

DEPICTIONS OF POSTWAR LONDON IN BRITISH FICTION FILMS,
1946-1958

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Jenny Stewart
Department of History of Art and Film
University of Leicester

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ABSTRACT

Jenny Stewart

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London emerged from World War II victorious yet war-ravaged, as the Blitz of 1940-1 and 1944-5 destroyed vast swathes of the London landscape. The subsequent ruins and rubble exposed much the pre-war city and, due to a scarcity of materials, rebuilding was a slow process. Using primary sources, this thesis explores how filmmakers depicted and utilised London's unique postwar landscape for fictional stories, through an examination of sixteen popular British fiction films produced between 1946 and 1958. Case study films, such as *Hue and Cry*, *The Blue Lamp* and *Seven Days to Noon*, are typified by extensive location shooting in inner-London districts, and were generally praised by critics for their 'authentic' evocation of London. These films have a historical value, as filmmakers captured and depicted now-demolished buildings, streets, ruins and wastelands of postwar London. This thesis invites film historians to consider these inner London-set films of the postwar period as a distinct corpus, with particular themes and motifs identifiable across the body of films.

This thesis is structured thematically, to enable comparisons across films, and root selected films within their historical and critical contexts. It compares depictions of London in postwar fiction films with those found in newsreels, local histories and contemporary accounts. An empirical approach, using archival sources, examines how depictions of inner-London locations are shaped by the films' production contexts. This thesis argues that the documentary impetus, developed in British cinema of the 1930s and during World War II, continued in fiction film with regards to location shooting. Analysis of the films' critical reception and publicity materials enables an understanding of discourses around notions of what was considered by critics to be an 'authentic' depiction of London, and how real London locations were used by filmmakers as a key selling point.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BBFC	British Board of Film Censors
BFI	British Film Institute
CEF	Children's Entertainment Film
CFF	Children's Film Foundation
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CO	Central Office (Scotland Yard)
GPO	General Post Office
LIP	London Independent Producers
MET	Metropolitan Police
MOI	Ministry of Information
PC	Police Constable
PIO	Public Information Officer (Metropolitan Police)
RAF	Royal Air Force
TNA	The National Archives of the UK

INTRODUCTION

“Any place gains meaning and identity, from its production and position in a network of cultural work. London is seen and known through its fiction.”¹

London emerged from World War II victorious yet beleaguered, as vast swathes of urban residential districts, the Docklands and the City of London were destroyed in the Blitz of 1940-1 and 1944-5. Pre-war issues, such as the need for new, modern housing to replace slum terraces, acquired a new urgency after World War II, particularly as there was now a severe shortage of housing. However, the rebuilding process was slow due to scarcity of materials, thus much of the London landscape in the subsequent postwar years was one of bombsites, ruins and wastelands. During World War II, night-time London was a “threatening, hellish, monstrous landscape”, yet was also “conceived as an enormous body bravely soaking up the damage meted out by bombs and a signifier of national pride, spirit of resistance and perhaps even pity”.² Indeed, bomb damage exposed existing areas of the city and surviving iconic landmarks such as St Paul’s Cathedral acquired a new significance in the nation’s mind-set. As architectural historian Robert Thorne states, “seen across bomb sites, St Paul’s appeared to be the pre-eminent symbol of national resistance and sacrifice. In popular eyes, it was the country’s chief war memorial.”³

The citizens of London celebrated victory while contending with recent memories of night-raids, austerity, continued rationing and a perceived ‘crime wave’, as the black market flourished. Postwar, inner London districts were “essentially Victorian” with predominantly working-class demographics, as by the mid-1930s the middle-class

¹ Ged Pope and Salim Hafejee, *Reading London’s suburbs: From Charles Dickens to Zadie Smith* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p.8.

² Lawrence Phillips, *London Narratives: Postwar Fiction and the City* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006), p.2.

³ Robert Thorne, ‘The Setting of St Paul’s Cathedral in the Twentieth Century’, *The London Journal*, 16, no.2, p.118.

areas of inner London had shrunk.⁴ As London was broadly a collection of villages, each district of inner London developed its own distinct character. Railways cut through and defined the geography of each district and residential housing merged with industry and commerce (before the slow decline of industry from the mid-to-late 1950s onwards). As rebuilding slowly recommenced in the mid-1950s, the urban landscape of London began to change, as new buildings in the modernist style emerged side by side with the older, pre-war London and remaining bomb damage.

London's distinct postwar landscape and character, marked by victory, devastation then rebuilding, was one that sparked the imagination of filmmakers, novelists and photographers. For historian Jerry White, the idea of twentieth century London is one constructed through fiction, and that "perhaps, indeed, London and Londoners can be most truly realised in fiction."⁵ This thesis explores how postwar London was realised in British film and how depictions of inner London contributed to the popular image of London circulated through newsreels, contemporary accounts and wartime drama-documentary and documentary films. It discusses how fiction films, which used extensive location shooting in inner London, combined the aesthetics of documentary tradition, prevalent in British cinema during the 1930s and World War II, with escapist, commercial mass entertainment. While European postwar film movements, Italian neorealism (circa.1943-1952) and the British New Wave (circa.1958-62/3), were notable for their authenticity of location, using the real streets and bombsites of their respective postwar cities, this thesis posits that during the period 1946 to 1958, in British cinema, a set distinct set of themes and recurrent motifs also emerge in the depiction of inner London. This thesis also offers a new approach to understanding these films within their wider historical contexts by suggesting that postwar London-set fiction films with extensive location shooting are historical sources. The films' authenticity and filmmakers' documentary ethos in shooting inner London also enables the historian to understand how changing social and urban environments were envisaged by filmmakers and perceived by critics

⁴ Inner London refers to the Metropolitan boroughs as defined before the London Government Act of 1963. The Metropolitan Boroughs of London from 1900 to 1965 were the following: City of London, Battersea, Bermondsey, Bethnal Green, Camberwell, Chelsea, Deptford, Finsbury, Fulham, Greenwich, Hackney, Hammersmith, Hampstead, Holborn, Islington, Kensington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Paddington, Poplar, Shoreditch, Southwark, St Marylebone, St Pancras, Stepney, Stoke Newington, Wandsworth, Westminster, and Woolwich; Jerry White, *London in the Twentieth Century* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), pp.7 & pp.22.

⁵ Jerry White, 'Unreal City: Reflections on London and the Novel in the Twentieth Century', *History Workshop Journal*, no.56 (Autumn, 2003), p.1.

upon release. As such, this thesis therefore aims to be of primary interest to British film historians and of secondary interest to urban historians exploring cultural depictions of the postwar city.

The 1940s was a ‘Golden Age’ of British cinema, dominated by key figures and institutions such as Michael Balcon, head of Ealing Studios from 1939-59, and the Rank Organisation, the largest producer-distributor-exhibitor in Britain and the only British corporation that operated on the same scale as the Hollywood majors.

Although Hollywood films dominated British cinema, the British film industry established a unique identity during World War II for its contribution to the war effort, through semi-documentary and documentary propaganda films. Whilst wartime audiences preferred escapist films such as Gainsborough’s melodramas, critics championed British realist films. In the immediate postwar years, cinema-going continued to be the prime leisure activity in Britain, as cinema attendance in Britain reached its peak in 1946 with 1,635 million admissions.⁶

British film studios in the immediate postwar period were located in outer and inner London, including Ealing (Ealing Studios), Elstree (Elstree Studios), Lime Grove / Shepherd’s Bush (Rank Studios), Islington (Rank Studios) and Hammersmith (Riverside Studios).⁷ Ealing Studios produced several successful London-set films with themes and characters that resonated with postwar audiences. Popular films such as *Hue and Cry* (dir. Charles Crichton, 1947), *Passport to Pimlico* (dir. Henry Cornelius, 1949) and *The Blue Lamp* (dir. Basil Dearden, 1950) depicted a ‘village’ London, in-keeping with its community ethos that harked back to wartime notions of communities pulling together for the greater good. The quick turnaround between the films’ production and release (usually around a year), ensured that they were socially and culturally relevant to the period. These films were notable for extensive location shooting in specific districts of inner London and were generally praised by critics for their ‘authentic’ and realistic portrayals of the city. It was not only Ealing Studios who made use of the postwar landscape, companies such as The Children’s Film Foundation, independent producers such as Sydney Box, and producers and directors Roy and John Boulting also produced popular, critically acclaimed inner

⁶ Figures cited in UK Cinema Association, online, <https://www.cinema.uk/the-industry/facts-and-figures/uk-cinema-admissions-and-box-office/annual-admissions/> [Accessed 14 November 2016].

⁷ Rank Studios located in Lime Grove / Shepherd’s Bush and Islington operated in London until the end of the 1940s.

London-set films. Indeed, critic Dilys Powell acknowledged the wider trend of using London as a background in films of the later 1940s, referring to the streets of London as “the perfect setting for the film of action” and “with a growing emphasis on background, not at the expense of, but in relation to, the characters.”⁸ London, with its familiar landmarks, was recognisable to audiences, therefore London locations were a selling point for films aimed at British audiences and also for key lucrative foreign markets, such as the USA. Thus, studied together, it is possible to identify a corpus of inner London-set films in the immediate postwar period.

In order to select case studies for this thesis, it was necessary to locate and view commercial fiction films with contemporary stories, shot in London locations and produced between 1946 and 1958. Films were then selected as case studies according to the following criteria: a) a significant amount of exterior shooting in inner, mainly working-class districts of London and the City of London; b) stories rooted in contemporary settings; c) the availability of archival sources and contemporary critics’ responses. The following sixteen films selected for study are: *Hue and Cry* (dir. Charles Crichton, 1947), *It Always Rains on Sunday* (dir. Robert Hamer, 1947), *Passport to Pimlico* (dir. Henry Cornelius, 1949), *The Blue Lamp* (dir. Basil Dearden, 1950), *Night and the City* (dir. Jules Dassin, 1950), *Seven Days to Noon* (dir. John and Roy Boulting, 1950), *High Treason* (dir. Roy Boulting, 1951), *The Lavender Hill Mob* (dir. Charles Crichton, 1951), *Pool of London* (dir. Basil Dearden, 1951), *Street Corner* (dir. Muriel Box, 1952), *Cosh Boy* (dir. Lewis Gilbert, 1953), *Skid Kids* (dir. Don Chaffey, 1953), *The Ladykillers* (dir. Alexander Mackendrick, 1955), *The Long Arm* (dir. Charles Frend, 1956), *The Salvage Gang* (dir. John Krish, 1958), and *Innocent Sinners* (dir. Phillip Leacock, 1958).

Ealing’s postwar output dominates this study due to their significant number of London-set films, stemming from Ealing’s policy to shoot in real locations. Ealing films *Hue and Cry* and *The Blue Lamp* are positioned within this thesis as influential films in the wider corpus of postwar London-set films. *Hue and Cry* was the first postwar London-set film to make extensive use of the war-torn landscape. Its critical and commercial success encouraged Ealing to produce more London-set films,

⁸ Dilys Powell quoted in Margaret Butler, *Film and Community in Britain and France: From La Regle du Jeu to Room at the Top* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), p.90.

while *The Blue Lamp*, the most successful British film of 1950, set the standard for critics against which subsequent London-set films would be compared and judged.

This thesis does not claim to be an exhaustive analysis of every single London-set film of the period - it is necessarily selective to ensure each film is afforded a sufficient level of detail. There are some inevitable omissions – *Dance Hall* (dir. Charles Crichton, 1950) and *I Believe in You* (dir. Michael Relph and Basil Dearden, 1952) are Ealing contemporary London-set dramas, however, both are mainly studio bound films, as are Herbert Wilcox's postwar London-set romantic comedies which depict a fantastical, upper-middle class London. As this thesis is structured thematically, there are some omissions of films that do not fit into overarching themes, such as *The Yellow Balloon* (dir. J. Lee Thompson, 1953), however, relevant films are mentioned as points of comparison or used to locate case study films within wider contexts.

1958 is the cut-off point for this thesis for several reasons. By 1958, rebuilding British cities had recommenced, Britain's economy recovered after the initial years of austerity following World War II, and a new societal 'permissiveness' emerged. Cinema-going as the prime leisure activity was on the wane; the decline of British cinema-going was gradual, as attendances slowly fell throughout the 1950s, with admissions more than halving between 1956 and 1960.⁹ As such, British films and studios adapted to changing audience tastes and fragmented audiences. By 1956, the Ealing formula seemed out-dated and as fortunes declined, Ealing sold their studio space to the BBC in 1956. In terms of location, 1958 marks a move away from London in British Cinema, as the British New Wave, a new movement in realist filmmaking and on-location shooting, was taking shape in the late-1950s, featuring young working-class characters in northern British cities and towns.

Research Questions

This analysis of depictions of postwar London in British inner London-set films aims to examine the following key questions:

⁹ Full figures available at The UK Cinema Association, online, <https://www.cinemauk.org.uk/the-industry/facts-and-figures/uk-cinema-admissions-and-box-office/annual-admissions/> [Accessed: 03 December 2016].

- i. How and why were particular landmarks and districts of postwar inner London used by filmmakers for fictional films? What were their significance and how were particular landmarks and districts perceived at the time of production?
- ii. How do depictions of postwar inner London in British fiction films compare to those circulated in newsreels and contemporary accounts?
- iii. How did contemporary critics respond to the films' depictions of London? To what extent were real London locations deemed realistic and/or authentic? For critics, how important were London locations as a selling point for the film? Does an analysis of critics' responses help us reassess how these films were viewed in their original reception contexts?
- iv. To what extent were London locations a key selling point for producers and how were London locations used in publicity materials? To what extent did studios draw upon previous successes of previous London-set films?
- v. To what extent was the documentary ethos and documentary backgrounds of filmmakers an important consideration in the filming of the postwar landscape? To what extent do these films reflect a continuation of the documentary ethos in the postwar period?
- vi. What distinct themes and motifs emerge in the use of London locations in this period?

Literature Review

The study of the city on film has invariably crossed disciplines, with literature published in the fields of film studies and film history, and urban history. Therefore, this review is organised into sections to account for key literature in these differing

fields. This thesis uses secondary source material predominantly from the fields of British cinema history and London locations in film. Literature on histories and contemporary accounts of postwar London are also considered to contextualise films within their historical and location contexts. This literature review aims to provide a general overview of key literature in the field, while literature on the specific themes and genres discussed in this thesis are integrated into each separate chapter.

British cinema

Raymond Durnat's *A Mirror for England*, a comprehensive survey of British films from World War II through to the 1960s, was a founding text for emphasising the cultural significance of British films.¹⁰ Durnat brought to scholarly attention lesser-known British films and directors, partly as response to the *Cahiers du Cinema* critics' tendency for privileging cinematic 'auteurs' as the expense of other popular films and directors. Despite later criticisms of Durnat's reflectionist approach, his contributions to our understanding of British cinema and awareness of key films, genres and personnel, remain invaluable.¹¹ Since the publication of texts such as Durnat's *A Mirror for England* and Roy Armes historical and auteurist account of British cinema in *A Critical History of the British Cinema*, British film scholars have continued to map the history of British cinema, addressing neglected genres and films, and revising previous theoretical perspectives on British film.¹² Film historian Charles Barr's edited volume, *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema*, challenged François Truffaut's notion that Britain and cinema were incompatible, with essays detailing British cinema's relationship with Hollywood, previously unexplored genres such as the crime film, and an overview of key British directors and stars.¹³ Anthony Aldgate and Jeffery Richards' case study approach in *Best of British* afforded attention to the production and reception of twelve

¹⁰ Raymond Durnat, *A Mirror for England: British Movies from Austerity to Affluence* (London: Faber & Faber, 1970).

¹¹ For later criticisms of Durnat's approach, see, for instance, James Chapman, Mark Glancy and Sue Harper (eds), *The New Film History: Sources, Methods, Approaches* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

¹² Raymond Durnat, *A Mirror for England*; Roy Armes, *A Critical History of British Cinema* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1978).

¹³ Charles Barr (ed.), *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema* (London: BFI, 1986).

individual films.¹⁴ Aldgate and Richards moved away from Arnes' auteurist perspective by rooting the study of British cinema in a historical context and emphasising the collaborative nature of filmmaking.¹⁵ Likewise, Charles Drazin's accounts of key figures of British cinema of the 1940s in *The Finest Years*, adopts a biographical rather than comprehensive approach, yet resists a simplistic auteurist perspective, to draw out the importance and complexity of collaboration in British cinema in this period.¹⁶ Later literature, published in the 1990s, expanded on Barr's edited volume; Sarah Street focused on British film production in *British National Cinema*, providing a useful grounding in British cinema from 1945-60, locating British films within their historical contexts.¹⁷ Sue Harper and Vincent Porter's survey of British cinema of the 1950s, primarily an industrial account of the decade, illustrates how an empirical approach, with an industry focus, is key to understanding how filmmakers grappled with changing circumstances, and demonstrate how the visual style of a film is inherently shaped by the conditions of production.¹⁸

Robert Murphy's *Realism and Tinsel* was the first detailed analysis of British postwar cinema since Durgnat, as much scholarship on British cinema before the publication of *Realism and Tinsel* tended to focus on British studio's significant output during World War II. Thematically, Murphy assesses British cinema of the late 1940s in, discussing cycles of films such as the spiv cycle which emerges over a particular period in British cinema.¹⁹ Murphy accounts for the impact of realism on British cinema which encouraged location shooting a move beyond literary adaptations, evident in both 'realist' films and more melodramatic, fantastical films.²⁰ Christine Geraghty combines a cultural historical approach and theoretical perspective in *British Cinema of the Fifties*, to explore cinema-going during the

¹⁴ Anthony Aldgate and Jeffery Richards, *Best of British: Cinema and Society from 1930 to the Present* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, first edition published in 1983, second edition published in 1999).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Charles Drazin, *The Finest Years: British Cinema of the 1940s* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007).

¹⁷ Sarah Street, *British National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).

¹⁸ Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s: The Decline of Deference* (Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹⁹ Robert Murphy, *Realism and Tinsel: Cinema and Society in Britain, 1939-1948* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

²⁰ Ibid.

