 October 1945, Colombo, Ceylon' sourced from the <i>Admiralty Official Collection</i>, IWM.</p>	<p><b>As itself.</b></p>
<p><b>Germany's Counterpart</b></p>	<p><b>On-Screen</b></p>
<p><b>Admiral Graf Spee (Pocket Battleship)</b></p>  <p>'Panzer-schiff "Admiral Graf Spee", Backbord-Ansicht' sourced from <i>Kommando der Volksmarine</i>, German Federal Archive.</p>	<p><b>USS Salem (Heavy Cruiser)</b></p>  <p>'USS Salem (CA-139)' sourced from the <i>Historical Naval Ships Association</i>.</p>

When considering the photographs above, it is evident that the ships Powell captured did closely (not exactly) resemble their historical counterparts. While the *Cumberland* and



the *Achilles (Delhi)* were able to 'reprise' their role for the film, the *Sheffield* and *Jamaica* were fine stand-ins for the *Ajax* and *Exeter*. As mentioned earlier, there are few immediate aesthetic differences between the vessels and unless a naval expert or enthusiast it is difficult to pinpoint the discrepancies. This task is difficult for two primary reasons. Firstly, Powell focused on capturing footage of the ships whilst they were in motion and due to his directorial decisions regarding camera angles, focus, and shot alignment, there was little opportunity to pinpoint continuity issues between make and model. Secondly, the ships recommended by the Admiralty were appropriate stand-ins due to their class type and time of construction. For example, The *Ajax* was a light cruiser that was first launched in 1934 and its cinematic counterpart, the *Sheffield*, was also a light cruiser – launched only three years later in 1937. The *Exeter* and *Jamaica* were both warships made before WWII (the *Jamaica* was officially launched in 1940 but was under construction before England declared war) and although different classes, a light cruiser and a heavy cruiser, they shared pre-WWII aesthetics and technology.<sup>76</sup>

Finally, despite their differences in age and nationality, the USS *Salem* and the Admiral *Graf Spee* were paired for their similarities too. Recommended by Captain Clarke, 'the only people today that have a comparable ship afloat are the Yanks. The *Salem* would do you'<sup>77</sup>, the *Salem* was one of the last heavy cruisers ever built for America's navy (launched 1947) and served as a 'Lady of Diplomacy', rather than a warship.<sup>78</sup> Aesthetically, it was extremely similar to the *Graf Spee* but there was one noticeable detail that Powell could not disguise – the large numerical identifier, '139', painted on either side of *Salem's* bow. This aside, the vast number of similarities worked in Powell's favour and the manoeuvres he captured during his time in the Mediterranean produced an authenticity effect that could not be achieved in a confining studio tank lot.

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<sup>76</sup> There are a series of engineering differences between 'Light Cruisers and Heavy Cruisers' that cannot be fully addressed in this thesis due to its size and scope. Nevertheless, one of the most basic differences between them is the amount of armament assigned to each class. Light cruisers were small-medium sized vessels, which had light defensive armour and moderately sized long-range guns. This made them excellent as scouts and as convoy security because they were fast and manoeuvrable against larger destroyers. Heavy cruisers were armed with larger guns and were reinforced with more armour than their counterparts. Such ships were still fast and well-equipped for battle though.

<sup>77</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, 268.

<sup>78</sup> Unknown, 'USS Salem CA-139: Ship History', *United States Naval Shipbuilding Museum*, [online] date accessed: 09/06/2020, <<https://www.uss-salem.org/ship-history/>>.

Figure 9: (Left) The British in formation. (Right) The crippled *Exeter (Jamaica)* exits the chase for the *Graf Spee* after sustaining heavy damage during battle. (Below) The *Graf Spee (Salem)*, ‘tiger of the sea’. Images sourced from *The Battle of the River Plate*, 1956.

Images removed due to copyright restrictions

Information regarding the filmmakers’ return to South America is difficult to locate but sources suggest a visit to Malta and a longer stay in Montevideo<sup>79</sup>, ‘the partners took their third trip to South America to film the ‘Manolo’s Bar’ sequences and the spectacular crowd scenes in Montevideo’.<sup>80</sup> Filming in Montevideo, according to Powell, was a whirlwind experience due to the crowds that gathered after people became aware of their crew’s presence and purpose. When recalling their efforts to capture footage for the *Graf Spee*’s prisoner release and funeral procession scenes, (functions 70-72) and its final departure from Montevideo’s harbour (functions 86, 87, 90, 91 and 95), Powell described the experience in significant detail,

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<sup>79</sup> Howard Hughes, *When Eagles Dared: The Filmgoers’ History of World War II*, I.B Tauris & Co. Ltd, London: New York, 2012, 6-7.

<sup>80</sup> Macdonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 357.

There must have been about 10,000 people, held in order and prevented from drowning themselves by cordons of naval police... We sailed along the mole only 50 feet out, shooting the colourful, excited crowd. There were hundreds of pre-war cars brought by special request, and the zealous police had turned back at the gates all later models. They didn't all wave... they just stared, which couldn't have been better. People were clustered on cranes, on machinery, on everything high, like bees swarming... At last we went out to the other mole at the harbour entrance, where a faithful band had been waiting for hours, and got almost the best shot of all, as if we were the Graf Spee leaving the harbour, turning the crowded lighthouse with the whole city in the sunlight behind it.<sup>81</sup>

This footage was embedded within the picture by Reggie Mills, the film's primary editor and an Archers' favourite, and created a liveliness that would have been difficult to produce within Lawson's confined studio spaces and with a limited number of extras.

Footage captured in Malta also made it into the final cut of the film. Less lively than the crowd scenes in Montevideo, the USS Salem's exit from Malta's historic Grand Harbour (also known as the Port of Valletta) was used to represent the *Graf Spee's* departure from Montevideo. Fort Ricasoli, one of the notable historic fortifications in the harbour region, was visible in the background and its unique design clashed with the apartment complexes featured in the footage from Montevideo. Although a small detail, continuity was broken by this footage, its inclusion within the final cut indicates that The Archers' believed that the authenticity effect provided by a real ship exiting a real harbour (as opposed to a modelled scenscape) eclipsed the discrepancies within the backdrop.

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<sup>81</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, 337.

Figure 10: (Left) Crowds gather to watch the ship's departure in Montevideo. (Right) The *Graf Spee (Salem)* exits Montevideo (Malta). Image sourced from *The Battle of the River Plate*, 1956.

Images removed due to copyright restrictions

Evidently, set design played an integral role in the support of a picture's distributional functions and was especially pertinent for the creation of authentic set features, both historical and contemporary. Despite their effectiveness, such designs could not support the narratives on their own. Other details within the *mise en scène*, particularly costume, hair and makeup, and props, also played a significant role in the development of authentic and supportive integrational functions.

#### *Costume, Hair, and Makeup: The Commonly Scrutinised Authenticity Effects*

The Archers' history films were dominated by male characters due to their war-based narratives and this limited Powell and Pressburger's ability to develop their female leads to the same degree as their non-war dramas, i.e., *The Red Shoes*, *I Know Where I'm Going*, and *Black Narcissus*. In two of the three films discussed in this thesis, there was a serious yearning and opportunity to present audiences with intriguing and engaging female characters. Valerie Hobson seduced audiences with her *femme fatale* presence in *The Spy in Black* and Deborah Kerr challenged them to consider the evolution of women's rights, their role during wartime, and social mobility over three different decades in Britain's history. Unfortunately, April Olrich did not receive such attention in *The Battle of the River Plate*. With only two short scenes as Dolores the club singer, she was the only properly accredited actress in the picture. Despite the varying intensity of their roles, the women's costumes, hair, and makeup played an integral role within the wider *mise en scène* and were key authenticity effects for the

establishment and reiteration of the picture's intended period. The following section will consider how each component represented contemporary and historical trends, which further supported the distributional functions constructed by Powell and Pressburger.

Hobson's ensembles in *The Spy in Black* were one of the key signifiers that informed audiences of its contemporary setting. As established in earlier chapters, Powell and Pressburger were not creating a lush historical adaptation and their script contained few references (in dialogue and scene direction) towards the story's original 1917 setting. This was an intentional change and reiterated the significance of their version's main message – that Germany and Britain could be at war again and that spy games would be played with detrimental effect to national security. As the leading actress and the only primary character in civilian garb, Hobson's aesthetics played a significant role in the reiteration of the 1930s setting because she showcased contemporary fashions/beauty practices – which bore little-to-no resemblance to the lingering Edwardian fashions still favoured by women during the Great War era. Coincidentally, Hobson's fashions also fell in line with cinema's developing propensity for making modern films that contained wearable fashions, which increased consumer demand for such products and their production (predominantly a US trend at this stage, but one that was developing in the UK).<sup>82</sup> As neither Powell nor Pressburger's autobiographies and biographies mention this aspect, they were likely uninterested in this cinematic by-product. Nevertheless, it was an after effect worth examining in relation to the composition of Hobson's stylish appearance and the support it provided to *The Spy in Black's* distributional functions.

Before delving too far into Hobson's ensembles, it is necessary to consider the relationship between fashion and cinema in the 1930s as it provides insight into why some cinemagoers enjoyed contemporary films and the consumer demand that they prompted. Emmanuelle Dirix and Neil Kirkham have labelled the 1930s as a pivotal period for the relationship between cinema and consumerism.<sup>83</sup> Focusing primarily on US markets, Dirix and Kirkham explained that movie moguls in Hollywood were producing more contemporary films after it became clear that 'film fashion' was a lucrative market for manufacturers and a

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<sup>82</sup> Emmanuelle Dirix & Neil Kirkham, 'Fashion in 1930s Hollywood', *Film, Fashion & Consumption*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2014, 7.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 3-13.

booster for the consumer market in the late 1920s.<sup>84</sup> The reproduction business was fruitful and manufacturing associations, like the Hollywood Fashion Associates, Modern Merchandising Bureau, and Country Club Manufacturing, quickly grew and specialised in reproducing cinema's iconic 1930s garments at an affordable retail price.<sup>85</sup> Specialised shops, such as Hollywood Fashions, Macy's Cinema Fashion Shops, and Warners Brothers Studio Style, worked with fan/fashion magazines to showcase products and reiterate their links to popular films.<sup>86</sup> Fashionable Americans turned away from long-respected French haute couture designers, like Coco Chanel, and considered the products conceived by Hollywood designers and made in the US.<sup>87</sup> While there is little evidence to suggest that a large-scale manufacturing scheme of this type was present in Britain, it would be remiss to overlook how the UK's fashion/beauty trends were touched by Hollywood's influence.

The influence of Hollywood and its abundance of exported films had been a point of concern within the UK industry since the 1920s and it quickly reached a point where the state stepped forward with legislation designed to protect the local industry. The Cinematograph Films Act (1927) contained strict regulations regarding the necessary production, distribution, and exhibition of UK pictures, and was designed 'to foster and protect Britain's film production industry in the face of almost total domination of Britain's domestic market by American film companies'.<sup>88</sup> This legislation was effective to a certain extent. As highlighted by Simon Hartog, it boosted the local industry's production schedules and ensured that British filmmakers/studios were able to survive and develop in such a tumultuous time; however, it did not stop the predominance of American producers and the influence of their products.<sup>89</sup>

In regard to women's fashion and beauty trends, Hollywood's films and its stars were constantly showcased in UK fan magazines like *Film Weekly*, *Film Fashionland* and *Picturegoer*. Next to each article, a myriad of advertisements encouraged everyday Britons to purchase clothing, shoes, hair dyes and sprays, face creams, nail polishes, and perfumes, to

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>85</sup> Celia Reyer, 'When Hollywood Glamour was Sold at the Local Department Store', *Smithsonian Magazine*, 2017, [online], date accessed: 09/09/2020, <<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/when-hollywood-glamour-was-sold-local-department-store-180962262/>>.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Simon Hartog, 'State Protection of a Beleaguered Industry' in James Curran and Vincent Porter's *British Cinema History*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1983, 59.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 73.

emulate stars like Greta Garbo and Joan Crawford. Alongside this, *British Pathé* reels (shown before a double feature) often had special edition fashion show segments that shone a spotlight on and up-and-coming trends – with products ranging from affordable and versatile (shoes and hats) to the expensive and luxurious (furs and jewellery).<sup>90</sup> Sarah Berry explored this relationship between fan emulation and wider consumerism in great depth and argues that while the practice was central to the economy it challenged existing norms of ‘gender, class, and racial difference’ in the US.<sup>91</sup> To an extent, this can be seen in the UK market too; however, due to the differences in product availability, a more rigid class structure, and cultural differences, the UK response was more conservative. Unlike Hollywood’s ‘goddesses of the screen’, who ‘swayed in streamlined backless dresses’ with ocelot or mink casually tossed over the shoulder, British favourites, like Wendy Hiller and Margaret Lockwood, wore the practical styles that were favoured by working/mobile women.<sup>92</sup> Glamour was reserved for grand ball scenes or royalty, as seen in *Pygmalion* (1938) and *Victoria the Great* (1937). With this in mind, it is understandable that while fashionable, Hobson’s ensembles in *The Spy in Black* were entirely practical.

It is difficult to determine the individuals responsible for Hobson’s costume, hair, and makeup, due to their absence in the film’s credits. She was likely dressed by a standard studio team under the direction of Vincent Korda (supervising art director), Frederick Pusey (art director) and Michael Powell (director). Their work was excellent because it reflected contemporary styles and trends extremely clearly, which helped to reduce any possible confusion regarding the film’s topical message and the period in which it was set.

1.	A herringbone travelling suit with matching beret/newsboy cap – worn by the original Anne Burnett (functions 4 and 5).
2.	A casual evening dress that was light in collar, had a slightly frilled neckline, a pleated bodice and a sequined applique at the waist (functions 7 and 8).

<sup>90</sup> British Pathé, ‘1930s Fashion Shows’, *British Pathé Historical Collection*, [online], date accessed: 15/10/2019, <<https://www.britishpathe.com/workspaces/df699ffd537d4e0c74710ad015dfd64d/wOdNriZK>>.

<sup>91</sup> Sarah Berry, *Screen Style: Fashion and Femininity in 1930s Hollywood*, University of Minnesota Press, USA, 2000, 184.

<sup>92</sup> Melanie Hillmer, ‘The Cinema in the Wardrobe: A Stroll through Seven Decades’ in Regine & Peter W. Engelmeier’s *Fashion in Film*, Prestel-Verlag, Munich, 1990, 13.

3.	A simple blouse with billowed bishop sleeves, a matching short tie and a flared, below-the-knee skirt (functions 9 and 10).
4.	A long-sleeved tailored black day dress with a simple fold-over collar and matching white cuffs (functions 11, 12 and 14).
5.	A similar blouse/skirt combination as earlier but in lighter colours. This created a softer aura around her character that was especially apt as her real identity (Ashington's wife) was revealed (Function 17 – 20).
6.	A fitted travelling coat, lined with a wide fur-trimmed collar and partnered with a matching Astrakhan style fur hat – secured by a long headscarf (function 24, 26, 29, 31).

In regard to Hobson's hair and makeup, like her dress, she was resolutely contemporary in her styles, which further reiterated the modernity of Powell and Pressburger's scenario and was relatable to viewers. Similar to the connection between wearable film fashion and consumerism, the relationship between beauty styles on-screen and the everyday viewer developed immensely in 1930s Britain. Sue Harper highlighted the significance of hairstyles and noted how on-screen had begun to influence viewer behaviour and habits during this period, and that it was a relationship that studios encouraged in their publicity materials.<sup>93</sup>

According to Harper, studios catered to audience demands by providing picture stills or instructions to magazines for the recreation of on-screen styles.<sup>94</sup> While there are no specific records that suggest that styling instructions were released as part of *The Spy in Black's* publicity campaign, Hobson's primary hairstyles were simplistic and keen fans could have replicated them as contained styling elements that were common to the era. It was worn close to the head, she had a short-waved fringe, and her braided crown was a component popular to styles in the later part of the decade – which made her relatable to modern

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<sup>93</sup> Sue Harper, 'Curls and Culture: Hairstyles in British Cinema 1930-80', *The Journal of Cloth and Culture*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2011, 376.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*



audiences and nothing like a WWI woman (as suggested in the original narrative and, minimally, the film's introduction).<sup>95</sup>

Figure 11: Valerie Hobson as Fräulein Tiel, images sourced directly from *The Spy in Black*, 1939.

Images removed due to copyright restrictions

Hobson's makeup also reflected popular modern trends and her most striking features were her pencilled brows and overdrawn lips. According to costumiers Young and Sheppard, manicured, strong brows were extremely popular during this era, especially as film stars like Gene Tierney and Lauren Bacall championed signature arched and angled designs. These styles were then replicated, albeit more softly, by everyday viewers for everyday wear.<sup>96</sup> Magazines encouraged constant maintenance to prevent 'unruliness' and recommended a light touch when attempting to alter beyond one's natural features, 'carry out the arch of the brow carefully, keeping the line as thick as your natural eyebrows and making the line light enough so that it is hardly detectable'.<sup>97</sup> Alongside this, Hobson's lips also signalled the end of the 1930s through their design. Earlier in the decade, lip shapes were still fairly small and the 'rosebud' style (in red) reigned supreme as actresses like Tallulah Bankhead and Ginger Rogers sported the design.<sup>98</sup> As the decade progressed this began to change and the full-

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<sup>95</sup> Louise Young & Loulia Sheppard, *Timeless: A Century of Iconic Looks*, Octopus Publishing Group Ltd, Great Britain, 47 & 63.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, 73.

<sup>97</sup> Virginia Vincent, *Make Up*, Whitman Publishing Co., Wisconsin: USA, 1932, 10-13.

<sup>98</sup> Young & Sheppard, *Timeless*, 51.

bodied, overdrawn designs that dominated the 1940s – like the ‘Hunter’s Bow’ and the ‘Smear’ – began to overtake their predecessors in popularity.<sup>99</sup> The design worn by Hobson best resembles the ‘Hunter’s Bow’, an arched and over drawn style that accentuated the top lip. When partnered with her hairstyle and ensembles, it is clear that Hobson’s character had an entirely modern silhouette.

Figure 12: Veidt and Hobson, *The Spy in Black*, 1939, via the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, [online].

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

See: <https://bampfa.org/event/spy-black-3>

Had Powell and Pressburger been focused on the authentic representation of a 1917 setting Hobson’s costumes, hair, and makeup would have been strikingly different. Just before the Great War, women’s fashion (western/European based) had begun to drastically change. From 1906 French designers, like Paul Poiret, had begun to ‘liberate’ women from corsets after adopting design structures from more ‘exotic’ locales, i.e., Japan and Turkey, that did not rely on such constricting garments for their silhouettes.<sup>100</sup> Hairstyles had reduced in their intensity too. Although still somewhat elaborate, the height and complexity that was popular during the peak of the Edwardian period had given way to more manageable updos. Cosmetics, on the other hand, were beginning to grow in popularity and complexity. Lisa Eldridge examined this quickly growing trend and explained that it had gone from ‘something that must be used covertly’, the standard opinion in the Victorian and Edwardian period, to

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>100</sup> Ilya Parkins, *Poiret, Dior and Schiaparelli: Fashion, Femininity and Modernity*, Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 2012, 57.

‘a symbol of patriotism and keeping up appearances’ during wartime.<sup>101</sup> This sentiment reoccurred in WWII and required a myriad of beauty products; however, at this earlier stage only skin care products, light rouges, and natural-looking lip tints were preferred. It was not until the 1920s that lipsticks, mascaras, and brightly coloured powders became common and generally acceptable. If a 1917 setting had been earnestly pursued by Powell and Pressburger then, as key authenticity effects, Hobson’s costumes, hair, and makeup would have resembled the appropriate era.

When Wendy Hiller withdrew from the *Colonel Blimp* project Powell’s expectations regarding the evolution and symbolism imbued in a woman’s silhouette remained, especially as Pressburger had expanded upon the idea and made specific annotations/directions towards it in his initial *Sugar Candy* screenplay. The filmmakers, Powell especially, had always intended to use the female lead’s costumes as aesthetic symbols to further emphasise the changing roles and rights of women in Britain. In his autobiography he explained:

Wendy Hiller... who had good clothes sense, would be going through the most sensational period of transformation of women’s bodies since the Garden of Eden... The beginning of the century saw the hourglass figure, the heavy material of the dresses and skirts, the enormous hats and all the paraphernalia to make a woman to feel decorative and useless. The 1914 war freed a woman’s body... it was a time of ugly, serviceable skirts, drab colours, cloche hats... Finally, there was the Second World War with women in uniform, beside their men.<sup>102</sup>

The ensembles he described were quintessential authenticity effects because their period appropriate shapes and trims mimicked those worn by women from 1900-1943 – making them especially useful tools for the reiteration of time, place, and as symbols of social change across the decades.

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<sup>101</sup> Lisa Eldridge, *Face Paint: The Story of Makeup*, Abrams Image, New York, 2015, 120.

<sup>102</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 406-07.

Showcased by Deborah Kerr, a small team was employed to execute The Archers' vision regarding this aspect of the *mise en scène*. Matilda Etches and Josef Bato focused on Kerr's dress, while George Blackler and Dorrie Hamilton handled her makeup and hair. All answered to Alfred Junge, the picture's production designer. Information regarding Blackler and Hamilton is minimal, with only a few credits on the *BFI's* database, but some information and examples of Bato and Etches work exist beyond the film industry. A limited number of Bato's illustrations (non-fashion related) can be found in the Museum of Modern Art's 'German Expressionism' online collection<sup>103</sup>, while examples of Etches haute couture collections are housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.<sup>104</sup> Their work for Powell and Pressburger was well-executed and demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of fashion trends in Britain at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the change that they represented. As historical signifiers, they were essential and worth investigating in greater depth.

To begin, when first introduced in Pressburger's script, Hunter was described as '...very neat; and well, though not extravagantly dressed' and Kerr's costume for her first scene certainly reflected neatness; however, it was seemingly more glamorous than Pressburger's initial comment suggested.<sup>105</sup> Bedecked in fashions commonly associated with the Edwardian period, such as a tall embellished hat, a fur muff, and a high-collared, corseted floor-length dress, she could have been easily mistaken for one of Charles Dana Gibson's fashionable and famed 'Gibson Girl' illustrations. In later sequences, her ensembles reduced in their extravagance and resembled the more casual and practical fashions worn by Edwardian upper-middle-class working women. This further reiterated her character's social standing and progressive, Suffragette like, mindset, whilst also making her a more realistic and relatable figure for everyday viewers. Many components within each ensemble can be directly linked to historical trends and materials from the past and this also highlights the team's endeavours towards the creation of period-appropriate authenticity effects in Kerr's costumes, hair, and makeup.

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<sup>103</sup> Josef Bato, 'Works by Josef Bato', *German Expressionism: Works from the Collection*, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, [online], date accessed: 16/03/2021, <[https://www.moma.org/s/ge/collection\\_ge/artist/artist\\_id-377\\_thumbs.html](https://www.moma.org/s/ge/collection_ge/artist/artist_id-377_thumbs.html)>.

<sup>104</sup> Matilda Etches, 'Matilda Etches Collection', *Victoria and Albert Museum*, London, [online], date accessed: 16/03/2021, <[http://collections.vam.ac.uk/search/?id\\_person=A2136](http://collections.vam.ac.uk/search/?id_person=A2136)>.

<sup>105</sup> Powell & Pressburger, *The Life and Death of Sugar Candy*, sequence 25.

At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century women's fashion changed significantly with the introduction of the S-bend corset and a move away from the traditional, hourglass shape that was popularised during the previous Victorian era. While its predecessor predominantly focused on reducing the circumference of a woman's waist, the S-bend corset was shaped to enhance multiple aspects of the body to produce a more curvaceous and sensational silhouette which, according to Aileen Ribeiro and Cally Blackman, was 'somewhat matronly' through the emphasis of a 'large bosom, tiny waist and rounded posterior'.<sup>106</sup> Using portraiture, both painted and photographed, Ribeiro and Blackman identified some of the era's integral fashion elements through their commonality across these images. Evening wear, they found, was reserved for fine gowns that were often sleeveless, had a low neckline (in comparison to previous trends), and were decorated with trimmings like chiffon frills, beads, and intricate laces.<sup>107</sup> Daywear was more discreet, but wealthy women partnered their well-tailored, often fur-lined and trimmed ensembles with tall and broad hats that were 'trimmed with artificial flowers, exotic bird-of-paradise plumes or even their entire dead bodies' because, as Ribeiro and Blackman noted, 'furs of every kind were extremely fashionable'.<sup>108</sup>

Figure 13: Deborah Kerr as Edith Hunter, images sourced directly from *Colonel Blimp*, 1943.

Images removed due to copyright restrictions

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<sup>106</sup> Aileen Ribeiro and Cally Blackman, *A Portrait of Fashion: Six Centuries of Dress at the National Portrait Gallery*, National Portrait Gallery, Great Britain, 2015, 200.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

Jane Ashelford also discussed this penchant for opulent accessories and their trims in her work and found that hats and hairstyles, were integral for achieving the ‘tall and willowy’ silhouette favoured by Edwardian women.<sup>109</sup> The hairstyles beneath were complex and ‘swept up and piled on top of the head in a series of luxuriant waves’, and further heightened by small artificial pads designed that also structurally supported any lavish millinery pieces.<sup>110</sup> Makeup was a popular accessory for any well-defined fashionistas; however, the styles and products that were used were simple, i.e., lightly coloured rouges, lip tints, and soft perfumes, and designed to only delicately enhance a woman’s natural features.<sup>111</sup> Hunter’s costumes, especially her first, contained such elements and when compiled together on a beautiful young woman they resembled one of the Edwardian period’s most iconic illustrated female figures, the ‘Gibson Girl’.

Created by American pen-and-ink illustrator Charles Dana Gibson in the late 1890s, the ‘Gibson Girl’ illustrations were stylised personifications of the ‘feminine ideal’ of the period and were images that ‘crossed class, regional, and ethnic lines’ in the USA, as well as inspiring ‘censure and applause’ across the Atlantic.<sup>112</sup> While they varied in dress and expression, Gibson’s illustrations showcased several fashions from the era and often emphasised their connection to changing social norms. At the time she was a figure that prompted sensational responses through her suggested modernity and, as Martha Patterson noted, the figure ‘was either... an unattractive, browbeating usurper of traditionally masculine roles’ or, contrastingly, a champion of independence, education, suffrage, reform and sexual freedom.<sup>113</sup> Since the Edwardian era, she has been subject to close analysis and linked to some of the more problematic ideologies of the period, such as ‘racial and ethnic taxonomies, social Darwinism, and imperialist ambitions’, but overall she has become an iconic image for the era through her fashion and silhouette.<sup>114</sup> Unsurprisingly, Kerr resembled

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<sup>109</sup> Jane Ashelford, *The Art of Dress: Clothes and Society 1500—1914*, The National Trust, Great Britain, 1996, 246.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Evangeline Hollande, *Edwardian England: A Guide to Everyday Life, 1900-1914*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Plum Bun Publishing, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014, page number not noted on text.

<sup>112</sup> Martha H. Patterson, *Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman: 1895-1915*, University of Illinois Press, USA, 2008, 2.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 26.

Gibson's girls throughout *Colonel Blimp's* Edwardian sequences as she was designed to be Candy's 'ideal', as well as the epitome of a modern, progressive woman at the time.

Figure 14: Charles Dana Gibson, *Studies in Expression. When Women are Jurors*, 1902.

Courtesy of the Cabinet of American Illustration, the Library of Congress, USA.



The previous illustration is exceptionally useful when considering popular Edwardian fashions and their representation in *The Archers'* film. Unlike many of Gibson's drawings, *Studies in Expression* showcases a variety of styles, across different age groups and social backgrounds, and provides an opportunity to study Kerr's diverse and complex wardrobe. As previously noted, in her introductory scenes she was dressed well and reminiscent of the traditional, upper-class 'Gibson Girl' figure (like jurors 9 and 11). In later scenes her dress, while still neat, was more practical (jurors 3, 6 and 8). Eventually, her lacey frills, feathers, and furs gave way to a more modern, sportier Edwardian look – one that favoured flat-topped straw hats, sharp collars, and a feminized version of the men's traditional button-up shirt and necktie (jurors 5 and 12). Such details helped to establish Hunter's progressive mentalities as her shift from 'frothy high-necked gowns' to 'sharply tailored' ensembles represented a real change from the fashion over the Edwardian period.<sup>115</sup> This change was so swift and

<sup>115</sup> Bradfield, *Historical Costumes of England*, 153-155.

dramatic, that traditional manufacturers of men's shirts and detachable collars/cuffs, began to cater for women and actively included them in their advertising campaigns.

