

Of Treason, God and Testicles

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*Political Masculinities in British
and American Films of the Early
Cold War*

By

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and American Films of the Early Cold War

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For Gregor and Kalle—my two favourite men

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This book starts out from the premise that gender is a key analytical category for the understanding of history in general and the history of the United States and Great Britain in particular. Social structures and processes are arranged according to individuals' and groups' access to and exercising of power which, in turn, is closely intertwined with the gender order of a society. Due to the prevailing gender hierarchies of Western societies, positions of political power in the US and the UK have traditionally been held by men. Therefore, not only these positions but also political institutions and structures have been shaped with a masculine "bias." As Eva Kreisky has recently pointed out:

[I]n the context of political science and political theory [...] masculinities have been crucial for illuminating gendered structural and institutional arrangements and thereby contributed immensely to our understanding of the gendering of politics, bureaucracy, and the state. (Kreisky 2014, 11)

Thus, in an attempt to comprehend the complex social and political processes of a historical phenomenon such as the Cold War, it becomes pivotal to examine in what way political beliefs and activities interact with different types of masculinities. I suggest that for this purpose it is even more fruitful to investigate masculinities which are situated directly in the political arena. Following Birgit Sauer's and my own definition of "political masculinities," the term

encompasses any kind of masculinity that is constructed around, ascribed to and/or claimed by "political players." These shall be individuals or groups of persons who are part of or associated with the "political domain," i.e. professional politicians, party members, members of the military as well as citizens and members of political movements claiming or gaining political rights. (Starck and Sauer 2014, 6)

The Cold War political players of this book, however, are not located in lived experiences. Extensive analyses of real-life Cold War masculinities

have been provided elsewhere.¹ Instead, I focus on the filmic representations of political masculinities during the early Cold War. Underlying this decision is the assumption that films, and also the cinema as an institution, interact closely with the socio-political context in which they are produced and consumed. Moreover, some of the films analysed here might not have been very successful at the box office; yet, taking into account contemporary cinema going practices, their impact should not be underestimated. The role of the cinema as a source of information and attitude formation will be briefly investigated in chapter two. The involvement of the state and its institutions in the production of Cold War films has been investigated in detail in Tony Shaw's books on Cold War cinema in Great Britain and the United States. Shaw and Youngblood emphasise how during the Cold War

[n]o cinema—from the East, West, North, or South—could fail to be touched in one way or another by a conflict that spanned more than four decades. During the war politicians of all stripes recognized the value of cinematic images and realized the need to intervene in the filmmaking process. (T. Shaw and Youngblood 2010, 3)

Though Shaw's books inform some of the analyses of this book, state propaganda is not at their centre. What interests me is rather the result of the interplay between widespread political and ideological Cold War attitudes and practices—which might or might not include state propaganda—and beliefs about masculinity and in what shape they found their way onto British and American screens. The masculinities in question are all directly linked to the political arena and the analysed characters are members of the Communist party, spies, a “national monument” imprisoned by the Communist regime, politicians, code clerks, a soldier, an investigator for the House Un-American Activities Committee, and a civilian strategic adviser to the Pentagon.

I concentrate on films from the early Cold War, 1948 to 1966, mainly because one might call this historical period the height of the Cold War as the late 1960s saw changing attitudes and the introduction of the policy of détente with its easing of tensions between the superpowers (before new tensions arose in the 1980s). The years of 1947–1962 have also often been called the first Cold War (T. Shaw and Youngblood 2010, 5) and Hans Krabbendam and Giles Scott-Smith point out for Western Europe that during the period 1945–1960,

the infrastructure of the Cold War was created: the organizations, the policy directives, the mobilization of groups in civil society [...]

[representing different] motives which mingled in an unprecedented expansion of governmental activity and private initiative that began to blur the lines between state and civil society. (Krabbendam and Scott-Smith 2003, 1)

In order to illustrate the multifarious interactions between the political arena of the early Cold War and the British and American cinemas of the time, chapter two sketches the conditions under which films were produced and watched, which (state) institutions influenced film production and reception and what the main differences between the two film industries and their output were. Moreover, it provides a brief glance of the actual products of the film industries and points to some of the most striking characteristics in their portrayal of the Cold War conflict and the superpowers. Chapter three defines and explores the concept of masculinity in its historical adaptability. It illustrates how and why masculinity is so closely intertwined with the field of politics and traces the social and political conditions which led to a perceived crisis of masculinity in the 1950s and links these findings to specific Cold War formations of masculinity. Chapter four presents the analyses of the two films which are widely considered the first Cold War films of the UK and the US, *Conspirator* and *The Iron Curtain*. It is particularly interesting to see how the cinema responded to the very early Cold War spy scandals of the 1940s, when the collective memory of the Second World War and the Soviet Union as an ally against Fascism was still rather fresh on the populations' minds. Therefore, this interpretation pays attention to the double standards the construction and deconstruction of political heroes necessitates. Heroic masculinity is also at the centre of chapter five, in which I analyse two filmic adaptations of the same event, the trial and sentencing of the Hungarian Cardinal Mindszenty by the Communist regime. The films under scrutiny are the American production *Guilty of Treason* and the British film *The Prisoner*. Looking at the actual historical figure of the Cardinal as well as the significant role that the Christian religion played in the superpower conflict, I outline how a member of the clergy can embody heroic masculinity. In chapter six I focus on the early 1950s idea of the fifth column—traitors within one's own community. In the cases of the British film *High Treason* and the American production *My Son John*, it is particularly the family which is under threat of infiltration and contamination by Communism. The overarching question is how a good patriotic family can produce a traitor and the answer is largely to be found in the films' understanding of masculinity. Chapter seven introduces the probably best-known figure of the Cold War, the Cold Warrior. In contrast to the other chapters of this book, all the