1950s, providing detailed, contextually informed, readings of representations of gender in 1950s British films.²¹

Literature on specific studios and filmmakers relevant to this thesis roots discusses filmmakers and studios within their institutional and social contexts. Charles Barr's *Ealing Studios* remains a key text in the analysis and definition of Ealing Studios ethos, style and filmmakers, while Mark Duguid et al's recent edited collection *Ealing Revisited* re-evaluates Ealing's history, exploring broader areas such as publicity and thematics.²² Alan Burton and Tim O'Sullivan's focus on specific filmmakers' Basil Dearden and Michael Relph in *Cinema of Basil Dearden and Michael Relph* reassesses their work by contextualising Dearden and Relph's films and partnership through analysis of their different collaborative, creative and hierarchal contexts, while their edited collection *Liberal Directions* places Dearden's films within the wider contexts of postwar Britain and film culture.²³ Burton, O'Sullivan and Paul Wells adopt a similar approach in their analysis of the Boulting Brothers films in their edited collection *The Family Way*, exploring the career of Roy and John Boulting and placing their films within their wider social contexts.²⁴

The key text in the study of London locations in film is Charlotte Brunson's *London in Cinema*, a comprehensive textual analysis of the representations of London from 1945 to present day.²⁵ In her journal article 'Towards a History of Empty Spaces', Brunson stresses the importance of the fictive nature of film, where different places are edited together to form an imagined city.²⁶ Brunson's approach is primarily textual analysis which considers the symbolic value of London locations in film. It is also generally ahistorical, as Brunson compares London-set films from different time periods. While Brunson argues that the actual locations used are unimportant, as "cinematic place has no necessary relationship to

²¹ Christine Geraghty, *British Cinema in the Fifties: Gender, Genre and the 'New Look'* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

²² Charles Barr, *Ealing Studios* (London: Cameron and Tayleur, 1977); Mark Duguid, Lee Freeman, Keith M. Johnston and Melanie Williams (eds), *Ealing Revisited* (London: BFI, 2012).

²³ Alan Burton and Tim O'Sullivan, *Cinema of Basil Dearden and Michael Relph* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009); Alan Burton, Tim O'Sullivan & Paul Wells (eds), *Liberal Directions. Basil Dearden and Postwar British Culture* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 1997).

²⁴ Alan Burton, Tim O'Sullivan and Paul Wells (eds), *The Family Way: The Boulting Brothers and British Film Culture* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 2000).

²⁵ Charlotte Brunson, *London in Cinema: The Cinematic City Since 1945* (London: BFI Publishing, 2007).

²⁶ Charlotte Brunson, 'Towards a History of Empty Spaces' (2007), Reprinted in Richard Koeck and Les Roberts (eds), *The City and the Moving Image: Urban Projections* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.99.

location shooting”, for the historian, it is important to consider why particular locations were chosen, how they are depicted, and how they compare and contribute to existing popular memory of a particular place.²⁷ Brunsdon herself acknowledges that in her study “the films [come] first, with sometimes only fleeting reference to significant aspects of London’s history and geography”.²⁸ This thesis therefore differs to Brunsdon by rooting case study films within their historical contexts through comparisons with documentary footage and local histories of specific areas. It also considers case study films within their production and reception contexts, using archival research to construct the films’ production histories and consider how depictions of London were perceived by critics at the time of release. This thesis also departs from Brunsdon by considering case study films set in a contemporary London during the immediate postwar period from 1946 to 1958, and posits these films as a distinct corpus, which captured a beleaguered yet victorious London. While Brunsdon discusses films thematically through their generic contexts, this thesis locates a set of recurring motifs across the body of case study films which are distinctive to their historical period.

The British New Wave films of the late 1950s and early 1960s are notable for their realist use of real northern towns and cities. However, as Steve Chibnall argues, British crime films of the same period which were shot in London are also worthy of academic consideration for their use of actual locations.²⁹ Much of the standard historiography of British cinema makes brief reference to how films have represented cities and the urban environment; Amy Sargeant briefly discusses the use of landscape in her chronological survey of British cinema, arguing that inner-city crime films of the 1940s stem from American B movies of the 1930s.³⁰ Sargeant recognises the importance of locations in Free Cinema and the British New Wave, arguing that “a tendency towards certain themes and settings are shared across fiction and non-fiction production and between commercial and non-

²⁷ Charlotte Brunsdon, *London in Cinema*, p166.

²⁸ Ibid, p.6.

²⁹ Key works on the study of British New Wave include: John Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956-1963* (London: BFI, 1986); Andrew Higson, ‘Space, Place, Spectacle’, *Screen*, 25, nos. 4-5, (July/October 1984), pp.2-21; Terry Lovell, ‘Landscapes and Stories in 1960s British Realism’ in Andrew Higson (ed.), *Dissolving Views: Key Writings on British Cinema* (London & New York: Cassell, 1996), pp.157-177. Peter Hutchings, ‘Beyond the New Wave: Realism in British Cinema, 1959-63’ in Robert Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book, 3rd Edition* (London: BFI Publishing, 2008); Steve Chibnall ‘Ordinary People: ‘New Wave’ realism and the British Crime Film 1959-1963 in Steve Chibnall & Robert Murphy (eds), *British Crime Cinema* (London & New York: Routledge, 1999).

³⁰ Amy Sargeant, *British Cinema: A Critical History* (London: BFI Publishing, 2005), p.218.

commercial releases”.³¹ Michael W. Boyce also discusses films of the immediate postwar period, with some consideration of the use of location, particularly in British film noirs of the 1940s and early 1950s.³² Although primarily theoretical and rooted in textual analysis, Boyce’s focus on the British working-class in postwar film is insightful and relevant for discussions of how characters interact with their environment. Barry Forshaw gives a general overview of the use of London locations in crime film in his monograph *British Crime Cinema*, focusing specifically on British crime genre and roots the films in a historical perspective.³³ Film historian Robert Murphy addresses the importance of London in British cinema from the mid-to-late 1960s, with the spate of ‘swinging London’ films representing a move from the ‘grim’ industrial north to ‘swinging’ areas of London such as Soho.³⁴

A number of scholars have considered London locations in British film in more detail, such as in Phillip Gillett in his monograph *The British Working Class in Postwar Film*, where he makes the case for films such as *Hue and Cry* to be considered as historical documents for their use of locations.³⁵ This thesis expands on Gillett’s work by considering case study films as historical documents within their wider production and cultural contexts. The impact of postwar planning in film is also considered by Matthew Taunton, who focuses on the issue of housing and class in four British films, to demonstrate the “dual perspective of planning on the one hand, and the subjective experience of home on the other”.³⁶ A small number of scholars adopt an empirical approach to the use of location in film; James Leggott, in his essay on British realist cinema of the 1970s, and Margaret Butler in her monograph *Film and Community in France and Britain*, refer to archival sources in discussions of location.³⁷ Leggott considers the use of location in 1970s British films, arguing that there was a commitment to realism and location in a range of

³¹ Ibid. p.218.

³² Michael W. Boyce, *The Lasting Influence of the War on Postwar British Film* (London & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

³³ Barry Forshaw, *British Crime Cinema: Subverting the Social Order* (London & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

³⁴ Robert Murphy, *Sixties British Cinema* (London: BFI Publishing, 1992).

³⁵ Phillip Gillett, *The British Working Class in Postwar Film* (Manchester University Press, 2003).

³⁶ Matthew Taunton, *Fictions of the City: Class, Culture and Mass Housing in London and Paris* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.6.

³⁷ James Leggott, ‘Nothing to do Around Here: British Realist Cinema in the 1970s’ in Robert Shail (ed.) *Seventies British Cinema* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 94-104; Margaret Butler, *Film and Community in France and Britain: From La Règle du Jeu to Room at the Top* (London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 2004), p.89

1970s films.³⁸ He discusses the use of location within the context of social realism, with some attention given to the films' production, while Butler briefly considers the city in British and French postwar films, demonstrating how London became a "film set in its own right".³⁹ Butler's detailed and valid analysis is based on archival source interviews with key players such as Michael Balcon and Butler also considers the critical reception of selected films. As key works on location in British cinema are either ahistorical or rooted in analysis of specific movements, such as *Swinging London* or the deindustrialised landscape of the 1970s, it is evident that there is a gap in our analysis and understanding of the immediate postwar period as a distinct body of films.

Postwar London

Popular and urban histories of postwar London are relevant for placing films within their wider historical contexts. There is a wealth of literature on the history of London, with a wide body of local histories on specific districts of London. For detailed overviews of London as a whole, Peter Ackroyd, David Kynaston and Jerry White's histories of the capital include chapters on the postwar period.⁴⁰ Jerry White's *London in the Twentieth Century* chronicles the city from the perspective of Londoners themselves and provides brief discussion of key films such as *The Blue Lamp*, while David Kynaston in *The City of London, Volume 4* focuses on facets of the City itself using archival research to explore how key people shaped the city and its changes in the postwar period.⁴¹ Frank Mort's cultural history of postwar London is relevant for the study of film as he discusses how the legacy of the Victorian era permeated into postwar London life, particularly with the co-existence of 'overworlds' and 'underworlds' in the 1950s.⁴² Mort argues that underworlds represented in dominant images with chiaroscuro lighting revived Victorian images and encounters.⁴³ Mort's analysis offers a differing perspective on imagery in

³⁸ James Leggott, 'Nothing to do Around Here', pp.94-104.

³⁹ Ibid, p.89.

⁴⁰ Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2000); Jerry White, *London in the Twentieth Century* (London: Vintage, 2008).

⁴¹ David Kynaston, *The City of London, Volume IV: A Club No More, 1945-2000* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2001).

⁴² Frank Mort, 'Modernity and Gaslight: Victorian London in the 1950s and 1960s' in Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (eds), *The New Blackwell Companion to the City* (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), pp.431-441.

⁴³ Ibid.

British crime ‘film noirs’ of the period than Brunsdon, who argues that these aesthetics hark back to images of the city in 1930s American films.⁴⁴

Literature on postwar London is useful for comparisons to fiction films to assess the extent to which motifs in films were part of a wider gender trend in fictional accounts of London in the postwar period. In *London Narratives*, Lawrence Phillips explores a number of postwar novels through an overview of significant fictional depictions of London in postwar novels.⁴⁵ Phillips’ approach, which locates selected novels within the context of histories of postwar London, demonstrates the effectiveness of a wider historical approach for understanding fiction within their social and cultural contexts.⁴⁶ Phillip’s conclusions, that community and nostalgia is an overriding theme in postwar literature, parallels with themes in Ealing’s postwar films.⁴⁷

Methodology

Theoretical approaches to the Study of Cinema and the City

The study of cinema and the city was a popular interdisciplinary area of research in the late 1990s and 2000s, with scholars adopting a mainly theoretical and conceptual approach to the study of the city and architecture in film. Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice’s two edited collections, *Screening the City*, and *Cinema and the City*, is typical of theoretical work on the cinema and city common in the early 2000s which considers representations of the city and its peoples in film, with a focus on the intersections of gender, race, class and the environment.⁴⁸ Such work also considers the ways in which film responds to the impact of increasing globalisation and late capitalism on the city through representations and reimagining of the postmodern city. Shiel and Fitzmaurice combine film studies and sociology to produce a ‘sociology of cinema’, one that provides a sociology of film production, distribution and exhibition. Their work builds upon the ‘spatial turn’ in humanities,

⁴⁴ Frank Mort, ‘Modernity and Gaslight’, Charlotte Brunsdon, *London in Cinema*.

⁴⁵ Lawrence Phillips, *London Narratives: Postwar Fiction and the City* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006).

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Lawrence Phillips, *London Narratives*, p.159.

⁴⁸ Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice (eds), *Screening the City* (London, New York: Verso, 2003); Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice (eds), *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context* (USA; Blackwell Publishing, 2001).

influenced in part by postmodern theory, which considers the symbolic value of cities as sites of power relations. Richard Koeck and Les Roberts' edited collection, *The City and the Moving Image: Urban Projections*, a later addition to this body of literature, recognises the “sprawling and imprecise” nature of the ‘spatial turn’.⁴⁹ Koeck and Roberts adopt a theoretical and analytical approach, focusing critical attention on the themes of identity, memory, mapping and architecture. Although David B. Clarke's edited collection *The Cinematic City* continued a theorisation of the city and cinema, Clarke does include essays to demonstrate the varied approaches to studying cinema and the city, such as Stephen Ward and John Gold's historical account of the planning documentary *New Towns for Old* (1942).⁵⁰ The focus on globalisation and postmodernity continues with Barbara Mennell's *Cities and Cinema*, which provides an overview of cities on film such as Berlin and New York, focusing on how films “work through” issues of identity and globalisation.⁵¹ There is also a growing interest in film by cultural geographers. For instance, David Matless' *Landscape and Englishness*, although not focused on the city, does relate film to the natural environment in the context of discourses around national identity.⁵² Matless' discussion of films such as *Went the Day Well?* (dir. Alberto Cavalcanti, 1942) places films within wider contexts of Englishness with comparisons to other depictions in popular culture.⁵³ This thesis offers a similar approach by relating fiction films to wider contexts and discourses around London and the urban environment. ‘Cinema and the city’ continues to be a thriving area of research, as evidenced by the 2014 symposium and research group, *Geography, Film and Visual Culture*, at Kings College, London.⁵⁴ The interdisciplinary merging of humanities and social science evident at this symposium and in critical literature, continues to focus on the cinema and the city from a theoretical perspective, with little historical, archival work on British cinema. This study therefore differs from theoretical interpretations of location in film in its approach, yet contributes to this

⁴⁹ Richard Koeck and Les Roberts (eds) *The City and the Moving Image: Urban Projections* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.7.

⁵⁰ David B. Clarke (ed.), *The Cinematic City* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).

⁵¹ Barbara Mennell, *Cities and Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).

⁵² David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (London: Reaktion Books, first published in 1988, second expanded edition published in 2016).

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Kings College, London, ‘Geography, Film and Visual Culture’ Symposium, 30 April 2014.

body of work on cinema and the city, by reconstituting films within their cultural and historical contexts.

The New Film History Approach

Andrew Higson's edited collection *British Cinema: Past, Present and Future* reflects the diversity of methodologies in the study of British cinema, as Jeffery Richards, in his essay 'Rethinking British Cinema', outlines the two broad approaches to the study of film in the UK; a textual analysis as favoured in Film Studies, and a focus on context in Cinema History.⁵⁵ His persuasive argument, that both approaches are needed and are converging, is reflected in subsequent literature and the methodological approach adopted in this thesis, as textual analysis of films is informed by archival sources pertaining to the films' use of location and accounts of the production process. These differing approaches are illustrated in Robert Murphy's edited collection, *The British Cinema Book*, which chronicled the development of British cinema from its conception to the 1990s, reflecting the growing scholarly interest in British cinema since the 1990s - The current third edition demonstrates the diversity of approaches that has flourished in the study of British cinema, with a range of theoretical debates and industrial issues emerging.⁵⁶ Durnat's method, which considers films a reflection of British society from a period of austerity to affluence, has also since been contested since by 'new film historians' who call for recognition of the complexity of the relationship between films and the society in which they are produced.⁵⁷ This 'new film history' is now a well-established methodological approach, providing fruitful analyses and accounts of British film history. James Chapman *et al* demonstrate the methodological sophistication of this approach, as historians should be aware of the extent to which the style and context of films are determined by the conditions of production, achieved through a source-based methodology that uses new sources and materials.⁵⁸ As Chapman argues, histories of production focus on the historical

⁵⁵ Justine Ashby and Andrew Higson (eds), *British Cinema: Past and Present* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

⁵⁶ Robert Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book* (London: BFI, 1997).

⁵⁷ James Chapman, et al, *The New Film History: Sources, Methods, Approaches*.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

conditions in which films are produced and foreground agency and process.⁵⁹ This effective use of materials is evident in the 2014 special issue of the *Historical Journal of Film, Television and Radio* on the Film Finances archive, where film historians demonstrate how archival research into film finance can illuminate decisions that were made, and the relationship “between capital and creativity”.⁶⁰ Sarah Street’s article in this edition, titled ‘Film Finances and the British New Wave’, illustrates how an archival approach to location offers another perspective than that in existing literature based mainly on textual analysis.⁶¹ Street’s archival-based analysis enables an understanding of the agency of personnel within institutions such as film finances in the decision making process on location shooting. This thesis adopts Street’s approach by considering the agency of studios, filmmakers and state institutions in decisions regarding location shooting, and couches this analysis within a wider, historical context to explore how popular films contribute to dominant images in circulation of postwar London. It also uses empirical methods: firstly, by mapping themes and recurring motifs across the body of case study films and secondly, by identifying contemporary critics’ consensus or disagreement with regards to the extent to which case study films depicted a realistic and/or authentic London.

This thesis refers to ‘realism’ and ‘authenticity’ as they were commonly used by critics to praise British filmmakers’ evocations of London locations. Although perceptions of an authentic depiction of a particular place can be subjective, for critics, there were common features which represented an authentic London. An analysis of the critical reception of the films therefore enables an understanding of what constituted a realistic or authentic depiction of London in the immediate postwar period. For critics, an authentic London was a local and recognisable London, with a continuity which somewhat matched the actual geography of the city. Exterior shooting in specific districts and in real London streets and buildings, and use of local people as extras, also contributed to this authentic London and led critics to praise the films for their ability to capture the essence of the city. As popular commercial films, these films combine a classic realism associated with

⁵⁹ James Chapman, *Film and History* (UK: Macmillan Education, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.109.

⁶⁰ Quotation from Justin Smith, ‘Calculated Risks: Film Finances and British Independents in the 1970s’, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 34, no.1 (January 2014), pp.85-102.

⁶¹ Sarah Street, ‘Film Finances and the British New Wave’, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 34, no.1 (January 2014), pp. 23-42.

Classical Hollywood Cinema with linear narratives and spectator identification, and a surface realism with use of real, recognisable locations. In British cinema, the documentary tradition provided an authenticity of place and character, thus these films have a ‘surface realism’, distinct, yet not entirely removed from ‘social realism’, as defined by Julia Hallam and Margaret Marshment, of characters marginalised by social status, associated with the British New Wave movement (1958-1962/3).⁶²

Sources

Where possible, this thesis considers the production histories of location shooting and is guided by the availability of archival sources. Primary sources and historiography on postwar London inform textual analysis and are used to provide an historical account of the production of location shooting. As there are no studio archives for British film studios, in contrast to the wealth of archival material on Hollywood studios, this thesis relies on information gathered from a variety of primary sources to help build up an overall picture of a film’s production. For instance, official records such as the MEPO films at The National Archives tend to provide material on wider policy matters that are not so apparent in personal papers located in BFI Special Collections.

Consideration of the films’ critical reception ascertains how important location was to the films’ perceived realism and critical success. There is a wealth of primary materials available for certain films such as *The Blue Lamp*, therefore it is possible to provide a detailed location production history of the film. As the films in this thesis are placed within their wider cultural contexts, accounts of particular areas and imagery found in newspapers and local history books are therefore utilised alongside histories of respective London districts.

Archival material found in BFI special collections, including memos, scripts found in the Michael Balcon files, and diaries in the Sydney and Muriel Box files, forms

⁶² Julia Hallam and Margaret Marshment, *Realism and Popular Cinema* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000) p.190.

the basis for production histories of location shooting. Meeting minutes for permissions for exterior shooting on *The Ladykillers* proved particularly fruitful and has enabled a detailed account of production of the film in the King's Cross area. Shooting scripts, post production scripts and other annotated versions of scripts located in BFI Special Collections and Alan Burton's personal archive, were useful for providing detailed notes on locations used in relevant films. Indeed, the documents enable an analysis of how location shots were originally envisaged and their relative importance in the script, while handwritten notes and various versions of scripts enabled a documentation of various changes in location. Publicity documents available at the BFI library and Cinema Museum archive such as pressbooks, publicity stills and posters were accessed to assess the extent to which location was a key factor in the films' publicity.