Figure 15: J.C Leyendecker, *Arrow Collars and Shirts*, 1907. Courtesy of the American Art Archives.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

See: <http://www.americanartarchives.com/leyendecker,jc.htm>

Overall, Hunter's complete ensembles were extremely persuasive authenticity effects that represented the variety of components and styles present in an Edwardian woman's wardrobe. They echoed popular, identifiable historical trends and this helped to cement the picture's impression of history and at an early stage – which further supported its distributional functions and overall historiophoty.

Despite her identical physical appearance to Hunter, Barbara Wynne's nature and general countenance were very different but, like Hunter, her modernity was also demonstrated through her costumes, hair, and makeup. Within the wider scope of the film, two specific costume sequences especially supported the distributional functions that further defined Wynne's character and the integral periods in her life with Candy. Firstly, there was her initial nurse's uniform (Voluntary Aid Detachment—VAD) during the 'khaki sequences' – which reflected her patriotism through wartime work, and secondly, were her ensembles that she wore in post-war Britain as a socialite and wife – these demonstrated her easy acceptance and adoption of modern trends. While the first sequence has only one costume with a primary connection to the past, the second contains a number of fashion elements that represented the significant changes to women's silhouettes in post-war Britain.



To begin, it would be remiss to discuss Wynne's ensembles without considering how her VAD nurses' uniform projected a saint-like aura around her character and how this image of the 'angelic nurse' connects with historical interpretation and memory. Broadly speaking, during the Great War nursing was one of the limited wartime occupations that middle-to-upper class women could be volunteer for because its stringent set of moralistic recruiting standards were deemed acceptable by wider society.<sup>116</sup> Due to the swift development of technologies and the industrial scale of warfare, Britain's body of professional nurses – which included those from its colonies – could not cope with the rapid rise in casualty rates.<sup>117</sup> To combat this the Red Cross/Order of St. Johns' Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) set out to recruit, train, and manage volunteer nurses.<sup>118</sup> It was a fairly successful program with, according to British Red Cross records, approximately ninety thousand volunteers – of which forty thousand took on roles in medical-related facilities, i.e., auxiliary hospitals and casualty trains.<sup>119</sup> Despite this success, the program had flaws.

As mentioned earlier, the selection process for volunteer nurses was influenced by the morals maintained in wider British society and this determined the women accepted into the program. According to George Robb, the VAD preferred to recruit from the 'genteel-upper and middle-class' (especially in the earlier stages when the role was unpaid); however, this restricted opportunities for women in the lower classes and, at times, caused issues within the community of career nurses already on staff.<sup>120</sup> In his discussion, Robb highlighted how many established nurses believed that VAD attendants had a poor understanding of care, lacked professionalism, and ultimately undercut the wage of regular nurses through their very presence.<sup>121</sup> In turn, some VAD's adopted insubordinate behaviours when they clashed with authority figures because the nurses in positions of power were often socially inferior to the VAD.<sup>122</sup> Regardless of these squabbles, through recruitment standards, dress, and propaganda, the figure of the youthful and saint-like volunteer nurse became an easily identifiable part of Britain's wartime efforts and was one that re-emerged again during WWII.

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<sup>116</sup> Robb, *British Culture and the First World War*, 40.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> British Red Cross, 'Volunteers during the First World War', *British Red Cross Online Archive*, viewed 07/10/2019, <<https://vad.redcross.org.uk/Volunteers-during-WW1>>.

<sup>120</sup> Robb, *British Culture and the First World War*, 40.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

The uniform created by Bato and Etches was unmistakably VAD. The blue-grey dress, white pinafore apron, tall, starched collar, sharply cuffed sleeves, and handkerchief style cap were all components of the VAD's mandatory uniforms<sup>123</sup> and commonly added in Britain's wartime propaganda posters – evident in the Joyce Denny poster above. Their presence within function 17 was essential for the historiophoty of the picture's aesthetic elements.

Figure 16 : (Left) Kerr as Barbara Wynne (directly in front of the window), Powell & Pressburger's *Colonel Blimp*, 1943. Courtesy of the Ronald Grant Archive (Right, below) Joyce Denny, *V.A.D.*, UK, 1915. (Right) nurse's ward apron, VAD, 1915-1919. Courtesy of the IWM.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions



<sup>123</sup> British Red Cross, 'Nursing During the First World War', *British Red Cross Online Archive*, date accessed: 12/10/2020, <<https://vad.redcross.org.uk/~media/BritishRedCross/Documents/Who%20we%20are/History%20and%20archives/Nursing%20during%20the%20First%20World%20War.pdf>>.

After the khaki sequences, Wynne was reintroduced to audiences fairly quickly and her costumes reflected not only her wealth and taste for emerging fashions but also the wider economic boom experienced in the immediate post-war years in Britain. As the daughter of a profitable mill owner, her vibrantly coloured, softly flowing silks represented the transition of Britain's manufacturing industry from wartime to peacetime work. Alongside these colourful fabrics, Wynne's ensembles showcased trends that were still in their infancy at this time but would develop into popular fashions over the 1920s. Some had already begun to develop during the war years: corsets were abandoned for more flexible undergarments, which increased physical mobility and introduced a 'tubular' look (which had no discernible waistline), and hemlines were lifted from ankle-length to knee-level which changed the hosiery industry – the previously favoured heavy woollen stockings gave way to skin-toned nylons and silks.<sup>124</sup> Hairstyles and hats were also dramatically altered. Instead of tall, voluminous styles and broad-brimmed millinery pieces, hair was shorter, waved, and worn close to the head and nape; accompanying hats were 'cloche', a French bell-shaped style that conformed to the head.<sup>125</sup> Several of Wynne's ensembles contained these fashionable elements, which reiterated her progressive mindset whilst also addressing the changing nature of the women's silhouette and its links to social change.

Wynne's ensembles reflected the changing nature of post-WWI fashion very well and were compelling authenticity effects for the reiteration of time, place, and wider social change. Also, due to the drastic changes between early Edwardian and post-WWI styles, they were effective tools used to differentiate Wynne's character from Edith Hunter, a tricky but necessary undertaking when a single actress takes on all three primary female characters in a picture.

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<sup>124</sup> Martin Pugh, *'We Danced All Night': A Social History of Britain Between the Wars*, The Bodley Head, London, 2008, 171.

<sup>125</sup> Bradfield, *Historical Costumes of England*, 162-164.

Figure 17: Kerr as Wynne-Candy. Images sourced directly from *Colonel Blimp*, 1943.

Images removed due to copyright restrictions

While Hunter and Wynne embodied the modern women of the past, Cannon was the 'poster girl' for WWII's mobilised woman. She was young, forthright, and actively contributing to the war effort, while still maintaining her feminine silhouette. This was predominantly portrayed through her hair and makeup because, in direct contrast with Hunter and Wynne, Cannon was seen in only one ensemble – her uniform. Pressburger's script originally labelled Cannon as an Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) driver; however, in the film, she wore the uniform of the Motor Transport Corps. Likely changed due to the sourcing issues mentioned previously<sup>126</sup>, Cannon's uniform still played an integral role in the representation of modern women's history through ever-changing fashion and beauty standards. She personified the mobilised woman on screen and undoubtedly connected with many audience members that were employed in similar wartime occupations. Like the ATS, the MTC provided essential auxiliary services across national and international locations throughout the war, but the group was not directly linked to Britain's military forces. Originally founded in 1939 as the Mechanised Transport Training Corps (MTTC), it was formed to specifically cater for women that were unable to fulfil the full-time roles that many auxiliary services expected and worked hard to produce flexible, part-time options for such women.<sup>127</sup> Primarily working under the

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<sup>126</sup> This was changed within the film's dialogue too; however, there is no specific evidence to suggest when and why *The Archers* had to change this detail.

<sup>127</sup> Martin Brayley, *The British Home Front 1939-45*, Osprey Publishing, 2005, 56.

umbrella of the Ministry of Transport, the MTTC changed its name to the Motor Transport Corps (MTC) in 1940 and by 1943 it was estimated that they had approximately three thousand members in service.<sup>128</sup> Their uniforms were fairly similar to those worn by other women's service groups but the light blue piping and crossed spanner badges, which are clearly visible on Kerr's costume, set them apart as MTC staff.<sup>129</sup>

Alongside her uniform, Cannon's hair and makeup were essential components of her contemporary look. Maintaining a good appearance was encouraged during WWII and, according to Patricia Nicol, 'in the fashion rhetoric of the day, painted lips, waved hair, powdered cheekbones and a jaunty hat were proof that the nation's women were keeping calm and carrying on'.<sup>130</sup> Cannon could not swap out her MTC cap for a casual 'jaunty hat'; however, her waved and rolled hair, minimal but bright makeup and overall neatness echoed the high standard of grooming that was encouraged during WWII. When discussing clothes rationing and fashion in Britain during this period of upheaval, Lara Clouting highlighted how personal appearance, especially for women, was so indicative of morale levels that the Government factored it into their decision-making process when repurposing manufacturing facilities.<sup>131</sup> Makeup, in particular, became a highly prized commodity that was difficult to obtain but essential for common beauty practices. Although never rationed, make-up was subject to a luxury tax and manufacturers faced difficulties when attempting to obtain its key core ingredients, i.e., castor oil, petroleum, talcum powders, glycerine and fats, because they were prioritised for the manufacturing of goods for servicemen, like sunscreens and camouflage creams.<sup>132</sup> According to Patricia Nicol, throughout the conflict many women survived with only two lipsticks – red being the most prevalent – because availability had fallen to less than a quarter of its 1938 levels.<sup>133</sup> Thrift was encouraged, and even *Vogue*

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, 62.

<sup>130</sup> Patricia Nicol, *Sucking Eggs: What Your Wartime Granny Could Teach You about Diet, Thrift and Going Green*, Vintage Ltd, 2010, 157.

<sup>131</sup> Laura Clouting, *8 Facts About Clothes Rationing in Britain During the Second World War*, Imperial War Museum, 2018, [online] date accessed 10/10/2019, <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/8-facts-about-clothes-rationing-in-britain-during-the-second-world-war>>.

<sup>132</sup> Nicol, *Sucking Eggs: What Your Wartime Granny Could Teach You*, 158.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

advised its readers to use their ‘little grey cells’ to avoid ‘collecting a fleet of half-used lipsticks in a bottom draw’ or wasting nail polish through ‘wilful peeling’.<sup>134</sup>

Figure 18: Kerr as Angela ‘Johnny’ Cannon, *Colonel Blimp*, 1943. Courtesy of the Ronald Grant Archive.

Images removed due to copyright restrictions

For audiences, Cannon’s well-kept image reiterated society’s desires for keeping up these appearances, despite the challenges that women faced regarding product availability, but she was not the only fashionable woman in uniform on screen. On the contrary, many propaganda films encouraged women to enlist in primary support services and included such characters on screen. Nan Turner’s 2019 article explores this trend in three other British wartime dramas: *Millions Like Us* (1943), *The Gentle Sex* (1943), and *Two Thousand Women* (1944). She found that female characters dressed in uniform were clean, had excellent hair, and impeccable makeup because it reiterated to viewers, both men and women, that femininity could still be maintained while serving the nation.<sup>135</sup> The Archers’ Angela ‘Johnny’ Cannon certainly falls into this category. As the epitome of the ‘modern woman’, Cannon’s costume,

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<sup>134</sup> Becky E. Conekin, ‘Magazines are Essentially About the Here and Now. And this was Wartime’ British Vogue’s Responses to the Second World War’, in Philippa Levine & Susan R. Grayzel’s *Gender, Labour, War and Empire: Essays on Modern Britain*, Palgrave Macmillan, UK, 2009, 121.

<sup>135</sup> Nan Turner, ‘Costumes go to War’, *The Journal of the Costume Society of America*, vol. 45, no. 2, 2019, 165.

hair, and makeup were authenticity effects that focused on mimicking contemporary reality, rather than the trends of the past. In the wider scope of Powell's commentary regarding the ever-changing female silhouette and its ties to social change, Cannon's uniform was the best symbol to end on. When compared to Hunter and Wynne, it starkly reminded audiences that women were now more mobile in society and active in the workforce – an important factor during wartime.

As integral authenticity effects within the wider scope of the film, Kerr's ensembles were exceptionally well-done and echoed a variety of past and present fashion/beauty trends. Together, Bato and Etches (costume), and Blackler and Hamilton (hair and makeup), demonstrated an in-depth understanding of the history of women's silhouettes and styles and used this knowledge to reinforce *The Archers'* story and characters. Had they stumbled and inserted inappropriate period clothing, Kerr would have been unable to effectively execute Powell's yearning to present 'the most sensational period of transformation of women's bodies since the Garden of Eden' on screen because the integrational function would not have aligned with the intended historical setting.<sup>136</sup>

Lastly, when compared to *The Spy in Black* and *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* the amount of screen time dedicated to any female character in *The Battle of the River Plate* is woefully small because the wartime event was dominated by men. There was no room for *The Archers* to insert an elaborate female role into their distributional functions, so they did not. Beyond extras, the only woman that had any dedicated screen time was April Olrich. Her character, Dolores, was the club singer in Manolo's bar and the primary focus of function 60 – the sequence used to introduce Montevideo's thriving nightlife. Later, she was present in the bar when Mike Fowler set up his radio hub, but her presence was fleeting, but nevertheless, as the only credited female cast member, it is pertinent to examine Olrich's ensembles to determine whether they reflect 1939 fashions.

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<sup>136</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 406.

Figure 19: April Olich as Dolores, *The Battle of the River Plate* promotional still, 1956.  
Courtesy of the Ronald Grant Archive.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

In the wider scope of the film, Olich's performance was important for the introduction of Montevideo because it bridged parts III and IV of the film's cardinal functions together and highlighted the energy of Montevideo's community; however, her character played no significant part beyond this. As the primary focus of a lively bar in South America in 1939, Olich's ensembles had to catch the viewer's eye and transport them to an exotic place from the past. A sequined gold dress was employed for this task. Small in the waist, the figure-fitting gown accentuated Olich's bust and hips, and the wide, low-cut neckline showcased her neck and shoulders. All were common features in evening dresses from the late-1930s to the late-1940s.<sup>137</sup> According to Melanie Hillmer, sequins were an extremely popular embellishment among performers and starlets, like Marlene Dietrich and Joan Crawford, because they caught the light dazzled audiences.<sup>138</sup> While this may be the case in Hollywood, as a club singer in a small establishment in Montevideo, it is fair that Olich's ensemble lacked

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<sup>137</sup> Bradfield, *Historical Costumes of England*, 171.

<sup>138</sup> Hillmer, 'The Cinema in the Wardrobe', 114-125.



the ostentatiousness often associated with these larger than life stars. Nevertheless, with her sequined dress, braided hair, and bright red lips, Olrich echoed 1939 fashions well enough for her short time on screen.

The only other female character to receive any screen time beyond ‘glancing’ was Millington-Drake’s secretary – an uncredited part in the picture’s final version. Unlike Olrich’s eye-catching gold sequined dress, Millington-Drake’s secretary sported a style that was common with working women during the decade – the two-piece skirt suit. Although the combination existed prior to 1939, when showcased by *Vogue* in their 1942 ‘Utility’ campaign, the ensemble was pushed to the forefront of working women’s fashion due to its functionality and smartness.<sup>139</sup> Such suits maintained their popularity in the 1950s; however, shapes and colours had changed in a markedly different way. Skirts, for example, became longer and many required petticoats to assist with the creation of their shape.<sup>140</sup> Jackets were altered too and WWII’s popular triangular torso shape, which was achieved by exaggerated shoulders and the narrowing of the waistline, was replaced by wide collars and dropped shoulder lines, which created a softer silhouette.<sup>141</sup> While there were few women in *River Plate* shown in an office setting, like Millington-Drake’s secretary, the few that were present wore ensembles that aligned more with WWII’s fashion trends, rather than 1950s favourites.

When compared together, it is evident that the ideas and efforts behind each woman’s ensembles were different for each picture and relied on her role within the wider narrative. While Hobson and Kerr received significant care and consideration due to their leading positions, Olrich received far less attention because women were not directly involved in the *River Plate/Graf Spee* incident and Pressburger did not have the time or space within his account to produce a layered original character. As authenticity effects, each ensemble presented a specific aesthetic composition that reinforced the picture’s distributional functions. Some outfits were contemporary, i.e., Hobson as Fräulein Tiel (*Black*) and Kerr as Angela ‘Johnny’ Cannon (*Blimp*), while others represented historical trends, like Kerr’s Edith Hunter and Barbara Wynne (*Blimp*) and Olrich as the eye-catching 1939 club singer, Dolores

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<sup>139</sup> Prudence Glynn, *In Fashion: Dress in the Twentieth Century*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, Boston: Sydney, 1978, 63.

<sup>140</sup> John Peacock, John Peacock, *Fashion Since 1900: The Complete Sourcebook*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Thames & Hudson, London: New York, 2007, 151.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

(*Plate*). Despite their differences, overall, the studio teams – under the direction of Powell, Pressburger and each production’s specific art director – did well with the women’s ensembles and transferred this same attention to detail to the men’s costumes too.

The men’s costumes, hair, and makeup also maintained a good standard across the films discussed in this thesis. In regard to diversity, they were far more constricted than the women’s wardrobes but were still prominent authenticity effects within the wider set of integrational functions. Due to the wartime subject matter, for large parts of each feature the men were predominantly in military uniform and there were only a handful of moments when casual menswear graced the screen. Nevertheless, exactness was still a necessity and The Archers’ teams took considerable care when constructing these ensembles. Like the women’s wardrobes, some costumes reflected contemporary styles, while others displayed historical fashions. The following sections will interrogate some outfits worn by the pictures’ leading men to further consider how authenticity was communicated through this aspect of the *mise en scène* and how this affected the picture’s overall historiophoty. The amount of screen time dedicated to male characters beyond Captain Hardt was relatively small in *The Spy in Black* and in many instances, the supporting characters wore similar naval get-ups or unremarkable civilian garb, so this section will focus primarily on Veidt’s wardrobe. Throughout the film, he had only three prominent costumes: his German officer’s uniform (worn most often), a non-descript motorcycle outfit (function 7 and 8), and his stolen priest’s garb (function 22).

To begin, Veidt’s uniform was an identifiable version of the Imperial German Navy’s regular service dress. His double-breasted ‘reefer’ jacket was a quintessential part of this regalia and was identifiable by its open collar, wide lapels, and a set of gilt metal buttons (set parallel to one another with the top row slightly wider than the others).<sup>142</sup> According to Gordon Williamson, this jacket was traditionally worn with a white shirt and tie, which were present in the picture; however, in more casual scenes Hardt partnered this jacket with a non-descript dark turtleneck.<sup>143</sup> His trousers matched the reefer jacket and his shoes (when visible) were a pair of generic black men’s shoes, which was common as ‘officers and warrant officers were permitted to wear just about any suitable lace-up shoe in plain black leather’.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Gordon Williamson & Darko Pavlovic, *U-Boat Crews 1914-45*, Osprey Publishing, Great Britain, 1995, 17.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

Upon his sleeves were the insignias representative of his rank and the embroidered Hohenzollern crown signalled his allegiance to Germany. This crown was one of the few details in Hardt's uniform that differed from Ashington's British one and this was not a cinematic faux pas. Across multiple navies, uniform styles and colours were extremely similar. Darker blue hues and white was common, and the iconic 'flap collar' was present in lower-ranking seamen's uniforms.<sup>145</sup> Due to these similar colours and styles, embroidery and trim were heavily relied upon to differentiate allegiances. Regarding the Imperial German Navy, the embroidered Hohenzollern crown was prevalent on their uniforms until 1919. It symbolised Wilhelm II's position as the King of Prussia and Germany's Emperor, but after his abdication in 1918 its prevalence in the naval wardrobe ceased and it was later replaced by the National Socialist German Workers' Party's (Nazi Party) Reichsadler eagle. Always incessantly neat, Hardt's impeccable uniform reiterated his character's pride in his position and, alongside his actions, further signalled to the audience that he was an honourable military man (despite his position as the enemy). Furthermore, unlike Hobson's many ensembles, Veidt's adhered to uniform styles from the Great War and was a better authenticity effect for the reiteration of the picture's 1917 setting.

Veidt's other ensembles held far less meaning in regard to his characterisation; however, they did fit within the 1917 setting. For example, his motorcycle outfit, coveralls, goggles and a leather cap, which resembled those worn by casual riders before the 1930s. According to Harley-Davidson's online archive, the evolution of protective gear for riders was relatively slow between 1900-1940.<sup>146</sup> While individuals practising and competing within private racing clubs utilised protective gear, civilians were purchasing 'motorcycle sport suits' that contained few protective components – such ensembles contained light jumpsuits, soft leather caps and goggles.<sup>147</sup> Regarding the military, protective gear was rarely used (within British forces) until the death of T.E Lawrence (aka 'Lawrence of Arabia') in 1935. His motorcycle accident sparked the research of one of Britain's first neurosurgeons, Dr. Hugh Cairns, and the recommendations he made resulted in the issuing of hard helmets for all

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<sup>145</sup> Jonathan North, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Uniforms of World War I: An expert guide to the uniforms of Britain, France, Russia, America, Germany and Austro-Hungary*, Anness Publishing, UK, 2011.

<sup>146</sup> Unknown, 'From the Archives of H-D Apparel: 'The 1919 Motorcycle Sport Suit'', *The Harley Davidson Archive/Museum*, [online], date accessed: 11/11/2019, <<https://www.harley-davidson.com/us/en/museum/explore/archives/did-you-know/hd-apparel.html>>.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

despatch riders in the Army.<sup>148</sup> So, in the scope of the film and its 1917 setting, Hardt's outfit (borrowed from his junior officer Schuster) resembled the casual motorcycle suits common to non-professional riders in the era. Veidt's other costume, his disguise stolen from Reverend Harris, was little more than a black cape coat, a homburg hat (both common in Britain since their introduction in the Victorian era) and a white clerical collar.<sup>149</sup> Due to the stagnant nature of Veidt's costumes, there was little opportunity to experiment with contemporary men's fashion or insert authenticity effects that suggested the modern period – this was done through Hobson's costume, hair, and makeup. Instead, the filmmakers opted to keep the 1917 aesthetic for the men in uniform.

Figure 20: (Right) Hardt preparing to leave for his rendezvous with Fräulein Tiel. (Left) Ashington (Shaw) and Hardt (Veidt) discuss the whereabouts of the British ships and their movements within the Scapa Flow region. Image sourced directly from *The Spy in Black*, 1939.

Images removed due to copyright restrictions

In comparison, *Colonel Blimp* was filled with an array of men's ensembles; however, due to the size and scope of this dissertation it is impossible to discuss all of its male characters, but an in-depth examination of its main characters, Candy and Schuldorff, is possible. Present in every period included in Pressburger's distributional functions, the costumes worn by Livesey and Walbrook were integral authenticity effects for the construction of setting and character support. Similar to Kerr's wardrobe, they also presented

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<sup>148</sup> Marek Pruszewicz, 'Lawrence of Arabia and the Crash Helmet', *BBC World Service*, May 2015, [online], date accessed: 11/11/2019, <<https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-32622465>>.

<sup>149</sup> Elizabeth J. Lewandowski, *The Complete Costume Dictionary*, Scarecrow Press, 2011, 67 & 137.

audiences with the collective history of men's fashion, both military and civilian, after the turn of the century and were dressed with significant care to avoid anachronistic details. The following section will explore key components from each period, to further highlight how the picture's costume, hair, and makeup teams endeavoured to present history and contemporary reality believably through their tasks. Although the film emphasised the folly of blimpish mindsets during WWII's unique total war circumstances, the exploration of Candy's early years was essential for justifying how his traditionalist mindset stagnated throughout his career. He was not born as a Blimp, rather, his inability to adapt to new strategies of warfare made him so. When introduced to audiences in the picture's 1902 sequences, he was a strapping young officer and the recipient of a Victoria Cross, and his belief in gentlemanly warfare suited the military honour codes at the time. It was only fitting that his first full costume for this period was the British Army's iconic red coat regalia.

Candy's uniform was somewhat altered for the silver screen; however, its adopted components still reflected trends that were common in Britain's military regalia during this period of transition between Victorian and Edwardian trends. This can be confirmed by the work of A.E Haswell Miller and John Mollo, but even they state that 'authorities differ on the exact composition of the various orders of dress', especially between 1908-1914.<sup>150</sup> Utilising plate illustrations, *Vanished Armies: A Record of Uniform* interrogated military fashions (across various European countries) and identified some of the common components, reoccurring styles and advancements that were made during this contemporary period.<sup>151</sup> Alongside this study, R. Spencer Kidd's *Military Uniforms in Europe 1900-2000: Volume One* provides insight into the changing nature of Britain's regalia during this period.<sup>152</sup> In both studies, it was agreed that the Army's iconic red coat was abandoned as a field uniform after the bloody campaigns in South Africa highlighted its ineffectiveness and it was only retained for 'walking-out and ceremonial purposes'.<sup>153</sup> This worked within the scene produced by Powell and Pressburger, as Candy was back in London (function 6) – not in the field. The costume's details, like the ornate twisted gimp at the cuffs, pith helmet with the British coat

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<sup>150</sup> A.E Haswell Miller & John Mollo, *Vanished Armies: A Record of Military Uniform Observed and Drawn in Various European Countries During the years 1908-14: With Notes and Memories of the Days Before 'The Lights Went Out in Europe' in the Year 1914*, Oxford Shire Publications, 2009, 9.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> R. Spencer Kidd, *Military Uniforms in Europe 1900-2000: Volume One*, Lulu Press Inc, USA, 2013.

<sup>153</sup> Miller & Mollo, *Vanished Armies*, 9; Kidd, *Military Uniforms in Europe*, 6.

of arms, embroidered collar, white gloves, and decorative sword, were real components in this dress uniform, and their inclusion bolstered its strength as a historically based authenticity effect.<sup>154</sup>

Figure 21: Roger Livesey as a young Clive Candy alongside his friend 'Hoppy', played by David Hutcheson. Image sourced directly from *Colonel Blimp*, 1943.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

In regard to Candy's hair and makeup in this early period, there is one minor detail that does not align with military trends at the time – his lack of moustache. Grown at a later date to cover the scar he earned after his duel with Schuldorff (function 12), Candy's moustache was one of the few elements directly adopted from David Low's original illustrated character and it symbolised the beginning of Candy's Blimper. According to Major Money Barnes, officers in the British Army were forbidden from shaving their upper lip (only their upper lip, they could not grow an entire beard, just the moustache).<sup>155</sup> This requirement had been part of their dress regulations since the 1860s and had remained mandatory until the early stages of the Great War.<sup>156</sup> In his memoir, Sir Nevil Macready (a Lieutenant-General at

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<sup>154</sup> Major R. Money Barnes, *A History of the Regiments & Uniforms*, A History of the Regiments & Uniforms of the British Army, Seeley Service & Co, London, 1954, 203.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid*, 227.

<sup>156</sup> Nevil Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, vol.1, Doran, New York, 1925, 258.

the time of the Great War) outlined the trouble that this regulation caused in the early stages of the conflict and General Charles Douglas's almost constant reports of its infringement amongst his cavalry and artillery officers.<sup>157</sup> According to Macready, the regularity of the infringement prompted an Army Council investigation into its history, which was then used to inform their decision on whether it should be upheld as a service tradition.<sup>158</sup> The study found that while the mandatory moustache had significant lineage in their uniform's history, a 'clean-shaven British infantry' had also fought and conquered Napoleon – so it was decided that officers could forego the moustache if desired.<sup>159</sup> As this change occurred in the early stages of the Great War, Candy's clean-shaven face was somewhat defiant when considered against the regulation standards of 1902. Nevertheless, within the wider scope of the picture's narrative and his character's arc, the moustache symbolised the beginning of his Blimpery and was only added to his costume after the 1902 sequences.

Whilst traipsing about Berlin, Candy's costumes were somewhat demure when compared to his vibrant military regalia. Officially a tourist visiting Berlin, Candy's position in these scenes proved the costume, hair, and makeup teams with an opportunity to showcase men's Edwardian fashions alongside Hunter's stylish ensembles. Oftentimes, women come to the forefront of discussions concerning fashion trends during the Edwardian period; however, men's fashion during this era was just as complex. Brent Shannon's work explores the social implications of men's dress and the consumer culture they propagated throughout the Victorian/Edwardian period and is an excellent resource when considering Livesey's outfits for Candy's casual dress in 1902.<sup>160</sup> According to Shannon, men's engagement with fashion was complex during this period.<sup>161</sup> To avoid the previous era's 'foolish vanity of Dandyism', etiquette guides told men to refrain from wearing too-tight clothing and over starched neckcloths, and encouraged them to borrow more practical fashions from 'the groom or gamekeeper'.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Brent Shannon, *The Cut of his Coat: Men, Dress, and Consumer Culture in Britain 1860-1914*, Ohio University Press, USA, 2006.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 12-28.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, 34.

Figure 22: (Left) Candy and Hunter in the Café *Hohenzollern*. (Right) Candy toasts Schuldorff's engagement, *Colonel Blimp*, 1943. Courtesy of the Ronald Grant Archive.