examples here are taken from the American cinema because British cinema, for reasons examined in this chapter, does not provide any full-fledged Cold Warriors. The comparison of the films *Big Jim McLain*, *Fail-Safe* and *The Manchurian Candidate* with their production ranging from the early 1950s to the early 1960s, is remarkable for its extensive variation of the depiction and evaluation of the Cold Warrior figure. I attribute this flexibility to the influence of the growing Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) movement and general changing attitudes towards the Cold War from the end of the 1950s on, which produced a different view of the masculinity of political players and results in a range of Cold Warrior depictions from celebrated hero to detested monster.

Chapter eight was included to demonstrate that even early Cold War cinema had space for alternative visions of a world in which individuals are not judged by their country of origin or party affiliation. Instead, they are portrayed as human beings with a universal need for romantic love and dreams of a better life who fall in love across the Iron Curtain. Emphasising the fact that all human beings are equal, the British film *The Young Lovers* and the American film *The Russians Are Coming! The Russians Are Coming!* even involve overtly political players, such as a code clerk and a soldier, in their romances. I illustrate how the “political” of these masculinities needs to be downplayed in order to convey the message of equality across the Iron Curtain.

Finally, chapter nine summarises the findings of my analyses and reflects on the relationship between early Cold War cinematic depictions of political ideology and masculinity.

Notes

1 Cf. for example, K. A. Cuordileone’s 2005 analysis of masculinity in American Cold War politics, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War*, Robert D. Dean’s 2003 book dealing with similar issues, *Imperial Brotherhood. Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy*, or Robert J. Corber’s 1997 book *Homosexuality in Cold War America. Resistance and the Crisis of Masculinity*.

CHAPTER TWO

BETWEEN FREEDOM AND TOTALITARIANISM: BRITISH AND AMERICAN CINEMA AND THE EARLY COLD WAR

British or American?

During the early Cold War the film industries of the United States and Great Britain were on the one hand essentially different. Yet on the other hand, as part of a Cold War alliance, they operated within the same larger political and cultural framework. Up to the 1950s, they likewise shared hosting the largest number of cinema seats per capita and “the largest habitual cinema-going public” (Pronay 1993, 15). In America, the return of servicemen to the postwar cinema caused attendance to rise to a staggering ninety million a week in 1946 (Shain 1974, 334). From the 1950s on theatre attendance dropped due to the advent of new leisure activities such as television, family vacationing, homebuilding, redecorating and shopping (Pomerance 2005, 6; Geraghty 2000, 12). However, the popularity of the medium still prompts Neal R. McCrillis to conclude, “[British] films produced during the years 1945–1960 both expressed and shaped the popular attitudes of the day” (2001, 6). This is confirmed by Peter Biskind’s assessment of the role of films in 1950s America: “They told us what was right and what was wrong, what was good and what was bad; they defined our problems and suggested solutions” (2001, 2). Therefore, it is safe to assume that the portrayal of Cold War values, norms and ideals in British and American films of the early Cold War resonate with real-life Cold War attitudes.

In some cases it is quite difficult to establish whether a film is in fact British or American. As Nicholas Pronay points out, American companies also made films in Britain and

[p]art of the game was to get these films within the quota definition [which defined the films eligible for the 30 per cent of screen time reserved for British films] for the financial advantages which that conferred. (Pronay 1993, 11)

Between 1950 and 1957 over 100 films in Britain were produced by American companies (Street 2009, 23). Harper and Porter attribute the British film industry's "wholesale dependence on American finance" during the 1950s (2007, 1–2) to American innovations such as Eastmancolor, CinemaScope, and VistaVision (ibid., 2). As a consequence, "the 1950s industry was a battleground in which different factions—in finance, in class politics, in gender representation, in technology—struggled for dominance" (ibid.). According to Pronay, things had developed into a farce by the 1970s. "Even the Board of trade itself [...] found it impossible to determine whether a film was or was not a British film and how it was to be registered" (1993, 12). Gill Plain even states that by 1966, seventy-five per cent of British films were financed by American money, with the number rising to ninety per cent in 1968 (2006, 233).

Thus, in order to categorise a film as British or American, Pronay offers the following rule of thumb, which will also be employed for this book: "The only sensible thing [...] is to list [...] films which were actually made in Britain [or America, respectively], using a touch of common sense" (1993, 12).