Critical reception is a key factor in this study, therefore contemporary reviews accessed via the BFI's press cuttings, trade papers and the British Library's newspaper collection are essential sources.⁶³ The BFI's press cuttings enable an overview of the national press' response to films, while the British Library's digital newspaper archive gives access to reviews in provincial newspapers, providing the researcher the opportunity to assess the extent to which provincial newspapers differed in their response to the authentic nature of London locations. Newspaper reports and trade paper's accounts of the films' production were accessed via the BFI library and the British Library Newspaper archive. The trade press, notably *Kinematograph Weekly*, offers factual information on films' production and documentation, and discussion of issues pertaining to the British film industry, enabling a contextualisation of films within broader industry trends.

The Film Finances archive has files on two films in this study, *Cosh Boy* and *High Treason*, which had a guarantee from Film Finances. The daily production logs, breakdowns of location budgets and memos enabled a detailed and accurate analysis of the location production histories, records that are relatively scarce on the British film industry outside of the Film Finances archive.

⁶³ The BFI's press cuttings do not always provide page numbers for newspaper reviews. In these instances, it will be indicated in the reference that the source for the review is 'BFI Press Cuttings'.

The MEPO Files at The National Archives on *The Blue Lamp*, *Street Corner* and *The Long Arm* were the basis for analysis of these three films in Chapter Five of this thesis. Detailed memos between Ealing personnel and the Met were useful for an understanding of the agency of the Met in the films' production. They reveal tensions between the Met's insistence on authenticity and the filmmaker's concern for drama, and reveal the extent to which Met involvement enabled extensive location shooting.

Oral historian Alan Dein's interviews with *The Ladykillers* Assistant Director Tom Pevsner and Unit Production Manager David Peers, for the King's Cross Voices oral history archive (available online), gave further insights into the use of Kings Cross in *The Ladykillers* and location shooting for Ealing more generally.⁶⁴ These interviews tended to corroborate speculative accounts of the film's production and minutes of meetings held in the Michael Balcon files at BFI Special Collections. Personal email correspondence with director of *The Salvage Gang*, John Krish, and an extra and speedway rider in *Skid Kids*, Dennis Daniels, provided new insights into the production and use of locations in these respective CFF films. BFI's 2016 *London on Film* season included Q&A sessions with actor Earl Cameron, useful for personal accounts of the production of *Pool of London*. Personal biographies, notably T.E.B. Clarke's *This is Where I Came In*, gives personal recollections of the production of relevant Ealing films.⁶⁵ While such personal collections can be anecdotal in nature, they are useful in corroborating or contradicting other production accounts and an awareness the of mythology created through anecdotes of a film's production.

Documentary footage of London in the postwar period was accessed via a variety of sources, mainly Pathe newsreel online archive and BFI's Britain on Film footage available on BFI Player. Documents, video and photographs available in local libraries, such as models of the location-set of *Passport to Pimlico* in Lambeth Library and video resources and maps available in the London Metropolitan Archives, were invaluable for placing films within their wider historical contexts.

⁶⁴ These interviews are available online at <https://voices.kingscross.co.uk/> [Accessed 12 February 2017].

⁶⁵ T.E.B Clarke, *This is Where I Came In* (London: Michael Joseph, 1974).

There are of course some limitations to archival research. Film Finances has comprehensive records only on the films it guaranteed; it did not guarantee any of the Ealing films, or Rank's 'in house' productions as opposed to those backed through distribution guarantees. The BFI Special Collections are sporadic in nature, with detailed information on certain Ealing films such as *The Ladykillers*, and scant information on other films, such as *Innocent Sinners*. This thesis, therefore provides extensive detail on the production of films where there is a wealth of archival documents available, while for others one must rely more on critical reception and newspaper reports to contextualise textual analysis.

Finally, and perhaps abstractly, walking the streets of London where films were shot enabled an understanding of how these films captured a rapidly changing city and their value as historical documents. For areas that remain intact, walking and navigating the streets enabled an insight into the continuity of the films, the positioning of particular streets and landmarks, and how filmmakers depicted particular locations cinematically.

Thesis Structure

Each chapter in this thesis is best read as interventions on depictions of postwar London. The case study films are grouped around six genres and/or themes: Chapters One, Two and Three are concerned with critical debates around 'authentic' postwar London; the East End in drama films, and London Ealing comedies. Chapters Four, Five and Six are thematic, looking at films dealing with salient issues in postwar London and Britain; children on bombsites and juvenile delinquency, policing, and Cold War threats. Although films are grouped thematically, they are interlinked, thus, where relevant, films are also compared across chapters. Key films *The Blue Lamp* and *Hue and Cry* are discussed in different chapters as they traverse different themes; *The Blue Lamp* is first posited as a key film in the corpus of postwar London-set films, yet is also a key intervention in the police drama film and juvenile delinquent film. *Hue and Cry* is the first of Ealing's postwar comedy films and the first postwar London-set film, yet is also a

‘boy’s adventure film’ and is therefore integral to the body of films featuring postwar London children.

Chapter One locates the realist impetus in postwar film production, through a discussion of how *The Blue Lamp* and Ealing’s postwar films were, to an extent, a continuation of the village London depicted in Ealing’s wartime London-set films. The analysis then continues with an assessment of what critics deemed an ‘authentic’ and realistic London in the postwar period, through a comparison of critical responses to two crime films released in 1950, *The Blue Lamp* and Anglo-American production *Night and the City*. Chapter Two explores how two Ealing drama films, *It Always Rains on Sunday* and *Pool of London*, contributed to popular perceptions of the East End of London. Both films depict London on a Sunday where crime disrupts the peace and familiar rhythms of the day, therefore this chapter concludes by comparing these depictions with contemporaneous accounts of postwar London on a Sunday. Chapter Three explores the use and depiction of inner-London districts in four Ealing comedies. The first section of the chapter explores how *Hue and Cry* and *The Lavender Hill Mob* utilised the area around St Paul’s and Bankside, with use of actual bombed warehouses, while the second section considers how *Passport to Pimlico* and *The Ladykillers* merged a built set with a real London location. Chapter Four explores the depiction of working-class youth in the city, firstly focusing on films which feature children in the urban London landscape, depicting children as heroic figures. The first section of Chapter Four discusses how *Hue and Cry*, two films of the CFF, *Skid Kids* and *The Salvage Gang*, and *Innocent Sinners*, depict the city as a playground for working class children and make extensive use of real locations in particular boroughs of London. The second section of this chapter discusses depictions of the juvenile delinquent in postwar London, in *The Blue Lamp* and *Cosh Boy*, to explore how filmmakers responded to changes in the delinquent ‘problem’; from the initial ‘crime wave’ of the early 1950s in *The Blue Lamp*, to the ‘cosh boy’ panic of the early-to-mid 1950s with *Cosh Boy*. Chapter Five turns to agents of law and order, the police, who traverse the city in a different manner to youth and criminals, keeping to strict ‘beats’ and whose familiarity with the city streets and their districts ensures that the threats of criminals and delinquents is under control. This chapter using the MEPO files as a primary source, to explore how three films made with full supervision of

the Met, *The Blue Lamp*, *Street Corner* and *The Long Arm*, depict the relationship between the police and the city streets. Chapter Six discusses the Boulting brothers' depiction of London in their two London-set Cold War dramas, *Seven Days to Noon* and *High Treason*. This chapter demonstrates how *Seven Days to Noon* played upon recent memories of Blitz and evacuation to explore how London might cope in the possible event of a nuclear attack. Analysis of the *Seven Days to Noon* and *High Treason*'s publicity and visual style also locates these films within the wider corpus of postwar London films.

CHAPTER ONE

The 'authentic' city? Critical reception of depictions of London in *The Blue Lamp* and *Night and the City*

1950 was a pivotal year in the production and release of British London-set films. Ealing released *The Blue Lamp* (dir. Basil Dearden, 1950) in January 1950, while *The Lavender Hill Mob* (dir. Charles Crichton, 1950) and *Pool of London* (dir. Basil Dearden, 1951) went into production in the same year, then in June 1950, Twentieth-Century Fox released Anglo-American production *Night and the City* (dir. Jules Dassin, 1950). These films featured extensive location shooting in inner-London, with London locations a key selling point in publicity materials. An analysis of the process of the production of *The Blue Lamp* reveals how Ealing worked closely with the Metropolitan Police and used the area of Paddington, West London, to create a distinct Ealing-esque London. With *The Blue Lamp*, Ealing capitalised on the success of previous London-set drama documentary films produced during World War II, and postwar dramas and comedies set and filmed in inner London, such as *It Always Rains on Sunday* (dir. Robert Hamer, 1947), *Hue and Cry* (dir. Charles Crichton, 1947) and *Passport to Pimlico* (dir. Henry Cornelius, 1949), films all praised by critics for their authentic evocations of postwar London. *The Blue Lamp*'s generic hybridity locates it within different thematic sub-genres explored in this thesis; *Kinematograph Weekly* advertised *The Blue Lamp* as a generic hybrid of suspense, comedy and drama, in keeping with Harper and Porter's contention that Ealing films of the early 1950s were not straightforward specific genres, and are thus grouped around themes.¹ Ealing promoted *The Blue Lamp* as an exciting crime thriller in the style of American crime thrillers; taglines such as 'Scotland Yard at grips with post-war crime' played upon moral panics about a postwar crime wave, while the tagline 'The unending battle of the city streets' was akin to American film noirs, where lawlessness played out in the streets of the major metropolises.

¹ *Kinematograph Weekly*, 12 January 1950, p.26; Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s*, p.60.

The Blue Lamp set the barometer for London-set films to follow, as British critics hailed the film an authentic portrayal of policing in the streets of London and one which captured the ‘essence’ of postwar London.² In contrast, British critics derided *Night and the City* as an inauthentic depiction of London, one created by an ‘outsider’, as opposed to Ealing personnel whose depictions of London reflected their familiarity with the city.³ A comparison of the critical reception of *Night and the City* and *The Blue Lamp* reveals contemporaneous perceptions of what constituted an authentic depiction of London in the immediate postwar period, and discourses around ‘home-grown’ versus ‘outsider’ perceptions of the city.

The continuation of the documentary tradition in Ealing’s postwar London films

From 1939 until 1956, under the direction of Michael Balcon, Ealing produced a body of successful and entertaining films which dealt with the British scene and way of life. Key personnel at Ealing consisted of politically left-leaning middle-class males, such as Charles Crichton and Douglas Slocombe, most of whom developed their craft in documentary during the 1930s, and propaganda films during World War II. Their style and ethos collectively contributed to Ealing’s narrative traditions of ordinary people coming together for the common good.⁴ One key characteristic of Ealing’s postwar output was their commitment to shooting on-location, imbuing films with an authenticity praised by critics. Ealing’s ethos of outdoor shooting was reflective of wider trends in postwar cinema; in 1947 Roger Manvell noted the impetus to shoot British subjects on location, listing four British films released in 1945 which made use of the British landscape; *Strawberry Roan* (dir. Maurice Elvey, 1945) in Wiltshire, *Johnny Frenchman* (dir. Michael Powell, 1945) in Cornwall, *I Know Where I’m Going* (dir. Michael Powell, 1945) in the Scottish Isles and *Painted Boats* (dir. Charles Crichton, 1945) in the industrial Midlands.⁵

A number of factors influenced Ealing’s commitment to location shooting in the postwar period, including; the shortage of studio space after World War II, smaller

² See, for instance, Dilys Powell, ‘Films – The Blue Lamp’, *Britain Today* (April 1950), p.36.

³ See, for instance, *Time and Tide*, 24 June 1950: BFI Press Cuttings: *Night and the City*.

⁴ As discussed in Charles Barr, *Ealing Studios* (Newton Abbott: Cameron & Tayleur, 1977).

⁵ Roger Manvell, ‘The British Feature Film from 1940 to 1945’, in Michael Balcon (ed.), *Twenty Years of British Film, 1925-1945* (London: The Falcon Press Ltd., 1947), p.94.

sound stages and improvements in technology in the late 1940s, a realist aesthetic developed through World War II propaganda films, and the influence of European film movements such as Italian Neo-realism.⁶ In 1947, Roger Manvell stated that the war and documentary movement had created a renaissance of British cinema, exemplified by young directors and a sincerity in approaching human values, evoked through authentic situations and environments.⁷ John Orr refers to wartime British cinema as ‘romantic realism’, a combination of French Poetic Realism and Italian Neo-Realism, with dramas of everyday people as part of the wider community, typified by location shooting and naturalistic interiors which matched location shots.⁸ According to Forsyth Hardy, writing in 1947, although directors were growing tired of documentary, for British audiences documentary gained an enhanced reputation during World War II and was a now-familiar genre.⁹

For Producer Michael Relph, it was filmmakers Alberto Cavalcanti and Harold Watt who greatly contributed to Ealing’s style and ethos during World War II, while Relph notes that writer T.E.B. Clarke was the main influence on Ealing films after World War II.¹⁰ It was Cavalcanti (director and producer at Ealing from 1940 to 1946), and Watt (who moved to Ealing in 1941) who were integral to the British documentary movement of the 1940s through their work at the GPO film unit. In 1939, Cavalcanti and Watt worked on documentary *The First Days* (dir. Humphrey Jennings, Harry Watt & Pat Jackson, 1939), with Cavalcanti as producer and Watt as co-director. *The First Days* was shot in the streets and parks of London, depicting how Londoners responded to the first days of World War II. In 1940 Watt co-directed *London Can Take It!* (dir. Humphrey Jennings and Harry Watt, 1940), a short, highly emotive documentary about the heroism of ordinary Londoners during and after a typical air raid, replete with iconic images of St Paul’s and Westminster. Ealing’s postwar London-set films continued this theme of the plucky, ordinary Londoner, with iconic images of St Paul’s as a symbol of heroism in films such as *Hue and Cry*. Andrew Higson locates the films of Cavalcanti and Watt as

⁶ John Ellis discusses the changes in sound stages and improvements in technological in John Ellis, ‘Made in Ealing’, *Screen*, 16, no.1 (1975), p.84 & 87.

⁷ Roger Manvell, *The British Feature Film from 1940 to 1945*, p.84.

⁸ John Orr and Daniel Letwin, *Romantics and Modernists in British Cinema* (Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p.44.

⁹ Forsyth Hardy, ‘The British Documentary Film’, in Michael Balcon (ed.), *Twenty Years of British Film, 1925-1945* (London: The Falcon Press Ltd., 1947), p.60.

¹⁰ Michael Relph interview by Sidney Cole, taped for BECTU project, 24 January 1990.

developing the strand of documentary cinema which merged narrative and documentary - a dominant strand in Ealing's war output.¹¹ Indeed, Higson refers to British cinema of the war years as a "Golden Age when documentary and feature film momentarily come together and a truly national cinema seems to have been found".¹²

Films such as *The Bells Go Down* (dir. Basil Dearden, 1943) exemplify Ealing's drama-documentary style developed during World War II, as amateur fire fighters join the auxiliary fire-service to battle London's Blitz. The film's opening voice-over, anchoring shots of Petticoat Lane, encapsulates Ealing's London: "Down beside the docks in the East End of London they say London isn't a town but a group of villages. This is the story of one of those villages, a community bounded by a few streets with its own marketplace, its church, its shops, its police station and its own fire brigade". This village London, with tightknit community endures in Ealing's postwar films including comedies such as *Passport to Pimlico* and *The Ladykillers* and in police crime-drama *The Blue Lamp*. In 1947, Roger Manvell advised that "British films must retain their national integrity without becoming merely insular: they must be honestly British without being dull as entertainment".¹³ Ealing, under the direction of Michael Balcon, fulfilled these criteria for a successful British film by combining the documentary ethos with use of real locations, with commercially successful dramas and comedies. For Ealing, this authenticity of location continued the studio's fusion of documentary, with location shooting and naturalistic studio shots, in commercial fiction films.

The corpus of Ealing's postwar inner-London films, with contemporary settings and extensive location shooting in London's varied, mainly working-class districts, consists of eleven films produced between 1947 and 1956; *Hue and Cry*, *It Always Rains on Sunday*, *Passport to Pimlico*, *A Run for Your Money*, *The Blue Lamp*, *Dance Hall*, *Pool of London*, *The Lavender Hill Mob*, *I Believe in You*, *The Ladykillers* and *The Long Arm*. Eight of these eleven films were produced in Ealing's most successful period, 1947–1951, and utilised the immediate war-torn London environment for fictional purposes. Four original London-set stories, *Hue*

¹¹ Andrew Higson, 'Britain's Outstanding Contribution to the Film: The Documentary Realist Tradition', in Charles Barr (ed.), *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema*, p.84.

¹² Ibid, p.81.

¹³ Roger Manvell, 'The British Feature Film from 1940 to 1945', p.96.

and Cry, *Passport to Pimlico*, *The Blue Lamp* and *The Lavender Hill Mob*, were penned by Ealing's most prolific screenwriter T.E.B. Clarke, who drew upon his own experiences in London during World War II, firstly as a journalist for *Hue and Cry* and secondly as a war reserve policeman for *The Blue Lamp*. Cinematographer Douglas Slocombe's experience shooting documentary films for the GPO and Ealing fiction films such as *Dead of Night* contributed to the corpus of Ealing's London film's combination of naturalistic photography and high-contrast, expressionistic cinematography evident in *Hue and Cry*, *It Always Rains on Sunday*, *A Run for your Money* and *The Lavender Hill Mob*. Directors such as Charles Crichton (*Hue and Cry*, *Dance Hall*, *The Lavender Hill Mob*) and Basil Dearden (*The Bells Go Down*, *The Blue Lamp*, *Pool of London*) developed their craft directing drama-documentary films for Ealing during World War II, and were thus adept at directing 'authentic' portrayals of London in their postwar output. Ealing's ethos of depicting the British way of life in real locations was also a savvy selling point, as Michael Balcon stated in 1952, "if you do well locally, you do well nationally... and I believe that the indigenous films is the truly international film. This, I suggest is the reason for our success with stories of London and Londoners – we know the heart and mind of the people".¹⁴ Balcon was also keen to appeal to US market due to the Rank Organisation's acquisition of theatres in foreign territories. The success of films such as *The Blue Lamp* and *Passport to Pimlico* in the US are therefore testament to Balcon's awareness of the potential overseas appeal of a truly 'indigenous' film.

By 1951, after a succession of successful location-based films, particularly in London, Ealing had gained a reputation with critics as a studio committed to location shooting.¹⁵ In 1951, Helen Williams (*Yorkshire Post*) declared that the use of "authentic English backgrounds" was "Ealing's policy".¹⁶ The *Aberdeen Evening Express* stated that Ealing "prefer the real thing to a built-in set. They try to create character in people and places, and they usually succeed."¹⁷ Ealing also garnered a reputation for authentic depictions of the London scene; for Dilys Powell, Ealing studios had "expanded and elaborated" the documentary tradition in the immediate

¹⁴ Quoted in Margaret Butler, *Film and Community in Britain and France*, p.90.