Images removed due to copyright restrictions

Frivolity and excess are not descriptors that come to mind while examining Candy's civilian wardrobe. He was neat and tidy, and his suit resembled the popular, versatile, and simplistic Edwardian 'lounge suit'. First introduced in the 1890s, lounge suits, sometimes referred to as 'dittoes', contained three common items: a set of trousers, a waistcoat, and a jacket, which were all made from matching fabric.<sup>163</sup> It replaced the previous era's fanciful frock coats, top hats, and tails, and its less restrictive cut ensured that it met society's ever-growing embrace of informality as 'the younger, professional, middle-class set eagerly took up the new taste for practical, sporty, less formal, fashionable male attire'.<sup>164</sup> With the exception of his regulation-breaking clean shave, Livesey's military and civilian costumes were well-constructed authenticity effects that helped to support the historiophoty of the 1902 setting whilst also reflecting his character's personality and social standing.

Livesey was not the only male lead to consider though. Anton Walbrook stood alongside him as Candy's enemy-to-lifelong friend, Theo Kretschmar-Schuldorff, and was dressed with equal care. Like Livesey, Walbrook's costume was also well-constructed military regalia and showcased the styles favoured by the Imperial German Army during the reign of Wilhelm II (1888-1918). As an Uhlan officer (a light cavalry man) Schuldorff's was equally luxurious, and just as eye-catching, as Candy's iconic red coat uniform. Like his co-star's military garb, Walbrook's uniform contained components that were common to Uhlan

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid, 151.

<sup>164</sup> C.E Humphry, *Etiquette for Every Day*, G. Richards Ltd, London, 1904, in Brent Shannon's *The Cut of his Coat: Men, Dress, and Consumer Culture in Britain 1860-1914*, Ohio University Press, USA, 2006.



uniforms during this period; however, it did not replicate a specific rank or regiment in exact detail. Its general commonalities with the Uhlán uniform can be identified in the following plate illustration and included: a *czapka* helmet – identifiable by its unique shape and plume of white horsehair (officer 2), a red-trimmed tunic (officer 7), tall black riding boots and an accompanying sabre.<sup>165</sup> Concerning resemblance, Schuldorff's primary uniform (present in functions 13-14) mirror officer 7's silhouette, palette, and trim the most, but the *czapka* helmet and red-panelled tunic seen in officer 2's uniform present in Schuldorff's regalia during his introductory scene (function 12). Although these additions were made, the costumes maintained their functions as supportive, historically based authenticity effects. It supported the 1902 setting and did not provide anachronistic details that could break its efforts towards historical immersion or confuse audience members. When both characters entered the WWI phase of *The Archers'* narrative, the grandeur of these vibrant military uniforms was appropriately replaced by Britain's full adoption of drab khaki and Germany's dull *feldgrau* grey.

Figure 23: Plate Illustration of Germany's Uhlán Officers, c. 1900. Courtesy of *Follow the Drum: World Military Iconographic Sources*.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

When the segue sequence ended (between functions 15-16) in France, 1918, Candy was introduced to audiences again as a Brigadier-General and a bachelor reaching middle-age. He was far removed from fashionable society and his drab khaki uniform blended well

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<sup>165</sup> John Mollo, *Military Fashion: A Comparative History of the Uniforms of the Great Armies from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century to the First World War*, Barrie & Jenkins, London, London, 184-185.

with the surrounding battlefield. Again, Bato and Etches' work mimicked the uniforms worn by British officer's during this specific period and the details they included supported the film's cardinal functions, as well as its wider historiophoty. In regard to his specific regalia, the red collar gorget patches, with their single brass button and braid detailing, were focal points on the uniform due to their eye-catching colour and they were historically appropriate as they featured on Brigadier-General and Field Marshal uniforms.<sup>166</sup> When facing the elements, Candy wore a generic overcoat, (a common item for servicemen) but the addition of the First World War's iconic 'Brodie' helmet (a steel combat helmet invented by John Leopold Brown Brodie and adopted extensively by the British by 1916) completed the emblematic soldier's silhouette that became synonymous with this conflict.<sup>167</sup>

Figure 24: (Left) Brigadier-General Candy tries to spot Barbara Wynne. (Top right) Candy delivers a speech as peace bells signal the armistice. Stills sourced directly from *Colonel Blimp*, 1943 film. (Bottom left) Steel Helmet, MKI Brodie Pattern: British Army, First World War, courtesy of the IWM.

Images removed due to copyright restrictions



In contrast, *Colonel Blimp's* immediate post-war sequences were far brighter. Like Kerr, Livesey's costume reflected the popular civilian fashions during this period. Despite the

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<sup>166</sup> John Rabon, 'Her Majesty's Services: A Brief Guide to British Armed Forces Ranks', *Anglotopia*, [online], date accessed: 27/10/2019, <<https://www.anglotopia.net/british-identity/majestys-services-brief-guide-british-armed-forces-ranks/>>.

<sup>167</sup> Imperial War Museum, 'Steel Helmet, MKI Brodie Pattern: British Army', *Uniforms and Insignia Collection*, IWM, [online], date accessed: 27/10/2019, <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30098635>>.

changes that occurred in the aftermath of the Great War, men's fashion was relatively untouched until the mid-1920s. According to Stella Blum, from 1919-1924 men's fashion was reminiscent of Edwardian styles.<sup>168</sup> Catalogue illustrations and product advertisements still emphasised the previous era's masculine fashions and aesthetic ideals, i.e., square jaws and neatly slicked hair, and while a clean-shave was now acceptable, moustaches were commonplace.<sup>169</sup> Livesey's uncanny resemblance to such images suggests that Bato and Etches were well aware of these era-appropriate styles and incorporated their sportier components into Livesey's outfit because they represented his personality best. His time in casual civilian gear was short-lived. In the sequences that followed Candy was back in his Brigadier's uniform as he searched for Schuldorff at the prisoner of war camp.

Unlike Candy, Schuldorff was always in military dress throughout the post-war scenes. Similar to Candy's experience, Schuldorff's uniform had completely transformed over the inter-war years. While the British completed the khaki transition of their army's uniforms, Germany adopted the grey-green *feldgrau* (field grey) and *hellgrau* (light-grey), and was a change that was openly reported in the British War Office's 1907 *Handbook of the German Army (Home and Colonial)*, 'a new grey uniform has recently been experimented with, with the idea of its universal adoption throughout the army'.<sup>170</sup> According to Mollo, the installation of these greys was not widespread until after 1910 and although 'practical and reasonably inconspicuous' the structural design of Germany's uniforms were still heavily influenced by traditional styles.<sup>171</sup> This was noticeable in Walbrook's costume. For example, the double-breasted tunic, with its piped red trim and series of brass buttons, was reminiscent of his blue tunic from 1902. This nostalgia aside, Bato and Etches also endeavoured to include Schuldorff's appropriate rank insignias in this costume, as they did with Candy's. As mentioned previously, clearly identifying rank slides/insignias can be difficult due to their size and limited screen time; however, the braiding on Walbrook's epaulettes and collar supported the assertion (made through dialogue) that he was an *Oberst* (Colonel) and a field

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<sup>168</sup> Stella Blum, *Everyday Fashions of the Twenties: As Pictured in Sears and Other Catalogs*, Courier Corporation, 2012, 3.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid*, 3-4.

<sup>170</sup> War Office (British), *Handbook of the German Army (Home and Colonial)*, 1907, in John Mollo's *Military Fashion: A Comparative History of the Uniforms of the Great Armies from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century to the First World War*, Barrie & Jenkins, London 1972, 230.

<sup>171</sup> Mollo, *Military Fashion: A Comparative History*, 230.

officer in one of Germany's Uhlan units.<sup>172</sup> Overall, despite the era's limited colours and uninteresting designs, Bato and Etches refrained from adding any aesthetic details that would have jeopardised the historiophoty of these sequences.

Figure 25: Schuldorff and Candy during the immediate post-war sequences. Image sourced from *Colonel Blimp*, 1943.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

When reintroduced again for the final contemporary sequences, both men were significantly aged by makeup, but Livesey now sported a padded suit to produce Candy's 'bay window' silhouette, plastic inserts filled out his cheeks and his head was freshly shaved, while Walbrook's costume was a simple and plain black suit – strikingly different to his decorated uniforms.<sup>173</sup> No longer an officer within Germany's army, limited in means and funds, and classed as an 'alien' under Britain's Defence Regulations, Schuldorff could not wear a uniform or indulge in ever-changing fashions. Walbrook's costume was simple and conservative and contained the following elements: a simple black suit with a plain matching tie, a tan overcoat,

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<sup>172</sup> Nigel Thomas & Ramiro Bujeiro, *The German Army in World War I (2): 1915-17*, Osprey Publishing, 2004, 40-41.

<sup>173</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 407.

a grey trilby hat, a pocket watch, and a gentleman's cane. It was unremarkable and standard for the era, as well as Schuldorff's current situation and standard of living. Nevertheless, his plain black suit was a part of Britain's fashion history that the film had not touched upon in prior decades.

Candy's civilian garb had always been some form of lounge suit – a versatile design but one that was especially suited for sporting and leisure. Contrastingly, Schuldorff's black suit symbolised another group in Britain's community – professionals and businessmen – and was an integral style within the nation's wider fashion history. According to John Harvey's *Men in Black*, the rise of 'professional black' began in the nineteenth century and became heavily associated with businessmen, like mill/factory owners and landlords, and professional men, such as politicians, lawyers and clerical staff, and suits in this style came to symbolise arduous training and hard-earned skills.<sup>174</sup> Over time the trend extended to rural areas and crossed domestic spheres, 'the change spread steadily to more walks of life, and those in service as well as in employment – to the 'gentlemen's gentlemen as well as the gentlemen' – and further enhanced the social mobility of many, whilst providing 'a good cover for a rising élite'.<sup>175</sup> The suit's symbolism remained fixed in the nation's common fashion until the 1950s when it was slowly decided that the colour black was too formal and somewhat sinister for many occupations.<sup>176</sup> Within *Colonel Blimp*, Schuldorff was not in the position to climb any social or corporate ladders; however, he was seeking employment (mentioned through dialogue in function 32) and his plain black suit indicated his professionalism.

While Walbrook wore civilian dress, Candy was in uniform. Initially, Livesey's costume imitated those worn in the regular army, but from function 33 (after being placed on the retirement list) his uniform echoed the drill fatigues favoured by the Home Guard (HG). Established after Anthony Eden's 1940 announcement regarding the creation of a national task force, the Local Defence Volunteers (quickly renamed the Home Guard) experienced haphazard administration during its initial stages, which impacted on the development of its uniform regulations and distribution.<sup>177</sup> When eventually distributed, khaki coveralls were the primary option due to a shortage in fabric stocks and these were only replaced by woollen

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<sup>174</sup> John Harvey, *Men in Black*, Reaktion Books Ltd, London, 1995, 146.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid, 248.

<sup>177</sup> Brayley, *The British Home Front 1939-45*, 45

'battledress, serge' (a durable type of twill) when supplies allowed (Candy wore serge as a HG Major-General).<sup>178</sup> Alongside this, insignias and regimental cap badges were only available in some units because distribution was hindered by the HG's unrefined rank system, which was only replaced by the regular army's structure in February 1941.<sup>179</sup> According to Brayley, in some early examples, an HG officer's rank was sometimes indicated by a series of dark blue stripes across the shoulder and this detail was present in Livesey's costume, further reiterating his position as a Major-General.<sup>180</sup> The uniform was fairly non-descript beyond these details, but this works within the wider context due to the haphazard nature of the HG's early administration.

Figure 26: (Left) Candy explaining war game parameters in HG headquarters. (Right) Major General Clive Wynne-Candy, *Colonel Blimp*, 1943. Courtesy of the Ronald Grant Archive.

Images removed to copyright restrictions

Overall, as supportive authenticity effects, the men's costumes in *Colonel Blimp* were period-appropriate and created silhouettes that were easily identifiable with the decades depicted. Some details, like the intricate trims and insignias on uniforms, proved challenging to determine on screen; however, their general shapes, sizes, and colours resembled their historical counterparts and did not detract from the picture's overall historiophoty. Alongside the costumes, the hair and makeup teams also worked to delineate the passing of time, but in the men's ensembles, this component was less demonstrative of society's changing trends

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, 62

– especially when considered alongside Kerr’s very different decade-based changes. Although the teams were different for *The Battle of the River Plate*, this attention to detail carried through.

Unsurprisingly, *River Plate* was dominated by naval uniforms and regulation haircuts. While Veidt wore disguises in *The Spy in Black* and Livesey and Walbrook enjoyed moments in civilian garb in *Colonel Blimp*, a vast majority of *River Plate*’s male cast existed solely in uniform. Whether ally or enemy, they played a major role in the picture’s historiophoty and the production team worked hard to dress not only the primary cast, but the swath of extras that were needed too.

With no mention of a specific costumier in its screen credits or the *BFI*’s online index, it is highly like that this task came under the umbrella of responsibilities for the picture’s production designers, Hein Heckroth and Arthur Lawson. Both were Archer favourites, described by Powell as their ‘go to’ men, but Heckroth’s highly imaginative and artistic skills were stifled by the picture’s historical subject matter, and this prompted his return to Germany before it was officially released, ‘fantasy had fled... there was nothing The Archers could do to rescue Hein—nothing that Hein could do on a naval epic’, which prompted his return to Germany before the film was complete.<sup>181</sup> Nevertheless, his contributions to the picture, no matter how subdued or dull in comparison to his work for *The Red Shoes* (1948) and *The Tales of Hoffman* (1951), were still acknowledged. *Kinematograph Weekly* reported another contributor to the picture’s costume efforts, Morris Angel – an experienced costumier and the proprietor of London’s renowned Angels Costumes (est. 1840). According to their article, Morris spent twelve months meticulously researching the uniforms worn by British and German seamen in 1939.<sup>182</sup> Although this was not substantiated on Powell or Pressburger’s materials, it is possible that the report was correct. By the 1950s Angel Costumes were a well-established London costumier and had been supplying costumes to the film and theatre for decades.<sup>183</sup> They also had Academy Award credit for their work on Laurence Olivier’s *Hamlet* (1948) and, although after *River Plate*, they contributed to other

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<sup>181</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, 317.

<sup>182</sup> Unknown, ‘Twelve Months’ Research to Perfect ‘River Plate’ Costumes’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, Great Britain, 1 November 1956.

<sup>183</sup> Sarah Cooper, ‘The Angels and their Outfits’, *ScreenDaily*, 29 January 2016, [online], date accessed: 15/06/2020, <<https://www.screendaily.com/awards/the-angels-and-their-outfits/5099519.article>>.

popular films like *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), *Where Eagles Dare* (1968) and *Star Wars* (1977).<sup>184</sup> Involved or not, the ensembles of the men in *River Plate* were important in the creation of believable settings and characters, and their interrogation will reveal how these on-screen versions included real historical detail.

Presenting Germany's navy on screen would have been a mammoth task due to the sheer number of extras needed but luckily for their costumiers on staff, military fashions were on their side. As mentioned, when discussing *The Spy in Black's* naval costumes, particular designs and colours were common amongst the world's navies and countries like Britain (and its colonies), Italy, the USA and Germany, shared traits. In regard to Germany, its navy had rebuilt itself after the destruction of its Grand Fleet in Scapa Flow (1919) and its new title – *Kriegsmarine* – technical advancements, and war aims prompted updated regalia for its servicemen. The level of quality and craftsmanship for these products were high in the early stages of the Reich, as Arthur Hayes and Jon Maguire note in *Uniforms of the Third Reich: A Study in Photographs*, but despite entering a new period in Germany's military history the *Kriegsmarine* opted to keep traditional designs and colours.<sup>185</sup> Captains, officers, and enlisted men all owned a series of uniforms that ranged from white ceremonial garb to general duty wear, to wet weather gear. General duty wear, described in the following extract from Williamson, was the common uniform worn by *River Plate's* extras.

The form of dress adopted by the typical *Kriegsmarine* seaman was the traditional 'square rig', which consisted of wide-legged trousers and pullover shirt, dark blue melton cloth, with the so-called 'Nelson' collar in cornflower blue with three white edge stripes, closely modelled on the British pattern... It was produced in dark blue for winter wear or in white, with contrasting blue cuffs to the shirt, for summer wear.<sup>186</sup>

The men on screen were also comparable to the figures in Britain's WWII propaganda posters, which were distributed extensively amongst the public. Spotting a German sailor – or any type

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Arthur Hayes & Jon Maguire, *Uniforms of the Third Reich: A Study in Photographs*, Schiffer Publishing Ltd, USA, 1997, 125-164.

<sup>186</sup> Gordon Williamson & John White, *German Seaman 1939-45*, Osprey Publishing, Great Britain, 2001, 19.



of enemy serviceman – was a top concern and posters were primary tools for conveying the nuances of livery to the masses. His Majesty’s Stationary Office and the Ministry of Information were responsible for a vast majority of this propaganda and a series of ‘*Spot at Sight*’ images explained enemy combatant uniforms in a generic and easy to understand manner.<sup>187</sup>

Figure 27: *Spot at Sight Chart No. 2 Enemy Uniforms*, c. 1939-1945. Courtesy of the IWM online archive collection.



A number of the film’s extras resembled the ‘German sailor’ from this image; however, the white version of this style (described by Williamson in the extract above) was also included in Powell and Pressburger’s picture. The available production notes do not reveal why this occurred (it was likely linked to resource availability whilst on shooting on location);

<sup>187</sup> Imperial War Museum, *Spot at Sight Chart No. 2 Enemy Uniforms*, His Majesty’s Stationary Office & Ministry of Information, c. 1939-1945, IWM, [online] date accessed: 05/11/2019. < <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/31775>>.

however, the overall historiophoty of their representation was not jeopardised by this difference because it was a real part of the Kriegsmarine's WWII wardrobe.

One of the smaller details on the German costumes that clearly delineated their country of service and this historical period was the Third Reich's rendition of the Reichsadler – the imperial eagle.<sup>188</sup> In contrast with its predecessor, this eagle clutched a wreath encased swastika between its talons and had an incredibly sharp shape, making it easily identifiable from the outline alone. According to Williamson and White, the emblem was embroidered in many colours and purposefully partnered with contrasting fabrics for maximum effect, i.e., yellow/gold against dark blue/black, blue emblems against whites, and yellow against greys.<sup>189</sup> It also came in metal pin form and could be added to other uniform kits – like those used in tropical/summer climates – and various caps.<sup>190</sup> This detail was easily identifiable on Peter Finch's uniforms, as well as those worn by supporting cast members and wider extras.

It would be remiss to discuss the Kriegsmarine costumes without examining the ensembles worn by Finch during his time as Captain Langsdorff. In regard to Finch himself, Powell believed that his skill as an actor and his interest in the role helped immensely for his characterisation because it encouraged him to develop a deeper understanding of Langsdorff's preferred dress and mannerisms.<sup>191</sup> He explained that the actor had studied Langsdorff to the best of his abilities, adopted a German accent, and even took the time to grow a small, neat beard (a style only adopted at sea and a detail described by Dove in his original account) to further support his performance.<sup>192</sup> The wardrobe department completed the rest of Finch's look by using a series of uniforms that were common to a Captain's wardrobe, which was also some of the regalia that Langsdorff was photographed in during his time on shore in Montevideo. When introduced (function 3) Finch wore a Captain's white summer suit, in later scenes at sea he wore a blue double-breasted 'reefer' jacket with matching trousers – the favoured uniform for seamen when operating in colder climates – and when preparing for funerals and meeting dignitaries in Montevideo he wore a white dress uniform, complete with a ceremonial sword.<sup>193</sup> This followed the directions laid out in Powell and Pressburger's initial

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<sup>188</sup> Williamson & White, *German Seaman 1939-45*, 17.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid*, 17-18.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid*, 18.

<sup>191</sup> Powell, *Million-Dollar Movie*, 322-323.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>193</sup> Williamson & White, *German Seaman 1939-45*, 17.

script breakdown, which clearly and concisely stated ‘Langsdorff: German Navy Captains white uniform, German navy Captains blue uniform with sweater and seaboots, full dress uniform (white) with sword’.<sup>194</sup> When stills from the film are compared to historical materials it is clear that the department was quite precise with its era-appropriate detailing. This attention to detail did nothing but support the picture’s characterisation and its historiophoty regarding the aesthetics of Langsdorff and the wider Kriegsmarine, but this effort was not reserved for this alone. Harwood’s British fleet received the same careful treatment.

Figure 28: (Top left) Finch as Langsdorff, image sourced directly from *The Battle of the River Plate*, 1956. (Bottom left) Langsdorff on deck in his blue reefer jacket, sourced from Alan Royle’s *Film Star Facts*. (Right) The real Captain Langsdorff, c. 1939. Courtesy of *Jestpic*, a global free picture library [online].

Images removed due to copyright restrictions



Before the outbreak of WWII, officers in the British Navy had twelve different orders of dress: ball dress, full dress, frock coats (with and without epaulettes), white full dress, white undress, white mess dress, white mess

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<sup>194</sup> S-203, Powell & Pressburger, ‘The Battle of the River Plate Script Breakdown’, *Michael Powell Collection*, British Film Institute, London.

undress, tropical dress, regular undress, regular mess dress and regular mess undress.<sup>195</sup> It was an extensive list but in *River Plate*, the officers in Harwood's squadron only displayed those issued to suit the balmy South American climate. Similar to the scenario with Langsdorff's costumes, Powell and Pressburger's initial script breakdown contained general directions for the men's uniforms,

Bell: R.N Captain's white + blue uniforms with grey flannel.

Harwood: Commodore's white uniform with grey flannels, scarf and cap

Woodhouse: R.N Captain uniform + blue uniform + scarf and cap

Parry: R.N Captain uniform + blue uniform + scarf and cap.<sup>196</sup>

Concise in their delivery, these instructions were followed directly, and two primary costumes were showcased amongst British officers – their white summer uniform and a general duty blue one. In official regulation guides, they were listed as: 'white undress No.10' – a uniform made from light drill material and issued to those operating within hot climates, and 'No.5 undress' – a basic navy coloured outfit that consisted of a double-breasted jacket, matching trousers, and a cap.<sup>197</sup> Caps clearly displayed the Royal Navy's signature 'crown, anchor and wreath' emblem, and the rank slides on the officers' shoulders, as well as the embroidery upon their cuffs, clearly delineated their positions.<sup>198</sup>

In regard to the extras across the *Ajax*, *Exeter*, and *Achilles*, a variety of uniform components were showcased within their costumes; however, they were far more relaxed when compared to the primary cast. The diversity depicted was not a false representation of naval practices/traditions though, as limited resources and stops prompted the relaxation of regulations whilst at sea. As described by Sumner,

Many changes occurred in practice only when supplies of an obsolete item had run out; further, difficulties to supply to more distant stations, such as

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<sup>195</sup> Ian Sumner & Alix Baker, *The Royal Navy 1939-45*, Osprey Publishing, Great Britain, 2001, 47.

<sup>196</sup> S-203, Powell & Pressburger, 'The Battle of the River Plate Script Breakdown'.

<sup>197</sup> Sumner & Baker, *The Royal Navy 1939-45*, 47.

<sup>198</sup> E.C Talbot-Booth, *Rank and Badges in the Navy, Army, RAF and Auxiliaries*, George Philip & Son Ltd, Liverpool, 1943, 3.

those in the Pacific, meant that some months could elapse before new items were taken into use. At the same time, a certain amount of discretion was given to the Commanders... certain Captains could relax regulations while at sea.<sup>199</sup>

With this in mind, it was fairly reasonable for the film's extras to roam the decks in variations of regulation dress and undress uniforms. For example, on the Achilles low-ranking officers dressed in their blue no.5 undress tunics whilst standing alongside shirtless gunners in tropical white drill shorts.<sup>200</sup>

Figure 29: (Top left) Captain's Woodhouse (Ian Hunter), Bell (John Gregson) and Parry (Jack Gwilliam) meet with their Commodore, Henry Harwood (Anthony Quayle). (Bottom left) Britain's no.5 undress uniform. Images sourced from *The Battle of the River Plate*, 1956. (Right) 'Royal Navy Executive Branch-Officers', from E.C Talbot's *Rank and Badges in the Navy, Army, RAF and Auxiliaries*, 1943.

Images removed due to copyright restrictions

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<sup>199</sup> Sumner & Baker, *The Royal Navy 1939-45*, 47.

<sup>200</sup> Powell & Pressburger, *The Battle of the River Plate*, 00:28:20 – 00:30:25.

As historically driven authenticity effects, these costumes were easily identifiable to audience members because both styles had featured heavily in other popular naval based war films, like Noel Coward's *In Which We Serve* (1942) and Charles Frennd's *The Cruel Sea* (1952). *River Plate* dedicated a significant amount of screen time to both uniforms and the neat, well-pressed figures reiterated The Archers' predilection for presenting their male characters in a respectable and gentlemanlike manner. Apart from the sequences directly depicting the battle, all officers in uniform are remarkably neat and tidy.

Investigating the costumes worn by the film's political and civilian male characters is a fairly simple task when compared to the complex and detailed designs worn by the naval officers and their crew. In their script breakdown, Powell and Pressburger also provided instructions for the civilian costumes, alongside the notations for the naval officers. They read,

Mike: Light tropical suit, Panama hat. White tuxedo, black trousers.

Millington-Drake: Full evening dress (tails), orders, decorations. White double breasted suit, white-collar and shirt, black tie.

McCall: Light tropical suit, Panama with flowered band, club, or school tie. Allow for RN white uniform (naval attaché).

Martin: Light tropical suit, Panama hat.<sup>201</sup>

While the suits favoured by each character were fairly standard for late-1930s menswear<sup>202</sup> the authenticity effect that reiterated the tropical 'other worldliness' of Montevideo was the Panama hat. Born from Ecuadorian weaving traditions, the Panama hat was a popular short-brimmed lightweight straw hat – often tan, cream or white– that had been circulating through the world's wardrobe since the mid-1800s.<sup>203</sup> According to enthusiast Brent Black, although

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<sup>201</sup> S-203, Powell & Pressburger, 'The Battle of the River Plate Script Breakdown'.

<sup>202</sup> Although it is not explicitly stated in Nancy Bradfield's *Historical Costumes of England*, it is clear that men's fashion did not change drastically in the early part of the twentieth century. While the silhouettes, popular fabrics, hair, and make-up trends for women evolved in fast succession, the changes in men's styles were much slower. As showcased by *Colonel Blimp*'s characters, there were subtle changes to the cuts and colours of the favoured three-piece lounge suit and 'professional black' did emerge as a staple for business/working men; however, men's fashion did not undergo substantial change until the 1960s.

<sup>203</sup> Brent Black, 'A Short History of the Panama Hat', *The Panama Hat Company of the Pacific*, [online] date accessed: 07/11/2019, <<https://www.brentblack.com/pages/history.html>>.

originating from Ecuador the hat was known collectively as a ‘Panama because it dominated Panama’s marketplaces and was popular with travellers passing through there.<sup>204</sup> Alongside its history, the hat maintained its popularity and over time it was worn by a number of cinema’s influential figures, like Orson Welles, Gary Cooper and Humphrey Bogart, which helped to cement it as a cinematic aesthetic effect to suggest hot and exotic settings.<sup>205</sup> With both points in mind, it is unsurprising that they were utilised in *River Plate*.

Like *Colonel Blimp*, there was a significant amount of time and effort invested in the production of *River Plate*’s costumes, and to a lesser extent, its hair and makeup. The details included were representative of reality’s military fashions and civilian trends, and no significant mistakes or compromises jeopardised the picture’s overall historiophoty or authenticity.

#### *Prominent Props: Using Props to Establish a Historical Timeline or as Historical Signifiers*

Similar to the previously discussed authenticity effects, props within historical film/television also draw the critical eye of viewers. Whether they be large vehicles, sets of furniture, weapons, books or general knickknackery, audiences rely on such items to further enhance their immersive experience of the past. As Natalie Zemon Davis highlighted, ‘they add to the credibility and genuine historicity of the film only insofar as they are connected to the values and habits of a period and are used with some discernment about their truth status’.<sup>206</sup> To further establish realism and credibility, filmmakers must animate such props and actively link them to historical places or people, otherwise, their projects run the risk of being over-staged – museum-like.<sup>207</sup> The practice works for many historical periods; however, there are some limitations due to gaps in the wider historical discourse. For example, according to Sarah Salih, it is difficult for filmmakers to provide an authentic reproduction of everyday material culture

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ultrafino staff, ‘The Complete Panama Hat History’, *Ultrafino*, [online] date accessed: 07/11/2019, <<https://blog.ultrafino.com/history/2018/12/complete-panama-hat-history/>>.