Cold War Allies

Within the framework of the Cold War, Great Britain and the United States were close allies who were linked through a special relationship. Therefore, their values were, if not identical, very much alike. Historian Anne Deighton claims that homogeneous political aims can be identified quite early, although "[b]etween 1945 and 1947, the pattern of the cold war was not yet defined, the great postwar alliance systems were not yet fashioned," and Britain as well as the United States considered themselves world powers in their own rights (1993, 4). For the immediate postwar period Deighton emphasises Britain's foreign political priority of establishing and maintaining a Western alliance in order to control Soviet expansionist activities in Europe and elsewhere (ibid., 6–7). Within this context, the objective of British-American cooperation in matters of anti-Communist state propaganda featured largely in the politics of the two countries. Andrew Defty observes,

[...] from the earliest stages in the development of Britain's response to communist propaganda, the degree to which such activities could be coordinated with the US Government was a primary consideration. [...] [C]ooperation, and eventually coordination of propaganda activities, with

the United States became a defining feature of Britain's anti-communist propaganda policy. (Defty 2004, 1–2)

It was agreed that Communism was an evil, heathen and uncivilised dictatorship, whereas the Anglo-American alliance stood for Christian civilization, democracy, freedom and the better way of life and was in danger of being undermined by Communism. This was a “reality” which had been established as early as 1946. In March that year, Winston Churchill gave his famous Iron Curtain speech in Fulton, Missouri. He “call[ed] for the Anglo-Americans to resist the expansion of Soviet-Communist power” (Churchill quoted in Hanhimäki and Westadd 2004, 36) and employed a type of rhetoric which came to be a Cold War routine:

Except in the British Commonwealth and in the United States where Communism is in its infancy, the Communist parties or fifth columns constitute a growing challenge and peril to Christian civilization. [...] But what we have to consider here today while time remains, is the permanent prevention of war and the establishment of conditions of freedom and democracy as rapidly as possible in all countries. (Churchill 1946)

This dichotomy remained in place, in different variations and degrees, until the end of the Cold War—and some would argue even beyond the conflict's termination.¹

British Cinema

Following Churchill's speech, the British Labour government set up an “increasingly elaborate long-term anti-communist propaganda campaign, at home and overseas” during the second half of the 1940s (T. Shaw 2006, 24–25). Thus, in 1948 the Information Research Department (IRD) was established, a department of the Foreign Office, which played a vital role in the British government's anti-Soviet propaganda (ibid., 25). The IRD, whose propaganda was mainly directed at a domestic audience, was a very secretive and not well-known department until its dissolution in 1977 and the release of IRD papers began only in 1995 (Defty 2004, 2). It circulated information to “academics, trade union leaders, MPs [Members of Parliament], the BBC, Fleet Street and the film industry,” however, made sure that the sources of that information remained unknown (T. Shaw 2006, 25). According to Tony Shaw, the British film industry had traditionally been very respectful of the government's notions on national security and therefore “it was only natural for the mainstream cinema to

consign the USSR to pariah status once the Cold War re-emerged in a more graphic form after 1945” (ibid.). This is in line with John Jenks’ reflections on the Early Cold War British media. He writes that after the war the British media

[i]n a little less than three years [...] developed a Cold War consensus of Soviet intransigence and British virtue, and the government prepared for a propaganda barrage to sell that message to the rest of the world. (Jenks 2006, 7)

Initially, however, feature films between 1945 and 1949 depicting East-West relations were absent from British cinema. This was mainly due to commercial reasons, the public’s taste in entertainment as well as censorship (T. Shaw 2006, 26). The key genres of 1950s British cinema continued to be domestic comedies and war films (Geraghty 2000, 36; see also Harper and Porter 2007, 248). Gill Plain describes the immediate postwar period as “a nebulous border zone between the two more familiar states of war and peace,” during which there existed a popular disdain for realism because the audience were “seeking release from the pressures of wartime in the escapism of Hollywood and the Gainsborough melodramas” (2006, 99). In line with this, Pronay found only 2.4 per cent of British films to relate to the Cold War during the period of time from 1947 to 1985 (1993, 10).

Possibly, some filmmakers’ reluctance to partake in the anti-Soviet propaganda also sprang from political reasons. Thus, Tony Shaw mentions the recentness of the war and its framing of the USSR as an ally, an understanding of the Soviet Union’s concern over the security of their Western border, a certain doubt of American trustworthiness as well as some British individuals’ belief in a possible contribution of Communism to a democratic society (T. Shaw 2006, 27). Particularly the wartime image of the Soviet Union as an ally was hard to depose. Moreover, the British government publicised their new foreign policy objectives only in 1948, after Britain had secured a new power balance in Europe and accepted its role as “the United States’ junior partner in Western Europe” (Deighton 1993, 6). As Geraghty points out,

[s]uch changes in attitude were by no means straightforward, either to members of the government and the civil service or to the British, who had endured six years of war. (Geraghty 2000, 95)

Thus, it is not surprising that the first British Cold War feature film, *Conspirator*, was released only in 1949. As one reviewer points out, it was

the first “film with a mission—to prove that Communist spies are everywhere, even in the Brigade of Guards.”²

Documentary films were a different story altogether. Many were commissioned by the British Foreign Office and produced by the Central Office of Information (T. Shaw 2006, 30), “a common service department which supplemented the information services of home and overseas ministerial departments” and was the Ministry of Information’s postwar replacement (ibid., 25). The Central Office of Information was established in 1946 as a result of a series of events which had been initiated by Churchill himself (Taylor 1999, 230). The documentaries produced by the Central Office of Information Films Division were intended to either provide an immediate response to current and recent events or to deal with public fears or glorify political successes on the one hand, or to illustrate Western Cold War strategies and thinking on the other (T. Shaw 2006, 30). The IRD even established direct contact with newsreel companies in 1948 in order to influence their content in accordance with government politics (ibid., 32). Moreover, documentary films were produced within the frame of the US-sponsored European Recovery Programme which had been initiated in 1948 and ensured anti-Communist content (ibid., 30–31).