¹⁵ By 1951 Ealing were producing around five films a year in medium sized studios.

¹⁶ Helen Williams, 'A 21st Birthday Picture', *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Mercury*, 23 February 1951.

¹⁷ 'The Pool is the Star of the Film', *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 19 April 1951, p.3.

postwar years and through *The Blue Lamp*, *Hue and Cry* and *It Always Rains on Sunday*, “there has been an attempt to re-create what one might call the human background: to weave with fictional characters the texture of London street life with its barrow boys and hawkers; its shouting and its pubs.”¹⁸ For C. A. Lejeune,

The family at Ealing seem to be at home in any sort of British scene... but their happiest playground is London. Their London is not the visitors’ London, the London of the West End, smart restaurants and shopping centres, but an older and more indigenous London: City streets, docks, inner suburbs, school crossings, faded crescents.¹⁹

This older, indigenous London, developed in the war period and continued in postwar films *Hue and Cry* and *It Always Rains on Sunday*, culminated in *The Blue Lamp*, the most commercially successful film of 1950 at the British box office. For the *Evening Standard*, *The Blue Lamp* formed a ‘family tree’ of Ealing London films alongside *Dance Hall* (dir. Charles Crichton, 1950), *It Always Rains on Sunday* and *Pool of London*.²⁰

Ealing’s ‘familiar’ West London in *The Blue Lamp*

The Blue Lamp concerns police officer Andy Mitchell (Jimmy Hanley) who is paired with older police officer George Dixon (Jack Warner) to patrol the streets around Paddington Green Police Station. Their routine is interrupted by juvenile delinquent Tom Riley (Dirk Bogarde) who shoots PC Dixon during a bungled robbery. *The Blue Lamp* proved to be Ealing’s most successful London-set film, earning £246,000 at the British box office, and awarded the 1950 British Film Academy Award for Best Film.²¹ Therefore, as Aldgate and Richards note, *The Blue Lamp*’s status in British film history cannot be overstated, nor can its importance in its evocation of postwar London.²² Indeed, the area around Paddington and the Edgware Road were subsequently named in the press as ‘*The Blue Lamp* streets’, and critics compared London-set films released in 1950 and thereafter to *The Blue Lamp*.²³ For Frank Enley (*Sight and Sound*), *The Blue Lamp* was typical of British

¹⁸ Dilys Powell, ‘Films – The Blue Lamp’, *Britain Today* (April 1950), p.36.

¹⁹ C.A. Lejeune, ‘Ealing for England’, *Observer*, 01 July 1951, p.6.

²⁰ *Evening Standard*, 22 February 1951, BFI Press Cuttings: *The Blue Lamp*.

²¹ Figures quoted in Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s*, p.285.

²² Tony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards, *Best of British*, p.128.

²³ *Gloucestershire Echo*, 12 June 1950, p.1.

Cinema and Ealing; “modest, down-to-earth” and popular, similar to British films such as *In Which We Serve*, *The Captive Heart* and *Passport to Pimlico*, which depicted British as brave and lower classes as eccentric and comical.²⁴ Film historians have since also noted the continuity from Ealing’s wartime output; For Aldgate and Richards, *The Blue Lamp* fitted the collective ethos of Ealing, one of decent communities with shared values worth defending, as found in *The Bells Go Down*, while James Chapman posits the police in *The Blue Lamp* as a community in themselves, a continuation of representation of communities in Dearden’s war films *The Bells Go Down* and *The Captive Heart*.²⁵ Jeffrey Richards and Steve Chibnall also liken *The Blue Lamp*’s location shooting, a narrator and authenticity to *The Bells Go Down* and *The Captive Heart*.²⁶ In regards to location, Charlotte Brunson locates *The Blue Lamp*, alongside films such as *Passport to Pimlico*, as an example of a ‘Little London’ film, and a ‘City’ London film.²⁷ For Brunson, the village ‘little’ London and ‘city’ London fuse together in the final White City sequences, where “the city still abides by the village rules” as the locals work together to expel Riley from the stadium.²⁸

Jan Read and Ted Willis penned the original treatment for *The Blue Lamp* for Gainsborough Pictures, conceiving *The Blue Lamp* as an East End police-drama film. Read and Willis completed the original treatment for *The Blue Lamp* after extensive research into the workings of the Metropolitan Police. Willis spent six weeks at various police stations in London and travelled in police cars, while Read observed police work at Lehman Street Station in Whitechapel, and the Wapping and Dockland areas.²⁹ As a result, Read originally set the film in Lehman Street Station, as he believed it had an older charm and congenial atmosphere, whereas “the newer stations, such as Hammersmith, are lighter and more commodious, but lack atmosphere and associations” and “it will be much easier to get over a sense of

²⁴ Frank Enley, ‘The Blue Lamp’, *Sight and Sound*, April 1950, p.76 & p.78.

²⁵ Tony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards, *Best of British*, p.128; James Chapman, ‘Sordidness, Corruption and Violence Almost Unrelieved’, *Contemporary British Film History*, 22, no.2 (2008), p.197.

²⁶ Jeffrey Richards, ‘Basil Dearden at Ealing’, in Alan Burton, Tim O’Sullivan and Paul Wells (eds.), *Liberal Directions: Basil Dearden and Postwar British Film Culture*, p.21; Steve Chibnall, ‘The Teenage Trilogy: The Blue Lamp, I Believe in You and Violent Playground’ in Alan Burton, Tim O’Sullivan and Paul Wells (eds.), *Liberal Directions: Basil Dearden and Postwar British Film Culture*, p.143

²⁷ Charlotte Brunson, *London in Cinema*, p.67.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p.67.

²⁹ Alan Burton and Tim O’Sullivan, *The Cinema of Basil Dearden and Michael Relph*, p.205; TNA: MEPO 2/8342, P.I.O Minutes on *The Blue Lamp*, 10 June 1948.

comradeship in such crowded surroundings than in a concrete glass expanse.”³⁰ Read envisaged that *The Blue Lamp* should be semi-documentary in style, with considerable location shooting, similar to the work they had done on American spy film *The House on 92nd Street* (dir. Louis de Rochment, 1945), which was shot on location in New York City and produced with the full cooperation of the FBI.³¹ The original opening sequences for *The Blue Lamp*, as envisaged by Reed and Willis in original screenplay, were set in Commercial Road, Whitechapel, as police follow a couple to tenements on nearby Settles Street.³² The wish for an ‘everyday’ London was evident in Jan Read’s description of the final chase sequence in the revised treatment: “We now go back to the chase, which can, I think, be more effective if carried out against the everyday background of back-yards, sun-lit crowded streets, public houses and railway stations, than in the usual ultra-romantic surroundings of warehouses and docks by night”.³³ While Read originally developed the treatment so that “it can be shot among the streets and in the houses, shops and Police Stations of Greater London”, Read eventually conceded that much of the film would have to be shot indoors due to Gainsborough’s severe financial difficulties.³⁴ Unfortunately, Gainsborough’s financial problems continued to escalate throughout 1949, resulting in the cancellation of a number of projects including *The Blue Lamp*. Michael Balcon then offered to develop and produce the film at Ealing, seizing the opportunity to replicate the recent successes both at home and abroad of American films produced with the cooperation of the police, such as *The Naked City* (dir. Jules Dassin, 1948). As Ealing were developing a reputation for extensive location shooting in particular districts of London, with previous successes *Hue and Cry*, *It Always Rains on Sunday* and *Passport to Pimlico*, the studio was therefore ideally positioned to produce *The Blue Lamp* in line with Read’s original semi-documentary intentions.

Balcon was originally keen to shoot inside Lehman Street Station itself, however, Fearnley convinced Balcon that for practical reasons such as lack of space, sequences shot be shot in the studio based on stills and designs.³⁵ Balcon decided to

³⁰ TNA: MEPO 2/8342, Jan Read’s revised treatment of *The Blue Lamp*, 21 September 1948.

³¹ TNA: MEPO 2/8342, Letter from Jan Read to Sir Harold Scott, 6 May 1948.

³² TNA: MEPO 2/8342, *The Blue Lamp* Original Screenplay by Jan Read and Ted Willis, 10 December 1948.

³³ TNA: MEPO 2/8342, *The Blue Lamp* Revised Treatment, Jan Read, 21 September 1948.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Correspondence between Percy Fearnley and Michael Balcon, 27 January 1949, TNA: MEPO File 2/8342.

change the setting of the film from Whitechapel in the East End to Paddington in West London, much to the initial dismay of the Met, and entrusted T.E.B. Clarke to rewrite the script and remove the East End dialogue.³⁶ Clarke was the natural choice for scriptwriter, having spent time as a war reserve police officer in S Division, Hammersmith, from 1939 to 1943. Clarke vividly recollected ‘working the beat’ on the streets of Hampstead and it is evident that his experiences informed the script.³⁷ The sequence where PC Mitchell informs Mrs. Dixon of her husband’s death was similar to Clarke’s own experience of informing a family that their loved-one had died.³⁸ Ted Willis later acknowledged that Clarke “honed, refined and improved our material and added much more that was uniquely his own”.³⁹ Clarke also spent time observing the police at work and travelled with them in radio cars whilst developing the script, which Ealing’s publicity department was keen to exploit through press releases detailing Clarke’s work with the police.⁴⁰ While there is no archival record of why Balcon chose change the film’s setting to Paddington, the area’s working-class residential profile, and notable buildings including the Metropolitan Music Hall and Coliseum cinema in close proximity to Paddington Green station, certainly met the demands of the narrative. The film’s narrative and characters also ties in with Frank Mort’s description of Paddington in the immediate postwar period as one of London’s “twilight or transitional zones [...] squeezed between the established infrastructure of the metropolitan core and the settled residential communities of the Victorian inner suburbs”, with “dislocated communities” including prostitutes and runaway teenagers.⁴¹

Filming on *The Blue Lamp* commenced in June 1949, with two camera units, often at different locations, “most in studios or London streets, a small amount in information room at the CO [central office]”, “a few external shots at Paddington Green Station” and a “wireless car chase from De La Mere Terrace, Paddington, to Shepherd’s Bush”.⁴² The ability to shoot so much of the film on location was due in

³⁶ Fearnley advised against for two reasons; firstly, the No.3 District and H division had already put much work into the film, and secondly, the dialogue was that of the East End, as noted in TNA: MEPO File 2/8342, *The Blue Lamp* Minute Sheet, 13 August 1949.

³⁷ T.E.B Clarke, *This is Where I Came In* p.128.

³⁸ Ibid, p.128.

³⁹ Quoted in Richards and Aldgate, *Best of British*, p.128.

⁴⁰ *The Blue Lamp*: Pressbook, 1950.

⁴¹ Frank Mort, ‘Scandalous Events: Metropolitan Culture and Moral Change in Post-Second World War London’, *Representations*, 93, no.1 (February 2006), p.109.

⁴² TNA: MEPO File 2/8342, *The Blue Lamp*: Minutes, 13 April 1949.

part, according to Michael Relph, to the facilities and help given by the Metropolitan Police; “using enormous lamps, we could do night shots, and we were able to shoot all around the Edgware Road and surrounding district, which would otherwise have been difficult”.⁴³ The Metropolitan Police supervised location and studio filming throughout production and ensured that studio sets accurately reflected real police stations. However, according to Dirk Bogarde, some scenes were shot in the cinema-vérité style, with the chase across the railway lines and scenes in White City stadium shot without permission.⁴⁴ Production was completed on 12 August 1949, on schedule for Ealing’s annual fortnightly break, with outstanding establishing scenes, where no police actors were needed, finished after the break.⁴⁵

Real buildings located on the Harrow road and Edgware Road, including Paddington Green Police station, the Coliseum Cinema and the Metropolitan Theatre, were integral to *The Blue Lamp*’s narrative, as spaces to be transgressed by the delinquent Riley (as discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis). These recognisable locations were also a key selling point in publicity materials, released during pre-production and early stages of production. Paddington Green Police Station, located at 325 Harrow Road, serves as a focal point for several scenes within the film, a space of order and congeniality, in contrast to the spaces of leisure frequented and used by Riley to plot and commit crimes. Ealing and the Met’s dedication to authenticity of locations is evidenced by interior shots of Paddington Green Station, which were studio sets based on photographs of the real station and visits made by Ealing personnel. Exteriors of the Coliseum cinema, located next door to Paddington Green station, and used as the cinema where Riley commits the robbery and shoots Dixon, were shot at the cinema itself, with some studio work used for the foyer interior.⁴⁶ As the Coliseum was closed in 1958 and eventually demolished, and the Metropolitan Music Hall was demolished in 1963, these scenes are since imbued with a historical resonance.

⁴³ Interview with Michael Relph, in in Alan Burton, Tim O’Sullivan and Paul Wells (eds.), *Liberal Directions: Basil Dearden and Postwar British Film Culture*, p.246.

⁴⁴ ‘Yard Made this Film Possible’, *The Star*, 17 January 1950; Dirk Bogarde quoted in Phillip Gillett, *The British Working Class in Postwar Film* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), p.58.

⁴⁵ TNA: MEPO File 2/8342, *The Blue Lamp*: P.H. Fearnley, Minutes, 26 July 1949.

⁴⁶ The name of the cinema was changed from the original Majestic in the shooting script to the Coliseum during production, in keeping with the film’s use of real locations to authenticate the fiction.

The Blue Lamp's use of newspaper headlines, such as "stolen car strikes women in West End crash", directly tackled the wartime and postwar 'crime wave', as a weakened wartime police force and spivs operating on the black market resulted in an increase in crime. Critics praised the correlation between lawlessness and the postwar environment; Paul Holt (*Daily Herald*) noted how the film "plays out against the background of lawless, restless, confused, over-crowded, poverty-racked and bomb-torn, post-war London" and that "it is the Harrow Road that is the real villain", while the *Evening News* stated how the film "stars the streets of Paddington and the daily life thereof. Its job is to 'look in' on the relentless processes whereby Scotland Yard attacks the new London gangster problem".⁴⁷ Critics were quick to link the locations used with real-life incidents that mirrored the film; in December 1950, two women were stabbed on Edgware Road, which the press noted was the same section of the Edgware Road where *The Blue Lamp* was filmed, then in February 1950 a robbery took place at the Coliseum, just one month after the release of *The Blue Lamp*.⁴⁸ For the press, these incidents further enhanced the film's authenticity and served to perpetuate the notion that the area around Paddington Green was synonymous with crime; the provincial press even referred to the streets around Edgware Road and Paddington Green as '*The Blue Lamp* streets'.⁴⁹

For American critics, *The Blue Lamp* succeeded in replicating the success of urban American thrillers within a British context; the *Washington Post* compared the film to Jules Dassin's *The Naked City* (dir. Jules Dassin, 1948), a police procedural drama shot in documentary style in New York City, while praising *The Blue Lamp*'s ability to retain its "national characteristics".⁵⁰ British critics were also keen to emphasise *The Blue Lamp*'s 'national characteristics'; for Dilys Powell, British crime cinema of the period, while influenced by the realism of location in American 1930s gangster films and then-recent American crime films, were rooted in the traditions of British documentary films.⁵¹ Frank Enley (*Sight and Sound*) considered *The Blue Lamp* as typical of both British cinema at the time and of Ealing studios, where Britishness is synonymous with bravery, and continuing the Ealing tradition

⁴⁷ Paul Holt, *Daily Herald*, 20 January 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *The Blue Lamp*; *Evening News*, 19 January 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *The Blue Lamp*.

⁴⁸ 'Two Women Attacked, One Dead', *Gloucestershire Echo*, 12 June 1950, p.1; *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 28 January 1950, p.1.

⁴⁹ *Gloucestershire Echo*, 12 June 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *The Blue Lamp*.

⁵⁰ 'Blue Lamp does a Naked City Job on the Bobbies of London', *Washington Post*, 12 April 1951, p.9.

⁵¹ Dilys Powell, 'Films – The Blue Lamp', *Britain Today* (April 1950), p.36.

of tributes to institutions in British life.⁵² Critics also praised *The Blue Lamp*'s depiction of an authentic postwar London; *Picture Show* defined the London of Ealing and *The Blue Lamp* as "shabby, grimy, friendly and secretive".⁵³ For Dilys Powell, *The Blue Lamp* was "sharply native" and "peculiarly successful in its amalgamation of the real and the reconstructed", with characterisation which "admirably conveys the feeling of London life"⁵⁴ Powell was particularly impressed with how *The Blue Lamp* depicted London, which for her captured the essence of the city:

The camera has selected and composed just those fragments from the great mosaic of London which can best communicate the sense of sprawling, dirty, bleak areas outside the smart West End: the music-hall in Edgware Road, the forbidding residential streets to the West, the back lots by the canal. I have rarely seen a film which so vividly evoked London: not the rich London of the tourist or the prim London of the well-to-do resident, but the raw, smoky London in which the huge undistinguished mass of people live.⁵⁵

This 'vividly evoked London' of *The Blue Lamp*, released in January 1950, would for critics set the benchmark for following films which used extensive shooting in inner-London, as evidenced by critics' response to Anglo-American production released just six months after *The Blue Lamp*, *Night and the City*.

"Can this hell perhaps be Jules Dassin's London, which is certainly not the London that belongs to you and me?"⁵⁶ Critical reception of depictions of London in *Night and the City*

Night and the City concerns American hustler Harry Fabian (Richard Widmark) whose ambition leads him into a Soho underworld of wrestling promoters and shady nightclub owners. The film was produced by Twentieth-Century Fox due to Anglo-American film agreements, where British films were produced with American dollars and given fair distribution in the USA, an agreement Dilys Powell regarded

⁵² Frank Enley, 'The Blue Lamp', *Sight and Sound* (April 1950), p.76.

⁵³ *Picture Show*, 11 February 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *The Blue Lamp*

⁵⁴ Dilys Powell, 'Films: The Blue Lamp', *Britain Today* (April 1950), p.36.

⁵⁵ Ibid; *The Star* also praised the film's evocation of the London scene: "seldom have the milk bars, frowsy apartment houses, billiard halls and barrow-lined streets of London that does not appear on travel posters been so vividly captured on screen" in *Star*, 20 January 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *The Blue Lamp*.