<sup>206</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “‘Any Resemblance to Persons Living or Dead’: Film and the Challenge of Authenticity”, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, vol. 8, issue 3, 1988, 273.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid, 279.

during the Middle Ages because its history is fragmented, which makes ‘medieval authenticity-effects particularly troublesome to produce [on screen]’.<sup>208</sup>

Nevertheless, despite their sometimes-troubling nature props can add to a film’s historical atmosphere, support the wider narrative through symbolism, and assist viewers with immersion. Powell and Pressburger did not encounter the same problems that Salih described; however, they had different sets of circumstances, with both positive and negative influencing factors, that shaped their use of purposeful props. For example, within *Black* only minor references to a past era were made through prop work. Newspapers and written messages highlighted times and dates but little else was used to suggest 1917, as well as the uniforms discussed previously. In comparison, *Colonel Blimp* was filled with objects that symbolised a myriad of British traditions and changing social practices and were specifically embedded within them to further support Pressburger’s original story. The significance of props changed again for *River Plate*. In this instance, Pressburger did not experience the same pressures that he faced when developing *Colonel Blimp*. The narrative was pre-established due to reality’s events, so the props did not have to symbolise broader ideas or traditions in such a profound way. The examples open to analysis are varied in the pictures’ discussed here and to address them in an organised manner the following sections will consider the role of props in two different ways. Firstly, it will investigate how props that were used to establish a historical timeline will be considered, and secondly, it will consider the objects that acted as historical signifiers for broader historical trends.

The expression and manipulation of time is a prominent cinematic task that filmmakers must learn to effectively tackle to produce seamless narratives, as Odin Lindblom noted: While time is an abstract concept, objects associated with time are very concrete. From clocks and calendars to sunrises and sunsets to seasonal changes, the passage of time can be easily inferred from this symbolism. Multiple techniques utilise symbolism effectively.<sup>209</sup> Some of these common techniques include the use of graphics and title cards, newspapers, diary entries, clock faces, the depiction of seasons and the physical aging of

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<sup>208</sup> Sarah Salih, ‘Cinematic Authenticity-effects and Medieval Art: A Paradox’, in A. Bernau & Bettina Bildhauer, *Medieval Film*, Manchester University Press, UK, 2020, 21.

<sup>209</sup> Odin Lindblom, ‘Images in Time: Expressing and Manipulating Time in Cinema’, *Videomaker*, [online], date accessed: 05/07/2020, <<https://www.videomaker.com/article/c18/17968-images-in-time-expressing-and-manipulating-time-in-cinema>>.



characters.<sup>210</sup> The techniques are applied in most films; however, within historically set narratives (especially those based on real events) such details are susceptible to intense scrutiny because they often double as historical markers. As highlighted by Eric Hart, such items are specifically created for close-up shots and are known as ‘hero props’ within the industry and are constructed with great care.<sup>211</sup> Design teams work hard to ensure that the information conveyed through their composition aligns with the overall narrative and the intended setting because a misquoted publication date or a misused photograph could easily damage a film’s overall authenticity effect.

Regarding Powell and Pressburger’s work, they often used dated props like newspapers, letters, magazines and photo albums to directly provide audiences with a historical timeline for reference. This is unsurprising as dated props were commonly used in early cinema because they could:

- a) Easily cement the story in a particular historical period and location,
- b) Could be used as a transitional tool between scenes,
- c) Conveyed smaller details swiftly without the need for copious amounts of dialogue.

Similar to other authenticity effects, the use of this technique depended on the aim and content of the picture, but it is clear that The Archers were happy to use this method when necessary. In the three pictures examined here, it was present predominantly in *The Spy in Black* and *Colonel Blimp*.

To begin, *The Spy in Black’s* dated props were the only objects within the film’s integrational functions that suggested a 1917 setting. They appeared early in the picture and did little more than provide a supportive segue between scenes. The first object, a newspaper page, appeared in the opening sequences. Two unnamed German naval officers picked up a freshly printed issue of the ‘*Kieler Post*’ newspaper and its front page received an extreme close-up. The frame was completely filled by the prop and its bold headline ‘(ENGLAND STARVING), the publisher’s name, and the date were clear. It was the first minor reference

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Eric Hart, *The Prop Building Guidebook: For Theatre, Film, and TV*, Routledge, New York, 2017, 2.

towards the film's commentary on food shortages during wartime and it provided audiences with a clear historical date for reference, 'Saturday, March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1917'.<sup>212</sup> In a similar vein, there was a close-up of Anne Burnett's passport (cardinal function 3) and this included a 'date of issue', listed as the '27-2-17', comfortably aligning with the date given from the previous prop.

When partnered with the picture's opening title card, which read 'Kiel. The base of the German Grand Fleet. 1917', these props helped to support the proposed historical setting, but this quickly disintegrated as the film progressed. As explained in the previous sections, the hair, makeup, and costumes worn by Hobson adhered to 1930s fashion trends and the sets designed by Vincent Korda focused on Scottish architecture, so the dated props were quickly overshadowed.

Figure 30: (left) Anne Burnett's passport, (right) the *Kieler Post* newspaper, from Powell & *The Spy in Black*, 1939.

Images removed due to copyright restrictions

The use of this prop technique was far more pronounced in *Colonel Blimp* due to Pressburger's fervour and attention to detail. At various points throughout the film-specific dates were included in letterheads, postcards, official invitations, and newspaper clippings. They helped The Archers depict the passage of time and they conveyed information that could not be included in an entire sequence of scenes. For example, the montage through Candy's personal scrapbook, which smoothly segued 'Part III – The Great War and Immediate Post-War Years, 1918-1919' to 'Part IV – The Contemporary Years, 1939-1942', was one sequence that best demonstrated this technique. In the space of one minute, audiences easily followed

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<sup>212</sup> *The Spy in Black*, directed by Powell, 00:01:38.

the timeline of Candy’s career via various photographs, newspaper clippings and official invitations.

Table 9: The props that delineate Candy’s career until his wife’s death.

1920	A <i>London Gazette</i> report of Candy’s appointment to troops in China.
1923	An invitation (in Italian) to the Pallazzo della Municipalità suggested an appointment in Italy.
1925	Another invitation, this time to the ‘Duetsche Botschaft, Tokio’, implied time spent in Tokyo.
1926	A dinner invitation from a ‘Lady Bembridge’ included the party’s location in the bottom left – Jamaica.
1926	<i>The Times</i> , August 12 <sup>th</sup> , contained a personal message from Candy thanking friends for their sympathies towards his ‘irreparable loss’ (the death of Barbara). <sup>213</sup>

Figure 31: Candy’s scrapbook from *Colonel Blimp*, 1943.

Images removed due to copyright restrictions

The pages that followed were shown; however, they remained blank, which suggested that Candy’s fervour for recording his time abroad (in this manner, at least) diminished without his wife’s influence. Capturing this sequence of events in whole scenes would have been costly in both time and money, so this proved to be an effective alternative. A similar technique was used with taxidermized animal trophies, but as these props also acted as symbols for wider British traditions they will be addressed later.

<sup>213</sup> Powell & Pressburger, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, 01:54:00-01:55:20.

The other prominent dated prop that is worth addressing is the inclusion and manipulation of *Picture Post* magazine, found in *Colonel Blimp's* contemporary sequences. The publication was used as a tool to add some realism to the film's contemporary setting and was remarkably effective. First issued in 1938, *Picture Post* magazine quickly became one of Britain's favourite photojournalistic publications and reached a comfortable circulation of 1.7 million by 1939 due to its accessibility and availability.<sup>214</sup> Initially edited by Stefan Lorant, a Hungarian-Jewish photojournalist that had arrived in Britain in 1934, *Picture Post* provided an objectivity that was missing amongst its counterparts.<sup>215</sup> Other publications, like the *Tatler*, *Illustrated London News*, and the *Sketch*, produced stories that focused on Britain's class system, the Royal Family, and the careers of prominent politicians, which reiterated their normalcy and place within Britain's national identity.<sup>216</sup> The *Picture Post* did not. Described by Charles Darwent as 'touristic', the magazine's perspective was akin to 'an outsider looking in', and this produced an exploratory air and fascination to its articles.<sup>217</sup> It moved away from 'the salon and the drawing room' and explored the streets and everyday life in a manner that was unusual for photojournalism at the time.<sup>218</sup>

With this in mind, it is understandable that The Archers utilised the publication in their film. Like Candy's scrapbook, an edition of *Picture Post* was used to transition between two different periods in his career. The issue chosen for this prop was from September 21, 1940, as it shined a spotlight on Britain's Home Guard.<sup>219</sup> The magazine was doctored but the details were small (simple by-lines and a portrait photo), and the film's design team left the remaining articles in their original form (see next page).

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<sup>214</sup> Colin Jacobson, 'Picture Post', *History Today*, vol. 57, issue 6, 2007, 42.

<sup>215</sup> Charles Darwent, 'The Way We Were', *New Statesman*, vol. 127, issue 4404, 1998, 62.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Tom Wintringham, 'The Home Guard Can Fight', *Picture Post*, 21 September 1940.

Figure 32: (Above) Tom Wintringham, 'Some of the Men who Teach at the Guard School', *Picture Post*, 21 September 1940. (Below) Manipulated *Picture Post* page for Colonel Blimp.



Image removed due to copyright restrictions

In this instance, the technique produced an impressive authenticity effect for the contemporary 1940s setting. This object was grounded through both research (the film was developed two years after the issue's release) and reality. This ultimately heightened the picture's authenticity as it was a conventional, familiar, and accessible reference for contemporary 1943 cinemagoers to identify and relate to. According to Michele Pierson, the conventionality, familiarity, and accessibility of historical references (within production design) play a major role in their implementation in history-based films. Historical knowledge varies amongst audience members and Pierson believes that production designers will opt to adapt familiar historical signifiers, rather than create past worlds that attempt to wholly represent historical actuality. In this case, Junge's use of *Picture Post* demonstrated this technique but utilised it to reiterate the significance of the contemporary sequences. It was a clear and inclusive reference for 1942 audiences and an easily accessible one for later viewers to identify and investigate.<sup>220</sup> When considered against the efforts made for *The Spy in Black*, it is clear that the implementation and effectiveness of this technique was stronger in *Colonel Blimp*.

The use of this technique changed again for *The Battle of the River Plate*. Due to the project's position as a film based on real events, Lawson and his team did not have to create props that subtly established a timeline for audiences to follow. Instead, times and dates were shown through title cards and further established through the events depicted in the distributional functions. This approach was likely taken because audiences in 1956 were familiar with the event, as noted by Sir Eugen Millington-Drake (British Minister in Montevideo in 1939), 'many people I met in Britain had a surprisingly vivid recollection of the Battle of the River Plate and the end of the *Graf Spee* at Montevideo, in spite of many other major and more important naval actions later in the war'.<sup>221</sup> Millington-Drake went on to note that the public's interest in the 'first thrill of the phony war' had waned post-WWII however, he found that The Archers' picture and the Rank Organisation's 'considerable publicity' campaign reinvigorated interest.<sup>222</sup> Audiences may have missed some information through media reports and wider publications, i.e., Captain Dove's *I Was Graf Spee's Prisoner!*, but a

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<sup>220</sup> Michele Pierson, 'A Production Designer's Cinema: Historical Authenticity in Popular Films Set in the Past', in Geoff King's *The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to Reality TV and Beyond*, Intellect Books Ltd, Bristol, UK: Portland, USA, 2005, 139-149.

<sup>221</sup> Millington-Drake, *The Drama of the Graf Spee and The Battle of the River Plate*, 409.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

general understanding existed in the community. Due to this level of familiarity, using props to establish and further reiterate the narrative's timeline was unnecessary. Overall, when used with care dated props can assist in the development of a picture's wider historical setting. Their effectiveness relies heavily on the filmmakers' approach though. Like the other elements within the *mise en scène*, dated props cannot support the historical settings on their own. They must work collectively with hair, costumes, makeup, set design, and the props used as historical signifiers for wider trends, to better develop historiophoty.

The objects that are used as historical signifiers also play a significant role in the overall development of a picture's historiophoty. Like other facets within the *mise en scène*, these props must work congruously with surrounding elements to provide a realistic and 'unified historical front' for viewers. They cannot wholly convey the complex nature of cultural traditions or social trends from the past, nevertheless, their presence can nod towards broader topics. Alongside this, such props can help to establish a 'then vs. now' effect and further reiterate historical differences or the impression of age. As Jerome De Groot noted when discussing the materiality of the past within film/television, 'the doubleness of objects in historical fictional renderings' are worked in a variety of ways and 'freighted with multiple meanings'.<sup>223</sup> For Powell and Pressburger, the use of props as prominent historical signifiers varied from film to film and depended on their dedication towards projecting an authentic historical atmosphere. Similar to the other *mise en scène* components that have been addressed in this thesis, *Black* had very few historically related props and *Colonel Blimp* had many, and surprisingly *River Plate* had few props of this type, despite its narrative being based on real events and individuals. The following section will identify and investigate a series of objects that were used as historical signifiers to support the films' distributional functions and further consider how they contributed to the picture's wider historiophoty.

To begin, within *The Spy in Black* there was one set of unassuming props that Powell and Pressburger used to allude towards history's events and subtly remind audiences of previously experienced wartime consequences – the foodstuffs (particularly ham and butter). It may seem like an inconsequential detail at first, a passing joke or complaint that Captain Hardt shares with his junior officers and later with Fräulein Tiel, but the small references

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<sup>223</sup> Jerome De Groot, *Remaking History: The Past in Contemporary Historical Fictions*, Routledge, London: New York, 2016, 90.

towards food rationing alluded to the after-effects of the Blockade of Germany, the naval campaign sanctioned by the Triple Entente powers that targeted neutral merchant ships to prevent imports to Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire. After they transitioned from an agrarian state to an industrial one (late 19<sup>th</sup> century) Germany was heavily reliant on imports and exports and, as Hans-Jürgen Teuteberg noted, their import of agricultural produce, which included grains, meats, and animal feed, ‘nearly doubled between 1900-1912’.<sup>224</sup> When war was declared in 1914, over 60 million Germans relied on the success of trade for their foodstuffs and although the administration had anticipated a blockade, they did not implement any food rationing strategies because they believed it would be a short conflict.<sup>225</sup> In 1915 the realisation that this war would be a long-term affair prompted a change in the national diet – ‘bread and potatoes’ only – as the stores of producers began to swiftly decrease without external trade partners.<sup>226</sup> As the blockade continued the German population became severely malnourished – making them susceptible to disease and death.

Although light-hearted and clever in its implementation, Pressburger’s initial joke regarding Hardt’s inability to get a hearty meal at the Hotel *Kielerhof*<sup>227</sup> makes direct reference to this historical reality without accusing the British of an ethically dubious tactic.

Hardt: ‘We’ll have the roast goose, terrine of foie gras, apple strudel,  
plum pudding-’

Schuster: ‘- Big as a depth charge’

Waiter: ‘Oh gentlemen, please, here is the menu...’

Schuster: ‘What’s this? A joke?’

Hardt: ‘Boiled fish. Carrots. Beetroot. Potatoes- ‘

Waiter: ‘- no potatoes, sir!’

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<sup>224</sup> Hans-Jürgen Teuteberg, ‘Food Provisioning on the German Home Front, 1914-1918’, in Rachel Duffett and Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska’s *Food and War in Twentieth Century Europe*, Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, London: New York, 2008, 65.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid,

<sup>226</sup> C. Paul Vincent, *The Politics of Hunger*, Ohio University Press, USA, 1985, 45.

<sup>227</sup> Travel postcards from this period indicate that there was a hotel *Kielerhof* in Hamburg; however, there is no evidence that suggest an establishment in Kiel under this name.



Schuster: 'Bring us a pile of bread and butter!'

Waiter: 'No butter, sir. We may have margarine... tomorrow perhaps'<sup>228</sup>

The issue was acknowledged again in cardinal function 7 when Hardt initially meets Fräulein Tiel. Powell's deliberate close-up of Tiel's well-stocked dining table – filled with familiar staples like ham, butter, and white bread – continued to highlight this issue. Hardt eagerly scooped butter out of the dish and carved the ham with great fervour, and these actions were worthy (in Powell's opinion as Director) of their close-ups, which turned these simple objects into well-placed historical signifiers.

While this moment purposefully diffused the tension that Pressburger had built throughout the previous functions, it also reminded audiences that food shortages impacted civilians during wartime. This would not have been a new or surprising notion for allied citizens though. The public was aware of the blockade strategies used against Germany during the First World War because it received a significant amount of attention. Newspapers across the UK, like the *Yorkshire Evening Post*, *Aberdeen Evening Express*, *Liverpool Daily Post* and the *Dublin Daily Express*, often addressed the blockade's impact/success as a military tactic, its influence over the actions of neutral powers, and the negative impact it had on Allied prisoners of war in Germany.<sup>229</sup> Furthermore, audiences within the UK would have also experienced food shortages themselves, albeit at a less dire level. A number of factors facilitated this shortage in the UK: Germany's navy had retaliated to the Allied blockade and also targeted merchant vessels, Britain's agricultural workers left their lots to serve in the military, and equipment and horses were requisitioned/repurposed to aid the war effort.<sup>230</sup> For audiences in 1939, this reality was still within living memory and the reminder would have been a stark one, especially as relations with Germany were at a dangerous tipping point. Powell and Pressburger's use of humour softened the warnings regarding food shortages, but

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<sup>228</sup> *The Spy in Black*, directed by Powell, 00:04:50.

<sup>229</sup> M. Spiekman, 'Seven Meatless Days per Week at Dusseldorf', *Aberdeen Evening Express*, Scotland, 11 March 1916; Unknown, 'Position of Neutrals', *Dublin Daily Express*, Ireland, 8 April 1916; Unknown, 'Starving Germany', *Liverpool Daily Post*, Great Britain, 9 March 1917; Anonymous, '40 Prisoners Starved in German Camps: A British Soldier's Story', *Yorkshire Evening Post*, Great Britain, 27 September 1918.

<sup>230</sup> Unknown, 'Rationing and Food Shortages During the First World War', *Imperial War Museum*, UK, [online], date accessed: 21/07/2020, <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/rationing-and-food-shortages-during-the-first-world-war>>.

the images and historical allusions created by such props supported the film's underlying messages regarding the consequences of war.

In comparison, *Colonel Blimp's* props were far more developed for the support of its wider distributional functions. While its key themes and criticisms regarding tradition were predominantly portrayed through a character's situation and their actions, significant props were also used to carry information regarding contemporary trends and traditions that were prevalent in British society. Although they differed in type (some were hero props that received their own close-ups, while others simply lingered in the background) each example conveyed information in a manner that supported Pressburger's original ideas, as well as the aesthetic settings that Powell and Junge created during production. This significant prop work began early in the film and remained consistent throughout the feature, especially when transitioning between historical periods. The section below will interrogate a series of these historical signifiers and consider their links to 'the bigger picture' that The Archers wanted their audiences to consider.

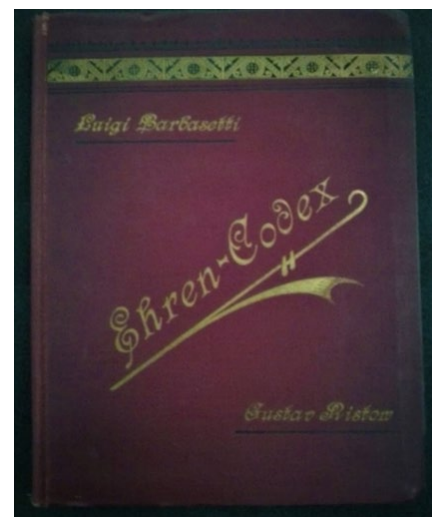
Without a doubt, the lingering notion of 'gentlemanly warfare' (especially amongst highly ranked military personnel) was the primary issue that Powell and Pressburger chose to address in *Colonel Blimp*. Recognising and reconciling the demise of particular military traditions was Candy's great struggle and the primary focus of his character arc. To further demonstrate his inability to adapt to change, Schuldorff's story was used to highlight how to change, although difficult to bear at times, was an inevitable part of life and necessary for combatting Nazism. In order to support these sequences, The Archers and Junge embedded a series of props within *Colonel Blimp's* foreground and background, to act as historical signifiers for antiquated trends. Two particular objects were excellently placed within the *mise en scène* to demonstrate this. The first was a copy of Luigi Barbasetti and Gustave Ristow's *Ehren Codex* – a text that outlined the strict rules and expectations for preparing and participating in duels. The second was Candy's extensive collection of taxidermy hunting trophies and their symbolism for Britain's imperial mindset and big game hunting Africa and India.

To begin, the *Ehren Codex* prop that was used in the film was an excellent copy of the original publication that resided in the British Museum's library. Produced in 1898 and translated for '*österreichisch-ungarischen gebräuchen*' (Austrian-Hungarian use), this

etiquette book was written by the acclaimed Italian fencing master Luigi Barbasetti.<sup>231</sup> At the time of this publication, Barbasetti was nearing forty and had opened a school in Vienna (1894) to further cement and disseminate his sabre techniques within the sport.<sup>232</sup> According to Nick Forrest Evangelista (a modern fencing master), Barbasetti’s school attracted a large number of talented students and the favoured style – “Hungarian sabre fencing” – dominated competitions in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>233</sup> The Great War disrupted Barbasetti’s work; however, after moving to Paris in 1921 he took on a number of pupils that later won at an Olympic level, such as Lucien Gaudin and Roger Ducret.<sup>234</sup> Later, Barbasetti also produced two books in English, *The Art of the Foil* (1932) and *The Art of the Sabre and Épée* (1936), which have since been labelled as some of the most well-devised teaching manuals available due to their detailed descriptions and illustrations.<sup>235</sup> At a cursory glance, the prop could almost be mistaken for a copy of the real book, but minor differences in the font, border and the title’s ornament (artistic underline) betray this notion.

Figure 33: (Left) Junge’s copy of the *Ehren Codex* for *Colonel Blimp*. (Right) Photograph of Luigi Barbasetti’s *Ehren Codex*, translated and adapted to the Austrian-Hungarian usage by Gustav Ristow, Wein (Vienna), 1889. Housed in the British Library, photograph part of author’s private collection.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions



<sup>231</sup> Luigi Barbasetti, *Ehren Codex*, translated and adapted to the Austrian-Hungarian usage by Gustav Ristow, Wein (Vienna), 1889.

<sup>232</sup> Nick Forrest Evangelista, ‘Luigi Barbasetti: Italian Fencing Master’, Britannica, [online], date accessed: 24/07/2020. <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Luigi-Barbasetti>>.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> See Stella Fox, ‘An Annotated and Critical Bibliography of Books on Fencing’, *Research Quarterly. American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1942, 116-122 and Walter Guerry Green III’s ‘The Classical Foil Fencing Lesson’, *Classical Academy of Arts*, 2016.

The presence of the *Ehren Codex* demonstrates Powell and Pressburger's attention to historical detail and their general understanding of history's trends and events. Duelling had a rich history across Europe and was an activity linked to notions of honour and gentlemanly conduct, both valued traits within wider society: 'The ideal gentleman all through the ages has conformed his conduct in the matter of truth... He has avoided mental reservation, abhorred lying... his yea has meant yea, and his nay, nay, and he has regarded his word as his bond'.<sup>236</sup> Filled with periods of acceptance and rejection, the history of duelling differed greatly across social and geographical lines. According to Kevin McAleer, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century 'most civilized countries had wiped duelling from their slate of national customs' but Germany still favoured it as a legitimate response to insult and slander.<sup>237</sup> The Army, in particular, considered duelling as an 'integral component of the officer's code of honor' and 'lent the practice its peculiarly sombre character of a moral duty, rather than an act of heroic voluntarism'.<sup>238</sup> This belief was demonstrated in cardinal function 11 (when British and German dignitaries meet to organise the details of the duel) and the presence of Barbasetti's codex highlighted the gravitas of the situation from the German perspective. Unlike the austere beliefs held by their German counterparts, the British dignitaries do not hold the practice in high regard. Previously, it had thrived in England for centuries; however, during the early Victorian period changes in legal parameters, social reforms, the influence of religious moralism, and evolving views regarding masculinity had dramatically decreased its popularity.<sup>239</sup> The last official duel recorded in England occurred in 1852 and was actually between two French refugees (France still favoured the custom), Frédéric Courmet and Emmanuel Barthélemy.<sup>240</sup> When considered within the picture, the British dignitaries' distaste for the practice suited the 1902 period because it had been unpopular (in their social/cultural context) for over fifty years. As a historical signifier, the *Ehren Codex* clearly to

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<sup>236</sup> Edward Everett Hale, 'Foreword', in the anonymous author's *The First True Gentleman: A Study in the Human Nature of Our Lord*, John H. Luce & Company, Boston: USA, 1907, i-ii.

<sup>237</sup> Kevin McAleer, *Duelling: The Cult of Honor in Fin-de-Siècle Germany*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey: USA, 1994, 3.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>239</sup> Wade Ellett, 'The Death of Duelling', *Historia*, 13, 2004, 60.

<sup>240</sup> Marc Mullholland, 'The Last Duel – a French Affair with an Irish Twist', *Oxford Arts Blog*, University of Oxford Press, 2019, [online], date accessed: 25/07/2020. <<https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/arts-blog/last-duel-%E2%80%93-french-affair-irish-twist>>.

this wider part of European history and although small, the allusions it made and the support it provided created a unique informant to consider.

In a similar vein, the hunting trophies adorning the walls of Candy’s ‘den’ alluded to another ‘gentlemanly tradition’ from the 19<sup>th</sup> century– big game hunting in Africa and India. Closely tied to the Imperialist mindset and heralded as a romantic act in both art and literature, the popularity of big game hunting sky-rocketed during Britain’s Victorian period and quickly became a fixture within itineraries of overseas travellers. In his publication *The Empire of Nature, Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism*, John MacKenzie noted that the British’s ability to travel, for either work or leisure, mobilised the national tradition and transported it to an exotic locale.<sup>241</sup> Alongside local stags and pheasants, exotic animal trophies were installed in homes across the UK because, as MacKenzie highlighted, ‘most middle-class and aristocratic families had some members serving in India, later in Africa, or some other part of the world.’<sup>242</sup> Candy comfortably fell within this category as his military postings took him to a variety of British colonies and territories. Although never explained through separate scenes, Candy’s time overseas was highlighted through the film’s transitioning sequences – from 1902 to 1914 and 1926 to 1939. In these sequences, taxidermy hunting trophies were utilised as hero props and each had a label that informed audiences of Candy’s whereabouts during the interim years.

Table 10: Candy’s whereabouts as demonstrated through his hunting trophies.

<b>1902-1914</b>		
1903	East Africa	Lion
1904	Sudan	Warthog
1905	East Africa	Rhino
1907	Bengal	Crocodile
1908	Somaliland	Thompson’s gazelle
1909	Somaliland	Kob (antelope)
1912	South Africa	Sitatunga (antelope)
1914	Central Provinces, British India (1612-1947)	Indian elephant

<sup>241</sup> John M. MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature, Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism*, Manchester University Press, Manchester: New York, 1988, ix.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid, 29.

1930-1939		
1930	Nova Scotia	Moose
1935	Corsica	Mouflon (wild sheep)
1936	Labrador	Polar bear
1938	Cairngorms	Red deer <sup>243</sup>

Candy's passion for hunting continued throughout his life and this does align with the history of the trend in the wider European context. Hunting had embedded itself within European society as a legitimate pastime for a series of reasons. On a personal level, it was considered a traditionally masculine activity and helped to shape male identity, highlight fitness, and demonstrate protective capabilities.<sup>244</sup> British dignitaries used hunting (for tigers, in particular) as a way to demonstrate their fitness to 'rule over Indians', to challenge the traditional rulers that respected the animals and bore them on house insignias, and to further highlight how they could successfully conquer the natural environment.<sup>245</sup> In other colonies, like Cyprus, hunting occurred in an effort to simulate rural life in the UK and maintain Britishness for communities stationed (posted or voluntary) overseas.<sup>246</sup> Some romanticised the practice after it was glorified by authors like Rudyard Kipling. A select few, like natural history enthusiasts, cited scientific study behind their hunting practices (ironically, at the turn of the century their enthusiasm turned towards conservation and preservation, rather than killing).<sup>247</sup> Like the *Ehren Codex*, the hunting trophies were props that were representative of 'gentlemanly' traditions, but such commentary was not wholly saved for the film's male characters though. One prominent prop was used to comment on the changing role and behaviours of women across the decades too – the cigarette.

<sup>243</sup> Powell and Pressburger, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, 1:59:00 – 2:01:00.

<sup>244</sup> Joseph Sramek, "'Face Him Like a Briton': Tiger Hunting, Imperialism, and British Masculinity in Colonial India", *Victorian Studies*, vol. 48, no. 4, 2006.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid*, 660.

<sup>246</sup> Andrekos Varnava, 'Recreating rural Britain and maintaining Britishness in the Mediterranean: the Troodos Hill Station in early British Cyprus', *The Cyprus Review*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2005, 61.