The effect of documentaries and newsreels in 1940s and 1950s cinema cannot be overestimated. Newsreels were a staple at the “beginning” of a cinema programme until the mid-1950s and their content was regarded by most cinemagoers in the 1940s and 1950s as objective news rather than an outlet for political opinions (ibid., 32). Usually, there would be a continuous performance of a main film, followed by a B-movie and a newsreel. These, according to a contemporary cinemagoer, would, for example, keep “rolling from 2 pm until the stampede to beat the National Anthem at 10 pm” and often people would arrive in the middle of a film and leave once they reached the point at which they had come in (Kynaston 2010, 200–201). This holds true for the American cinemas, too. Murray Pomerance writes about 1950s American cinema that there were no fixed times and no particular order of watching the news, cartoons and/or films and that “people showed up at movies whenever it pleased them” (2005, 8). He even claims that audiences were not actually going to the cinema *because of the story* of a film, but instead were more interested in the stars or particularly erotic or unnerving moments (ibid., 8–9). So when going to the cinema to watch a particular main film, people were very likely to also view the newsreel. The miscellaneous nature of newsreels is illustrated by these two (American) examples, taken from the *Motion Picture Herald* of October 1, 1949. Stated under the heading of “In Newsreels” is:

Universal Newsreel—Vol. 22, No 286—Russia and the atom bomb. 1950 swim suits. Football. Warner Pathe News—Vol. 21, No 13—Atom bomb. Shirley My France reception. California pole sitter. Swim suits. Dangerous occupations. Football.³

Overall, newsreels and documentaries were often characterised by misinformation, omissions and in some cases faked footage in order to provide the preferred Cold War point of view to the public (T. Shaw 2006, 32). Sometimes this would not even have been necessary. Jenks observes that during the Early Cold War it was not the British journalists' fear of the government or of losing their jobs which let them avoid particular stories and sources. Instead, "they accepted the hegemonic common sense about communism and the Soviet Union and probably never even considered challenging it" (Jenks 2006, 1). Moreover, Jenks draws attention to the British journalists' conditioning during the Second World War and claims that they had learned to reflexively defer to the national security concerns of the government (*ibid.*, 23). Tony Shaw concludes,

seeing the "reality" of the Soviet threat and the tangible benefits capitalism brought to war-torn Europe in terms of food and fuel in newsreel clips—and documentaries—presumably lent at least some solidity to Bevin's [Foreign Secretary] policy. (T. Shaw 2006, 33)

Moreover, he suggests that newsreels might also have rendered fictional depictions of the USSR more believable (*ibid.*).

The compliance of fictional Cold War portrayals with state propaganda was ensured by, among other institutions, the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC), which was established in 1912. In 1920 the main trade associations, Kinematograph Renters Society and the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association, decided to not handle films without a BBFC certificate. Their overall objective was "to establish the cinema as a form of family entertainment" (Harper and Porter 2007, 218). Though the original task of the BBFC had been to protect children, it soon extended its mission to also ban adult films. Thus, in 1950, the Board named further principles which the examiners used for their evaluations. These included a negative effect on the moral standards of the public, possible offence of cinema audiences and the effect on the minds of children. In 1952 this was further specified to include a loosening of social standards and false values (*ibid.*, 226). As a result, the Board banned films from Eastern Europe which depicted "wrong politics" or might have hurt religious feelings (*ibid.*, 227). With regard to domestic films, it was mainly concerned with juvenile delinquency and violence, sex, and nudity (*ibid.*, 228–41). Harper

and Porter cite a *Films and Filming* article from 1958 which condemns the Board for being “in danger of denying the public access to new and forceful, vigorous ideas—indeed from the truth itself” (ibid., 236). In spite of the criticism, though, and the insistence that gyrating rock-’n’-roll singers should be permitted to be screened, even this article upholds the Cold War consensus that “religion must be Christian; politics non-Communist” (ibid.). Thus, there existed “an atmosphere of cultural caution for British filmmakers” (T. Shaw 2006, 39) and they were confronted with “a context of production that was subject to tight regulation and censorship,” which only shifted towards greater control of the directors when the British studio system started to come to an end in the 1960s (Spicer 2003, 2).