⁵⁶ *Sunday Chronicle*, 18 June 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Night and the City*

as “hopeful” at a time of shrinking finances in the British film industry.⁵⁷ American director Jules Dassin had previously directed *The Naked City* (1948), leading to obvious critical comparisons to *The Blue Lamp*. Stylistically, *Night and the City* adopts a noir aesthetic with chiaroscuro lighting, oblique angles, mainly night-time settings, and a flawed anti-hero. The film lacks the restrained, naturalistic cinematography associated with British films of the period, with British cinematographer Max Greene depicting a picturesque, if downbeat London. An extensive body of literature exists on *Night and the City*, a film now considered by film historians as a key film in the corpus of British film noirs.⁵⁸ For Robert Murphy, *Night and the City* marks the end of the cycle of British Spiv films of 1945-50, films notable for their seedy underworld Soho settings and black market activity.⁵⁹ Andrew Pulver’s monograph *Night and the City* gives a detailed analysis of the film’s production history and textual analysis of use of location, while Charlotte Brunsdon locates the two Londons in *Night and the City*; ‘landmark’ London with recognisable icons and ‘underground’ Soho, London.⁶⁰

Night and the City, in contrast to *The Blue Lamp*, provides the spectator with a vast array of familiar London landmarks, including; London Bridge, Waterloo, Petticoat Lane, Piccadilly, Mile End Arena, Strand and Regent Street. For Twentieth-Century Fox, this variety of locations was a key selling point; publicity documents stated that the film was shot in sixty-four London locations, filmed over fifty-three working days and nights, and in just fourteen interiors.⁶¹ *Night and the City*’s depiction of bomb-damage is minimal and when bomb-damage does appear, it functions mainly as backdrop. The film’s production in London locations was newsworthy in light of the success of American urban thrillers in city locations; Stephen Watts for the *New York Times* reported how Dassin planned to make “dramatic use of London as an integral foreground, rather than background, of the film”.⁶² Although, as Andrew

⁵⁷ Dilys Powell, ‘Night and the City’, *Sunday Times*, 18 June 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Night and the City*.

⁵⁸ Film historians such as Steven Chibnall and Robert Murphy note that while *Night and the City* can be categorised as a film noir, it differs from its American counterparts in its depiction of female characters who are portrayed as victims rather than temptresses, in Steve Chibnall and Robert Murphy, *British Crime Cinema*, (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2005), p.5.

⁵⁹ Robert Murphy, *Realism and Tinsel*.

⁶⁰ Andrew Pulver, *Night and the City* (London: BFI/Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Charlotte Brunsdon, ‘Space in British Crime Film’, in Steve Chibnall and Robert Murphy (eds), *British Crime Cinema*, (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2005), pp.153-164.

⁶¹ Ernest Betts, Director of Publicity, Publicity sheets for *Night and the City*, 20th Century Fox, 1950.

⁶² Stephen Watts, ‘Cameras on Night and the City in London’, *New York Times*, 02 October 1949, BFI Press Cuttings: *Night and the City*.

Pulver states, one deleted scene depicted Fabian hiding out in a bombed-out church in the film's "most explicit connection with the narrative's wartime assault on London".⁶³ This minimal use of bomb-damage contrasts with Ealing's London-set films, such as *It Always Rains on Sunday*, where the effect of war is written into the film's dialogue and set design or features as a reminder of war, as in *Pool of London* and *Hue and Cry*.⁶⁴ For British critics, *Night and the City* could easily have been transplanted onto any large city; for Joan Lester (*Reynold's News*), "those shadowy shots might well have been Manchester".⁶⁵

For critic Audrey Leonard (*Sunday Graphic*), *Night and the City* was a good example of Anglo-American productions which were typically a "British thriller gingered up by American gangsterdom", produced to appeal primarily to an American audience.⁶⁶ Indeed, the characters in *Night and the City* regularly refer to 'London' rather than specific districts, perhaps reflecting Dassin's and American audience's unfamiliarity with specific districts. *Night and the City*'s dialogue, and depiction of London as a vast labyrinth, contrasts with Ealing's London, where characters are grounded in their specific districts. Dassin, when interviewed in 2005, recalled that British critics thought that the London he depicted was 'made up' and asserted that the London on screen was the real London.⁶⁷ This assertion is partly correct; British critics were quick to point out that Jules Dassin was not a native and unfamiliar with London, rather than having 'made up' the city; *Manchester Guardian* noted that "in making a realistic film there is no substitute for knowledge of place and people – Mr. Dassin quite obviously did not have the time to know London and Londoners".⁶⁸ Indeed, Dassin had spent six weeks in London prior to production and claimed to find the vastness of the city "frightening".⁶⁹ Publicity materials addressed Dassin's unfamiliarity with the city with a quotation from Dassin stating "it would be absurd to claim that I have done more than touch the fringe of London when I came here to look at it. I set out to discover some of the

⁶³ Andrew Pulver, *Night and the City*, p.40.

⁶⁴ The use of bomb-damage in *It Always Rains on Sunday* and *Pool of London* is discussed in detail in Chapter Two of this thesis, while use of bomb damage is discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis.

⁶⁵ Joan Lester, *Reynold's News*, 18 June 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Night and the City*.

⁶⁶ Audrey Leonard, *Sunday Graphic*, 18 June 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Night and the City*.

⁶⁷ Interview with Jules Dassin for *Night and the City* DVD extra, BFI, 2005.

⁶⁸ See *Time and Tide*, 24 June 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Night and the City*; *Manchester Guardian*, 17 June 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Night and the City*.

⁶⁹ Stephen Watts, 'Cameras on Night and the City in London', *New York Times*, 02 October 1949, BFI Press Cuttings: *Night and the City*.

most beautiful and striking locations suitable to the story [...] But I don't pretend that I shall show London to filmgoers as if I knew it intimately."⁷⁰ For critics, the use of American lead actors also added to the films lack of distinct British style. Mary (Gene Tirenay) exudes a Hollywood glamour, while the English character Helen (Googie Withers) is glamorous, ruthless and ambitious in-keeping with the American femme fatale, a character far removed from down-to-earth East Ender Rose Sandigate (Googie Withers) in *It Always Rains on Sunday*.

Minor British characters appear in *Night and the City* as criminal Dickensian stereotypes. For the *Daily Herald*, such characters were unrealistic and "like those dreamed up by Charles Dickens and John Gay".⁷¹ These characters were depicted in a 'thieves kitchen' in Houndsditch, a historically poor street in the City, where beggars created signs and used artificial limbs, chosen for its picturesque, Dickensian quality.⁷² The *Daily Worker* argued that a lack of normal characters in *Night and the City* served to "accentuate the macabre" and thus offered "a distorted picture of London".⁷³ However, for Pulver, the film's Dickensian elements continue the tradition of British gothic and late Victorian literature.⁷⁴ Indeed, such Dickensian characters also appeared in native British London-set films, as a 'macabre' London is depicted in the gothic architecture and character of Professor Marcus in later Ealing comedy *The Ladykillers*. *Night and the City*'s evocation of a macabre, seedy London is also typical of British postwar spiv films set in Soho, which, according to Murphy, continued the tradition of 1930s British crime thrillers, with a darker atmosphere and in a postwar context.⁷⁵ For Charlotte Brunson, *Night and the City* is an example of how the West End is reconstituted as a dark place in British thrillers film noirs.⁷⁶ Frank Mort described London's "polarised geography" and spatial layout as one which stimulated scandal and eroticism, as Soho was characterised by narrow streets and alleys just off the grand thoroughfares of Leicester Square.⁷⁷ Depictions of Soho in British film as a seedy, dangerous place thus enhanced Soho's reputation as, as Arthur Tietjen described in 1956, a

⁷⁰ Quoted in Ernest Betts, Director of Publicity, *Night and the City*: Publicity Sheets, 20th Century Fox, 1950.

⁷¹ P.H. *Daily Herald*, 16 June 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Night and the City*.

⁷² Stephen Watts, 'Cameras on Night and the City in London, *New York Times*, 02 October 1949, BFI Press Cuttings: *Night and the City*.

⁷³ *Daily Worker*, 17 June 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Night and the City*.

⁷⁴ Andrew Pulver, *Night and the City*, p.88.

⁷⁵ Robert Murphy, *Realism and Tinsel*.

⁷⁶ Robert Murphy, *Realism and Tinsel*, p.131; Charlotte Brunson, *London in Cinema*, p.94.

⁷⁷ Frank Mort, *Capital Affairs* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), p.12.

“breeding ground of crime and hotbed of vice” which provided an “internal fascination” for the criminally minded with its “labyrinth of narrow streets and alleys, its underground clubs”.⁷⁸

Pulver suggests that negative reviews of *Night and the City* were due to British critics’ fear of a Hollywood invasion of the British film industry.⁷⁹ While this may have been a factor in critic’s responses, it was the depiction of London, as well as the use of American leads in a British-set film, which most infuriated British critics in the national press.⁸⁰ British critics were, however, quick to praise Greene’s cinematography for its beauty, perhaps in a nod to one of the few above-the-line British talents on the film.⁸¹ For Dilys Powell, Dassin’s depiction of London, with squalid characters, American stars and a “conglomeration of night-clubs, thieves’ kitchens, all-in wrestling and river-rats”, “will do the British cinema nothing but harm”.⁸² For the *Daily Herald*, the film is a “gross misunderstanding” of London, in which the city is made “incredible, which she never was”.⁸³ However, it was evident that the critic for the *Daily Herald* took umbrage with an American version of London as “I was offended by this film, for I do not mind being told that London is wicked but I hate to be told by a friendly foreigner that she is absurdly so”.⁸⁴ Some critics also displayed a highly emotional response to Dassin’s depiction of London; Roy Nash (*Star*) argued that “this film insults London” and “will hurt the pride of every Londoner”.⁸⁵ Critics were particularly cynical about the climatic scenes where Harry Fabian sprints across London, a scene which covers over six miles and takes in as many familiar London locations as is possible, thus lacking a continuity as found in Ealing’s London, which feature a limited number of streets in close proximity to one another.⁸⁶ However, the provincial press outside of London were generally positive in their reviews of *Night and the City*; Elizabeth Winters at *Gloucester Journal* thought the film was realistic, capturing “the authentic

⁷⁸ Arthur Tietjen, *Soho: London’s Vicious Circle* (London: Allan Wingate, 1956), p.145.

⁷⁹ Andrew Pulver, *Night and the City*, p.41.

⁸⁰ Critics who criticized the use of American leads include *Evening Standard*, 20 July 1949, BFI Press Cuttings: *Night and the City*.

⁸¹ See Dilys Powell, ‘Night and the City’, *Sunday Times*, 18 June 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Night and the City*; Anon, *Evening Standard*, 15 June 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Night and the City*.

⁸² Dilys Powell, ‘Night and the City’, *Sunday Times*, 18 June 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Night and the City*.

⁸³ P.H., *Daily Herald*, 16 June 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Night and the City*.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Roy Nash, ‘This Film Insults London’, *Star*, 13 June 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Night and the City*.

⁸⁶ Audrey Leonard, *Sunday Graphic*, 18 June 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Night and the City*; *Daily Telegraph*, 19 June 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Night and the City*.

atmosphere of Piccadilly, Trafalgar-Square and Thames-side” and indicative of the “documentary technique” which “has successfully been adapted for purely fictional films”.⁸⁷

Pulver notes that American critics appreciated the noir style, in contrast to British critics who focused on (the lack of) authenticity.⁸⁸ The differences in the mode of address used in British critic’s reviews of *The Blue Lamp* suggest a sense of belonging and familiarity as opposed to *Night and City*, where British reviews refer to “the Americans”. Alan Exley for the *Evening News* addressed the Londoner directly, claiming that for a Londoner *The Blue Lamp* “is partly your film [...] It is shot in your street, even in some of your homes.”⁸⁹ The *Star* contrasted *Night and the City* to “our own” *The Blue Lamp* to demonstrate how in *Night and the City* “the backgrounds are there but the real flavour of London is missing”.⁹⁰ For the *Evening Standard*, London was a “pre-eminently gentle city” one of “serenity and stability. But my view is obviously not shared by the people who make pictures. To them London is sinister, evil and cruel. The dome of St Paul’s and the tranquil Thames are not symbols of beauty, but a shadowy background for mayhem, murder and the macabre”.⁹¹ Indeed, *Night and the City*’s depiction of St Paul’s contrasts to Ealing’s depiction of the Thames and St Paul’s in *Pool of London* (discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis), also shot during 1950, as a place of reverence, beauty, and tranquillity.

Night and the City fared poorly at the British box office, yet has since gained a reputation as a classic film noir, partly due to the reassessment of film noir by French film critics and filmmakers in the late 1950s, and subsequent canonisation of Dassin as an auteur. Robert Murphy defends the film’s “marvellously evocative impression of London at night” and suggests that the film was not commercially successful due to changes in public taste, as evidenced by the huge success of *The Blue Lamp*.⁹² For Murphy, the liberties Dassin takes with London geography are insignificant compared to Reed’s treatment of Belfast and *Odd Man Out* (dir. Carol

⁸⁷ Elizabeth Winters, ‘This film captures the authentic atmosphere’, *Gloucester Journal*, 24 June 1950, p.15. See also positive reviews in *Chelmsford Chronicle*, 07 July 1950, p.13; *Cornishman*, 14 December 1950, p.14; *Portsmouth Evening News*, 01 July 1950, p.4.

⁸⁸ Andrew Pulver, *Night and the City*, p.42.

⁸⁹ Alan Exley, *Evening News*, 10 August 1949, BFI Press Cuttings: *The Blue Lamp*.

⁹⁰ *Star*, 16 June 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Night and the City*.

⁹¹ *Evening Standard*, 15 June 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Night and the City*.

⁹² Robert Murphy, *Realism and Tinsel*, p.142.

Reed, 1947) and Vienna in *The Third Man* (dir. Carol Reed, 1949).⁹³ While Pulver acknowledges *Night and the City* as straddling two traditions of American underworld crime films and British spiv films, Pulver ultimately locates *Night and the City* as “a product of a distinctly British cultural tradition - one that relies heavily on its setting, the central London district of Soho” and positions *The Third Man* as a ‘partner’ film to *Night and the City*.⁹⁴

The initial critical response to *Night and the City* reveals a want for an ‘authentic’ London, typified by a local, ‘village’ London by filmmakers who were familiar with the geography of the city. For critics, *The Blue Lamp* sealed Ealing’s reputation to capture a recognisable London, rooted in specific districts with ‘ordinary’ inhabitants with a community ethos, thus *Night and the City* was judged against this standard. Ealing’s West London of *The Blue Lamp*, of crime-ridden working-class districts, familiar bobby on the beat, was the culmination of Ealing’s wartime London and immediate postwar London films, yet one that was also influenced by the success of Jules Dassin’s previous American film, *The Naked City*.

⁹³Ibid, p.140.

⁹⁴ Andrew Pulver, *Night and the City*, pp.71 & pp.89.

CHAPTER TWO

Depictions of London's East End in *It Always Rains on Sunday* and *Pool of London*

While Soho in London's West End gained a reputation during World War II and in the immediate postwar period as a place of excitement, danger and vice, as depicted in films such as *Night and the City* and *The Blue Lamp*, London's East End also developed a distinctive reputation and identity perpetuated in fiction. The East End exists not only as an actual location but also in the popular imagination, evoking historically laden images dating from the Victorian era of poverty, crime, prostitution and exoticism. This 'mythic' East End was a source of fascination in the nineteenth century consciousness, fuelled in part by the novels of Charles Dickens and fascination with the Whitechapel murders. Silent British cinema continued to mythicise the East End with serials such as *The Mystery of Fu Manchu* (1923) and films such as *The Lodger; A Story of The London Fog* (Hitchcock, 1926), contributing to cultural perceptions of the East End as a place of vice, danger and poverty. Such portrayals continued in British cinema after the silent era, where, as Charlotte Brunsdon argues, "the poverty has proved fascinatingly other, not ordinary, with the East End having "strong generic markings of horror, melodrama and gangster films".¹ However, in the immediate years following World War II, the East End of London also lent itself to social realism, as it was synonymous with bomb-damaged streets, slum housing and war-ravaged working docks. For filmmakers, London was (and still is), as Forshaw argues, "an exportable commodity" and the East End, with its slums, crime and spivs, a "useful setting" for crime fiction.² Ealing's *It Always Rains on Sunday* (dir. Robert Hamer, 1947) and *Pool of London* (dir. Basil Dearden, 1950) were two such films, praised by critics for their 'realistic' and 'authentic' portrayals of the East End. Thus, *It Always Rains on Sunday* and *Pool of London* are indicative of Ealing's immediate postwar identity, stemming from Balcon's policy of bringing together personnel from commercial and documentary backgrounds.³ Both *It Always Rains on Sunday* and *Pool of London* depict postwar life in the East End and feature working-class East

¹ Charlotte Brunsdon, *London in Cinema: The Cinematic City Since 1945*, p.150.

² Barry Forshaw, *British Crime Film*, pp.98-99.

³ Charles Barr, *Ealing Studios*, p.43.

End characters. Both films are generic hybrids, fusing location and documentary-style realism with crime narratives. British film historians and critics have categorised both films as examples of British film noir and having ‘soap-opera’ elements, due to the various sub-plots, and variety of working-class characters whose lives intersect.⁴

The ‘authentic’ and nostalgic postwar Bethnal Green in *It Always Rains on Sunday*

It Always Rains On Sunday cost £180,936 to produce, and went into production during the harsh winter of January of 1947, with studio filming completed in the February of 1947.⁵ It was Ealing’s most profitable film of 1947, during their most successful financial year.⁶ The film was a mainly faithful adaptation of Arthur La Bern’s popular novel, *It Always Rains on Sunday*, (published in 1945), which in part drew upon La Bern’s own childhood experiences of poverty in London.⁷ *It Always Rains on Sunday*’s main narrative takes place on a rainy Sunday in March, where Rosie Sandigate (Googie Withers) hides her former lover, escaped convict Tommy Swan (John McCallum), in her marital home at 26 Coronet Grove, Bethnal Green. The film contains a number of related sub-plots and local characters, including three crooks who sell stolen goods to a local businessman. John W. Collier, in his contemporaneous account of the making of the film, suggests that the change from the novel’s setting of 1939 to ‘present day’ was due to the practical considerations of location shooting, as much of the East End was scarred by bomb damage.⁸ The novel’s 1930s working-class milieu and downbeat mood was also easily adaptable to the postwar East End; historian Peter Hennessy refers to the period of 1945-51 in Sir Ralph Dahrendorf’s terms, as a “postscript” to the inter-war period, before rebuilding in the mid-1950s, the 1951 Festival of Britain and the end of austerity,

⁴ Andrew Spicer categorises both films as ‘British high noir: semi documentary’ in Andrew Spicer, *Film Noir*, (Essex: Pearson Education, 2002), p.190; Andrew Higson categorises *Pool of London* as a “noirish crime thriller embedded in an Ealing story documentary-cum-soap-opera” in Andrew Higson, ‘Pool of London’ in Alan Burton & Tim O’Sullivan (eds) *Liberal Directions*, p.162.

⁵ Figures quoted in Phillip Gillett, *The British Working Class in Postwar Film*, p.200.

⁶ *Showmen’s Trade Review*, 48, no.14 (3 April 1948), p.16.

⁷ Cathy Unsworth, ‘Introduction’ in *It Always Rains on Sunday*, Arthur Le Bern (first published by Nicholson & Watson, 1945, republished by London Books, 2015).