<sup>247</sup> MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature, Hunting*, 201.

Figure 34: Candy's hunting collection, *Colonel Blimp*, 1943.

Images removed due to copyright restrictions

According to Jerome de Groot, smoking is often used to invoke the past: 'Smoking is an index of pastness...cigarettes are used in these fictions [film and television programs] to construct an affective bridge between then and now, but also to enable the viewer to gain consciousness of this dynamic'.<sup>248</sup> While Jerome de Groot's discussions regarding smoking as a perception of pastness were limited to contemporary productions, like *Mad Men* (2007-2015), *Boardwalk Empire* (2010-2015), and *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (2011), his conclusions can be applied to *Colonel Blimp*. Similar to its contemporary counterparts, cigarette smoking was employed by The Archers to further demonstrate the 'then vs. now' and actively showcased the modernity of 1940s Britain. It is best considered alongside Deborah Kerr's

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<sup>248</sup> De Groot, *Remaking History*, 90-91.

characters because collectively, Hunter, Wynne, and Cannon ('Johnny') represented the ever-changing nature of a woman's role in society.

To begin, it is important to note that Hunter and Wynne did not smoke at all and other female characters, such as the convalescent home's Nurse Erna, criticise the habit with comments like, 'I thought nobody can smoke more than a German Officer. Now I see a British Officer can surpass him'<sup>249</sup> and 'the cigarettes are here but please remember Mr. Candy that smoking is bad for you'.<sup>250</sup> This abstention aligns with the moral stance that was adopted by middle-upper class women between 1902-1920. The relationship between smoking, women's rights, and society's perceptions of the habit has been addressed in a variety of books and articles, and Matthew Hilton's *Smoking in British Popular Culture 1800-2000: Perfect Pleasures* provides great insight into the habit's ever-changing popularity through its portrayal within advertising and film.<sup>251</sup>

In regard to the Edwardians, Hilton noted that 'smoking by women was largely seen as unrespectable across most social classes ... and consequently very few women smoked at this time'.<sup>252</sup> Female Edwardian smokers were often targeted by prominent moralists, like Eliza Lynn Linton (an anti-feminist and the first salaried journalist in Britain), who described it as an act of rebellion from 'blasphemous girls of the coal mining district' or the long-lasting habit of 'the old "withered and unsightly", worn-out country dames'.<sup>253</sup> This severity shifted slightly over the course of the Great War; however, Hilton noted that while cigarette advertisements now included women (often in 'the midst of a scene of seduction') they did not depict women partaking in the activity, which suggested a general reluctance to deem it as acceptable.<sup>254</sup> With this in mind, it is understandable that as Candy's ideal woman, Hunter could not be an active smoker as this habit would not align with his perception of a 'smart Edwardian woman'.

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<sup>249</sup> Powell & Pressburger, *The Life and Death of Sugar Candy*, sequence 42.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid, sequence 45.

<sup>251</sup> Matthew Hilton, *Smoking in British Popular Culture 1800-2000: Perfect Pleasures*, Manchester University Press, Manchester: New York, 2000.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid, 90.

<sup>253</sup> L. Linton, 'The Girl of the Period', from *The Girl of the Period and Other Essays*, vol. 1, 1883 in Matthew Hilton, *Smoking in British Popular Culture 1800-2000: Perfect Pleasures*, Manchester University Press, Manchester: New York, 2000, 143.

<sup>254</sup> Hilton, *Smoking in British Popular Culture*, 150.



An earnest shift away from this mindset did not begin until the 1920s and continued to develop well into the 1930s. As highlighted by Penny Tinkler, 'during the 1920s and 1930s, smoking amongst women increased dramatically' as advertisements encouraged the habit amongst 'upper-working-class and middle-class young women'; however, similar to the decades before, there were many social stigmas associated with the act.<sup>255</sup> For example, during the 1920s-1930s smoking was viewed as a slightly rebellious trait and a sign of 'the modern girl', a common label applied predominantly to working young women, aged between 15-25.<sup>256</sup> It also was considered as an 'erotic prop' (in reality and on-screen) between couples because the practice drew attention to the mouth and required a significant level of intimacy, i.e., (in a romantic setting) if a man offers to light a woman's cigarette he must lean into her personal space to complete the action.<sup>257</sup> Although Wynne falls within the class-related parameters that Tinkler outlined, she does not fit within the appropriate age category. By the time Candy and Wynne are wed, she has already had a short career as a nurse (but has not returned to work) and is likely to be in her mid-to-late twenties.<sup>258</sup> Like Hunter, Wynne was progressive through her work, but the extent of her modern mindset was limited, and she did not smoke either.

This changed in *Colonel Blimp's* contemporary sequences. As a prop promoting modernity and the ever-changing parameters regarding acceptable feminine behaviours, it was unsurprising to see that The Archers placed a cigarette in Cannon's hand at one stage. As the poster girl for active servicewomen in Britain at the time – working as an MTC driver, in uniform, and with a boy's nickname, Cannon actively adapted somewhat masculine behaviours to successfully navigate Britain's social and cultural landscape during wartime. Her smoking simply added to this deviation away from traditional feminine habits. By the 1940s the number of women shown smoking on cinema screens and in commercial advertisements had increased; however, according to Rosemary Elliot's research, the 'predominant image of

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<sup>255</sup> Penny Tinkler, 'Rebellion, Modernity, and Romance: Smoking as a Gendered Practice in Popular Young Women's Magazines, Britain 1918-1939', *Women's Studies International*, vol. 24, 2001, 111-115.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid*, 113-115.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid*, 120.

<sup>258</sup> Pressburger never specifically stated Wynne's exact age, but when discussing their official engagement in the 1919 sequences Candy says 'How can you be so sure? [of their marriage] I'm twenty years older than you and a soldier!'. Due to his position as a 'strapping' young soldier in 1902, The Archers suggested age for Candy at this point in the film is the mid-to-late forties.

the smoker before and during the Second World War was as a man'.<sup>259</sup> In her oral-based investigation, she noted that many older interviewees remembered smoking as a censured habit during this period – one that was 'frowned upon in public', but acceptable if done privately in the home.<sup>260</sup> When considered Cannon's personality and actions, it is possible that The Archers' (or their team) were aware of this general attitude when they added this action into the film. Instead of having Angela smoke throughout every sequence, they opted to place the action in a single scene (cardinal function 32), where Cannon, Murdoch and Schuldorff gather in Cadogan Place to listen to Candy's BBC broadcast. In this scene it is important to note that Cannon does not pull a packet of cigarettes from her pocket, instead, Schuldorff offers his own, asking 'Cigarette, soldier?' before preparing one for himself.<sup>261</sup> The interaction further demonstrates her modern mannerisms, as well as Schuldorff's ability to accept evolving contemporary customs (despite his old age). Cannon marked the end of The Archers' short 'take' on the history of women's smoking habits but as a historical signifier it helped to establish a 'then vs. now' marker for audiences, whilst also carrying information regarding the wider trend in Britain's social history.

Although only a handful of examples, it is clear that props of this type were littered throughout *Colonel Blimp* and often served a wider purpose. As The Archers' most invested history project at that point in their catalogue, it was unsurprising that Junge's prop work supported the picture's authenticity effect in such a detailed way because Powell and Pressburger had the means and plans in place to do so. When *River Plate* followed over a decade later this approach was different again and the amount of license provided to Arthur Lawson and Hein Heckroth for their prop work was strikingly different.

The amount of meaningful prop work within *River Plate* was strikingly low when compared to *Colonel Blimp* and resembled *The Spy in Black* more. Whilst *The Spy in Black* concentrated on its narrative content, style, and espionage themes (thus barely relying on props), *River Plate* focused on settings, costumes, and getting reality's sequence of events correct. The footage collected whilst on location provided the picture with an authenticity that was unparalleled at the time, but the focus on-location shooting and the minimalism in

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<sup>259</sup> Rosemary Elliot, 'Everybody did it—or Did They? The Use of Oral History in Researching Women's Experiences of Smoking in Britain, 1930-1970', *Women's History Review*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2006, 304.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid*, 305.

<sup>261</sup> Pressburger, *The Life and Death of Sugar Candy*, sequence 101.

a cruiser's quarters/bridge left little room for Heckroth and Lawson to insert meaningful, props into their broader sets. Interestingly, there was one object that did carry historical ties that they managed to embed within the picture – Captain Langsdorff's copy of *Jane's Fighting Ships*.

Like Luigi Barbasetti's *Ehren Codex*, the copy of *Jane's Fighting Ships* was more than just a book to fill the screen. The publication itself was strongly cemented within society and was internationally revered for its detailed descriptions of naval technologies and the nation's that developed/implemented them. Originating from the mind of Fred T. Jane (1865-1916) and initially sold as *All the World's Fighting Ships* (1897), the publication's primary goal was to stress the importance of naval matters to the wider public and draw attention to new technologies.<sup>262</sup> According to Bert Chapman, Jane was an incredibly enthusiastic and savvy British journalist who began his career (in earnest) in 1889 after being assigned to cover the Anglo-German naval manoeuvres at Spithead (part of the English Channel).<sup>263</sup> After the initial editions attracted a significant audience, *Jane's Fighting Ships* began to print annual editions and Jane relied on trusted 'anonymous' sources to provide him with information regarding current engineering feats and designs, the 'British and foreign naval sources whose trust he obtained and succeeded in retaining by never divulging their identities, a practice still adhered to today.'<sup>264</sup>

Within *River Plate*, a copy of *Jane's Fighting Ships* was in Captain Langsdorff's possession and was a detail directly transferred from Dove's account. The conversation he described in the book and the scene on screen were remarkably similar in both instances they conveyed information that solved one of the mysteries surrounding the ship's speed and manoeuvrability.

Early next morning working parties started on their work of painting and entirely altering the appearance of the Graf Spee... Even her superstructure was radically altered... I noticed that he [Captain

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<sup>262</sup> Bert Chapman, 'The Origins and Development of Jane's Fighting Ships', *Reference Services Review*, 1993, 71-72.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid, 73.

Langsdorff] was carrying under his arm a copy of Jane's Fighting Ships, open at the page which gave block sketches and full details of the Repulse.<sup>265</sup>

On-screen, this explanation was important (especially for the many that were unfamiliar with Dove's account) because it explained the *Graf Spee's* habit for disguise, which provided audiences with an answer to questions regarding its elusive nature at the time of the event. By incorporating this part of Dove's eye-witness account into the cinematic narrative, and by providing the specific object for audiences to connect with, *The Archers* added some extra support to their historical account.

Figure 35: (Above) Captain Langsdorff, Captain Dove, and an unnamed officer consult a copy of Jane's Fighting Ships whilst preparing the battleship's next disguise. Image sourced from *The Battle of the River Plate*, 1956. (Below) Fred T. Jane, *Jane's Fighting Ships*, 1938, Purnell and Sons, Ltd, Great Britain.

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### *Conclusions Regarding Integrational Functions*

After considering various elements of the *mise en scène* in-depth, it is clear that Powell, Pressburger and their set designers, Vincent Korda, Junge, and Lawson, were invested in the authenticity projected by their constructions, with both historical materials and contemporary representations. In each instance, their dedication towards historical representation differed; however, a high quality of the work was still present. Vincent Korda avoided heavy historical reference in *The Spy in Black* and preferred to pay homage to the

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<sup>265</sup> Dove, *I was Graf Spee's Prisoner!*, 98.

Orkney Islands' iconic architectural styles and modern fashions – effectively drawing the narrative into a contemporary period, while Junge approached *Colonel Blimp* with an eye to fine detail. Deeply involved with tradition and history, Pressburger's *Sugar Candy* script contained very specific instructions and needed a significant amount of support from the wider *mise en scène* to cement its distributional functions. Through his designs, and with the help of his production teams, Junge provided aesthetic elements that replicated past and present trends in great detail, which helped to further reiterate the underlying 'then vs. now' message attached to the wider narrative. Comparatively, Lawson was limited in his ability to create intriguing studio sets or experiment with the film's costumes, hair, and makeup, due to the stark nature of naval vessels and, although complex in their rank detailing their shared blue, and white uniforms. Instead, emphasis was put on the manoeuvres that Powell captured at sea, which heightened the picture's immersive qualities and produced a more authentic experience for viewers.

Alongside this, two primary prop modes are discussed in this section – dated objects and historical signifiers. Firstly, dated objects worked to establish a historical timeline, i.e., newspapers, telegrams, letters, and were most noticeable in *The Spy in Black* and *Colonel Blimp*, but the implementation and effectiveness of these objects differed greatly between both pictures. While *Colonel Blimp's* dated props flourished amongst the other authenticity effects underpinned by history and the broader *mise en scène*, *The Spy in Black's* dated props floundered against its contemporary setting because they were not supported by other integrational functions. Regarding *River Plate*, due to the documentary style of the film, dated props were ignored in favour of straightforward title screens and captions. The second type of prop discussed was the historical signifiers. Exemplified in *Colonel Blimp*, but still somewhat present in *The Spy in Black* and *River Plate*, these props symbolised or alluded to the 'bigger ideas' from history. For example, Fräulein Tiel's fully stocked dining table sharply contrasted against the history of WWI food shortages (specifically within Germany), Clive Wynne-Candy's exotic taxidermy collection symbolised Britain's penchant for big game hunting in its colonies, while Captain Langsdorff's copy of *Jane's Fighting Ships* provided an answer to one of the *Graf Spee's* more elusive operating tactics. Throughout these case studies, it became clear that the props that were placed with significant care and had the support of other integrational

functions contributed to a picture's authenticity; however, without the support of other elements within the *mise en scène*, such props floundered and lost meaning.

After considering set design, costumes, hair and makeup, and props, in significant depth, it is clear that integrational functions play a major part in the creation of a believable and authentic (either historical or contemporary) representation for audiences. They reflect the traits mentioned by Stubbs; 'the majority of historical films carry a high information load in terms of the detail they put on display, even if they chose to avoid other types of information about the past' and work hard to support the wider narrative.<sup>266</sup> Whether they are carefully constructed and curated costumes, inspired sets, real spaces on-location shoots, or specifically placed props, each element acts as a historical signifier or an authenticity effect, and are often underpinned by some form of research (conducted and decided during the preproduction or production phase). Furthermore, this interrogation highlights the interconnectedness of a film's integrational functions and reiterates that they must work together and support one another, otherwise, as seen in *The Spy in Black*, they struggle to make any impact and lose meaning within the wider scope of the film.

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<sup>266</sup> Stubbs, *Historical Films: A Critical Introduction*, 41.

Chapter Five:  
Release and Reception: Investigating Audience Response

*'Reception studies matters for our individual and our social and political lives. It is a particularly pragmatic field even if at times reaching specific conclusions is difficult'.*

Janet Staiger.<sup>1</sup>

The final area of study advocated in this methodology is the investigation of the 'release and reception' period of a film's lifecycle, with a focus on determining how the filmmakers' efforts towards historiophoty and authenticity were communicated, i.e., only through a film's content or mentioned in publicity campaigns and received by audience members. Considering this element alongside a picture's construction and content is vital when attempting to understand the effectiveness of its key themes and representations, otherwise, it is difficult to determine what resonated with viewers and why.

This is especially relevant when discussing historically set pictures as questions surrounding memory, representation, and factuality, are often applied; however, despite its significance and cinema's lengthy history, reception studies have only begun to flourish in the past twenty years. As noted by Ian Christie 'audiences are an essential yet often neglected part of the audiovisual scene' despite the general acceptance that they are essential to understanding films and filmmaking. He asserts that due to the ambiguity of 'the audience', two perceptions have dominated the wider discourse: the '*imagined audience* [author's italics] of "they" and "we"' and the '*economic or statistical audience* [author's italics], recorded in terms of admissions of box office receipts', while a third concept, 'the *individual spectator* [author's italics]', has steadily grown in popularity.<sup>2</sup> Considering the individual experience, the 'bottom up' perspective, is now heavily advocated in film-related disciplines because the incorporation of methodologies and practices from other fields, i.e., ethnographic research, social geography, cultural studies, history, and memory studies, has

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<sup>1</sup> Janet Staiger, *Media Reception Studies*, NYU Press, New York, 2005, 4

<sup>2</sup> Ian Christie et al., *Audiences: Defining and Researching Screen Entertainment Reception*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2012, 11.

broadened the researcher's toolbox and allowed them to investigate how cinema audiences receive and influence the meaning and construction of media texts.<sup>3</sup>

In regard to Powell and Pressburger's work, there has been little focus on the contemporary reception of their films, particularly from a 'bottom up' perspective, which has produced a gap in the current discourse but a unique opportunity for this thesis to demonstrate how this methodology can effectively incorporate audience response. Although mentioned briefly in wider studies regarding Britain's habits and tastes<sup>4</sup>, most scholars (discussed throughout this thesis) have opted to explore the artistry of The Archers' pictures, their boundary-testing themes and motifs, their contributions towards genre development, and their place in Britain's wider industry history. The following chapter will move away from these lines of inquiry and will focus on how *The Spy in Black*, *Colonel Blimp*, and *River Plate* was publicised, in both trade journals and to the wider public, distributed, and received<sup>5</sup> – both nationally and internationally. This creates an opportunity to consider how audiences were responding to Powell and Pressburger's efforts regarding historiophoty and authentic contemporary representation and provide insight into how their tastes may have been shaped by the wider publicity surrounding each picture.

For The Archers, despite their different approaches towards historical representation, each film investigated in this thesis had a unique release period and were received fairly well by critics and wider audiences. These opinions can be found in general newspapers, as well as cinema orientated magazines, like *Picturegoer* and *Kinematograph Weekly*, and in the responses from Britain's *Mass Observation* responders. This final chapter intends to explore

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel Biltereyst & Philippe Meers, 'Film, Cinema and Reception Studies: Revisiting Research on Audience's Filmic and Cinematic Experiences', in Elena Di Giovanni & Yves Gambier's *Reception Studies and Audiovisual Translation*, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam: Philadelphia, 2018, 21-25.

<sup>4</sup> Examples include: Anthony Aldgate & Jeffrey Richards, *Britain Can Take It: The British Cinema in the Second World War*, Bell and Bain Ltd, Glasgow: Great Britain, 1986; Jeffrey Richards & Dorothy Sheridan, *Mass Observation at the Movies*, Routledge, London, 1987; Sue Harper & Vincent Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s: The Decline of Deference*, Oxford University Press, USA, 2003; Jeremy Havardi, *Projecting Britain at War: The National Character in British World War II Films*, McFarland & Company, Inc., North Carolina, 2014; Sam Manning, *Cinemas and Cinema-Going in the UK: Decades of Decline, 1945–65*, University of London Press, London, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> This study is limited when considering the experiences of everyday cinemagoers due to a lack of significant primary resources regarding an individual's specific reaction to each picture, which does impact on its ability to provide an entirely 'bottom up' approach. To gauge audience reaction at a personalised level – beyond published responses in newspapers and magazines – this dissertation relies on the responses found in the *Mass Observation* collection. Although limited, they shed some light on the general reactions from patrons and provide small details on what they liked or disliked, i.e. acting, Technicolor, narrative.



the release campaigns/materials of each film (if any) and consider how they drew audiences into the cinema. It will consider the general responses from cinemagoers and determine whether there were any reactions to Powell and Pressburger's efforts as filmmaker historians.

*'The Spy in Black': A Prophetic Narrative*

To begin, billed as an Alexander Korda film, *The Spy in Black's* release was particularly well-timed considering its storyline's uncanny resemblance to reality's events. Released nationally in August and internationally in October 1939 (known as *U-Boat 29* to US audiences), reviews were kind and three prominent stages in the picture's cinematic run garnered different responses from audiences. Firstly, August accumulated general release responses. Secondly,

after war was declared on Germany (September 3) audiences began to make links to the film's more subtle commentaries, i.e., food shortages due to wartime blockades. Finally, a successful German attack in Scapa Flow broke society's belief that it was an impenetrable space and the film's storyline became all too real. While some cinemagoers revered the picture as eerily prophetic, some proprietors were quick to exploit the event to entice patrons.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Figure 36: Columbia Pictures Distribution, 'The Spy in Black' panel advertisement, *The Daily Express*, UK, 7 August 1939.

In the initial release stage of *The Spy in Black* critics responded predominantly to the performances of Conrad Veidt and Valerie Hobson. *The Daily Express* claimed that the picture's star power was one of its strongest points and praised Veidt's abilities, 'I doff the monocle to Conrad Veidt. After eighteen years he is still the best spy in the business'.<sup>6</sup> *The Yorkshire Post* offered a similar, but more nuanced critique, 'since he came to live in England he has not had many good chances, now he gets one and takes it with both hands'<sup>7</sup> and *Punch* magazine's Richard Mallet stated that despite 'many exciting moments' and 'much good detail', the picture 'would not ... be much without Conrad Veidt'.<sup>8</sup> Although less renowned, Valerie Hobson received praise too, 'Valerie Hobson has been kicked around all sorts of films. She gets kicked around again in "The Spy in Black". But she also kicks others about!', *The Daily Mirror* exclaimed.<sup>9</sup> Such positive reviews eventually made it into Columbia's already extensive advertising campaign, which had already prompted a high turnout of patrons and a box office 'smash opening', as reported in *Kinematograph Weekly*, 'large queues have gathered around the theatre [Odeon Theatre, Leicester Square] and scores of would-be patrons have to be turned away'.<sup>10</sup> Amongst these keen viewers was King George VI. Years after the picture's release he admitted to Pressburger (at the 1946 Royal Command Performance screening of *A Matter of Life and Death*) that Clouston's novel was a favourite and that he had watched their version multiple times at the palace.<sup>11</sup>

After war was declared on Germany (September 3) some viewers began to link the picture's more nuanced commentaries to scenarios that were likely to occur again during this world war. Food shortages, in particular, were a point of concern. In one example, from the 'opinion' section of *The Daily Express*, a contributor described *The Spy in Black* as a 'film with a lesson' in relation to this subject.

This film holds a lesson for the citizens of this country. And that lesson is, "GROW MORE FOOD AT HOME"[author's capitalisation]. We need to

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<sup>6</sup> Guy Morgan, *The Daily Express*, UK, 28 July 1939, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Unknown, 'More About This Espionage', *The Yorkshire Post*, UK, 1 August 1939, 4.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Mallet, 'At the Pictures', *Punch*, UK, 23 August 1939.

<sup>9</sup> Reginald Whitley, 'You Want the Best Films... Reginald Whitley Picks Them for You!', *The Daily Mirror*, UK, 28 July 1939, 24.

<sup>10</sup> Unknown, 'Smash Opening of "Spy in black": Top Figures for Columbia', *Kinematograph Weekly*, UK, 10 August 1939, 6.

<sup>11</sup> Macdonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 257.

grow sufficient food in Britain to remove forever the danger of starvation by blockade. Blockade which might be imposed on our food ships, either from above the earth by airplanes or from beneath the seas by submarines, whose sinister courses you follow in "The Spy in Black".<sup>12</sup>

While this may have played on the minds of some cinemagoers throughout September, a real German attack in Scapa Flow reiterated the film's topicality and provided it with an air of eerie, prophetic mystery.

The German attack in Scapa Flow (October 13) was one of the earliest naval attacks on the British fleet in WWII and was widely covered in newspapers across the UK and overseas. As mentioned in previous chapters, the "Impregnable Scapa" had been the main anchorage for the British fleet during the Great War and was well fortified at the time. Over the interwar years, its defences had deteriorated due to age and wear, and by 1939 it was officially deemed as an 'insecure base' but was still used for rotating the Home Fleet's ships.<sup>13</sup> Amongst the wider public, the Flow's reputation as a stronghold had lingered, but on the night of October 13, its reputation as a safe haven was irreparably damaged.<sup>14</sup> A little after midnight, Germany's *U-Boat 47* (under the direction of Günther Prien) entered the area and torpedoed Britain's *HMS Royal Oak* – which subsequently sank.<sup>15</sup>

At first, there was some confusion about the nature of the incident. During their initial investigation, the Board of Enquiry explained that after the event 'depth charges were dropped and divers were sent down' to investigate the scene but had found no evidence to suggest that a submarine had been there.<sup>16</sup> This contradicted the accounts of survivors and witnesses, who were adamant in their statements that 'all explosions were from a source external to the ship'.<sup>17</sup> After further investigation and the wider consideration of Scapa Flow's defences and the weather at the time, the Board concluded,

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<sup>12</sup> Anonymous, 'Film with a Lesson', *The Daily Express*, UK, 1 August 1939, 8.

<sup>13</sup> Alexander McKee, *Black Saturday: The Tragedy of the Royal Oak*, Souvenir Press, London, 1959, 14.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 18.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 18-19.

<sup>16</sup> ADM 358/3594, The Board of Enquiry, Admiralty, 'Loss of the H.M.S "Royal Oak"', 14 October 1939, 7, *The National Archives*, Kew: London.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*.

The evidence available points to the attack having been made by a submarine and there is nothing to suggest that it could have been made by any other means. We are definitely of the opinion therefore that H.M.S “Royal Oak” was sunk by torpedoes fired from a submarine.<sup>18</sup>

Newspapers were quick to report this news and links to Powell and Pressburger’s film were quickly made. As Charles Drazin noted, *The Spy in Black* made a further impression because its plot – which would have previously been ‘considered an impossible feat’ – had been proved achievable with the destruction of the HMS *Royal Oak*.<sup>19</sup> *The Daily Mirror* marvelled at how Irving Asher would have had ‘little idea that he was anticipating history’ when he took on the project in 1938<sup>20</sup> and in the far reaches of Queensland, Australia, *The Evening News* described it as ‘a truly amazing coincidence of fiction and fact’.<sup>21</sup>

Cinema owners were far shrewder in their responses and were quick to exploit the event to entice audiences back into theatres. For example, Drazin found a *Weekly Variety* article that described an exhibitor in Winnipeg who had ‘carried copies of the headlines from two local dailies telling of the *Royal Oak* sinking’, while *U-Boat 29* was screening.<sup>22</sup> In Britain, some cinema proprietors had a similar approach. A Granada cinema in Tooting (South London) displayed specialised posters that read ‘*The Spy in Black* – The Story the Papers Didn’t Dare to Print’, while the *Liverpool Echo* advertised the film as a truly terrifying encounter that was reminiscent of recent events,

Now...this sensational story can be told... of enemy menace in its grimmest form... of U-boat 29... Lurking, waiting... The British Fleet in Peril ... See and thrill to a terrific drama as topical as to-day’s headlines!<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Drazin, ‘The Distribution of Powell and Pressburger’s Films in the United States, 1939-1949’, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2013, 57.

<sup>20</sup> Reginald Whitley, ‘Nazis Made film of “U-Boat Raid” True’, *The Daily Mirror*, UK, 19 October 1939, 5.

<sup>21</sup> Unknown, ‘Cashing In: Topics and Gossip of the Day’, *The Evening News*, Australia, 9 November 1939, 4.

<sup>22</sup> Drazin, ‘The Distribution of Powell and Pressburger’s Films’, 57.

<sup>23</sup> Mass Observation, ‘The Cinema in the First Three Months of the War’ January 1940, *Mass Observation Archive*, University of Sussex Special Collections, 12.

While somewhat tactless, the proprietors' response in Britain was somewhat understandable due to their loss of income after blackout restrictions were introduced. According to a *Mass Observation* cinema report, some vendors claimed to be losing up to £1000 a week after new exhibitor regulations were introduced and a few exploited current events to entice customers into their vacant seats.<sup>24</sup>

Overall, it is clear that *The Spy in Black* succeeded at drawing an array of cinemagoers into theatres and that unplanned events in reality simply heightened its relevance at the time. While Powell and Pressburger were aware of the threat of war and incorporated it into their general narrative, they could not foresee the destruction of the HMS *Royal Oak* and society's subsequent fascination with the film as a form of eerie prophecy. Overall, Powell and Pressburger's dismissal of Clouston's original 1917 setting was an excellent decision. Audiences were far more engaged in the dangerous and dramatic setting that they provided, and when reality's events mirrored the film's narrative the hype surrounding the production simply intensified. When *Colonel Blimp* arrived in 1943, *The Archers* caused another burst of excitement amongst cinemagoers as their controversial picture finally made it to screen.