Although Britain had not established an equivalent to the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), no public investigations took place and no official blacklists were drawn up, the late 1940s and early 1950s in Britain did see some security measures which should not be underestimated. Tony Shaw mentions the “British version of the Truman Loyalty Security Programme” with investigations starting in 1952, the special Cabinet Committee on Subversive Activities and the informal blacklisting carried out by the BBC. He also draws attention to smear campaigns in teaching and lecturing professions and restrictions on the publication of “Communist” literature (T. Shaw 2006, 39). Evidence of such measures can also be found in Phil Cohen’s 1997 book *Children of the Revolution*, in which he collected childhood memories from Communist households in Britain. The poet Jackie Kay remembers that during the McCarthy era there was “a fierce paranoia and hatred of communism in the media, with the ‘reds under the beds’ scare and people being hounded and hunted down” (Kay 1997, 38) and that while she was campaigning for her father, one woman said “the Communists were the devils” (ibid., 33). Michael Rosen, a well-known author of children’s books, even reveals that he, as a “known leftie,” had been blacklisted at the BBC in 1972, which prevented him from obtaining a staff job (1997, 64). In the same vein, Brian Pollitt, the son of Communist Party secretary Harry Pollitt, recalls how he was discriminated against during his National Service. Originally chosen for officer training, he was then classified as a security risk, was confined to particular kinds of postings and “formally warned [...] of the awful punishments that would be visited upon [him] if [he] attempted to stir up the soldiery” (Pollitt 1997, 109). A similar experience is reported by Nina Temple, former general secretary of the British Communist Party and then head of the Democratic Left. As late as during the early 1970s her father, who worked for the Central Bureau for

Educational Visits and Exchanges, was denied promotion to head of Bureau due to his membership in the Communist party. This even involved the conflation of the “crimes” of Communism and homosexuality, a common strategy in the gendering of the Cold War. Threatened by the British Security Service MI5 with exposure, it was a homosexual colleague who denounced Temple’s father (Temple 1997, 91).

Thus, in spite of the film industry’s initial reluctance, anti-Communist paranoia did find its way onto the screen and “[p]olitical subversion was a popular theme in British films released in the wake of *Conspirator*” (T. Shaw 2006, 40). Tony Shaw emphasises, though, that there is evidence of a frequent recycling of story-lines and characters from the years between World Wars I and II (ibid., 193) and the only new genre were so-called creature films and fantasies, often copying Hollywood models (ibid., 194). During this phase, the 1951 *High Treason* stands out as the only truly McCarthyite film made in Britain. It depicts Communist attempts at sabotage and focuses on an innocent young man, who is duped into working for the party, while all of them are being controlled by foreign powers. *Variety* comments in 1951, “[w]ith the production of *High Treason* British studios make their first entry into the political film derby”.⁴ In line with the fear of subversion, many films during the late 1950s and early 1960s account for the immense popularity of spy stories. The most overt example that comes to mind is, of course, the James Bond series.

Towards the end of the 1950s, Tony Shaw attests to a “growing sense of unease with the spiralling arms race and the state’s interference in people’s lives in the name of national security” (2006, 193), which led to a small number of films becoming “self-reflexive to the point of self-critique” (ibid., 193–94). One could speculate about how much this might also have been due to the decreasing role of newsreels. By the end of the 1950s, Pronay claims, the British newsreel had all but ceased to exist. The companies that survived beyond the 1950s then functioned as “colourful, human interest and travelogue cinema magazine[s],” rather than engaging with the Cold War (Pronay 1993, 9).

With regard to the spy genre, Tony Shaw identifies a shift towards darker and more sceptical films which show “a deepening anxiety about the practices of the nation’s own security services” (2006, 60), for example with films based on John Le Carré’s novels and his belief that there “is no victory in the Cold War, only a condition of human illness and a political misery” (John Le Carré quoted in T. Shaw 2006, 60). *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* (1965) is almost iconic in this regard. It

focuses on the seediness of spying and presents its hero, Lemas, as a broken man. Many contemporary reviews praise the film's realism and applaud its reversal of the Bond glamour. Thus, *The Daily Cinema* hails it as a "grey and gritty counter-espionage thriller," which dares to depict "[t]he utter ruthlessness with which governments play upon the individual in the macabre chess games of the cold war."⁵ Other such disillusioning films include *The Deadly Affair* (1966) and *The Looking Glass War* (1969). The shift of the spy genre also led to an emphasis on the complexity of fighting the Cold War enemy within (T. Shaw 2006, 62), as in the 1965 film *The Ipcress File*. Based on Len Deighton's novel, the film introduces the anti-hero Harry Palmer, who in essence is a Bond antidote. A contemporary review describes the film as

ruthlessly deglamourised. A world of double-think and treble-cross, where the only loyalty is to money and the worst trap you can fall into is thinking you can trust someone.⁶

Another review calls it

a thriller set in a recognisable London where espionage is a seedy business conducted, not by impregnable Bonds, but by men as scared and venal as anyone else.⁷

Moreover, there were films such as the 1963 satire *Dr. Strangelove*, which questions the logic of the Cold War and ridicules the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction (aptly abbreviated MAD). One contemporary deems it "the first truly moral film of our time" and pays tribute to the filmmakers' "daring that takes one's breath away."⁸

A resistance to the Cold War consensus can also be seen in a number of films either offering alternatives, such as in *The Young Lovers* (1954), which features a romantic relationship across Cold War borders, or *Our Man in Havana* (1959), Carol Reed's adaptation of Graham Greene's novel, which ridicules the secret service, "cutting holes in the institutionalized culture of Cold War espionage" (T. Shaw 2006, 176). *The Young Lovers* was praised as brave⁹ because it does not feature a villain¹⁰ and presents "an idea so topical and so simple that it is a wonder no one has put it into a film before."¹¹ Resistance to the Cold War, however, also found expression in dystopic films, such as *The Damned* (1961). Tony Shaw considers the latter as "the most profound cinematic critique on dominant Cold War values made in Britain" during the early Cold War (ibid., 182). In line with this judgement, Colin Gardner describes the film

as presenting director Joseph Losey's "unilateral plea for peace," condemning the "indifferent silent majority" (2004, 109–110).