⁸ John W. Collier, *A Film in the Making, Featuring It Always Rains on Sunday* (London: World Film Publications, 1947), p.10.

while Jerry White describes a London that remained unchanged until the early 1950s and as a city of emptier streets.⁹ The local ‘crook’ characters of Alfie Price, Whitey Williams and Dicey Perkins were also easily transferred from the novel to screen with the postwar increase in black market trade. Indeed, Ealing’s press department offered suggestions for games and tie-ins that would resonate with audiences in austerity Britain, including a ‘Help the Police’ campaign which stated, “In these difficult times of shortages, shady characters and black marketers are more in evidence than ever”.¹⁰

Film historians and critics commonly refer to *It Always Rains on Sunday* a British film noir; Charlotte Brunsdon, while acknowledging the film’s hybridity, categorises the film as “East End noir”, due to its urban setting, downbeat mood, crime narrative and use of low-key lighting and shadows in the films’ climax.¹¹ For Andrew Pulver, war-torn London “was a landscape ripe for investigating the tortured motifs of film noir. It was all laid out for them.”¹² For Tim Pullene, postwar crime melodramas, including *It Always Rains on Sunday* and *Night and the City*, later termed film noir, stemmed from the influence of neo-realist subject matter and location shooting in British cinema, and the proliferation of black market activity and spivs.¹³ Robert Murphy, however, suggests that *It Always Rain’s on Sunday* is best acknowledged as a ‘spiv’ film, one of nine released within fourteen months, while Christine Geraghty categorises the film as a “women’s film” and melodrama.¹⁴ Upon release, critics used more general generic labels to describe *It Always Rains on Sunday*, such as “romantic crime melodrama”, and “convict drama”, positioning the film within the wider trend of ‘crime thrillers’ common in British cinema during the late 1940s.¹⁵ Ealing’s publicity department sold the crime and romance elements of the film, as evidenced in the original trailer. However, it was the locations which were the film’s key selling point; the trailer featured shots of the studio recreation of Petticoat Lane market with the title overlay ‘A picture hailed as the symphony of

⁹ Peter Hennessy, *Never Again: Britain 1945-51* (Penguin Books: London, 2006), p.425; and Jerry White, *London in the 20th Century*, p.309.

¹⁰ *It Always Rains on Sunday*: Pressbook, 1947

¹¹ See, for instance, Dennis Broe, *Class, Crime and International Film Noir: Globalising America’s Dark Art* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p.98; Charlotte Brunsdon, *London in Cinema*, p.161 & p.163.

¹² Andrew Pulver, *Night and the City*, p.42.

¹³ Tim Pulleine, ‘Spin a Dark Web’, in Steve Chibnall and Robert Murphy (eds.), *British Crime Cinema*, p.27.

¹⁴ Robert Murphy, *Realism and Tinsel*, p.2; Christine Geraghty, *British Cinema in the 1950s*.

¹⁵ ‘British Studio News- Balcon will make 1948 a Year of Comedy at Ealing’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 20 November 1947, p.16; ‘The Chandos Presents’, *Buckingham Advertiser and Free Press*, 12 February 1949, p.2; ‘Film Chiefs think Crime Does Pay’, *Derby Evening Telegraph*, 27 December 1946, p.2.

London's East End'. The trailer then cuts to location shots of a typical terraced street anchored with a voice-over, "in this familiar London street whose tranquillity is suddenly destroyed", in-keeping with Ealing's 'familiar' London which could be recognisable anywhere. The publicity department also falsely claimed that most of the film was shot in the real East End to help sell the picture, leading reviewers such as P. L. Mannock (*Daily Herald*) to praise the "genuine outdoor scenes of Hackney, Bethnal Green and Dockland."¹⁶

It Always Rains on Sunday's production was typical of studio production of period, combining studio and location work. The shots of a bustling Petticoat Lane were recreated on a large sound stage during the February of 1947, allowing Dearden more control with studio filming, while some brief exterior shots were filmed on location around Whitechapel Road. Real market traders with their actual stalls and goods and recreated their environment in the studio to authenticate the scenes.¹⁷ Practicalities determined decisions to shoot in the studio or on location, as location work was time-consuming and the lighting difficult to control, whereas outdoor scenes which required quick shots were easier to shoot on location.¹⁸ *It Always Rains on Sunday*'s authenticity extended to use of extras, as Ealing's casting director was sent to find average East End shop girls, army men and typical East End youths in 'zoot' suits for the Dance Hall sequences.¹⁹ The extent to which the characters' accents and dialogue were authentic divided critics; *Tribune* thanked the filmmakers for toning down the accents so audiences outside of London could understand them, while Reg Whitley (*Daily Mirror*) felt that the dialogue and the slang was appropriate to the East End, yet may not be understood outside London, while *The Cinema* found "the down to earth dialogue frequently amusing".²⁰ Certainly, the film's dialogue was toned down from the novel for the film as anticipated by critics; *Essex Newsman* noted while the film was in production in March 1947 that "the novel was littered with expletives and the colourful Anglo-

¹⁶ *It Always Rains on Sunday*: Information Booklet, Ealing Studios, 1947; P. L. Mannock, 'Films', *Daily Herald*, 28 November 1947, BFI Press Cuttings: *It Always Rains on Sunday*.

¹⁷ 'British Studio News- Balcon will make 1948 a Year of Comedy at Ealing', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 20 November 1947, p.16.

¹⁸ John W. Collier, *A Film in the Making*.

¹⁹ 'Strange Collection of Characters used in Thriller, *Los Angeles Times*, 23 July 1950, p.3.

²⁰ *Tribune*, 28 November 1947, BFI Press Cuttings: *It Always Rains on Sunday*; 'Bang on Balcon!', *Daily Mirror*, 28 February 1947, BFI Press Cuttings: *It Always Rains on Sunday*; C.H.B. Williamson, *The Cinema*, 14 November 1947, p.12.

Yiddish of the East End. Somebody, no doubt, has been busy with the bucket and suds”.²¹

The climatic sequences where Tommy Swan dramatically escapes across the ruins of Hartland Road, then through a railway yard, is where *It Always Rains on Sunday* adopts an expressionist, ‘noir’ style, as smoke emanates from steam trains and the empty city streets and railway tunnels are shot in a low key light, creating ominous shadows. The railway yard chase sequence was filmed mainly in Temple Mills, Leyton, one of the biggest marshalling yards in the country, as the yard was too large to recreate in the studio.²² For film historian Ian Sinclair, it is this sequence which illustrates the influence by the French poetic realist cinema of Marcel Carne or the expressionist cinema of Fritz Lang on director Robert Hamer.²³ Hamer is considered by film historians as somewhat of a maverick and outsider at Ealing; Robert Shail argues that Hamer was one of two directors (the other being Alexander Mackendrick) who were able to “impose a personal vision on their work” and that Hamer’s direction takes the film in a “different direction” from ‘standard’ Ealing studio realism with its “gloomy mood”.²⁴ For Dennis Broe, there are two styles evident in the film; the French poetic influence, which he attributes to Hamer, and the social realist nature of the film in-keeping with Ealing’s style.²⁵ Indeed, *It Always Rains on Sunday* is to some degree a continuation of British wartime cinema (as discussed in Chapter One of this thesis), with everyday people, location shooting and naturalistic interiors.²⁶ However, for Charles Drazin, *It Always Rains on Sunday* is more typical of the contemporary urban drama Hamer wanted to direct.²⁷ According to John W. Collier, Hamer did not view himself as an ‘artist’, a view also reiterated by Hamer himself; “He [Hamer] speaks of the studio as “we” as if it were a family cooperative than an employer [...] He boasts with corporate pride that all the members of that team got their first assignments as directors at Ealing, a fact which perhaps tends to develop certain similarities of style”.²⁸ Hamer considered the realistic treatment of

²¹ *Essex Newsmen*, 07 March 1947, p.3.

²² John W. Collier, *A Film in the Making*, p.93.

²³ Interview with Ian Sinclair, ‘Coming in from the Rain’, DVD extra, *It Always Rains on Sunday* DVD, released by Vintage Classics, 2012.

²⁴ Robert Shail, *British Film Directors: A Critical Guide* (Edinburgh University Press, 2007) p.3 & p.91.

²⁵ Dennis Broe, *Class, Crime and International Film Noir: Globalising America’s Dark Art* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p.98.

²⁶ John Orr and Daniel Letwin, *Romantics and Modernists in British Cinema*, p.44.

²⁷ Charles Drazin, *The Finest Years*, p.76.

²⁸ John W. Collier, *A Film in the Making*, p.57; Freda Bruce Lockhart, ‘Interview with Robert Hamer’, *Sight and Sound*, October-December 1951, pp.74-75.

characters as one consistent feature of his work, regardless of the absurdity of a film's premise, sentiments also echoed by Ealing stalwart Charles Crichton in his approach when directing *Hue and Cry*.²⁹

Robert Murphy's recent reappraisal of Ealing's films suggests that postwar films at Ealing were darker in tone than one would suppose, while recognising that the relationship between Hamer and Ealing was more complex than simply that of an 'outsider'.³⁰ Both Cathy Unsworth and Brian McFarlane attribute *It Always Rains on Sunday*'s noir style to Director of Photography Douglas Slocombe, who employed the same noir lighting he used on *Dead of Night* (dir. Alberto Cavalcanti, 1945).³¹ Slocombe was also adept at photographing realistic locations for a fictional narrative, having previously photographed 'realistic' Ealing films such as *The Big Blockade* (dir. Charles Frend, UK, 1942) and *Painted Boats* (dir. Charles Crichton, UK, 1945). When comparing Ealing's London films of the period, such as *Hue and Cry* and *Pool of London*, expressionist tendencies, and the link between ruins, urban spaces and crime, were common motifs in Ealing's London films, as ruins provided a photogenic space for criminals to run across and hide into. Indeed, *It Always Rains on Sunday* was considered by a number of critics as a successor to *Hue and Cry* for its use of London locations, perhaps in part fuelled by Ealing's publicity department who published advanced previews which all compare *It Always Rains on Sunday* to *Hue and Cry*, thus, the various styles at play in location shooting in *It Always Rains on Sunday* does not fully stand apart from Ealing's postwar corpus.³²

Art Director Duncan Sutherland initially searched for suitable locations for *It Always Rains on Sunday* in the East End, however, the actual residential streets used were located in Camden, North West London.³³ A small grid of streets, replete with Victorian terraced houses, off the Chalk Farm Road, and bomb damage, compensated for residential, working-class Bethnal Green. Clarence Way, off the Chalk Farm Road, functions as the fictional Coronet Grove, home of the Sandigate family, while Mr Neesly's business and home was filmed on the real Hawley Road

²⁹ Freda Bruce Lockhart, 'Interview with Robert Hamer', *Sight and Sound*, October-December 1951, pp.74-75.

³⁰ Robert Murphy, 'Dark Shadows Around Ealing' in Mark Duguid Lee Freeman, *et al.*, (eds), *Ealing revisited*, p.82.

³¹ Cathy Unsworth, 'Introduction', in Arthur Le Bern, *It Always Rains on Sunday*, p.84.

³² See *Tribune*, 28 November 1947, BFI Press Cuttings: *It Always Rains on Sunday*; A.E. Wilson, *Star*, 28 November 1947, p.6; *Kinematograph Weekly*, 20 November 1947, p.16.

³³ 'British Studio News- Balcon will make 1948 a Year of Comedy at Ealing', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 20 November 1947, p.16.

(formerly Labourne Road), just off Clarence Way. Hawley Road was a road of shabby houses in need of repair, ideal for the auster, down-at-heel look required for the film. Hawley Road and Clarence Way also matched critic and Playwright G.W. Stonier's 1949 account of a 'typical' East End street as "without decoration; two brick rows front one another across the pavements... a railway probably runs across the end of the street... The houses are... too small for their packed families, but they sit modestly, trimly, even harmoniously, under heaven".³⁴ Joe Moran's analysis of how the street in postwar Britain was imagined, emphasises the importance of the terraced street in the British imagination, a reminder of the Victorian past and emblematic of the post-war slum.³⁵ *It Always Rains on Sunday*'s opening shots, a high angle establishing shot of Coronet Grove, characterised by Victorian terraced houses, a church on the corner and a railway line at the end of the road, reflected popular perceptions of a typical street in the East End after World War II where run-down Victorian terraces still dominated the landscape. This perception of a typical East End street was reflected in the *Times*' review of the film; "little East End streets where pieces of dirty newspaper cling to the railings and dawn comes up with the bang and clatter of a goods train over the iron bridge at the end of the road."³⁶ Phillip Gillett notes how the railway was "an abiding symbol of the working-class environment" in British postwar cinema as "the middle-class travel by train; the working class live beside the tracks and watch them".³⁷ Indeed, the railway at the end of the road is a familiar trope in postwar London films, as evidenced in postwar British films set in working-class districts such as *Passport to Pimlico* and *Cosh Boy*.

Clarence Way not only compensated for a perceived 'typical' working-class street in Bethnal Green, it also met the demands of the narrative, as the Holy Trinity church, located on the corner of Clarence Way, (named in the novel as St Saviour's Church) provides a place for Tommy Swan to hide and shelter from the rain. The use of Holy Trinity church also locates the film in 'present day', as the bomb-damaged steeple is clearly visible in the film's establishing shots. Urban historians Peter Larkham and Joe L. Nasr note how the church is a building imbued with "considerable social

³⁴ G. W. Stonier, 'A Walk Through the East End' in *Flower of Cities: A Book of London* (Max Parish: London, 1949) p.218.

³⁵ Joe Moran, 'Imagining the Street in Postwar Britain', *Urban History*, 39, no.1 (2012).

³⁶ *Times*, 01 December 1947, BFI Press Cuttings: *It Always Rains on Sunday*.

³⁷ Phillip Gillett, *The British Working Class in Postwar Film*, p.179.

significance, visual importance and contribution to local – and indeed national – identity.”³⁸ Indeed, the ruined church frequently appears in postwar London-set films functioning as a reminder of the damage inflicted on London and as a symbol of resilience and community, as evidenced in *Seven Days to Noon* (discussed in Chapter Six of this thesis) and *Innocent Sinners* (discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis).

The opening paragraph of La Bern’s novel *It Always Rains on Sunday* describes Coronet Grove in the following manner; “in the course of half a century the factory fumes and domestic smoke of East London have transformed this bright ochre rash into a grey smudge, which is only relieved by the six white steps in front of each house”.³⁹ The filmic *It Always Rains on Sunday* lacks the domestic smoke, however the black and white ‘colour’ and mise en scène, with a railway viaduct at the end of the street, convey the grey, smoky atmosphere. The cramped mise en scène of the Sandigate’s home and exterior shots of weary, back-to-back terraces evokes the pre-war period and 1935 documentary *Housing Problems* (dir. Arthur Elton and Edgar Ansty, 1935), which depicts the slums of Stepney in London’s East End and need for new, modern flats. Depictions of the East End in *It Always Rains on Sunday* also compares to Pathe’s *Spanish Garden* (1950), which describes the East End as “the grey heart of London” with images of back-to-back Victorian terraces, anchored with a voice over; “Once upon a time green fields stretched where the chaos of the industrial revolution now defaces the East End of London”. These depictions of the East End in *It Always Rains on Sunday* and aforementioned Pathe newsreels are comparable with histories of postwar East London; Historian Peter Hennessy described postwar Britain as a place where “coal smoke would predominate...buildings were grimly black... (the) streets of 1945 were pretty empty,” while Jerry White describes London after the war as “broken, drab, patched, tired out and essentially Victorian still”. In 1951, the *Manchester Guardian* described the area around Whitechapel and Commercial Road as “tawdry little shops and mile upon mile of small grey, working-class houses huddled behind

³⁸ Peter J. Larkham and Joe L. Nasr, ‘Decision-making under duress: the treatment of churches in the City of London during and after World War II’, *Urban History*, 39, no.2 (2012), p.285.

³⁹ Arthur Le Bern, *It Always Rains on Sunday*, p.21.

them”.⁴⁰ Bethnal Green as a grimy, drab place is also reiterated in *It Always Rains on Sunday* during a flashback of Rosie and Tommy in the countryside, an idyll which contrasts with the monotony Bethnal Green as Rosie utters “I wish there were no such place as Bethnal Green”. *It Always Rains on Sunday*’s overall depiction of the East End as a ‘sordid’ place, in contrast to the more affluent West End of London, was one reinforced by Pathe in 1947, where *Pathe Pictorial Looks...East-West* (1947), described East and West London as “separate worlds”, depicting the East End as noisy, steeped in antiquity and “sailors’ tales” with “boisterous but free and easy pubs”. As Brunsdon notes, the West End in *It Always Rains on Sunday*, although never actually seen, is an alluring place for those ‘stuck’ in the East End.⁴¹ For those in the East End, the West End existed as a mythical place of excitement for young people, as depicted in *The Blue Lamp* and postwar British spiv films.

American critics acknowledged the ‘sordid’ nature of the East End in reviews of the film; Richard L. Coe (*Washington Post*) described “the sordid, crowded, pitiable people of the rough East End”, claiming *It Always Rains on Sunday* was a “faithful record of the rueful ways of life in a great city’s seamiest quarter”, while *Los Angeles Times* described Bethnal Green as a “notorious slum district”.⁴² The real poverty and ‘seamy’ East End is further emphasised in the film through the lodging house or ‘dosshouse’, synonymous with East End poverty and featured in popular novels such as George Orwell’s *Down and Out in London and Paris* (1933), which Phillip Gillet argues is no better than that in the pre-war film, *Doss House* (dir. John Baxter, 1933).⁴³ Indeed, the dosshouse of *It Always Rains on Sunday* is portrayed as a dark, poverty ridden place, frequented by poor ‘down-and-out’ old men.

It Always Rains on Sunday’s depiction of the East End straddles that found in newsreel and documentary and more poetic depictions of the East End in Nigel Henderson’s nostalgic, poetic, yet bleak photographs of Bethnal Green (circa 1949-1954). Henderson depicts Bethnal Green as impoverished yet photogenic, with quiet residential terraced streets, unchanged since the war, where barrows were a common

⁴⁰ Peter Hennessy, *Never Again: Britain 1945-51*, pp.88-89; Jerry White, *London in the 20th Century*, p.44; Anon, ‘The Working-Class Maze of East London: Liberals’ Hopes of Two Seats, Our Special Correspondent, *The Manchester Guardian*, 09 February 1950, p.8.

⁴¹ Charlotte Brunsdon, *London in Cinema*, p.90.

⁴² Richard L. Coe, ‘The Seamy Side of London Town’, *Washington Post*, 07 April 1949, p.17; ‘Rains on Sunday’ has East London Setting’, *Los Angeles Times*, 16 July 1950, p.4.