*'The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp': Responding to the Historical and Contemporary*

Described as 'one of the most wicked productions that has ever disgraced the British Film industry' by conservative husband and wife duo Emanuel Walter and Mary Major Robson (of the *Sidneyan Society*), *Colonel Blimp* had an extensive advertising campaign and was released in June 1943, and prompted both delight and disdain amongst audiences and critics.<sup>25</sup> On the one hand, some cinemagoers enjoyed the stars' performances and happily immersed themselves in the era encompassing narrative, while others fixated on the filmmakers' gall to put an actual Blimp – a British one too – on-screen during wartime. While audiences and critics argued, Churchill and some of his colleagues – still irritated by the picture's existence – were searching for ways to limit its wider release and had already conducted plans to halt its issue internationally, but like their previous efforts, this ultimately failed. The picture made its way to the US in 1945; however, it was shortened to better suit American audiences and

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> E.W & M.M Robson, 'The Shame and Disgrace of Colonel Blimp', *The Sidneyan Society*, Dugdale Printing, London, circa 1943, 4.

this version dominated repeat cinema runs and television specials until fully restored in 1983. Whether adored, abhorred or received with a shrug, opinions on *Colonel Blimp* were plentiful at the time of its release and worth investigating in relation to the filmmakers' historically driven efforts.

To begin, it is important to consider some of the film's pre-release advertisements to general audiences, as well as the specified recommendations made to cinema proprietors concerning their event preparations. In regard to the latter, in April *Kinematograph Weekly* (a leading industry magazine) began preparing its readers for the lengthy picture-run as it was sure to draw in patrons with its slightly unusual mix of star power and provocative themes,

The film's vital theme that we must forget chivalry and sportsmanship to fight the enemy successfully and its dedication to the new aggressive spirit of the Allied Armies is a challenge to those among the democratic peoples who are only just awakening to the meaning of total war.<sup>26</sup>

By May, a significant series of advertisements had begun to frequently emerge in *Kinematograph Weekly* and this campaign reached its peak in the June 10 issue, which contained a reversible four-page fold-out poster (expanding to approx. one metre in length) alongside multiple pages filled with stills from the film.<sup>27</sup>

Figure 37: 'The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp' advertisement panel examples from *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 June 1943.

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<sup>26</sup> Branch proceedings, "'Col. Blimp' Ready for Screening', *Kinematograph Weekly*, UK, 1 April 1943, 16.

<sup>27</sup> Unknown, 'The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp' advertisement sequence, *Kinematograph Weekly*, UK, 10 June 1943.

The campaign did successfully inspire some cinema managers and proprietors in their own advertisements, and they submitted their efforts to the magazine's 'vendor response' section. This was best seen in the October 7 issue, where the work of two rather enthusiastic managers was showcased. Cliff Gwilliam, manager of the Odeon cinema in Exeter, 'festooned' the front of the theatre with allied flags and 'arranged a display of arms and equipment, ranging from Boer War pieces to examples of the most modern outfits', while J.P Taylor, manager of the Alhambra cinema in Barnsley, created a ladies hat display that showcased styles similar to those worn by Kerr throughout the picture.<sup>28</sup> Evidently, foyer displays in the 1940s were not the 'one style fits all' approach that twenty-first century cinemagoers will be most familiar with, instead, local cinemas had a unique approaches. Regardless, the effort invested in these displays suggests that there was significant enthusiasm towards The Archers' production and a general belief that audiences would respond well to *Colonel Blimp's* historical material.

Figure 38: (Left) Cliff Gwilliam's military display in Exeter's Odeon. (Right) J.P Taylor's display of Kerr and women's millinery history in Barnsley's Alhambra cinema. Images sourced from *Kinematograph Weekly*, UK, 7 October 1943.

Images removed due to copyright restrictions

Material in the *Mass Observation* archive shows that the vendors' efforts and wider publicity campaigns worked well, as a significant number of responders discussed *Colonel*

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<sup>28</sup> Cliff Gwilliam & J.P, 'Vendor contributions', *Kinematograph Weekly*, UK, 7 October 1943, 35-37.

*Blimp* in their answer to the November 1943 questionnaire's prompt 'What films have you liked best during the past year? Please list six in order of liking and give your reasons for liking them'.<sup>29</sup> From teachers to housewives, clerks and journalists, *Colonel Blimp* impressed for several reasons. Some commented on its technical execution and the application of Technicolor, "'Col. Blimp" impressed me greatly – perhaps the best I have ever seen – technically, for its movements, its Englishness & its colour'<sup>30</sup>, while others responded to its key moments and underlying commentaries, 'it provided a diversionary glimpse of an English character [Blimp] that has its faults better known than its virtue'<sup>31</sup>, 'The German refugee trying to explain himself to authorities was one of the most moving scenes I have seen'.<sup>32</sup> Some even appreciated how it caught 'a complete prewar atmosphere'<sup>33</sup> and constructed believable historical scenarios/settings, 'Colonel Blimp was a grand film interesting on account of the period of time it covered. Films of the immediate past are always attractive to me probably because they bring back memories this film also seemed to be well-produced, the story was easy to believe in'.<sup>34</sup> But while everyday viewers enjoyed the piece, others criticised it sharply.

In some instances, critics were incensed by *Colonel Blimp's* subject matter. For example, Ward Price of the *Daily Mail* expressed his outrage at the filmmakers' gall to produce a bumbling officer during a time of war,

To depict British officers as stupid, complacent, self-satisfied and ridiculous may be legitimate comedy in peacetimes, but it is disastrously bad propaganda in times of war... In such times as these, when the respect and confidence of other countries are of vital importance to us, we cannot afford to put out a burlesque figure like Colonel Blimp to go round the world.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Mass Observation, 'November Directive 1943', January 1939–November 1955, *Mass Observation Archive*, University of Sussex Special Collections.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, Directive Respondent 1039.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, Directive Respondent 3479.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, Directive Respondent 1098.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, Directive Respondent 2095.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, Directive Respondent 1032, 'November Directive 1943'.

<sup>35</sup> Ward Price in the *Time's* 'Gad, Sir, He Had to Die', *The Times*, UK, 21 June 1943.



Others were annoyed by its length and supposed lack of clarity, 'it is too long, and I don't care if it did cost twenty-five million pounds (or something like that), that's nothing to do with the point...no-one decided exactly what they wanted to say with it'.<sup>36</sup>

Such critiques were interspersed amongst positive general newspaper/magazine reviews; however, one of the harshest and lengthiest responses to the picture came from husband-and-wife duo Mary Major Robson and Emmanuel Walter Robson of the Sidneyan Society. The pair were ardent cinephiles and had started a heavily jingoistic campaign in 1939 addressing 'films as engines of civilisation's decay', and had already attacked Powell and Pressburger's *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* for its portrayal of sympathetic Germans.<sup>37</sup> According to the Society's aims, through their publications, they intended to 'spread the realisation that a healthy film and film industry can only come out of a truly healthy society; that the best films in the world are those that induce the best social conduct; that the worst films are those showing that bad social behaviour pays'.<sup>38</sup> In response to *Colonel Blimp* they published the lengthy pamphlet *The Shame and Disgrace of Colonel Blimp* and comprehensively broke down its key moments, primary themes, and characters, and the social consequences their existence would produce.<sup>39</sup> Candy was a threat to morale as he was 'a big, fat lollipop of a walrus-whiskered Englishman' with English friends that were 'the "silly ass" type with protruding teeth and bushy moustaches'.<sup>40</sup> His only other friend, Schuldorff, was an extreme concern due to lingering 'ingredients of Nazidom' – 'no nation with its eyes wide open would have allowed any set of filmmakers in its midst, to portray a German, an essentially German German, as an object of commiseration, sympathy and affection.'<sup>41</sup> Such characters, the Society claimed, would promote 'woolly thinking' about 'the British view of the British people'.<sup>42</sup>

While such criticisms and suspicions were openly circulated, behind closed doors Churchill was considering how to limit to picture's distribution overseas. In a similar vein to

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<sup>36</sup> Unknown, 'The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp', *Tribune*, UK, 18 June 1943.

<sup>37</sup> Geoff Brown, 'Criticism: The 1930s: Theory and Debate', *BFI Screenonline*, [online] date accessed: 02/03/2021. <<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/criticism/criticism8.html>>.

<sup>38</sup> E.W & M.M Robson, 'The Shame and Disgrace', 31.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-15.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

his attempts to shut down production, Churchill relied on Brendan Bracken to execute such a task. In a personal minute (July 11, 1943), Churchill told the minister 'I think you should certainly stop it going abroad as long as you possibly can' but Bracken's response suggests that he was fed up with the situation and eager to see *Colonel Blimp* dismissed from his list of tasks.<sup>43</sup> Limiting the picture's export was only a temporary solution though and Bracken made it clear that they had already exhausted that option in his response, 'this we have so far managed to do by the unorthodox expedient of refusing the normal facilities for transport abroad by air ... we could not either by legal or illegal action prevent the film going abroad by other means'.<sup>44</sup> Bracken's response was fair, as was his irritation. By this time J. Arthur Rank had written several letters regarding the export of his film and the general public had become more aware of the government's dislike of the picture – thus bolstering its popularity.<sup>45</sup> Bracken was well aware of this and by August he vented his frustration in a memo to Churchill and effectively chastised the Prime Minister for his obsession with the film,

As a result of our illegal ban the wretched film "Colonel Blimp" has received a wonderful advertisement from the Government. It is now enjoying an extensive run in the suburbs and in all sorts of places there are notices – "See the banned film!" If we had left that dull film alone it would probably have proved an unprofitable undertaking, but by the time the Government have finished with it there is no knowing what profits it will have earned.<sup>46</sup>

With the ban backfiring and Rank's persistent appeals for export unceasing, the government eventually relented in August, after the Air Ministry communicated, 'we have had a further letter from Mr Rank requesting facilities ... he says it [Blimp] has broken box-office records ... it is becoming practically impossible to maintain our illegal ban'.<sup>47</sup> A short time later, a

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<sup>43</sup> Prem 4/14/15, Winston Churchill, 'Personal Minute: serial m. 459/3', 11 July 1943, *The National Archives*, Kew: London.

<sup>44</sup> Prem 4/14/15, Brendan Bracken, 'Response to M.459/3', 23 July 1943, *The National Archives*, Kew: London.

<sup>45</sup> Macdonald, *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death*, 226.

<sup>46</sup> Prem 4/14/15, Brendan Bracken, 'Response to m.523/3', 5 August 1943, *The National Archives*, Kew: London.

<sup>47</sup> Prem 4/14/15, Captain Clifford, 'Most Secret Cypher Telegram: Directions for Blimp, no. 368', 19 August 1943, *The National Archives*, Kew: London.

telegram to the War Cabinet read 'approval to release "Blimp" has now been secured'.<sup>48</sup> With this achieved Rank could now distribute the picture freely to the US market (one that he was determined to 'crack'); however, issues with distributors and audience tastes prevented the picture's immediate release. Ultimately, it did not receive a wide release in the lucrative US market until 1945.

When initially screened for industry stakeholders in the US, Mary Pickford – the prominent silent film star and co-founder of United Artists distributors – described *Colonel Blimp* as 'undoubtedly one of the finest films ever made' and after showing at a charity event in New York's Gotham Theatre it received further praise.<sup>49</sup> These events were unique screenings though – filled with industry figures and ardent cinephiles. In more general terms United Artists' distributors suspected that the long and complex narrative would be difficult to sell to the everyday American public, so they cut it down by over thirty minutes (predominantly removing the opening sequences with the Home Guard) and advertised it as a 'sexy' affair.<sup>50</sup> This was evident in its pre-release campaign, which was filled with images of a 'leery, a walrus-faced Blimp winking at the sinuous, leggy Deborah Kerr' and contained taglines like 'a rogue with a roving eye' and 'he loved swords...and guns...and beautiful women!'.<sup>51</sup> Needless to say, due to this misrepresentation, scene cutting, and the cultural/social differences between everyday British and US audiences, *Colonel Blimp* did poorly in the US market – defying Rank's earlier confidences.<sup>52</sup> To add further insult to injury, America's National Board of Review included *Colonel Blimp* – the original, full-length premiered version – in its 1945 top ten films of the year, which suggests that an untouched version may have done well in the US market if allowed.<sup>53</sup>

Evidently, *Colonel Blimp's* release and reception period was fairly different when compared to *The Spy in Black*. Its layered narrative, length, subject matter, and complex characters were always bound to prompt more responses from critics and the wider public, and overall, within the national market *Colonel Blimp* was received exceptionally well. Many

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<sup>48</sup> Prem 4/14/15, Unknown, 'Most Secret Cypher Telegram: Directions for Blimp, no. 413', 25 August 1943, The National Archives, Kew: London.

<sup>49</sup> Drazin, 'The Distribution of Powell and Pressburger's Films', 63.

<sup>50</sup> MacDonald, *The Life and Death*, 227.

<sup>51</sup> Drazin, 'The Distribution of Powell and Pressburger's Films', 64.

<sup>52</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 435.

<sup>53</sup> National Board of Review, '1945 Award Winners', *National Board of Review Online Archive*, 1945.

critics agreed that its star power and execution exceeded expectations, as did general viewers, and some specifically mentioned their enthusiasm for The Archers' historical sequences. None described their appreciation for these sequences in terms of 'accuracy' or 'authenticity'; however, their commentary suggested that a well-developed historical setting was appreciated by viewers. This would change for *The Battle of the River Plate*, especially as advertising campaigns highlighted Powell and Pressburger's efforts towards historical representation.

#### *'The Battle of the River Plate': An Epic at Sea*

*River Plate's* premiere at the 1956 Royal Film Performance received a great deal of fanfare, as demonstrated by a *Daily Express* review: 'A film made by the British in Britain about a great British victory – that is the red, white and blue choice for this year's Royal Command film show'.<sup>54</sup> Although born during a 'creative dry spell' and somewhat lacking in cinematic experimentation, it was one of the few film's The Archers made that pandered so closely to public taste and this paid dividends as thousands flocked to cinemas to see it. It had star power, a strong publicity campaign (one that mentioned its effort towards authenticity), was produced by a British studio, and its subject matter was a safe option for British audiences: When combined, these elements created one of the better release and reception periods in Powell and Pressburger's career.

*River Plate's* star power was undoubtedly one of its biggest drawcards and film magazines were quick to highlight its primary stars and their efforts for this historically driven production. In the past, British audiences had been less concerned with the culture of stardom and had focused more on an actor's training, accrued skills, and natural talent – as highlighted in Victoria Lowe's piece regarding Robert Donat's 1930s work – but the influence of Hollywood simply increased over time.<sup>55</sup> Polls created by fan magazines like *Picturegoer* and *Motion Picture Herald* indicated that this had changed in Britain by the 1950s – stars were still expected to perform well, but there was an added pressure to look just as beautiful and

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<sup>54</sup> Unknown, 'The Queen, Peter Finch and The Graf Spee', *The Daily Express*, UK, 24 September 1956, 7.

<sup>55</sup> Victoria Lowe, "'Something that is US": Robert Donat, Screen Performance, and Stardom in the 1930s', *Journal of Film and Video*, vol. 63, no. 3, 2011, 13-29.

glamorous as their Hollywood counterparts.<sup>56</sup> As this angle was difficult to take with a war film dominated by men and no female leads (thus reducing moments for 'charming exchanges' or glamour), magazines initially focused the picture's glittery release before addressing its technical execution.

When *River Plate* screened at the Royal Command Performance in October 1956, it was a fairly glamorous affair filled with Britain's upper echelons, as well as some of cinema's most famous faces. As one of the primary industry magazines, *Kinematograph Weekly* covered the event, but it also garnered international attention and emerged in publications like Australia's *Women's Weekly*. Locally there was great excitement regarding this screening because a British made film had not shown at the Command Performance since 1951, so reports were quick to highlight it as a patriotic affair – 'It's all British for Royal Film Show' exclaimed the *Daily Mirror*<sup>57</sup>, while the *Times* used a more nuanced line, 'it was a gallant battle, carried out on our side with a dash of determination that would have appealed to Nelson'.<sup>58</sup> It was also reported as a 'who's who?' event in the wider social season (both nationally and internationally) and accounts made sure to highlight the presence of the Queen, Princess Margaret, and the Countess and Earl Mountbatten, but only a few lines later made sure to mention the presence of Joan Crawford, Marilyn Monroe and her husband Arthur Miller, and Brigitte Bardot.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Sue Harper & Vincent Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s: The Decline of Deference*, Oxford University Press, UK: New York, 2003, 252-53.

<sup>57</sup> Unknown, 'It's all British for Royal Film Show', *Daily Mirror*, 24 September 1956, 7.

<sup>58</sup> Unknown, 'Royal Fil Show', *The Times*, UK, 30 October 1956,

<sup>59</sup> Unknown, 'Royal Film Night', *Australian Women's Weekly*, Australia, 21 November 1956, 35.

Figure 39: Picture showcase from 'The Industry's Most Glittering Night of the Year', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 1 November 1956.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

After its general release, positive reviews swiftly emerged, and critics were quick to address the skill of the primary cast and authenticity. It was reported that Anthony Quayle (Harwood) delivered 'a sterling performance'<sup>60</sup>, the modest John Gregson (Bell) impressed enough to become 'Britain's newest candidate for the glittering prize of international stardom'<sup>61</sup>, and Peter Finch (Langsdorff) – the '40-year-old Australian ex-hobo, ex-journalist, ex-strolling player' – simply excelled as Britain's German adversary.<sup>62</sup> Their likeness to reality's figures was a particular point of interest but this was not an entirely spontaneous focus, it was partly prompted by the Rank Organisation's publicity campaign. Within a press folder

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<sup>60</sup> Reg Whitley, 'What a Pity the Duke Missed it!', *Daily Mirror*, UK, 30 October 1956, 11.

<sup>61</sup> Margaret Hinxman, 'Now Gregson can be a World Star – but he refused to believe it', *Picturegoer*, 3 November 1956.

<sup>62</sup> Express Staff Reporter, 'The Queen, Peter Finch & The Graf Spee', *Daily Express*, UK, 24 September 1956.

sequestered in the *BFI's* archives, there are sections dedicated solely towards the actors' efforts to represent their historical figures to the best of their ability. For example, concerned about his portrayal of her late husband, Quayle spent significant time with Lady Harwood when she visited the set and she assured him that his interpretation was perfect, 'even down to the pipe'.<sup>63</sup> In a similar vein, the press folder described Peter Finch's reliance on Captain Dove for insight on Langsdorff's tone and mannerisms. One exchange was explicitly described for press purposes. Taking place after Finch delivered Langsdorff's final speech regarding Britain's victory, the actor approached Dove for his opinion.

After the take, Finch walked over to the real Captain Dove, who acted as advisor on the "Graf Spee" scenes. "Was I alright?" he asked. Captain Dove nodded. "That was one of the most moving interviews I ever had in my life," he said "for Langsdorff was a great gentleman. I never thought it would move me so much to see it acted again with such feeling and dignity".<sup>64</sup>

It is difficult to determine whether this exchange really occurred; however, it is possible as other sources mention Finch's apprehension and anxiety regarding his ability to contribute to the picture's authenticity. For example, it was reported that – in an effort to combat this anxiety – Finch 'spent 10 days in Germany visiting survivors of the Graf Spee to get first-hand reports of his [Langsdorff] characteristics and mannerisms.'<sup>65</sup> This example was very specific, but Pressburger himself also provided a general article to *Kinematograph Weekly* explaining the team's efforts towards building a historically authentic and factual representation of events, which involved consultation with individuals involved, Admiralty permissions and excursions, and 'thousands of miles of travel and thousands of hours' research'.<sup>66</sup> This focus on research and factuality was prominent in national reviews –likely because it was a part of

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<sup>63</sup> S-208, Rank Corporation, 'Anthony Quayle Meets the Widow of the man he is Portraying', Rank's Publicity Divisions Information Folder, 1956, British Film Institute, London, 101.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 103.

<sup>65</sup> Unknown, 'Twelve Months' Research to Perfect 'River Plate' Costumes', *Kinematograph Weekly*, UK, 1 November 1956.

<sup>66</sup> Emeric Pressburger, 'Why We Made "The Battle of the River Plate"', *Kinematograph Weekly*, UK, 25 October 1956.

Britain's history – but in the US there was a focus more on star power and action in the film's release campaign.

By this stage, the Rank Organisation had learnt how to navigate the US market more effectively and their processes were vastly different when compared to their earlier attempts with United Artist as their distributors. Irving Sochin, the general manager of the Rank Film Distributors of America, understood the market and was in charge of the 'saturation' campaigns used to promote films from Britain.<sup>67</sup> Prior to *River Plate's* release, an extensive billboard and radio campaign promoted the feature, and Sochin believed that it was the perfect opportunity to test 'how far a British picture can go' within the USA.<sup>68</sup> To further promote the film, April Olrich – the singer, dancer, and actress that performed in the picture's 'Manolo's café' – was labelled as one of its stars (despite her minimal presence) and she went on tour, giving various interviews to encourage cinemagoers.<sup>69</sup> When released, *Variety* magazine (a top entertainment trade paper) reviewed the film modestly and described it as a 'technically impressive filmization of the defeat of Graf Spee'; however, it was concerned about the film's characterisation and how 'the players are almost secondary to the ships themselves'.<sup>70</sup> Overall though, Sochin's saturation campaign worked and it was reported that *River Plate* was the first British film to 'solidly break down the "Dixie" line' (a symbol for the cultural boundary/differences between the North and South) upon its nationwide release.<sup>71</sup>

After considering the contents of *River Plate*, its release campaign and audiences' response to the picture, it is clear that it was released at a time when Britain's cinema was gripped by an 'obsessive nostalgia' for 'that mythic golden age when individual aspiration and selfishness were subservient to a nationwide community spirit'.<sup>72</sup> This was unsurprising, as the Cold War had brought forward a new type of warfare that was ever threatening and slightly ambiguous – Britain was in decline and debt after WWII, and it was unclear who could win (or survive) if the power struggle between Russia and the USA escalated. As Jeremy

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<sup>67</sup> Unknown, 'Rank Eschews Distribs 'In Depth', *Variety*, United States of America, 25 September 1957.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Unknown, 'Rival Productions Share a Story in Kansas City', *Variety*, United States of America, 20 November 1957.

<sup>70</sup> Myro, 'Battle of River Plate', *Variety*, United States of America, November 14, 1956.

<sup>71</sup> Unknown, 'Rank-Yank Cheered As 'Graf Spee' Captures Dixie: Over 100 Prints in Use', *Variety*, United States of America, 13 November 1957.

<sup>72</sup> Harvadi, *Projecting Britain at War*, 129.



Harvadi noted, the nuclear age brought forward a war of impersonal science and remoteness, while WWII contained clear moral boundaries and the notion of a 'gentlemanly pursuit of the enemy', and this discrepancy fuelled cinema's nostalgia in the 1950s.<sup>73</sup> *River Plate* was a historical nostalgia film and even though its release coincided with the Suez Crisis of 1956, it did not have the same topical impact that *The Spy in Black* or *Colonel Blimp* maintained during their release because it did little more than reiterate the past success of the British Navy.

Overall, this chapter has endeavoured to highlight how the examination of the release and reception period of a picture can provide insight into how well the work of the filmmakers was promoted and received, especially in regard to their attempts at creating a believable or factual historical account. Overall, The Archers' *The Spy in Black*, *Colonel Blimp* and *River Plate* were all received incredibly well; however, each period and film had a unique set of components that the industry highlighted in their promotions, as well as factors that audiences reacted to.

As their first project together, *The Spy in Black* was created to meet industry demands and executing an adaptation that was true to Storer Clouston's 1917 novel was not Powell and Pressburger's primary goal. Their main objective was to showcase the talent of Conrad Veidt, which they did, and the promotional campaigns clearly emphasised this too as they placed him in the centre of their promotions. Reviewers also responded well to his performance, but other aspects of the picture, like Hobson's role and Powell's direction, were praised too. The up-to-date topicality of the picture was fairly standard until the destruction of the HMS *Royal Oak* – a British ship destroyed by a German U-boat as it sat moored in the Scapa Flow – just two months after the picture's release. This reinvigorated the interest in Powell and Pressburger's picture and extended its cinematic run as patrons returned to theatres to marvel at its somewhat prophetic narrative. Although Powell and Pressburger had made some minor allusions to the Orkney Island's history through their distributional and integrational functions, it did not register with viewers to the same extent that its up-to-the-minute topicality managed to do.

When *Colonel Blimp* was released in 1943, the response from viewers was far more mixed. Due to its subject matter, major characters, and general themes, the picture managed

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 130.

to garner great praise as well as significant criticism. While its pre-release campaign was extensive, society's understanding of 'Blimps' and 'blimpish behaviours' had already been established by David Low's satirical cartoons, so critical reactions from conservatives or right-wing individuals, like the Sidney Society's Robson couple, was bound to emerge after the cinematic adaptation of such a notorious, provoking character. While these negative responses criticised *The Archers* for their unpatriotic subject, others revelled in the story and admired the pair for tackling such a prominent and topical issue. Fan magazines and trade papers reflected a general admiration for the performances from Livesey, Walbrook, and Kerr, as well as the picture's technical execution, but some *Mass Observation* responses revealed that cinemagoers were receptive to its historical representations. Unfortunately, this enthusiasm was not shared by Churchill and Bracken, nor the US market upon its release.

Years later, the historiophoty of *The Battle of the River Plate* came to the forefront of its release campaigns and reviews. Due to the event's prominence in Britain's military history, as well as the 1950s general mood for nostalgic pictures, it was unsurprising that factuality and authenticity was a focus point for national audiences. Audiences responded well to the actors' performances and the Rank Organisation made sure to highlight how pertinent consultants were used to create such believable characterisations. Furthermore, Pressburger also endeavoured to explain their research and filmmaking processes to industry readers – an effort that he did not make for *Colonel Blimp*. Overall, *River Plate* was an incredibly popular historical film, but it was also a project that signalled *The Archers'* decision and efforts to fully step into the role of filmmaker historians.

## Conclusion:

### Powell and Pressburger, Filmmaker Historians

*Interviewer: 'When you look back do you think that, somehow or another, the British didn't appreciate you both as much as they might have?'*

*Powell: 'When do the British ever appreciate their great men?'*

Michael Powell.<sup>1</sup>

In 1988, Robert A. Rosenstone argued that cinema should be considered more seriously as a legitimate form of historical representation due to its ability to disseminate information to a wide audience and shape society's general understanding of key individuals, events, and the communities of the past.<sup>2</sup> Since then, a myriad of prominent researchers, such as Hayden White, Marnie Hughes-Warrington, Jerome de Groot, Jonathan Stubbs, and Natalie Zemon Davis, have made significant efforts to explore the complex relationship between history, cinema, and society, but a gap remains regarding a method that could be used when interrogating authenticity, particularly the authenticity and historiophoty of history films. This gap has also created a chasm in our understanding of the filmmaker historian and the resources and processes that they employ when creating authentic representations of the past. This thesis has taken up this challenge and has presented a method for the interrogation of authenticity in films, both historically and contemporarily set, and demonstrated its application through an in-depth micro-study, which demonstrates the methodology's capacity for adaptation, comparison, aggregation, or scaling in other projects. This thesis also adds to the wider discourse regarding early British cinema through its focus on the history films of the renowned duo of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, *The Archers* (1939-1957).

Alongside this theoretical application, this methodology can also be applied practically by burgeoning filmmakers – making it unique through its duality. By understanding what, why, and how audiences critically analyse authenticity on screen (as outlined by the methodology) and by understanding the research practices and filmmaking approaches of past creators (case studies), this thesis has provided current filmmakers with a framework to use and

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Chabot & Gavin Millar, 'A Pretty British Affair', *BBC Arena*, 1981, via *Youtube*, date accessed: 9/05/2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f24s-TIYXB0>>.

<sup>2</sup> Rosenstone, 'History in Images/History in Words', 1173-1185.

examples to consider when developing and executing their own authentic representations – a particularly useful tool for those interested in historically set projects as they attract significant scrutiny. If this methodology is considered, adapted, and applied well, filmmakers can meet audience expectations (perhaps even surpass them) regarding authentic representation and the research/adaptation behind them. Such a rich, intertextual, and well-supported production has the ability not only to entertain but also educate and contribute to the wider discourse.

When creating a flexible methodology, one that could be applied to the variety of films produced, this dissertation required an interdisciplinary approach. Relying on Brian McFarlane's modified structuralist concept in *Novel to Film*, this thesis altered his framework further and refined it to better suit the history film genre. This refinement was informed by the work of prominent authors (from a variety of backgrounds) that have worked hard to outline the limitations and unique strengths that film can offer the wider historical discourse. The resulting methodology focused on the breakdown of the narrative (distributional functions) and the supporting *mise en scène* (integrational functions) and encouraged the interrogation of these sections to identify the historical materials/data embedded within them. In most instances, the incorporation of this data and replication of the past's aesthetic components, like fashions or landscapes, were purposely constructed by the filmmakers, and their teams, as 'authenticity effects', specifically designed to further enhance audience immersion and present the past as realistically, and as factually correct, as possible. This prompted this thesis' second point of investigation – the industrial context surrounding a picture's preproduction, production, and release periods.