The shift to darker and more sceptical films might also be attributed to the changing audience. If the cinema had been the most popular entertainment for all of the population during the immediate postwar era (see Geraghty 2000, 5–6), the advent of the TV brought a distinct shift towards younger people during the mid-1950s (*ibid.*, 8). However, from 1955 to 1959, British cinemas lost their young urban working-class audience (Street 2009, 20). Moreover, Pronay observes for the late 1950s that

[t]he social composition of the audience changed. From being the medium of the younger working class *par excellence*, it became that of the lower middle-class, the white-collar, clerical, lower professional groups. Tongue in cheek, it could be said that it became the medium of the higher/further education classes and their offspring. From being the medium of those who for reasons of age, social and educational background were the most vulnerable to its influence, it became the medium of those who were the least vulnerable. (Pronay 1993, 15; original emphasis)

This might also have been the kind of audience who were interested in debates about industrial relations and the role that subversion played within that context. There are a few films concentrating on the class antagonism between workers and employers and exploiting the link between Communist ideology and the working class.

For many on the political right and left, the conflict between "the bosses" and "workers" was, literally and metaphorically, at the ideological heart of the East-West divide. (T. Shaw 2006, 144)

This needs to be seen against the background of a British economy that was marked by "austerity," government attempts to motivate the population to contribute to a swift economic recovery and hostile industrial relations (*ibid.*, 144–53), which are often seen "as one of the chief causes of Britain's poor economic record in comparison to her rivals in the 1950s and 1960s" (*ibid.*, 153). The most influential of these films, according to Tony Shaw, is the comedy *I'm All Right Jack* (1959) (*ibid.*, 158). However, dealing with the Cold War in a more direct way by introducing a Communist infiltrator is *The Angry Silence* (1960), which "characterized the hysteria which developed in the British public mind about the origins and implications of strikes more than any other during our period" (*ibid.*, 160). The film caused widespread debate about the

depiction of trade unions. A letter to the editor of *The Times* illustrates the conflict as follows: Most trade unionists see the film as

basically anti-trade-union and anti-working-class, dramatizing an incident which is not typical [...] [t]ypical comments of non-trade unionists have been that it is a realistic picture of how working-class people behave, that it is anti-tyranny rather than anti-union.¹²

Also during the 1950s, a number of films were produced which deal with the decline of the British empire and for this purpose employ a native Communists versus good Britons setting, as in *The Planter's Wife* (1952), *Windom's Way* (1957) or *Bhowani Junction* (1956). These films attest to Britain's rapidly diminishing role as a world power losing its grip on a vast empire on the one hand. On the other hand, the films illustrate the fear of the spread of Communism to parts of the empire in Africa or Asia. By depicting these dangers, Tony Shaw claims, they also held the potential to strengthen and support anxieties of subversion at home in Britain (2006, 50). However, in *The Planter's Wife*, Communism is never mentioned. Instead it is a dubious group of "bandits," who threaten the rubber planters. *Windom's Way* and *Bhowani Junction* are slightly more specific and their rebels are identified as "Communist." Yet, both focus strongly on romantic relationships, which leaves their Cold War "message" somewhat diluted. Thus, the *Monthly Film Bulletin* regards the authors and the hero of *Windom's Way* as having "been betrayed by uncertainty of their attitude and position."¹³ Most reviews of *Bhowani Junction* focus on the film's depiction of the Anglo-Indian characters and their plight in the wake of Indian independence. The *Motion Picture Herald* even claims that the "involved explanation of Indian politics, including the attempts by foreign powers and the Communists to exploit the situation, slows down the first half."¹⁴

Yet another type of films needs mentioning, films which show the "real life" behind the Iron Curtain. These films confirmed the dichotomy of Communism versus Capitalism and at the same time illustrated the superiority of Western life by depicting the dreariness of Eastern life. Within this category fall films such as *Action of the Tiger* (1957) or *Yangtse Incident* (1957), which are set in Albania and China, *State Secret* (1950), set in a fictitious Eastern European country and *The Man Between* (1953), set in East and West Berlin (cf. T. Shaw 2006, 64–81). Often, the films received mediocre critiques. *Films in Review* deems *State Secret* rather inferior because "Hitchcock did it all earlier, and better"¹⁵ and the *New Yorker*, though praising *The Man Between's* style, laments, "having established his atmosphere, Sir Carol wanders around in it like a man lost

in one of his native togs.”¹⁶ There were many more films like these and all of them “were a variation on the Eastern European-as-captive theme, with the tragic plight of dissident opinion much to the fore” (ibid., 74–75).