⁴³ Phillip Gillett, *The British Working Class in Postwar Film*, p.41.

sight. Henderson was an upper middle-class artist and photographer, who became fascinated with working class street life, as evidenced by his romanticised description of Bethnal Green: “the streets glint, grudgingly, like shabby coins... where the air sighs with displacement as cyclist lunges past with fugitive resonance of rusty bell”.⁴⁴ Henderson’s work reflects the wider context of artists and sociologists who were mapping the slum terraces, on the cusp of demolition at a time when many residents were rehomed on new-built estates.⁴⁵ Indeed, G. W. Stonier was aware that such changes were coming to the East End and lamented that “with everyone else I shall be approving of the new, but glad also to have caught these last dismaying glimpses of the old.”⁴⁶ For Amy Sargeant, the shots of Coronet Grove which open and close *It Always Rains on Sunday* serve as “a potent image of East End kith and kinship”.⁴⁷ This notion of kinship was at the heart of Young and Wilmott’s seminal 1957 study *Family and Kinship in East London*, who evidenced families’ perceived loss of community, as they were relocated from Bethnal Green to new estates in the early 1950s.⁴⁸ While *It Always Rains on Sunday*’s evocation of Bethnal Green also contributes to this capturing of ‘dying’ East End slum terraces, the film undercuts any romantic notions of community, as neighbours are depicted as intrusive rather than helpful, with privacy difficult to achieve. For Christine Geraghty, the fact that Rosie is stuck in the home means she lacks community support, and her isolation from the community “is backed up by the film’s more general refusal to offer the traditionally cosy view of community and hence of nation with which Ealing is often associated”.⁴⁹ Ealing’s depiction of the typical East End street in *It Always Rains on Sunday* thus combines poetic, outsider notions of the East End, as found in Henderson’s photography, and documentary footage which revealed the lack of privacy and harsh realities of life in slum housing. As a commercial entertainment film, *It Always Rains on Sunday* tones down the grimmer aspects of working-class East End life, thus appearing ‘ordinary’ and palatable to a mainstream audience, as emphasised by the film’s tagline ‘the secrets of a street you know’.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Joe Moran, ‘Imagining the Street in Postwar Britain’, p.168.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ G. W. Stonier, ‘A Walk Through the East End’, p.220.

⁴⁷ Amy Sargeant, *British Cinema: A Critical History*, p.189.

⁴⁸ Michael Young and Peter Wilmott, *Family and Kinship in East London* (Pelican Books, 1957).

⁴⁹ Christine Geraghty, *British Cinema in the 1950s*, p.87.

Historically, the East End is an arrival point for immigrants, with Bethnal Green's a stopping-point for different ethnic groups due to the area's proximity to the docks.⁵⁰ As such, its postwar reputation as not only as a grey, drab area, but also as a lively, bustling area is reflected in *It Always Rains on Sunday*. Bethnal Green and Whitechapel as busy and eclectic is evoked when Lou complains to his sister Bessie that the East End smells, to which she replies, "Certainly it smells – the markets and fish shops, pubs and clubs". The ethnic diversity is evident in the scenes with Lou's Jewish family and in scenes depicting Petticoat Lane market, where Jewish, black and Asian traders and shoppers are glimpsed. Lewis Herman, in his manual of screen playwriting, praised *It Always Rains on Sunday's* ability to capture the impression of Petticoat Lane through the use of the full shot, with specific details of the market revealed "in a fluid succession of uncut long shots, medium shots and close shots".⁵¹ These high shots of Petticoat Lane market compare with photojournalism and documentary footage of market, as high angled long shots are used in *The New York Times'* 1947 photograph of the market and Pathe's *Petticoat Lane* (1949), which convey the crowded, bustling nature of the market.⁵² Nigel Henderson's photograph of a crowded East End market (circa.1948-1952) also depicts the rain-soaked streets, evoking a similar atmosphere to that depicted in *It Always Rains on Sunday*.

Charlotte Brunsdon defines local London as "a realist London", "a London of terraced houses, blocks of flats, high streets, corner shops".⁵³ In one sense *It Always Rains on Sunday* depicts this local London, with no 'tourist' landmarks visible; an ethnically diverse London of local people. Indeed, critics praised the films' authenticity in its portrayal of the East End; the *Spectator* even suggested the film "can be very highly commended as a documentary, while Dilys Powell in *The Sunday Times* noted how fiction film had learned from documentary, praising the "odd shots of real London streets".⁵⁴ Provincial British newspapers were also keen to stress the 'realism' of the film; *Western Morning News* described it as having a

⁵⁰ Mike Fenton, 'Living in Bethnal Green: Together or Apart?' in Anne J. Kershen (ed.) *London: The Promised Land? The Migrant Experience in a Capital City* (Hants: Avebury, 1997), p.129.

⁵¹ Lewis Herman, *A Practical Manual of Screen Playwriting for Theatre and Television Films* (World Publishing Company, 1952), p.98.

⁵² 'Petticoat Lane', *New York Times*, 24 March 1947, p.5.

⁵³ Charlotte Brunsdon, *London in Cinema*, p.57.

⁵⁴ *Tribune*, 28 November 1947, BFI Press Cuttings: *It Always Rains on Sunday*; *Spectator*, 12 December 1947, BFI Press Cuttings: *It Always Rains on Sunday*; Dilys Powell, *Sunday Times*, 28 November 1947, BFI Press Cuttings: *It Always Rains on Sunday*.

“startling realism” and portraying “the life of a typical East End family”, while Zena Watson (*Essex Newsmen*) felt that “some of the greatness in this film lies in its accurate and realistic portrayal of a complete aspect of English life to-day; that is, life in the East End”.⁵⁵ Critics’ response to the film as accurate and authentic, despite very little exterior shooting in Bethnal Green and Whitechapel itself, may be due in part to Jeffery Richard and Anthony Aldgate’s argument that films “provide images of the lives, attitudes and values of various groups in society”, thus “film audiences have a tendency to regard as accurate depictions of places, attitudes and lifestyles of which they have no first-hand knowledge”.⁵⁶ However, not all critics found the film realistic; C. A. Lejeune (*Observer*) acknowledged that the filmic East End resembles the real East End “in part”, yet overall felt that life was not like what was pictured “anything like the grubby colours of this picture”, while the *News of the World* criticised the films’ portrayal of “bad citizens and good time girls” as only a tiny minority of the people living there and thus the film did not fully represent the diversity of the area.⁵⁷

The postwar Docklands area and the City in *Pool of London*

Pool of London concerns two sailors, Johnny (Earl St. Cameron) and Dan (Bonar Colleano), who arrive in the London docks for one weekend and whilst ashore, are caught up in a smuggling racket. London’s Docklands gained a reputation in the immediate postwar period for smuggling and crime, as the black market flourished in this period of rationing and austerity. Smuggling nylons from ships arriving into London was a common occurrence as the items were still rationed in this period; *Daily Mail* reported in August 1949 how Customs officers seized nylons from a Petticoat Lane trader who claimed to have bought them from an American sailor for three hundred pounds.⁵⁸ For lead actor Earl Cameron (Johnny), the smuggling of

⁵⁵ *Western Morning News*, 20 February 1948, p.3; Zena Watson, ‘It Always Rains on Sunday’, *Essex Newsmen*, 20 January 1948, p.3.

⁵⁶ Jeffery Richards and Anthony Aldgate, *Best of British*, p.3.

⁵⁷ *The Observer*, 30 November 1947, BFI Press Cuttings: *It Always Rains on Sunday*; *News of the World*, 29 November 1947, BFI Press Cuttings: *It Always Rains on Sunday*.

⁵⁸ ‘Black Nylons Leak is Plugged’, *Daily Mail*, 16 August 1949, p.5.

contraband reflected real-life, as Cameron recalled his own experiences encountering smuggling while serving in the merchant navy.⁵⁹

Pool of London was produced in the autumn of 1950, released in Britain in February 1951 and proved to be a “modest success” for Ealing.⁶⁰ *Pool of London* is notable for its lead black character Johnny, a rarity at the time in British cinema, and extensive location shooting, including the actual Pool and nearby streets and interiors of real buildings, including Southwark Cathedral. The film unit constructed a temporary studio in an old warehouse in Bermondsey to facilitate location shooting – if the weather was inclement, the unit could shoot indoors.⁶¹ The filmmakers also used a radio-telephone service to ensure swift communication between the studio and location unit, which, according to Ealing’s publicity department, was the first used in British filmmaking.⁶² A real steam ship, the M.S. Czech, which ran a fortnightly service between Gdynia, Poland and London, was used for the fictional Dunbar, which the film unit used while she was docked, limiting shooting to a few days at a time.⁶³ This use of real London locations was a key selling point for Ealing; the poster artwork depicted the Pool with Tower Bridge in the distance, while one of the film’s taglines, “The heart of a great city is opened –to give you a story that is lived everyday”, uses location and realism as a selling point.⁶⁴ For critics, *Pool of London* was a successor to *The Blue Lamp*, with its documentary style and use of real City of London locations; Dilys Powell compared the film to *The Blue Lamp* in its style, while the *Monthly Film Bulletin* felt it was “closely modelled on *The Blue Lamp*”.⁶⁵ Ealing were indeed keen to capitalise on the success of *The Blue Lamp* as one of the film’s taglines was “From the team that made *The Blue Lamp*”.⁶⁶ Long shots of Vernon running across the wasteland in the city continued Ealing’s motif of crime and ruins as seen in *The Blue Lamp*, and earlier in *Hue and Cry*.

As with *It Always Rains on Sunday*, *Pool of London* defied easy genre categorisation. Most critics categorised *Pool of London* as a melodrama, while

⁵⁹ *The Film Programme*, BBC Radio 4, broadcast at 16.30, Friday 26 June 2009.

⁶⁰ Alan Burton and Tim O’Sullivan, *The Cinema of Basil Dearden and Michael Relph*, p.115.

⁶¹ *Pool of London*: Pressbook, 1951.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ *Pool of London*: Pressbook, 1951

⁶⁴ *Pool of London*: International Campaign Sheet, 1951.

⁶⁵ Dilys Powell, *Sunday Times*, 25 February 1951; ‘Pool of London’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, March 1951, p.229.

⁶⁶ *Pool of London*: International Campaign Sheet, 1951.

Manchester Guardian referred to the film as a “semi-documentary”.⁶⁷ *Pool of London* combines a number of different styles and genres; scenes shot on the Pool tend to employ a poetic, documentary ethos, depicting London’s landmarks in a postcard style, while the film’s climax employs noir visuals and lighting. Recent reappraisal of Dearden and Relph’s films suggest a darkness in their work; Alan Burton and Tim O’Sullivan argue that Dearden and Relph “pursued a singularly dark and unsettling course in some aspects of their work”, while Relph was a “leading exponent of the ‘modified realism’ which emerged at Ealing in the later war years”.⁶⁸ Robert Murphy also concurs that there was a gloom not just in Hamer’s films but in Dearden’s too.⁶⁹ An analysis of the use of location in *Pool of London* and the film’s inclusion as a British film noir suggests that the film encompassed both a dark view and a ‘modified realism’. Burton and O’Sullivan also cite Dearden’s ability to blend studio work with location work on the streets of London as a “characteristic method”, as exemplified in Dearden’s first directed film, *The Bells Go Down*.⁷⁰ Andrew Spicer argues that Dearden and Relph’s films “consistently combine a documentary-style exploration of a topical issue with an evocative use of a noir visual register”.⁷¹

For some critics, *Pool of London*’s incorporation of the documentary and noir styles created an incoherent film. Tony Williams argues that the film’s documentary realism and noir style are elements which oppose each other.⁷² *Monthly Film Bulletin* argued that the film was “lacking shape and control”.⁷³ This perceived incoherence may be in part due to what Brunsdon argues is the “juxtaposition of several generally different Londons”.⁷⁴ Andrew Higson posits the idea that the film’s hybridity may be due to Ealing’s attempt to cater to as many different audiences as possible.⁷⁵ However, not all critics found the film’s differing styles incoherent; Richard Mallet (*Punch*) thought “the story and background are very

⁶⁷ See, for example, *Today’s Cinema*, 15 February 1951, p.8; Bosley Crowther, *New York Times*, 28 November 1951, p.50; Richard Mallett, ‘At the Pictures’, *Punch*, 07 March 1951, p.29; *Manchester Guardian*, 27 March 1951, p.6.

⁶⁸ Alan Burton and Tim O’Sullivan, *The Cinema of Basil Dearden and Michael Relph*, p.44.

⁶⁹ Robert Murphy, ‘Dark Shadows Around Ealing’, in Mark Duguid *et al.*, (eds), *Ealing Revisited*, p.84.

⁷⁰ Alan Burton and Tim O’Sullivan, *The Cinema of Basil Dearden and Michael Relph*, p.60.

⁷¹ Andrew Spicer, *Film Noir* (Essex: Pearson Education, 2002), p.190.

⁷² Tony Williams, *Structures of Desire: British Cinema, 1939-1955* (State University of New York Press, 2000), p.184.

⁷³ ‘Pool of London’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, March 1951, pp.229.

⁷⁴ Charlotte Brunsdon, *London in Cinema*, p.188.

⁷⁵ Andrew Higson, ‘Pool of London’, Alan Burton & Tim O’Sullivan (eds.) *Liberal Directions*, p.162.

closely and skilfully interwoven”.⁷⁶ The film’s style also reflects the words of warning the Captain gives to Johnny. Shots from afar depict the tourist view of London, portraying the city as spectacle, yet when Johnny and Dan get ‘up close’ they find a city of spivery and dark shadows. Alan Burton and Tim O’Sullivan’s assertion that these differing styles were probably the result of very different scriptwriters; the documentary filmmaker John Eldridge and commercial background of Jack Whittingham, is also a likely reason for the film’s differing styles.⁷⁷ This fusion of different styles was due in part to the unique conditions of pre-production, as the script development differed to Ealing’s usual method of discussing ideas at a fortnightly round table meeting.⁷⁸ The original writer assigned to the film, T.E.B. Clarke recalled how *Pool of London* developed from a script devised by documentary filmmaker John Eldridge about activities on the Pool. Clarke suggested that the film arrived almost as a documentary as “it needed to be fictionalised, for Ealing had given up making documentaries after the war”, therefore Clarke was assigned with writing a script.⁷⁹ However, according to Clarke, his creation of a comic character for the film angered Michael Balcon and instead the project was passed onto Jack Whittingham.⁸⁰ Clarke then developed his idea for a comic character into the script for *The Lavender Hill Mob*, and even used some of the same bombed-out locations around St Paul’s as *Pool of London*.

Director Basil Dearden gained a reputation as a ‘journeyman’ director, a master of his craft not known for a distinct style. Dearden was considered by Ealing to be a reliable director, with a reputation for keeping within budgets and producing films on or ahead of schedule.⁸¹ His collaboration with producer, writer and director Michael Relph on *Pool of London* continued their working relationship which began with semi-documentary, *The Bells Go Down*. The travelogue, documentary-style shots of the Thames in the opening sequences of *Pool of London* evokes the opening of *The Bells Go Down*, with panoramic shots of the docks. The sense of the village-feel of London is evoked in the small radius used in both films, where characters bump into one another and lives intersect. For Brunson, these films create an

⁷⁶ Richard Mallett, ‘At the Pictures’, *Punch*, 07 March 1951, p.296.

⁷⁷ Alan Burton and Tim O’Sullivan, *The Cinema of Basil Dearden and Michael Relph*, p.114.

⁷⁸ John Ellis, ‘Made at Ealing’, p.93 & p.95.

⁷⁹ T. E. B. Clarke, *This is Where I Came in*, p.164.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p.164.

⁸¹ *Biography of Basil Dearden*, Paramount Pictures Press Department, BFI Press Cuttings: Basil Dearden, p.2.

“Ealing Studios River Thames”, with its realism and sense of community, drawing on British documentary traditions.⁸² In *Pool of London*, characters return to the same familiar spaces such as the pub and the theatre, in-keeping with Jerry White’s historical account of the East End immediately after the war as having a “village feel”, and continuing the Ealing trope of depicting a local, village London as seen in *The Blue Lamp* and *Passport to Pimlico*.⁸³ However, despite the village feel evoked, the film’s landscape shots also remind the viewer of the vastness of the city, evoking both Ealing’s ‘local London’ and the outsider’s vast London of *Night and the City*.

Johnny’s arrival into London on the Dunbar invites comparisons to the arrival of 492 Jamaican immigrants on the SS Empire Windrush on 22 June 1948. Such images of the Dunbar’s arrival compare to positive press coverage of the arrival of the Windrush which docked on the Thames in Tilbury Essex; *Evening Standard*’s front cover presented a photograph of the Windrush with the headline ‘Welcome Home’.⁸⁴ *Pool of London* alludes to racial tensions as soon as Johnny arrives off the boat, where he is told to “hop it”.⁸⁵ While Johnny may not be depicted as an immigrant looking for a permanent home in London, his status as a young black male arriving into London reflects the immigrant experience to some extent, as Johnny experiences London as a newly arrived outsider. As a visitor, Johnny encounters the city, with Pat (Susan Shaw) as his guide, as a spectacle to be admired. Johnny views the City from the dome at St Paul’s, where, as the shooting script describes, “the whole of London appears laid out before them”.⁸⁶ The spectacle of the city is also emphasised through dialogue, as Pat remarks that the view “takes your breath away, doesn’t it?” The photogenic impact of the Blitz on the City is emphasised in the final shooting script: “A long shot over the distant buildings, rising amidst the bomb-shattered, weed-grown wastes. From this high vantage point, unsuspected acres of cleared rubble can be seen, leaving the standing buildings like a few sound teeth in the rotting decay”.⁸⁷ Pat and Johnny’s visit to Greenwich also functions to display the beauty and history of London. They emerge from Queen’s House, a scene which showcases the architecture which survived the

⁸² Charlotte Brunsdon, *London in Cinema*, p.189.

⁸³ Jerry White, *London in the 20th Century*, p.11.

⁸⁴ ‘Welcome Home’, *Evening Standard*, 21 June 1948, p.1.

⁸⁵ Racial tensions would be more fully explored in Dearden’s later social problem film *Sapphire* (dir. Basil Dearden, 1959), also starring Earl St Cameron.

⁸⁶ *Pool of London*: Post-Production Script, 1950, p.55.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p.55.

war, as evidenced by the description in the post-production script; “In the background are the superb Indio-Jones arches striding the only remains of the old Deptford-Woolwich Highway”.⁸⁸ This ‘distanced’, postcard London is viewed several times in the film and worked into Johnny’s narrative, as the outsider being taken on a tour of the city. Johnny and Pat’s ‘courting’ through the sites of London can therefore be read partly as acceptance of their relationship, as mixed-race relationships were not seen on screens during this period, and partly as displacement, as Johnny and Pat can never fully develop their relationship beyond visits to tourist sites.