Powell and Pressburger's experiences showcased how the industrial context surrounding the preproduction and production periods can impact its overall content and historiophoty, which makes them a research component that cannot be ignored when considering authentic representation. Issues like a filmmaker's reputation, funding, the availability of industry resources, or access to historical primary/secondary materials, can all influence film content, and it is important to determine how a filmmaker's initial ideas change throughout the filmmaking process. What did they envision for their audiences? Were there any restrictions or opportunities? How did they overcome any obstacles? It is clear that The Archers' faced many unique challenges throughout their career; however, their ability to

overcome any difficult scenarios and individuals led to the production of some of Britain's finest pictures.

This leads into another area that this dissertation recommends investigating, the release and reception period. The manner of a film's release, including any studio driven publicity campaigns, is important when considering how authenticity is discussed. If publicised as an extremely authentic piece, it is likely that audiences will have high expectations when viewing and critiquing – if done poorly (e.g., *Argo*) viewers may scorn the picture, if done well it will receive praise. In the early years of cinema, this penchant for analysing authenticity was less prevalent; nevertheless, as suggested by the experiences of Powell and Pressburger, some viewers did notice authenticity and appreciated the filmmakers' efforts.

Regarding historiophoty and contemporary authenticity, there has been little investigation of the manner in which Powell and Pressburger approached their history-based films, but anecdotes and titbits from their respective biographies/autobiographies suggested that both men were History enthusiasts and, when able, approached their historically set films with fervour. As mentioned earlier, this passion could not always be expressed due to production limitations; however, once established Powell and Pressburger conducted their own historical research and were conscious of their cinematic representations of history's facts and its aesthetics. Under The Archers' general direction, various studio teams worked hard to create a series of authenticity effects through their work, i.e., set design, costume construction, and props, to better support the historiophoty of Powell and Pressburger's screenplays and preproduction outlines.

This differed from project-to-project and due to the scope of cinema's history genre, The Archers' war-based historical films fell within its various subcategories. This did not hinder this thesis' interrogation though. In actuality, it demonstrated how the methodology proposed here is flexible and adaptable to the many types of history films available. Firstly, *The Spy in Black* provided an opportunity to test this method with an adaptation of an original novel. Comparatively, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* was an original screenplay with historical and contemporary settings, and this method demonstrated its flexibility and applicability when investigating the manufacture of authenticity (for both past and present) in this type of feature. Finally, *The Battle of the River Plate* provided an opportunity to

investigate how Powell and Pressburger approached the representation of real individuals and events, highlighted how their techniques had changed over time, and demonstrated that this method was also appropriate to apply to history films of this type. The investigation of each picture revealed that there were many components, both internal and external to the industry, that framed how authenticity (for both historical and contemporary settings) and wider historiophoty was approached and executed (through their distributional and integrational functions).

Released in 1939 (just prior to the outbreak of World War II), Powell and Pressburger's first project together – *The Spy in Black* – was an adaptation of Storer Clouston's 1917 spy novel of the same name. Set during the Great War, this story focused on a German infiltrator and his mission to observe and report the British Grand Fleet's manoeuvres from their primary base in the Scapa Flow (a large body of water protected by the surrounding Orkney Islands, Scotland). Clouston's original novel was popular at the time of its release; however, its key plot points and its style of narration made it difficult to transpose to screen. Alexander Korda, the head of London Films production studio, had initially assigned the project to Irving Asher (producer and director) and Roland Pertwee (screenwriter) but was ultimately unimpressed with their initial endeavours. He then brought on the relatively unknown Michael Powell to direct and hired the completely unknown Emeric Pressburger to overhaul the screenplay. The pair had not met before and when introduced, Powell was immediately impressed by Pressburger's new outline, further points for story development, and his overall manner. It was a good start to the new project, the beginning of decades-long filmmaking partnership, and a lifelong friendship.

Pressburger's approach towards Clouston's narrative could only be labelled as a 'loose' style of adaptation, as per Desmond and Hawkes' definitions.<sup>3</sup> As demonstrated in the breakdown of the picture's cardinal functions (chapter three: part I), Pressburger took key plot points and characters from the book and reworked them to better suit cinema's fast pace and meet the studio's primary request – to create a role worthy of their contracted German star, Conrad Veidt. Pressburger did this and Veidt's complex character, Captain Hardt, emerged as a military gentleman, a keen and intelligent operative, and a caring commander

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<sup>3</sup> Desmond & Hawkes, *Adaptation*, 43.

– despite his position as Britain’s enemy. When required, Veidt’s skill and intensity produced an imposing figure and when placed in Vincent Korda’s purposely built, dingy, claustrophobic Orkney-esque sets, his physical size was emphasised and contributed to his intimidating presence. As well as this redevelopment, Pressburger also reworked the lead female role to better showcase Valerie Hobson’s acting talents. She was the film’s double-agent, its *femme fatale*, and her character – the supposed Fräulein Tiel posing as the teacher Anne Burnett but was actually the British agent, Jill Blacklock, was developed through the amalgamation of multiple characters from Clouston’s original story. By repurposing the novel’s characters, Pressburger was able to reduce the amount of cast needed and when partnered with his newly developed cardinal functions and an increase of action scenes, this created a far better cinematic spy story.

While some key points from the novel were transferred and reworked to the screen, the 1917 setting was abandoned for a contemporary one. Despite London Films’ reputation for producing aesthetically rich history pictures, this film, with two relatively unknown filmmakers in the lead and a troublesome script, was a risky project and did not garner a high budget, so it was altered accordingly. Pressburger’s cardinal functions contained limited references to the 1917 setting and, under the direction of Powell, wider elements within the *mise en scène* (integrational functions) barely reflected the past era. Some details mimicked/alluded to the earlier period, i.e., Hardt’s uniform and some dated props; however, the presence of contemporary vehicles and Hobson’s wardrobe (which featured heavily as she was in most scenes) overrode any impact they had as historical authenticity effects.

Instead of specifically emulating 1917 for his audiences, Powell focused his attention on capturing the unique ambience produced by the Orkney Islands’ isolated, weather-beaten landscape. As discussed in this thesis’ Production chapter, Powell had an affinity for the British and Scottish countryside and although his campaign to shoot *The Spy in Black* entirely on location ultimately failed, he was able to indulge this passion with a short trip to gather establishing shots and material for the studio team. Some of the footage he returned with was inserted into the picture, like the scenery shots of the ‘The Old Man of Hoy’ (a unique sea stack and natural tourist attraction of the region) and acted as authenticity effects geared towards representing an area’s specific atmosphere – it was geographically driven, not historically motivated. Such footage highlighted the harsh beauty of the Orkney’s natural

landscapes and emphasised the isolation of its inhabitants, which added to the tension created by the wider espionage narrative. Alongside this, Powell brought back material and insight regarding the style and structure of the region's infrastructure. Homes on the Scottish isle were strikingly different to those in Britain's countryside and Powell wanted to make sure that they would be replicated accordingly. Korda was happy to do this in his studio sets and through these authenticity effects it was clear that the events were occurring in Scotland, not in a Tudor-style home in the British countryside.

When released, the film was not critiqued for its contradicting historically set story with modern trimmings (authenticity effects), instead, it was heralded for its topicality and good acting. Released in August 1939, critics praised Conrad Veidt and Valerie Hobson's performances and were generally pleased with the overall composition of the picture. Still in cinemas when war was declared in September, newspapers and magazines began linking some of the film's more subtle wartime messages with current events, such as up-and-coming food shortages, and when Britain's HMS *Royal Oak* was torpedoed by Germany's *U-Boat 47* (October 13) – whilst anchored in Scapa Flow – the previously inconceivable notion of attack in that space became a reality. Newspapers and cinema proprietors latched on to the eerie coincidence and the picture's cinematic run was extended as audiences came to marvel at its prophetic nature.

Overall, *The Spy in Black* was not an appropriate time for Powell and Pressburger to indulge their interests in British history. Due to studio pressures, their position within the wider industry, and their inexperience with one another, they opted to make a contemporary war story, 'it didn't matter that it was the 1914-18 war... It was a war picture, all about submarines and spies, full of action and suspense The British Navy triumphs in the end and it was all lovely!'.<sup>4</sup> Their enthusiasm and passion for history remained dormant, but only three years later – and after three popular contemporary wartime features – Powell and Pressburger began work on their era encompassing project, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*.

Described as Pressburger's favourite Archers production and his most personal piece in their wider catalogue, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* is one of the pair's most

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<sup>4</sup> Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 335-336.



discussed features.<sup>5</sup> After Ian Christie discovered the '*Blimp File*' in Britain's national archives and the film's remastering in the 1980s, the picture has been examined in relation to popular cinema during wartime, censorship, and women at war, but there is a gap regarding the film's historiophoty. Although filled with fictional characters, evidence in Powell and Pressburger's autobiographies/biographies suggested that significant efforts were made to ensure that the picture's distributional and integrational functions were underpinned by historical data. This thesis endeavoured to interrogate this element and consider how, through the insertion/replication of history's ideologies and trends, The Archers created a pertinent secondary historical resource, as well as a primary one.

Prompted by a single comment from *One of Our Aircraft is Missing* (1942), Powell and Pressburger began to develop *Colonel Blimp* as early as February 1942. While Powell discussed the upcoming project with favoured studio hands, Pressburger spent significant time researching the prominent historical periods and trends he wished to exhibit on screen, which included, theatre catalogues, duelling etiquette, WWI military procedures, and women's rights and the wider Suffragette movement. These historical components were eventually incorporated into Pressburger's initial *The Life and Death of Sugar Candy* script as either scene/set directions, costume or prop descriptions, or mentioned in dialogue within the wider cardinal functions. Later, some resources were even directly replicated by the production team and included in the final picture as transitional props, i.e., Luigi Barbasetti's *Ehren Codex*. To further add to this historiophoty, The Archers employed Sir Douglas Brownrigg, a retired Lieutenant-General from Britain's army, to act as a military advisor on set. Brownrigg's career was extensive and followed a similar trajectory to the film's Clive Wynne-Candy, so his presence on set provided a secondary authority on its military representations. This effort towards the construction of fair representation and the inclusion of such minute historical details was appreciated by audiences across Britain. For example, cinema proprietors created significant lobby displays that highlighted the picture's period settings and revelled in its era-encompassing narrative – as demonstrated by the mini-military exhibit in Exeter and the women's intricate hat display in Barnsley (discussed in the thesis'

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<sup>5</sup> Ian Christie & Kevin Macdonald, 'The Making of The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp', [online] via *YouTube*, date accessed: 29/03/2021, Carlton International Media, 2000. <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFStj7I6n\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFStj7I6n_c)>.

Release and Reception chapter), but while general audiences enjoyed its historiophoty, politicians and conservative critics abhorred the notion of a British Blimp on screen.

Throughout the preproduction and production period, The Archers had been warned that the picture would not receive any support from the War Office or the Ministry of Information if it continued to fixate on Colonel Blimp. James Grigg, the Secretary of the State for War, flatly refused to support the production and Jack Beddington, head of the Ministry of Information's film division, warned The Archers that such an endeavour would enrage Churchill and could not be supported by his ministry in good conscience. With this dismissal in hand, the independent filmmakers turned to J. Arthur Rank, Britain's cinema mogul at the time, and enjoyed his generosity and full support of the picture. It was an expensive endeavour but was ultimately received well by British audiences; however, Churchill was irritated by the whole situation and even brought the issue up in war cabinet meetings (unbeknownst to the filmmakers). The national archive's *Blimp File* revealed that Churchill had initially opted to have the production completely shut down through funding rejections, but Rank's interference usurped this plan. Without any legal pathway to block production, the picture was made and released nationally, but Churchill then turned his attention towards its international distribution to stifle its influence. This strategy also failed in the end, as the shortened version made its way to the US in 1945 and although dated and altered, premiered as one of the top ten films of the year.<sup>6</sup>

As the biopic of a fictional military man, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* was an extraordinary film and a keen contributor to the overall legacy of The Archers' productions. It was topical, nostalgic, poignant, aesthetically vibrant and thought-provoking, but without their efforts towards creating a historically rich contextual setting (in both the distributional and integrational functions), the impact of its primary messages would have been substandard. Also, without the substantial history of Candy's career, the contrast between past ideologies and contemporary ideals would have been less polarising and he would have been a far more mockable character without it. This thesis highlighted the significance of The Archers' efforts towards this historical representation and revealed how they were developing not just filmmakers, but as filmmaker historians.

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<sup>6</sup> National Board of Review, '1945 Award Winners'.

In comparison to the previous films discussed here, *The Battle of the River Plate* was the most historically driven picture that The Archers ever produced and although lacking in the duo's signature artistic flair, it was one of the better naval-based war films to emerge from Britain's 1950s catalogue. Introduced to the pair after a series of mediocre pictures and during a significant creative slump, the pursuit of the *Graf Spee* and the River Plate story had elements that appealed to both men. Pressburger was able to explore and create a cinematic version of Captain Hans Langsdorff – one of WWII's more complex German figures and a fitting addition to the scriptwriter's collection of 'good Germans'. While Powell, with a high level of enthusiasm and glee, was provided with an opportunity to indulge his passions for British military history and location shooting. It was a surprising project, more akin to the documentary-style films produced by filmmakers like Lewis Gilbert, but despite its differences, The Archers still treated the subject with significant care and endeavoured to create an account that was immersive and as close to history as they could make it.

In order to represent this history well, Powell and Pressburger conducted extensive research and relied on oral accounts when developing their narrative and characters. Together they interviewed key individuals present at the time, like Captains F.S Bell, Woodhouse, and Dove (all hired later as historical/military advisers during production) and negotiated with the Admiralty to access pertinent records. Furthermore, to enhance authenticity and audience immersion, The Archers appealed to the Admiralty further and requested permission to capture and use footage of their real warships at sea. The authorisation was eventually granted. Powell was given last-minute permissions to travel and film the British Mediterranean fleet, was provided opportunities to shoot in Scotland and was even able to spend time on the USS *Salem* through the Admiralty's connections. To further add to this authenticity effect, two of the cruisers from the events in 1939 were present for Powell to capture – the HMS *Cumberland* and the HMNZS *Achilles* (repurposed as the INS *Delhi* in 1950) – and were included in the final picture. As most sea-faring films were shot in studio tank lots, this was an extremely unique approach and audiences responded well to this authenticity effect.

Regarding general release and reception, *River Plate* was received exceptionally well. Saved for the 1956 Royal Command Performance, and the first British production to be showcased there since 1951, the efforts of *River Plate's* stars, directors, and the wider

studio/technical crew, all received attention in the picture's publicity campaigns and reviews. The picture's star power was a particular focus but historiophoty also made it into general discussions. Press materials distributed by the Rank Organisation highlighted the involvement of advisers, particularly Captain Dove and Lady Harwood (Commodore Harwood's wife) and emphasised the diligence and reverence that the actors had when clarifying details about their characters or their performances. Furthermore, Pressburger was quite open about the filmmaking process and penned articles for magazine's like *Kinematograph Weekly*, explaining The Archers' research practices and some of the changes that were made on the advice of their visiting consultants. In comparison to the history presented in *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, *River Plate's* historiophoty had to be aligned far more closely with historical materials/accounts because it was a representation of real events and individuals – many of which were still living. Although the production style of this film was completely different to The Archers' more imaginative pictures – which has drawn some criticism – this step into the documentary-style should be considered as one of the most developmental and effective periods in their portfolios as historian filmmakers.

Through the case study of Powell and Pressburger's historically set productions, this thesis has endeavoured to highlight how an intertextual relationship exists between history's data/materials and the various components of a history film. Whether a biopic, costume drama, historical thriller or battle film, many filmmakers make an effort to represent history in an immersive but believable and factual manner, and oftentimes this requires significant research. Embedded within the picture's distributional functions and sequestered as supporting components in its integrational functions, authenticity effects that are derived from historical data or created in reference to artefacts help to establish and support a project's historiophoty. As with other forms of historical representation, compromises must be made to fill the gaps that historical data cannot explain, but the visual medium's specific ability to 'bring to life' these compromises should not be used as a tool to discredit the filmmaker's historical account and wider efforts. Instead, an understanding outlook and the investigation of wider industry pressure's, i.e., funding issues, source availability or reputation/career stage, often reveal the motivations or concessions behind a filmmaker's decisions. This provides further opportunity for researchers to consider how a picture can be studied, questioned, and used as not only a primary resource but a secondary one too.

The Archers had their fair share of compromises during their lengthy career, and although their history films differed in their inception and execution, the duo was clearly refining their approach towards historical representation. Their first picture, *The Spy in Black*, was produced in an environment that left no room for historical exploration and ultimately the picture sacrificed the novel's original 1917 setting in order to create a picture that highlighted the threat of an impending new war. Only a few years later, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* embedded a myriad of historical authenticity effects into its narrative and *mise en scène* to further emphasise the picture's primary messages and support its historiophoty. Over a decade later, *The Battle of the River Plate* was approached similarly, but due to the subject's position as a real event – filled with real (and still living) individuals – Powell and Pressburger made sure to align their representation as close to reality as they could. This ensured that viewers received the most factual and authentic account that could be produced within the visual medium. Due to the historiophoty displayed in The Archers' later projects (*Colonel Blimp* and *River Plate*), their significant research efforts, and a general seriousness toward historical representation, it is only fitting that they be identified as early examples of filmmaker historians.

As well as adding to the discourse surrounding Powell and Pressburger's filmmaking practices, this thesis does two things. Firstly, it argues that filmmakers often go to significant lengths when constructing authentic representations, especially regarding history-based projects. Trips to archives, libraries, the use of subject specialists, and location-based research, often occurred and as they are considered traditional research practices, it is only fair that researchers consider such films as resources that can be interrogated in-depth and considered as legitimate additions to the broader discourse. To conduct this research, this dissertation developed and used a methodology that was designed for the in-depth interrogation of authenticity on screen – filling a gap within the wider discourse. It encourages and demonstrates how the interrogation of both content (distributional and integrational functions) and context (preproduction, production, and reception periods) can provide a better understanding of how authenticity is developed, produced, and received. It is a flexible and accessible framework that can be adopted for many historiophoty based projects, as well as broader studies in authenticity on screen.

Secondly, this dissertation has practical implications. Filmmakers, burgeoning or seasoned, can consider and adopt the methodology used here when developing authenticity within their own projects. By understanding what audiences expect and critique when assessing authenticity on screen, filmmakers can better meet these expectations (perhaps even surpass them) and provide an invigorating, immersive experience that can also educate and contribute to History's broader discussions. The case studies within this thesis highlight how early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century filmmakers endeavoured to do this and their experiences can be used as examples (either positive or cautionary) for new filmmakers to consider. As role models, Powell and Pressburger's experiences with authenticity demonstrate that many challenges, opportunities, and rewards emerge throughout the filmmaking process, but they are only two men within cinema's history. There are many more that could be considered or discovered in the years to come.

## Appendices

### *Appendix A: Storer Clouston's The Spy in Black.*

The comprehensive set of cardinal functions for Storer Clouston's 1917 novel *The Spy in Black*.

#### Part I - The Narrative of Lieutenant von Belke (of the German Navy)

1. Belke smuggles himself onto the unnamed island base of the British Grand Fleet with the help of his comrade, Commander Wiederman.
2. Whilst exploring the island, Belke is confronted by mildly suspicious residents, this heightens his anxiety and concerns regarding anonymity.
3. Belke locates the British Fleet and spies on them while they execute military drills.
4. Later, Belke finds the island's manse (home provided for the church minister), where he waits for the arrival of his German contact.

#### Part II - A few Chapters by the Editor

5. Reverend Alexander Burnett is introduced. His desire to move to a new Parish is made clear.
6. An unknown man gives him a newspaper that has a vacancy for the 'Windy Islands' specifically marked.
7. A second travelling man visits the church. He encourages the Rev. Burnett to take up the position by discussing the beauty of the place and its people.
8. Sometime later, before departing for the Windy Isles the Rev. Burnett receives a telegram from his travelling companion (Drummond) which announces a change to their travel plans. Drummond cannot make the trip, so one of his friends, a 'Mr. Taylor', will come in his stead.
9. 'Mr. Taylor' arrives. He is the traveller that spoke so fondly of the Isles (function 7). They leave together.
10. Taylor and his chauffeur take Burnett along an isolated coastal road, they stop and knock the Rev. unconscious.

11. A short time later, the real Mr. Drummond is introduced. He is visited by a Navy officer, 'Topham', and it is revealed that Rev. Burnett was found hurt and naked at the bottom of some cliffs.
12. Topham makes it clear that the Navy will investigate the matter.
13. Miss Eileen Holland is introduced. She meets the supposed 'Reverend Burnett' on the mail ship to the island.
14. Eileen Holland takes the governess position in the Craigie Esq. household. She leaves after four days.

#### Part III – Lieutenant von Belke's Narrative Resumed.

15. Herr Tiel (the Reverend Burnett imposter) arrives at the manse and meets Belke. He provides lodgings for the spy.
16. 'Ashington' arrives. He is introduced as a British turncoat and provides information on the British Fleet's movements and its upcoming manoeuvres. They create a plan for Germany's attack using this information.
17. A Miss Eileen 'Burnett' (actually Eileen Holland, function 14) arrives at the house and charms Belke into staying longer than he initially anticipated.
18. Belke rendezvous with Commander Wiedermann to pass along the attack plans and informs him of his decision to stay longer on the island. Wiederman leaves, Belke returns to the manse.

#### Part IV – Lieutenant Von Belke's Narrative Concluded

19. Belke becomes suspicious of Tiel and begins to question his changeable behaviour.
20. Mr. Craigie (Eileen Hollands's employer) visits and is determined to find out about Eileen's abrupt departure. Belke interacts with him, almost giving his identity away, but is saved by the return of Tiel and Burnett. They usher Craigie out with some lies and reassurances.
21. Belke notices that the house is being watched, but waits for some signal from the others.



22. After the scheduled time of attack has passed, Belke learns that he was deceived and is now a prisoner of war.

Part V – A few Concluding Chapters by the Editor

23. An explanation ensues. 'Tiel' is the British Navy's investigator Commander Blacklock and 'Ashington' is his colleague Captain Phipps. Eileen is a civilian that was asked to assist. The real Tiel (the spy) was captured before ever making it to the island. Belke was manipulated to obtain information on the German fleet's movements.

24. Belke is taken away by Phipps.

25. Blacklock declares his love for Eileen, she accepts him.

## *Appendix B: The Spy in Black*

The following list contains the comprehensive set of cardinal functions for Powell and Pressburger's 1939 feature *The Spy in Black*.

1. Captain Hardt (Conrad Veidt) and Schuster (Marius Goring) are introduced through a dinner scene. Both men are irritated by the limited menu and voice their displeasure towards wartime rationing in Germany.
2. After dinner, a messenger hands Hardt special orders from High Command.
3. Back aboard his U-boat, Hardt and his officers review the orders to infiltrate Scapa Flow's harbour (a natural harbour surrounded by the Orkney Islands, Scotland) and report on the movements of the British Grand Fleet.
4. Anne Burnett (June Duprez) is introduced, abducted, and assaulted on her way to Hoy, Orkney Islands, where she was to take up a position – similar to the novel's Reverend Burnett (function 10).
5. Fräulein Tiel (Valerie Hobson), posing as Anne Burnett, boards the ferry for Longhope.
6. Reverend Hector Matthews (Athole Stewart) and Mrs. Matthews (Agnes Laughlin) are introduced. They meet Tiel at the port, in the belief that she is Anne Burnett, and attempt to convince her to stay at their manse. Tiel brusquely dismisses them.
7. Hardt navigates his U-boat through the Orkney's sea mine defence and successfully infiltrates the island.
8. Hardt finds the rendezvous point (the schoolhouse cottage) and introduces himself to Tiel. They eat and smoke, but do not speak about the mission, before retiring for the night. Tiel locks Hardt in his room, which he objects to and finds somewhat suspicious.
9. The British turncoat, 'Ashington' (Sebastian Shaw), visits and promises times, dates, and locations for Britain's naval exercises – similar to the novel's function 17.
10. Tiel practices her 'teacher' routine in the adjacent schoolhouse with Hardt as her audience. He applauds her performance but moves on to question Tiel's morality and actions regarding the real Miss Burnett. She rebuffs him.

11. School has started. Tiel teaches while Hardt watches Navy manoeuvres.
12. Ashington arrives with information regarding the British Grand Fleet. Hardt is excited, but cannot inform Schuster until a scheduled rendezvous later that night.
13. Meanwhile, Reverend John Harris (Cyril Raymond), the real Miss Burnett's fiancé, arrives on the island for a surprise visit. He meets the Reverend Matthews on his way to the school and is coerced into coming to their manse for dinner (with his fiancé) later in the evening.
14. Harris arrives at the schoolhouse cottage and interrupts the meeting between Ashington, Tiel, and Hardt. They attempt to persuade him to leave but it becomes clear that he has seen too much of their operation and they capture him.
15. Meanwhile, the Rev. Matthews and his wife are disappointed and concerned by Matthew's absence at dinner. This prompts their visit to the schoolhouse cottage.
16. Ashington takes Hardt to meet with Schuster, which resembles the novel's function 19.
17. At the same time, the Matthews arrive at the cottage and confront Tiel about Harris. She lies to them and says that Harris is ill and in bed for the night; he is tied up in the adjoining room.
18. Hardt conveys the information he gathered to Schuster, before re-joining Ashington and returning to the house – this is part of a split scene and resembles the novel's function 19.
19. After Ashington departs for the night, Hardt kisses Tiel and expresses his admiration of her professionalism and devotion to Germany. She rushes away and he retreats to his room. In her hurry, Tiel did not lock him into the bedroom (as she did the previous night), so he pretends to open and close his door before hiding in the darkness of the stairs.
20. Tiel leaves her bedroom after hearing a door close and Hardt follows her as she slips outside to meet Ashington. Hardt sees them embrace and eavesdrops on their conversation. When they are joined by the night constable their subterfuge is exposed

- they are both British agents and plan to arrest Hardt later that night, with the support of local law enforcement. Ashington, really a naval officer named Blacklock vows to escort Tiel/Burnett, actually his civilian wife Jill, to the nearby passenger ferry.
21. After escorting Jill away, Ashington arrives back at the house but only finds Reverend Harris tied up. Hardt has escaped.
  22. Hardt manages to board the ferry too and is disguised as the Reverend Harris.
  23. Meanwhile, Reverend Matthews harasses the officers based in the local Naval command office and they explain the events that have occurred in relation to Hardt and Tiel. Ashington then arrives and informs them of Hardt's escape. This moment is comparable to Craigie's actions and the information divulged in the novel – function 21.
  24. The ferry stops at Stromness. Hardt and Jill watch (separately) as German prisoners come aboard, along with some civilian passengers.
  25. The ferry resumes its journey. Hardt, now dressed as himself, releases the prisoners and enlists their help to commandeer the small vessel.
  26. Jill meets Hardt again. He reveals that he will use the ferry to rendezvous with his crew at Sandwick. Jill attempts to dissuade him; however, he is determined.
  27. At the same time, the Navy office realises that the ferry is off course and they send out a destroyer to intercept them.
  28. Unbeknownst to all others, the German U-boat, under Schuster's command, spots the ferry and he gives orders for the crew to fire upon it. He is unaware of Hardt's presence on the unassuming ferry.
  29. Hardt tries to communicate with his own U-boat but is unsuccessful. The Germans shell the ferry, damaging it immensely, and Hardt gives the order to evacuate. The civilians are rushed into the lifeboats, but Hardt stays behind on the slowly sinking vessel.
  30. The British Navy has now caught up. The German U-boat is spotted and bombed as it tries to submerge. It is destroyed.

31. Defeated, Hardt voluntarily stays on the sinking ferry. While this represents his defeat at the hands of the British, it also exemplifies his honour as a Naval officer and reiterates the notion of a good Captain 'going down with his ship' and, in this instance, his German comrades.

## *Appendix C: The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*

The following list contains the comprehensive set of cardinal functions for Powell and Pressburger's 1943 release *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*.

### Part I – Capturing the Colonel, 1942.

1. A dispatch rider brings a telegram announcing that 'war starts at midnight' to 'Spud' – a Home Guard C.O. He decides to 'make it like the real thing' and starts the exercise early.
2. The group stops at a tea shop and Spud goes in for his date with 'Mata Hari' (his girlfriend and Deborah Kerr's third character, Angela Cannon). The squad waits for some time but only Cannon exits. She greets them but quickly drives away. They then check on Spud, he is dizzy from an unexplained head injury. He announces that she 'got him' and that 'she's gone to warn the Wizard' of their plan.
3. A car chase into London ensues.
4. Cannon reaches The Royal Bathers' Club, Piccadilly, and rushes inside. The Home Guard squad is close behind. She attempts to contact the 'Wizard' (General Wynne-Candy) but ultimately fails. The troops race into the Turkish bath and it is full of aged men, who are now 'prisoners' and part of the Home Guard exercise.
5. General Wynne-Candy is found in the hot room. He and Spud argue about the directive that 'war starts at midnight' – Spud claims that the enemy would ignore such parameters, Candy argues that it is how wars have always been fought. The argument turns into a fistfight and both men fall into Bath's cooldown pool – thus triggering the transitional sequence that transports audiences to the bathhouse in 1902.