In contrast, *The Prisoner* (1955), a fictional depiction of Hungarian Cardinal Mindszenty’s imprisonment by Communists, was admired by many critics for its strong dramatic qualities and its acting. *Kinematograph Weekly* calls it a “British prestige picture of wide appeal”¹⁷ and the *New York Times* placed it among the ten best films of 1955.¹⁸ *The Prisoner* is also noteworthy for its coding of the Cold War as a religious conflict, a strategy that is found more frequently in American films of the time. Another issue, which *The Prisoner* addresses, became the topic of many other British films—the much-cited Brainwashing Scare of the 1940s and 1950s. Although it is usually associated with American culture (see below for details on the Brainwashing Scare), British filmmakers likewise capitalised on this fear. Tony Shaw mentions a number of films, among them *The Blue Peter* (1954), *The Gamma People* (1955) or *The Mind Benders* (1963) (ibid., 79). A further subject, which deserves attention, is the depiction of atomic bombs and atomic scientists. In the first five years after Hiroshima Britain produced only four films on the topic. Tony Shaw explains this with the secrecy that surrounded Britain’s decision to build nuclear weapons (ibid., 117). This is a secrecy which is also mirrored in historian Peter Hennessy’s discovery that up to 1965 Buckingham Palace was not in possession of a copy of the Government War Book, a document which “lays plans for a World War III supreme command built around the Prime Minister and a small War Cabinet” (2003: xxi). As a result,

[t]he Queen did not fully know either the drill that, should the stage of a nuclear exchange be reached, would leave her kingdom largely a smoking and irradiated ruin or the plans for carrying on her government in its aftermath. (ibid., xxii–xxiii)

Considering this secrecy, the release of *Seven Days to Noon* (1950) is the more astonishing. In this film a nuclear scientist tries to blackmail the British government into forsaking the further production of nuclear weapons by threatening to explode one of the bombs in London. If this was an explicit critique of the British government’s nuclear policy, other pacifist films preferred to rely on portrayals of “mad scientists.” Since pacifism was not a frequent characteristic of British postwar screens (T. Shaw 2006, 121), films such as *Escapade* (1955) and *The Mouse that Roared* (1959) need special mention. According to Raymond Durnat, the schoolboys’ fight for pacifism in *Escapade* can be interpreted as a forerunner of the CND student action, launched in 1958 (Raymond

Durgnat quoted in T. Shaw 2006, 122). *The Mouse that Roared* was a more vitriolic satire, ridiculing all sides of the conflict alike. Although many critics considered the film too whimsical and charged it with a kind of satire that fails to bite,¹⁹ it was rated important enough to show it at a Foreign Ministers' conference in Geneva in 1959.

An audience of delegates from the United States, Britain, France, the U.S.S.R. and East and West Germany; and newspapermen representing Britain, America, Japan, China and every country in Europe laughed in unison as the film poked fun at the foreign policy of each of the Big Four, and listened to Peter Sellers [...] plead for world peace and disarmament. Reaction to the picture was unanimous enthusiasm for both the comedy and the underlying theme.²⁰

Shaw notes that none of the nuclear weapons feature films actually presents any images of a nuclear war (with the exception of the 1961 *The Day the Earth Caught Fire*, which, however, “merely” dealt with the results of a nuclear testing accident) and attributes this to self-censorship and the BBFC (T. Shaw 2006, 132, 135). However, he also points out that in contrast to this lack of nuclear images, the British government subsidised many pamphlets, journals and films as part of its civil defence programme. The programme aimed at recruiting civil defence workers and at the same time was designed to reduce fears of the bomb by presenting the nuclear disaster as controllable (ibid., 133). The only film ignoring this (self)censorship is the 1966 BBC documentary *The War Game*. With its expressive and realistic portrayal of nuclear war and its consequences the film left no question that there was no chance of survival. As research stands, though, the film was all but withdrawn (until a broadcast in 1985) after the government advised that the broadcasting of the film on television would be too dangerous (ibid., 136–139).

With regard to science fiction and monsters and/or creatures, the 1950s and 1960s are an especially productive time in British cinema. Peter Hutchings points to the large number of invasion narratives and claims that although these films are often regarded as lesser versions of US films, they differ distinctly from them (2001, 33). One of the main differences he identifies is the depiction of individuals as existing in groups in the British films. This, he maintains, constitutes a harking back to

a notion of the people developed and circulated in Britain during the Second World War [...] in which the people as a national collective absorbed and superseded the individual [...] and where the nuclear family

that had been disrupted by war was replaced by the group as the prime site of interaction and mutual support (ibid., 39),

which is then deconstructed as in the *Quatermass* films, starting with *The Quatermass Experiment* of 1955 (ibid., 39). Although the Cold War with its notions of *us* and *them* does play a role in these films, Hutchings argues that the superficiality of the people's solidarity can be traced back to other tensions of the time, such as those caused by race and class conflicts. Overall he claims that the invasion in these films is caused by something being wrong with Britain (ibid., 39–40). This is also apparent in other films of the period and Hutchings concludes that

[i]t is as if Britain, displaced from an imperial history and the glories of the Second World War and caught up in a series of bewildering social changes, is more open to self-doubts and an accompanying acknowledgement of its own limits. (ibid., 46)

Or, as Hunter puts it, these films are “more concerned with tensions in postwar consensus than with metaphors of Red invaders” (2001, 1).