\*\*\*Segue to the past\*\*\*

### Part II – The early days, 1902.

6. London, 1902.

Candy emerges from the Royal Bathers' Club pool as a young man, 'he is 26, very fit,

full of impatience and enthusiasm'.<sup>1</sup> After learning about anti-British propaganda being spread in Germany through his colleague 'Hoppy', Candy is determined to travel there to meet Edith Hunter, the English governess who initially reported the matter via letter.

7. Candy visits the War Office to seek advice about the issue and is told to leave the matter be as it is a task for British diplomats, not a soldier. He leaves for Berlin, regardless.
8. Berlin, 1902.  
Candy first meets Hunter in the *Kaiserhof* Hotel and assures her that he can discredit the negative propaganda being spread by the man Kaunitz. Hunter is keen on the idea and suggests confronting Kaunitz at a popular café that he frequents. Candy agrees.
9. Candy visits the British Embassy in Berlin and is told, again, to leave the matter alone.
10. Hunter meets Candy at the Café *Hohenzollern* and is disappointed about his news regarding the Embassy. Spurned by her passion, he confronts Kaunitz about his part in the spreading of anti-British propaganda and questions his honour as a soldier. This, in turn, slights the entire contingency of Uhlan officers and creates a diplomatic incident.
11. In accordance with German traditions regarding duty and honour, Candy must duel an opposing officer to defend the accusations he made at the café. Officials make it clear that a duel is the best way to resolve the dispute without causing a major international crisis.
12. In the early hours of the morning Candy duels an Uhlan officer, Theo Kretschmar-Schuldorff, in a non-descript barrack's gymnasium. The event is attended by officials, but there is no winner as both men are injured and taken away in ambulances. Hunter, who is waiting in a carriage nearby with a foreign office official, is told she must go with them because the Embassy has decided to fabricate the motives behind the duel. They will claim that the men were fighting over a girl, her.

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<sup>1</sup> Powell & Pressburger, *The Life and Death of Sugar Candy*, sequences 16 & 17.

13. Candy and Schuldorff are properly introduced in the nursing home and they become good friends. Hunter remains with them during this time, under the guise that she is Candy's fiancé.
14. Weeks later, on the day of Candy and Hunter's departure, Schuldorff announces that they must duel again because he is in love with Hunter and wants to marry her (she also loves him). Candy is overjoyed and quickly reassures his friend that Hunter was never really his fiancé. He wishes them well and 'leaves her in trust'<sup>2</sup> for Schuldorff to take care of.
15. Upon his return to London Candy takes Hunter's sister, Margaret, out to the theatre. He realises it was the wrong thing to do. Later that evening he admits to his Aunt Margaret that he was in love with Hunter, and only realised after he left. She is sympathetic and tells him he will always have a place at Cadogan Place (her home), and assures him that all his hunting trophies have a home there too.

\*\*\*Flashforward sequence commences. Various hunting trophies are shown to suggest the passing of time. They have plaques listing species, origin and dates killed. They include 1903 – East Africa, 1904 – Sudan, 1905— East Africa, 1907— Bengal, 1908 – Somaliland, 1912 – South Africa, 1914 – Central Province, India, 1918 – Flanders \*\*\*

Part III – The Great War and immediate post-war years, 1918-1919.

#### 16. France, 1918

Described in Pressburger's draft as simply 'somewhere in Flanders'.<sup>3</sup> Candy is 'now a man of forty-two' and is a Colonel (Acting Brigadier). He visits a non-descript estaminet<sup>4</sup> that has been repurposed for the Allied forces, where his beliefs concerning the proper 'rules of engagement' are tested as he interrogates German prisoners. He will not torture them for information and balks when it is inferred by others. He remains firm, but this signals that he is 'out of touch' with the changing nature of warfare.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, sequence 48.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, sequence 51.

<sup>4</sup> Estaminet – A small restaurant, café or bar.



17. Candy continues through Flanders, with his Scottish batman (assistant) Murdoch, and visits the convent of the 'Crown of Thorns', which is filled with nuns and nurses. There he sees a young woman that, aesthetically, is an exact likeness of Edith Hunter. He is unable to meet her but manages to learn that their detachment is from Yorkshire - West Riding, England. He continues through Flanders with this knowledge.

18. When the bells signalling the end of the Great War ring Clive is at a crossroad with Murdoch – together they sombrely drink to peace and Britain's victory through, what Candy believes, a traditionalist, 'might is right' mindset.

19. West Riding, June 1919.

Clive has managed to find his 'lost nurse'. Her name is Barbara Wynne and she comes from a well-to-do family involved in the textile trade. They are engaged to be married, despite their age difference, and Candy is enamoured with his almost-Edith Hunter.

20. London, 1919.

The newly married pair arrive at Cadogan Place and are greeted by Murdoch, now Candy's butler. Candy learns that Schuldorff is alive and currently being held as a prisoner of war in England. They decide to go and see him.

21. England, 1919 – Prisoner of war camp.

Candy tries to talk to Schuldorff but is shunned by the defeated German officer. Unable to speak to him, and disheartened by his old friends' behaviour, Candy returns to London with his wife.

22. London, 1919.

Schuldorff calls from the train station where he is waiting to be sent back to Germany. He apologises to Candy for his behaviour at the camp, Candy forgives him and insists that he come to the night's dinner (a party, unbeknownst to the German) before his departure. Candy comes in a private car, but when the pair arrive at the house Schuldorff is faced with a house full of elite British politicians and military men. They insist that Germany will be well again soon.

23. Later, when travelling home with his comrades, Schuldorff scoffs at the outdated mentalities and naivety of Candy and his colleagues.

24. The post-war sequence ends with a romantic fireside scene between Candy and his wife. He admits that he is concerned about Schuldorff and hopes that they reassured him enough about Germany's future. They then sit in comfortable silence amongst Candy's hunting trophies and their dogs. It is idyllic.

\*\*\*Another flashforward sequence commences. This time the filmmakers used a scrapbook, - filled with photos, invitations, and newspaper clippings - to mark the passage of time. After Barbara's death in 1926, Clive's hunting trophies perform this task again. They include 1920 to 1925 – invitations and photographs, 1926 – a newspaper clipping marks Barbara's death, 1930 – Nova Scotia, 1935 – Corsica, 1936 – Labrador, 1938 – Cairngorms \*\*\*

Part IV – The contemporary years, 1939-1942.

25. London, 1939.

These contemporary sequences begin with Schuldorff's 'enemy alien' tribunal hearing. He is an old man now, around sixty-five, and he explains to officials that he is widowed and wishes to return to his wife's country. He reveals that his sons are Nazis and makes it clear that he despises this. His interviewer is sceptical and for a moment it seems like he will be refused refugee status in England.

26. Candy enters, a tad late, and vouches for Schuldorff. Due to his position as a Major-General, Candy's word immediately satisfies the authorities and Schuldorff leaves with him.

27. Over dinner at Cadogan Place the pair begin to discuss the past and their wives. Candy admits that he loved Hunter and Schuldorff is genuinely surprised, but somewhat amused at the Englishman's bashfulness.

28. Candy shows Schuldorff a portrait of Barbara and the other man is slightly baffled by Candy's insistence that she is 'exactly like Edith'. He admits that there is some resemblance but is tentative with his answers.

29. Schuldorff stays late at Cadogan Place and must be driven back to his lodgings by Angela Cannon, Candy's personal driver, to avoid breaking 'alien' curfew. He is polite and struck by her resemblance to his wife – the underlying reason why she was chosen.
30. Sometime later, Candy is scheduled to give a radio broadcast for the BBC. It is cancelled at the last minute and he returns to Cadogan place.
31. Cannon, Murdoch and Schuldorff are at the house – waiting for Candy's broadcast to air. When it is announced that the address will be given by J.B Priestly, Schuldorff admits that he suspected that they would cancel Candy's broadcast.
32. Cannon attempts to leave but Candy's sudden entrance stops her. He has a letter from HQ that explains how they have decided to put him on the retired list.
33. Schuldorff explains that the Army needs a different type of knowledge for this modern war and that Candy's old-fashioned ideas and 'gentlemanlike' behaviour would not stop Nazism. He emphasises the importance of an Allied win and argues that if the British lose this conflict there will be no opportunity for 'a return match' later.
34. Cannon supports Schuldorff and suggests that Candy should 'move over' to the Home Guard if the regular Army did not need him. It lightens the mood and everyone encourages Candy to join. It is also revealed that Murdoch has already joined Home Guard. With this knowledge and encouragement, Candy vows to join.
35. Later, Cadogan Place is destroyed in the Blitz. The house is in ruins and it is revealed that Murdoch was killed.

\*\*\*The final flashforward sequence begins; however, it is much shorter than the others. It includes: 1940 to 42 – a montage of *Picture Post* magazines reveal that Candy is now part of the Home Guard's High Command and is actively assisting with the training and development of the citizen militia\*\*\*

36. London, Home Guard HQ

A meeting between High Command reveals that there will be a military exercise that officially begins at 00:00 hours because 'war starts at midnight'. Candy leaves HQ and

Cannon drives him to his club. After this moment the film's cardinal functions align with its opening scenes; the flashback sequences have officially ended as the film's beginning has caught up to its current events.

37. Cannon has the afternoon off and she is meeting her boyfriend Spud at a local tearoom. The audience already knows Spud from function 1. While she waits in the tearoom, he is rallying his men to catch the Major-General Candy
38. Spud arrives at the tearoom, with B Company in tow outside, and explains their plans to 'bag the Wizard' early in the war game. Cannon is appalled and tries to escape. As Spud tries to restrain her, he trips, hits his head, and she escapes to her car.
39. The race to London begins, as in function 3.
40. Cannon makes it to the Royal Bather's Club where she tries to warn Candy, but it is futile. While she is hiding under a desk, frantically trying to phone through to the Major-General, B Company storms the club and takes everyone hostage, as seen in function 4.
41. Spud and Candy get into an argument and begin their fistfight, which dovetails with function 5 and the beginning of the flashback sequence.
42. Candy emerges from his reverie and waits for the exercise to end.
43. The next day Candy is sitting in the park, slightly despondent, and Schuldorff comes to talk to him about the events of the day before. He encourages Candy to see it in a positive light, with some slight teasing, and the other man admits that he knows it was a good plan in the end. He tells Cannon that there will be no official inquiry into her boyfriend's actions.
44. Meanwhile, B Company is marching in celebration of their success. The trio walks over to Cadogan Place to see them. A water tank resides where the house once stood and Clive tells them a story from his youth. He explains that after the incident in Berlin, one of his senior offices invited him to dinner, but he did not go and has regretted it ever since. He invites Spud to dinner and makes it clear that Cannon is to bring him, without fail.

45. The film ends with the trio watching the B Company march down Cromwell Road. Clive reflects on a promise he made to Barbara, 'to change only when the flood comes'. In his final lines, he admits, mostly to himself, that time has passed, and he did not change as he should have. His realisation that he must make room for the Army's younger men and their new approaches signal the 'death' of 'Colonel Blimp'.

## Appendix D: *The Battle of the River Plate*

The following list contains the comprehensive set of cardinal functions for Powell and Pressburger's 1956 film *The Battle of the River Plate*.

### Act I – Patrick Dove's Time on the Admiral *Graf Spee*

1. The MS *Africa Shell* is destroyed by an unnamed German ship.
2. Captain Dove (of the *Africa Shell*) is escorted onto the enemy ship while his crew are sent safely to shore.
3. Dove meets Captain Langsdorff, commander of the *Graf Spee*. Dove and Langsdorff converse about the destruction of the *Africa Shell* before moving on to discuss the *Graf Spee*'s recent raids and future plans.
4. Dove is taken on a tour of the *Graf Spee* before being shown to his quarters. He is told that other prisoners will join him in time.
5. Langsdorff is shown mapping out a route past South Africa to meet with the supply ship, *Altmark*. This silent cinematic interlude is used to suggest the passing of time since the *Africa Shell* was destroyed.
6. Now in cold waters, Dove is given appropriate clothing and is invited to watch the exchange between the *Graf Spee* and the *Altmark*. He speaks to Langsdorff and the Captain explains how he disguises his ship with false signage, paintwork, and crafted decoy turrets, to avoid detection from neutral or enemy ships.
7. Langsdorff explains to Dove that the ship is returning to Germany for shore leave, so their prisoners of war (previously stowed on the *Altmark*) will join him on the *Graf Spee*.
8. The prisoners are transferred and they meet Dove. He explains his capture and they discuss the ships they have all come from, i.e., *Clement*, *Newton Beech*, *Huntsman*.
9. Time has passed and the prisoners have survived through one of the raider's attacks. They are told by a German officer that the *Doric Star* was sunk. The newly captured men join them.

10. Langsdorff broods over his maps.
11. The prisoners do their best to stay entertained. They have some musical instruments and a newspaper but are terribly bored. The German crew brings them some decorations whilst singing 'Silent Night, Holy Night' – they are celebrating Saint Nicholas' Day<sup>5</sup> (December 6th).
12. Celebrations are cut short when an alarm starts and the Germans scatter to their posts.
13. The prisoners find a local newspaper in one of the decoration baskets. They recognise some of the English names printed there and realise that it is a report on British naval movements in South America – Commodore Harwood's squadron is recognised amongst the list of names.

#### Act II – The British are Hunting

14. This is the first visual introduction for Commodore Harwood. He requests a signal to tell the Captains of the HMS *Exeter* and HMNZS *Achilles* to come to the flagship for a meeting. Signalling commences. Captain Bell of the *Exeter* is introduced to the audience as he receives the message. The same occurs for Captain Parry of the *Achilles*.
15. The men are shown travelling, via small boats, to the flagship.
16. They meet with their Commodore and are introduced to the *Ajax's* Captain Woodhouse. Harwood explains that there is a German surface raider at large in the South Atlantic. He is unsure of its identity but outlines its movements and victims. Harwood believes that it will enter the River Plate area, where they currently reside, to attack the grain ships and meat cargoes coming to/from South America. His goal is to destroy the enemy, but he explains that she 'can outgun us and outrange us', so they must divide its attention and work together. They are to practice manoeuvres in anticipation of the enemy's arrival.

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<sup>5</sup> Saint Nicholas's Day is a holiday in the German calendar and is acknowledged by several different Christian based faiths – Catholicism, Anglicanism, Methodism, Lutheranism etc.

### Act III – The battle of the River Plate

17. 'The morning of Wednesday, December 13<sup>th</sup>' (dawn). The British are out on patrol. One ship's aircraft is deployed for reconnaissance. Nothing is found and the fleet resumes cruising stations.
18. The Captains and Commodore return to their separate quarters.
19. A plume of smoke is spotted. Messages are relayed and the *Exeter* is sent to investigate. It breaks away from the main fleet.
20. Bell confirms that it is the enemy and battle stations are resumed.
21. \*CUTSCENE\*: The prisoners on the *Graf Spee* are woken by an alarm – one they have never heard before.
22. The *Exeter* continues towards the *Graf Spee* and is under the impression that it is the *Graf Spee*'s sister ship, the *Admiral Scheer*. Battle ensigns are hoisted.
23. Harwood hoists the *Ajax*'s battle ensigns and sends a transmission to high command announcing that he is engaging with a pocket battleship. Meanwhile, the crew on the *Exeter* also prepare. Both ships move closer.
24. \*CUTSCENE\*: The prisoners are excited, especially when the *Graf Spee* begins firing.
25. The *Exeter* is narrowly missed. It returns fire.
26. Harwood is preparing to fire but must wait until the *Ajax* is close enough to the enemy.
27. The *Ajax* comes within range and begins firing.
28. The *Achilles* joins the fight and opens fire when in range.
29. The *Ajax*'s spotting aircraft is successfully launched.
30. The *Exeter* begins 'straddling'<sup>6</sup> the enemy.
31. \*CUTSCENE\*: The prisoners are anxious about being hit. Dove mentions that the *Graf Spee* is being straddled. They are hit and realise (through smell and sound) that the spotting plane had been damaged.
32. The *Graf Spee* alters course and heads towards the *Ajax*, whilst still firing upon the *Exeter*.

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<sup>6</sup> 'Straddling' is a common technique used in naval engagements. It is a technique used to accurately determine the exact coordinates of a target. The gunnery fires a quick succession of artillery rounds that are both too long and too short, which allows them to narrow down the distance in a systematic manner.



33. The *Exeter* is hit multiple times along the forward turret. Bell attempts to contact staff after the explosion but many are injured and unresponsive. There is extensive damage and able-bodied crewmen are attempting to put out fires and help casualties.
34. The crew on the *Ajax* watch as smoke billows from the *Exeter*. Harwood is increasingly anxious about its wellbeing.
35. Bell manoeuvres through the wrecked *Exeter* to survey the damage and receive reports from senior crewmen. Communications are down but the crew scrambles to fulfil Bell's orders.
36. The crew on the *Ajax* watch as the *Exeter* continues to fire and they cheer for Bell's continued efforts (despite the immense damage).
37. The *Exeter* is now severely damaged. There are various fires and the spotting plane has rained petrol upon the upper deck. Bell insists that the ruined aircraft be tipped overboard.
38. Harwood watches as the *Graf Spee* turns its attention to the *Achilles* while it simultaneously begins to straddle the *Ajax*. The *Ajax* alters course to disrupt the barrage.
39. Parry and the crew of the *Achilles* sustain serious injury after a direct hit. They struggle to return to their positions.
40. Bell is still firing on the *Graf Spee* but the enemy is headed straight for them. Firing is a difficult task without proper communication channels, so the crew make do.
41. It is reported, via the only active spotting plane, that the *Achilles* is falling short with its shots.
42. Bell admits that the *Exeter* is spent, with 'not a gun or a torpedo left'. The *Graf Spee* has the power to destroy them.
43. To redirect the *Graf Spee*'s attention, Harwood orders the *Ajax* to alter course towards the *Achilles* – putting them in range of the German raider. Meanwhile, the *Exeter* is listing starboard and is clearly out of control. It is reported that the *Graf Spee* is heading straight towards the struggling ship.
44. Bell tells his crew that the *Graf Spee* is on its way to 'finish them off'. If provided with a window of opportunity he admits that he will ram them if he can.
45. The *Ajax* manages to improve its range and fires upon the *Graf Spee*. Direct hits are made.

46. \*CUTSCENE\*: The prisoners scramble for cover as the *Graf Spee* is hit.
47. The *Achilles* fires again and directly hits the German raider too.
48. \*CUTSCENE\*: The prisoners are watching through the holes in their cabin's door. Many are elated that the *Graf Spee* is receiving significant damage.
49. Harwood is ecstatic when it is reported that the *Graf Spee* is altering its course away from the fleet. The German battleship is still firing during this retreat and does further damage to the *Ajax*.
50. The *Achilles* receives a report from a gunner. They have sustained heavy casualties and the ship is significantly damaged.
51. Harwood asks for the time – it is 7.40 am. He decides that ship will 'make smoke' to confuse the enemy. A message is also received from the *Exeter*. They are still seaworthy but have no usable weapons. Harwood wonders if they can reach the Falklands.
52. Via signal, Captain Bell receives Harwood's question concerning the Falklands. He responds, 'can reach Plymouth if ordered'.
53. Harwood receives Bell's response and directs the *Exeter* to the Falklands for repair.
54. \*CUTSCENE\*: The prisoners are silent and anxious. They begin to argue about the length of the battle (approx. half an hour) and its outcome.
55. Harwood chases the *Graf Spee*.
56. \*CUTSCENE\*: The *Graf Spee* is hit again during its retreat and the prisoners receive minor injuries.
57. The *Ajax* is under fire as it shadows the raider; however, the shots often miss. Harwood believes they are simply warning shots – one's to say 'keep off the grass'. He believes that they will have the chance to destroy her at dusk.
58. \*CUTSCENE\*: The prisoners are drinking and trying to pass the time. They decorate using the Christmas materials they were given earlier (function 11).
59. Time has passed and the prisoners realise that the *Graf Spee* is beginning to slow down. When it stops a German officer joins them. He explains that they are in Montevideo Harbour, in the neutral territory of Uruguay, and that they will be set free in the morning. There is an uproar of excitement and disbelief amongst the prisoners.

60. A montage of bright neon signs highlights the buzzing nightlife in Montevideo and eventually settles the café Manolo. It is buzzing with live music and patrons.
61. An old man interrupts the scene to announce that a German pocket battleship has entered the outer harbour. He specifically directs this to Mike Fowler – an American reporter – but is loud, so many patrons rush out to witness it themselves.
62. A short time later at the hotel, Rio de la Plata, Fowler harasses a telephone operator for a line to New York.
63. \*CUTSCENE\*: A montage of consulate office windows are shown on screen as they turn on their lights – signalling how officials are waking up to deal with the *Graf Spee*.
64. In a stately office, Captain Langsdorff and Germany's consulate representative, Dr. Otto Langmann, meet with Dr. Alberto Guani, Uruguay's Foreign Minister. Guani says he will send officials to the *Graf Spee* to assess the damage, which will determine how much time he will grant for their stay. They leave without remark.
65. Eugen Millington-Drake, the British Minister to Uruguay, enters the office immediately after the Germans exit. He immediately begins to quote international law and asks if the *Graf Spee* will be interned in Montevideo. The French Chargé d'Affaires, Monsieur Desmoulins, also enters and begins to recite points from Hague guidelines. Guani does not bow to the pressure and refuses to provide an answer.
66. The next morning crowds of locals line the harbour to see the damaged pocket battleship.
67. Fowler has set up a small radio broadcasting station in Café Manolo and is providing commentary for locals and listeners in New York. The café's owner tries to throw him out, but Fowler ends up renting the space.
68. \*CUTSCENE\*: Millington-Drake discusses the case with his secretary. She informs him that Ray Martin (Secret Intelligence Service) has installed himself down at the docks with the naval attaché from Buenos Aires to survey the Germans' activities.
69. At the surveillance point, Captain Henry McCall (Britain's naval attaché) answers a call from Millington-Drake. He explains that a 24hr watch on the *Graf Spee* has been arranged. After ending the call the pair spy a small ship visiting the interned raider – they believe it is Langmann, the German Minister.
70. \*CUTSCENE\*: Aboard the *Graf Spee*. Langsdorff has shaved off his beard and is wearing his white dress uniform. Langmann is with him. They walk across the deck and

it is lined with the coffins of the dead – all draped with the Nazi flag and ready for burial. The British prisoners begin to exit from below deck and, as a sign of respect, they salute the dead as they pass.

71. \*CUTSCENE\*: Martin and McCall watch the funeral preparations and prisoner release from their recon point. They are surprised to see British prisoners.
72. \*CUTSCENE\*: The prisoners are ushered off the ship, but Dove is separated because Langsdorff has requested a meeting.
73. Dove joins Langsdorff in his Captain's quarters. They shake hands and Dove thanks him for his hospitality. He asks about the battle and Langsdorff explains what prompted his actions. Langsdorff believed that the British ships were attempting to herd him towards higher class battleships – ones that would destroy his own – and he was entirely unaware that they were a fleet of three. Langsdorff then gives Dove the cap ribbons from three fallen sailors as 'souvenirs'.
74. \*CUTSCENE\* - The crew on the *Ajax* notice the *HMS Cumberland*. It has sailed from the Falklands to join the fleet just beyond Montevideo's neutral zone.
75. \*CUTSCENE\*: Later, back in Montevideo, Langsdorff and Langmann anxiously wait outside Guani's office for their scheduled meeting. Milligton-Drake and Desmoulins exit the office arm in arm, conversing quietly – which prompts some concerned looks from the waiting Germans
76. After Langsdorff and Langmann enter, Guani reads them the official communiqué he received from the German government. It says that the *Graf Spee* suffered only minor damage; however, Langmann argues that it received major damage and is no longer seaworthy, and insists on a 2-3-week session for repair in Montevideo. Guani states that the report by his technical officers (those he mentioned function 64) suggests that the *Graf Spee* would be stable enough for travel within forty-eight hours. In an effort to compromise, Guani grants them 72 hours of safe harbour in Montevideo on the proviso that they do not enhance the ship's firepower.
77. \*CUTSCENE\*: Unaware of Guani's decision, McCall takes a charter to the *Ajax*. Harwood tells him that the *Graf Spee* must be kept in the harbour. McCall is shocked because efforts have been made to eject the battleship from the port. Harwood insists that it must be done because he is waiting for more British ships to join the fleet.

78. Harwood learns that he has been promoted to Rear Admiral and awarded the Knight Commander of the Bath order of chivalry. The other Captains have also received promotions and are now Companions of the Bath. Harwood is excited and amused by the news.
79. \*CUTSCENE\*: In a scheme to spread rumours, Millington-Drake, McCall, and Martin telephone the British Ambassador in Buenos Aires to beg for a fuel supply to be readied for two British ships that are (supposedly) on their way to join Harwood's fleet. The Ambassador berates McCall for using of an insecure phone line but agrees to the fuel request. Martin, who has been silent thus far, believes that the 'leaky telephone cables' will result in newspaper headlines announcing that half British fleet is nearby.
80. \*CUTSCENE\*: In a montage, scores of locals are fighting for copies of the local newspaper at vendors' trucks. The montage continues into an office setting. A man asks a young woman to translate the main story and she tells him the false story that McCall planted. McCall and Martin are nearby and they overhear her comment. McCall quietly divulges that the Barham is in Gibraltar and is pleased that their ruse on the phone worked.
81. \*CUTSCENE\*: Guani meets with Millington-Drake and asks for an explanation about the British change in attitude. Millington-Drake only admits that it is a change in strategy, not attitude.
82. \*CUTSCENE\*: Fowler is still broadcasting from Manolo's. The crowds there are immense. It is Sunday morning (10:15 am) and the *Graf Spee* must leave the harbour that evening otherwise it will be interned. He repeats the rumours about British warships to his audiences – apparently there are five to seven waiting.
83. \*CUTSCENE\*: McCall and Martin are watching from their reconnaissance spot – the same from function 69. They chat about the fate of the *Graf Spee* and how it would be bad propaganda for Germany if it was defeated. Beasley (a prisoner from the *Trevanion*) and Dove join them. They discuss their attendance at the funeral that was held for the German sailors.
84. \*CUTSCENE\*: Fowler broadcasts the rumour that the *Graf Spee* may be granted more time in Montevideo

85. \*CUTSCENE\*: Harwood and his crew are listening to Fowler's broadcast through the *Ajax's* PA system. Fowler now reports that at least thirteen British battleships are waiting beyond the harbour. Harwood is unconvinced about the rumour that the *Graf Spee* will sprint towards the open sea when it departs and believes that this is too simple for Langsdorff.
86. Fowler announces that it is 7:50 pm and that the *Graf Spee* has ten minutes to move. Harwood orders the *Ajax* to form a single line with the *Achilles* and the *Cumberland*, forming a defensive position in preparation for its arrival.
87. \*CUTSCENE\*: The crowds on the beach and rooftops are immense. As the *Graf Spee* begins to exit the harbour it is followed by the passenger ship *SS Tacoma*.
88. \*CUTSCENE\* Harwood and his men alter their course slightly to better meet the *Graf Spee*.
89. The *Ajax* launches their spotting aircraft.
90. The *Graf Spee* exits the harbour with thousands of locals watching.
91. \*CUTSCENE\*: Many foreign diplomats are also watching from balconies overlooking the harbour.
92. The *Graf Spee* is 'on the move' and the *Ajax's* spotting aircraft reports that they are heading for Buenos Aires.
93. Fowler narrates over a fast-paced montage of onlookers – the *Graf Spee* is now three miles beyond the harbour and seemingly changing course.
94. It stops. Fowler reports that a launch ship can be seen transferring crewmembers to the *SS Tacoma* (shown visually too).
95. Explosions on the *Graf Spee* interrupt his broadcast. Everyone is surprised by the spectacle and in an uproar about Langsdorff's decision to scuttle his ship.
96. \*CUTSCENE\*: Both Harwood and Woodhouse are relieved at Langsdorff's decision and Harwood dictates a message for the *Achilles*, 'many a life has been saved today'. They sail past one another with cheering crews. They head towards the destroyed *Graf Spee*.
97. The *SS Tacoma's* crew is being harassed by Uruguay's police for assisting Langsdorff, the German Captain watches silently as the *Graf Spee* – still on fire – continues to sink. Captain Dove joins him. Dove admits that he thought Langsdorff had died with the ship; however, the other man is adamant that his crew comes first and that he must

arrange their safety. Dove assures him that all the parties involved, even the enemies, greatly respect him.

98. \*CUTSCENE\*: Fowler signs off his broadcast.

99. \*CUTSCENE\*: A panning shot of the *Ajax*, *Achilles* and *Cumberland* closes the film – inferring that they remained to continue patrolling the waters.

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