Overall, Tony Shaw identifies three significant differences between British and American Cold War films. These are first, the “far less histrionic and crude manner” in which the Cold War is approached in British films, second, the situating of the films in Britain or its Empire, thus highlighting the Cold War's impact on British people, and third, the far less pronounced homogeneity of British Cold War films' ideology in comparison to Hollywood, which he attributes to the less effective political coercion of British filmmakers (T. Shaw 2006, 194). McCrillis supports this view when he describes British Cold War films as “demonstrably different” from those of the American cinema. He finds the British films “less-pronounced anti-Communis[t]” and displaying a “sense of distance from the near hysteria of the American red scare” (McCrillis 2001, 7). Moreover, McCrillis testifies to British films being more cautious when the government and science were involved. He also states that during the second half of the 1950s there was a move “away from the conservatism of the early postwar years towards greater scepticism and a more confrontational stance.” In addition, McCrillis points to the greater number of comedies in British Cold War films and highlights the development of “science fiction films with elements of a new genre, the gothic horror film.” Finally, he notices the absent glorification of the military as seen in many American films (ibid.).

American Cinema

The American cinema, in particular Hollywood, was highly influenced by the pre-McCarthy and McCarthy-era paranoia about the enemy within. Whereas between 1942 and 1945 the Soviet Union had been turned into an ally in real life and on screen (T. Shaw 2007, 23), the situation had reverted back to viewing the Soviets as enemies in light of the Truman Doctrine (ibid., 24). In 1947, Truman, in seeking the support of Congress for providing financial help to the anti-Communist struggle in Greece and Turkey, proclaims this shift explicitly, thereby asserting that there are two sides to the conflict and two possible choices only: “[...] nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life” (Truman quoted in Bostdorff 2008, 5). He defines this choice as between being ruled by a majority under free institutions, voted for in free elections, and being guaranteed free speech and religion and no political oppression versus being ruled by a minority, who through oppression, suppression of personal freedom and terror force their will onto the majority. Truman concludes that the US must help all countries seeking to defend those above freedoms against “such methods as coercion, or [...] subterfuges as political infiltration” (ibid, 5–6). One of the main targets of the fear of these “fifth columns,” a term already used by Churchill in his Iron Curtain speech, was Hollywood. Although there had already been HUAC hearings due to allegations of Communist infiltration of the film industry in 1938 (T. Shaw 2007, 45), it were the 1947 hearings, that produced the industry’s Waldorf Statement, “which promised to deny employment to anyone suspected of less than orthodox, one-hundred percent Americanism” (Murray 1975, 14) and the famous blacklist (T. Shaw 2007, 45–46). From 1951 on HUAC had filmmakers testify for five more years, giving them the chance to clear their names by naming other names of persons associated with Communism (Pomerance 2005, 11). By 1960 there existed black and grey lists in the American studios with the names of over 2,000 people who could get no or only little work in Hollywood (T. Shaw 2007, 46). Some actors and filmmakers found employment in Britain. However, not all was well there, either. Rebecca Prime writes in *Film History* that Britain as America’s Cold War ally also placed restrictions on the blacklistedees. Thus, she quotes Joseph Losey as remembering the

restrictive stance on the part of the British authorities, who required him to report to Immigration every week and refused to issue a permit for more than thirty days. (Losey quoted in Prime 2008, 480)

Moreover, the American authorities even tried to interfere with blacklistees' lives in Britain, for example, by withholding their passports (*ibid.*). As a consequence, “[a] culture of fear prevailed throughout the film industry during the late 1940s and 1950s” (T. Shaw 2007, 46). Rebecca Bell-Metereau supports this view when she points out that due to the McCarthy hearings, which revolved around loyalty, secretiveness and safety, the issue of secrecy pervaded the American film industry of the 1950s (2005, 89–90). “Secrecy and indirection appeared as common motifs, along with several other patterns of alienation and malaise” (*ibid.*, 91). In addition, the Conservatism of the time was reflected in the popularity of specific genres, such as “the western, musical comedy, war film, epic, and science-fiction—which constituted the five pillars of America’s faith in itself, its past, and its future” (*ibid.*, 91–92).

Furthermore, there were other organisations and institutions which (self)controlled the film industry. Since the 1930s, the Motion Picture Production Code had been in effect. It regulated the content of the films produced by the major film companies. Thus, it demanded that films should not lower moral standards. There should be no sympathy for crime, wrong-doing or sin. Films were to portray the correct standards of life. Divine, natural and human law were not to be ridiculed and there should be no sympathy for its violations (Pomerance 2005, 9). Pomerance attributes the persistence of the Code to the fact that the audiences of 1950s American cinemas had not been diversified, yet. The cinema was supposed to cater for a heterogeneous audience and assure that everyone was able to follow the stories, regardless of their social background. Watching the same performance there would be

young people and old, educated people and uneducated, urban people and rural, men and women, families and lonely individuals, friends and strangers, the intensively employed and the unemployed—virtually anyone and everyone. (*ibid.*, 10)

According to Pomerance, though, the application of the Code flattened the contents of films, exaggerated details of stories in a sensationalist manner and focused on topics that bore no or little relation to existing social conditions, places, feelings or analytical thinking (*ibid.*). Pomerance’s criticism of the Code is echoed in liberal filmmakers’ attitudes at the time. When in October 1954 the conservative director of Production Code Administration, Joseph L. Breen, retired, they greeted this “with barely concealed glee” (Simmons 1994, 3). To liberals the Production Code was outdated and had become useless and frustrating. The Code thwarted any attempt to give a realistic picture of American society and deal with