The City of London, although ravaged by war, retained its beauty and, according to Angus Maude, writing in 1949, even enhanced its beauty, as flattened areas ensured once obscured buildings could now be seen.⁸⁹ The impact of the war on the city’s physical environment and its photogenic quality is one the filmmakers exploited *Pool of London*, as evidenced in the following description in the post-production script: “Dan hurries across a patch of wasteland from which one solitary chimney rises as a sole memorial of vanished houses”.⁹⁰ St Paul’s Cathedral features as an important landmark in the film, both in long establishing shots, allowing us to gaze at its beauty, and enjoy the view from its deck, as Johnny and Pat look out from the viewing deck at the city before them. Johnny and Pat’s view of St Pauls, standing majestic from a distance, compares to visitor’s descriptions of the area as reported in the press. In 1950, as Gene Sherman (*Los Angeles Times*), described his visit to St Paul’s; ““You see St Paul’s there’, said my guide. It loomed mammoth against a grey sky, its dome dominating the horizon [...] ‘you can see it now only because the buildings that once obstructed the view are gone’”.⁹¹ Indeed, St Paul’s was a symbol of beauty and victory had a particular resonance for British citizens, exemplified in Herbert Mason’s iconic photograph *St Paul’s Survives*, taken from the roof of the Daily Mail offices during the raid of 29 December 1940. The photograph, which depicts St Paul’s dome intact, surrounded by white smoke, was first published in the 31 December 1941 edition of the *Daily Mail*, with the headline ‘St Paul’s stands unharmed in the midst of a burning city’, then reproduced in a variety of press

⁸⁸ *Pool of London*: Post-Production Script, 1950, p.73.

⁸⁹ Angus Maude, ‘The City of London’ in *Flower of Cities: A Book of London* (London: Max Parish & Co. 1949), p.67.

⁹⁰ *Pool of London*: Post-Production Script, 1950, p.19.

⁹¹ Gene Sherman, ‘Reminders of the Blitz Still Haunt London’, *Los Angeles Times*, 11 October 1950, p.31.

outlets, journals and photo-books.⁹² Tom Allbeson contextualises Mason's photograph as St Paul's was a symbol of wartime, built between 1675 and 1710 after the Great Fire of London, then surviving the second great fire of the Blitz, and notes how the photograph "works to draw attention away from what was destroyed to what remains."⁹³ Images of St Paul's Cathedral in this period were particularly resonant, at that time London's tallest building and described by Angus Maude as "one of the miracles of the war", while St Paul's as a symbol of "a strong and secure England" gathered strength during World War II and became a symbol of defiance.⁹⁴ St Paul's as a symbol of victory and resilience also featured in earlier Ealing film *Hue and Cry*, while in *The Lavender Hill Mob*, produced at the same time as *Pool of London*, St Paul's functions as a picturesque backdrop and reminder of the Blitz (discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis). The first glimpse of St Paul's in *Pool of London* is in the film's opening sequences as the Dunbar heads towards Tower Bridge, compares to that in newsreel documentary footage, as St Paul's is depicted as a beacon in Pathe's *The City of London* (1951), while Pathe's *Sights of London* (1951), also offers a tourist view of the city with use of high angle shots of St Paul's, which the voice-over narration states is "standing in an area devastated by bombs". Nearby Leadenhall Market is also used in *Pool of London* for its picturesque quality and historical value, described at length in the post-production script, beginning with "this is the great, glass-roofed market in the heart of the city".⁹⁵

Pool of London's opening takes the spectator on a journey down the Thames, from Gravesend to the Pool, showcasing industrial London, with the factories and power stations, through to the dock entrances. The title sequence ends with the arms of Tower Bridge opening up and welcoming the ship. These long, establishing shots of the journey down the Thames are reminiscent of travel documentary films, which allow the viewer to gaze upon the sights of the river with slow, poetic camerawork to emphasise its beauty. The final shooting script's description of the arrival of the Dunbar describes the view in a romantic manner as the Dunbar "passes through the shadow of the bridge that towers towards the camera, towards the sunlight and awaits it on the other side of

⁹² 'St Paul's Stands Unharmed in the Midst of a Burning City', *Daily Mail*, 31 December 1941, p.1.

⁹³ Tom Allbeson, 'Visualising Wartime Destruction and Postwar Reconstruction: Herbert Mason's Photograph of St Paul's Reevaluated', *The Journal of Modern History*, 87, no.3 (2015), p.543.

⁹⁴ Angus Maude, 'The City of London', p.67.

⁹⁵ *Pool of London*: Post-Production Script, 1950, p.62.

the upper pool.”⁹⁶ Later, on Sunday night in the Pool, this poetic imagery continues as Tower Bridge is depicted in silhouette with a police boat resting on gleaming water in the foreground. This picturesque, poetic, romantic nature of the docks depicted in the film is one echoed in contemporary accounts, such as John Herbert’s 1949 account, where he described the port as having “a strange beauty”.⁹⁷ As Johnny returns to the ship on a Saturday night, the soundtrack of a harmonica overlays a slow fade out of Tower Bridge, further enhancing the poetic quality of the docks at night.

The busy Pool on a Saturday is described in *Pool of London*’s final shooting script as “one of the sights of London”.⁹⁸ The travelogue, or as Brunsdon refers to them, “postcard” images of the Pool in *Pool of London*, compare with Pathe’s newsreel footage, *The City of London* (Pathe, 1951), which portrays postcard images of Tower Bridge in long shot.⁹⁹ Images of the Dunbar arriving into the Pool also compares to similar imagery in Pathe’s newsreel footage *Eventful River* (1950-5), which depicts the beauty of the ships on the river Thames with Tower Bridge in the distance. Shots of the working Pool, with Tower Bridge visible in the background, also compare to documentary newsreel footage in Pathe’s *Pool of London* (1946), which depict ships being loaded during the immediate postwar exit drive. *Pool of London*’s final shots bookend the film as the Dunbar leaves through the bridge on a foggy Monday morning, leaving the viewer with the sense that although their story is over, life continues in the Pool. *Pool of London* thus captures life in a Pool, during a brief period of high employment, where industry recovered after the war, and ships carrying cargo would arrive at the Pool from all over the world.¹⁰⁰

John Herbert described London’s port and river in 1948 as one which evokes “conflicting emotions: an appreciation of its beauty, or distaste for its squalor, interest in its historic role or admiration for its greatness. But whichever each one of us feels, we will probably all agree that the Port of London is still very much alive”.¹⁰¹ *Pool of London* aims to evoke these differing emotions at various points throughout the film; the journey along the Thames, following the Dunbar as it comes into port, encourages the

⁹⁶ Ibid, p.2.

⁹⁷ John Herbert, ‘London’s Port and River’ in *Flower of Cities: A Book of London* (Max Parish & Co, 1949), p.120.

⁹⁸ *Pool of London*: Final Shooting Script, 21 July 1950, p.25.

⁹⁹ Charlotte Brunsdon, *London in Cinema*, p.184.

¹⁰⁰ Fiona Rule, *London’s Docklands: A History of the Lost Quarter* (Surrey: Ian Allen Publishing, 2009), p.263.

¹⁰¹ John Herbert, ‘London’s Port and River’, p.138.

viewer to gaze at its beauty, while the low-key lighting of the local streets nearby evokes the squalor, and Johnny and Pat's tour of the Neptune Room in Greenwich Royal Observatory reminds the viewer of the port's historic role.

Ealing's endeavour to depict an authentic London in *Pool of London*'s is evident in references to, and use of, real community spaces, such as the pub and the theatre; Johnny and Dan drink in the Duke of Clarence pub (now demolished), frequented by sailors and located on the corner of Tooley Street and Battlebridge Lane. The actual pub exterior was used for establishing shots, while the interior was recreated in the studio at Ealing. Interior and exterior scenes in the Hippodrome were shot on location at Queen's Theatre, Poplar. Queen's Theatre was a popular theatre used as a cinema and live theatre, located on Poplar High Street. The theatre's unique European style was clearly one which attracted the filmmakers; described in the *Times* in 1950 as "tall and seemingly a little narrow on account of its great height ... [it] reminds one strangely of some French or Italian theatre with its two tiers of boxes rising giddily to the roof and its three pillared horseshoes of gilding and red plush."¹⁰² The drabness of the streets and war damage in surrounding Queen's Theatre in Poplar High Street was described in the final shooting script as follows: 'The theatre stands in the extremely narrow, shabby High Street of Poplar...Camera shows the dim, lamp lit, dockland street and, beyond, a surrounding slum of naked bomb waste, bordered by crumbling, moribund figures.'¹⁰³ In comparison with the use of now-demolished spaces in *The Blue Lamp*, the use of Queen's Theatre and nearby streets in *Pool of London* imbues the film with historical value, as the theatre closed in 1958 and was demolished in 1964, thus capturing a disappearing London. A sense of nostalgia for elements of the London which were soon-to-be eradicated is evident in the scene where Johnny and Pat bid a final farewell and lament London's trams imminent disappearance. Pat remarks "There won't be any trams soon. They're scrapping them all", a reference to the planned phasing out of London's trams between 1950 and 1952. Indeed, for Jeffrey Richards, *Pool of London*'s ability to capture the city on the cusp of change is a change that is implied for the worst.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² *Times*, 03 January 1950, p.7.

¹⁰³ *Pool of London*: Post-Production Script, 1951, p.13.

¹⁰⁴ Jeffrey Richards, 'Basil Dearden at Ealing', Alan Burton & Tim O'Sullivan (eds.) *Liberal Directions*, p.30.

The chase through the Rotherhithe tunnel, shot on location, compares to American film noirs of the period, replete with low-key lighting and low angles, such as Dassin's crime dramas *The Naked City* and *Night and the City*. Indeed, one of Ealing's taglines for *Pool of London* was 'the British *Naked City*'. The crime narrative and noir style merges with Johnny and Pat's tourist view as the camera cuts from Johnny admiring the view to Vernon climbing along the bomb-damaged buildings, evoking the Captain Trotter's advice to Johnny that "from afar it gleams like a jewel, but walk within the shadow of its walls and what do you find? Filth, squalor, misery". The noir style in *Pool of London* also comes to the fore during the Sunday evening sequences, with low-key lighting and canted angles used to depict Johnny's drunken experiences in a drinking club and in Dan's attempt to return to The Dunbar. The marshes where Dan hides are described in the script as a "nightmarish landscape" and presented in the film as desolate and dark.¹⁰⁵ For Burton and O'Sullivan, the noir photography in *Pool of London* subverts the documentary realism found earlier in the film.¹⁰⁶ In *Pool of London*, Battlebridge Lane is depicted through a high angle as a deserted street which glimmers in the rain. Battlebridge Lane, a narrow street, replete with working warehouses, and cobbled streets, retaining much of its Victorian character, lent itself to a noir portrayal. *Pool of London's* post-production script demonstrates screenwriter Jack Whittingham's familiarity with the street, described as "normally congested with wagons, lorries and bustle" with "trams, shops and public houses".¹⁰⁷

While critics in the national newspapers and film press praised the excellence of the photography and locations, if not entirely convinced by the story, it was the provincial press outside of London that were especially enthusiastic about the authenticity of location; The *Bucks Herald* commented that "all the squalor and romance of the London docks are brought to life in fascinating detail, while the *Aberdeen Evening Express* praised Gordon Dines' photography for bringing the pool "vividly to life".¹⁰⁸ However, not all critics were so enthusiastic; Paul Rotha, while praising the "photographic excellence" of locations, criticised the characters, who in his view did not seem to belong to the Pool, arguing that when writing stories

¹⁰⁵ *Pool of London*, Post-Production Script, 1950, p.97.

¹⁰⁶ Alan Burton and Tim O'Sullivan, *The Cinema of Basil Dearden and Michael Relph*, p.116

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p.10.

¹⁰⁸ *Bucks Herald*, 13 April 1951, p.3; Mollie McDougall, 'Tense Thriller of London's Dockland', *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 23 February 1951, p.3.

“you’ve got to soak yourself in the place...get to know the sights and smells as well as your own town”.¹⁰⁹ Through analysis of location and focus on the production context of the film, it is evident that the different styles arose partly because of the change in scriptwriter and the filmmaker’s desire to show how London could appear to an outsider; at times beautiful and majestic and at others seedy, shadowy and crime-ridden. These varied stylistic depictions of London thus straddle the naturalistic, documentary-style approach to location evident in Ealing film’s *Passport to Pimlico* and *The Blue Lamp* and the British noir and spiv cycle tradition evident in *Night and the City*.

Sunday in London’s East End and the City in *It Always Rains on Sunday* and *Pool of London*

Both *It Always Rains on Sunday* and *Pool of London* depict London on a Sunday, a day with its own peculiar rhythms and traditions, from the busy Petticoat Lane markets of the East End in *It Always Rains on Sunday* to the quiet, deserted City of London in *Pool of London*. The 1949 Mass Observation report, ‘Meet yourself on Sunday’ describes Sunday as a ‘hangover’ from Saturday, evident in the opening sequences of *It Always Rains on Sunday* where Doris Sandigate returns home to the quiet, dark empty street after a Saturday night at the Dance Hall.¹¹⁰ The stillness and quiet of a Sunday morning is suggested in the final shooting script for *It Always Rains on Sunday*; ‘Coronet Grove is asleep. Rain-clouds are piling up. A solitary cat passes the road. The rain starts beating down...’¹¹¹ *It Always Rains on Sunday*’s draft script was revised to fully create the atmosphere of a Sunday morning in Bethnal Green, with scenes of Tommy’s escape to scenes of Saturday morphing into Sunday morning as it rains hard in the empty streets of the East End.¹¹² After the establishing shot of a deserted Coronet Grove, the camera cuts to a closed Whitechapel Station, then the Holy Trinity church on the corner of Coronet Grove, a clear evocation of a Sunday with its religious connotations. However, the sense that life continues on a Sunday, with its familiar patterns and rhythms, is evoked through

¹⁰⁹ Paul Rotha, 1951, *Pool of London*, BFI Press Cuttings: *Pool of London*.

¹¹⁰ ‘Meet Yourself on Sunday’, *Mass Observation Report*, July 1949, File Report No.3142.

¹¹¹ *It Always Rains on Sunday*: Final Shooting Script, 1947.

¹¹² John Collier, *A Film in the Making, Featuring It Always Rains on Sunday*, p.11.

a Jewish newspaper seller, a reminder that for the Jewish community in the East End Sunday did not have the same connotations, as Sabbath takes place on a Saturday.

Sunday morning is signalled in *Pool of London* through the sound of church bells over a montage of recognisable landmarks along the Thames, including The Tower of London and St Paul's, all shot static in long shot, a postcard view of a still, tranquil and quiet capital. The City of London as a deserted place is constantly emphasised in *Pool of London*'s post-production script, described as a "silent, deserted city" a "dead city – not a soul, not a sound, save the chimes of innumerable church clocks."¹¹³ This stillness is depicted on screen through a low angle shot of a lone policeman who walks across a bomb-damaged Wood Street, in comparison to *It Always Rains on Sunday*, where a lone bobby always walks the quiet streets.¹¹⁴ Sunday as a day of leisure is connoted by a group of cyclists framed in long shot, cutting to a low angle looking up at St Paul's, the only sound that of bells ringing. *Pool of London*'s shooting script states how even Vernon's attempted escape across a wasteland is unable to break the Sunday peace.¹¹⁵ This quiet city compares to documentary footage in Pathe's stock footage in *Quieter London* (1950-69), including bomb damaged wastelands around St Paul's, and with long shots of the City likely shot on a Sunday.

The quiet rhythms of a Sunday are evoked in *It Always Rains on Sunday* through eleven full shots of Coronet Grove (Clarence Way), each used to start a new scene and reflect the passing of time. The first shot depicts a deserted Coronet Grove as Saturday night morphs into Sunday morning. By mid-morning the street remains quiet, with some sign of life, as a child can be glimpsed playing and a couple stroll along the street. No cars are ever seen, instead, a wheelbarrow is glimpsed in mid-afternoon, reflecting a period before cars were a commonplace feature of residential streets. By mid-afternoon more people appear, suggesting the sleepy Sunday slowly comes to life, yet by 7pm, the street remains quiet again. This depiction replicates La Bern's novel where Sunday between the hours of 2pm and 5pm is described in as a time where "a vast peace descends on the streets of London".¹¹⁶ The stillness of a Sunday in both *It Always Rains on Sunday* and *Pool of London* heightens the

¹¹³ *Pool of London*: Post-Production Script, 1950, p.54.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p.53 & p.54.

¹¹⁵ *Pool of London*: Post-Production Script, 1950, p.55.

¹¹⁶ Arthur La Bern, *It Always Rains on Sunday*, p.112.

dramatic tension; the Sunday peace is disturbed in *It Always Rains on Sunday* when the police chase Tommy Swan through the streets and rail yard and later, when the peace of Coronet Grove is disrupted when the ambulance arrives for Rosie. The robbery in *Pool of London* disturbs the peace in the City as the police give chase to Vernon and his fellow robbers. The quiet of a Sunday in London served to enhance the dramatic tension in both films; the *Evening Standard* noted how a Sunday “might lead the unsuspecting to assume that London is a gentle city. This false façade has, of course, been stripped away by British films. Sunday is the best day of the week for police cars to screech through the streets after escaping bank robbers.”¹¹⁷

It Always Rains on Sunday and *Pool of London* Sunday depicts Sunday as an ordinary day of business for the spiv, whose black-market activity meant not having to operate on weekday working hours. *It Always Rains on Sunday*’s opening shots reveals spivs conducting their business on the streets and later three crooks sell roller-skates to My Neesly at his business and home on a Sunday afternoon. The depiction of busy cafés in *Pool of London* where criminal activity takes place is indicative of Mass Observation’s description of the cafes of Soho on a Sunday which are “no different” to the rest of the week as the normal rules do not apply, where “small time crooks, gamblers, prostitutes and continentals” frequent.¹¹⁸

Sunday is a day that was commonly associated with ‘nothingness’, however a Sunday in London offered more opportunities for leisure activities, such as strolling, sightseeing and evening entertainment. These opportunities for leisure are reflected in *Pool of London*’s dialogue as Johnny remarks “There’s not much to do on a Sunday, to which Pat responds, “There’s lots of things. I’ll show you if you like”, corresponding with Mass Observation’s account of the “sightseeing functions” of central London on a Sunday, described by a street photographer in the report as “the Londoner’s Day”.¹¹⁹ The 1924 travelogue film, *London’s Sunday*, depicts a Sunday evening in the capital as a ‘time for lovers’. A couple are seen gazing at Tower Bridge, in comparison to Johnny and Pat’s romantic tourist stroll of the city and admiration of its beauty in *Pool of London*. Evening entertainment for young people

¹¹⁷ *Evening Standard*, 22 February 1951, BFI Press Cuttings: *Pool of London*.

¹¹⁸ ‘Meet Yourself on A Sunday’, *Mass Observation Report*, File Report No.3142, p.12.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.10.

in the capital on a Sunday is reflected in *Pool of London* as Johnny is invited out to the theatre with Pat, a change which occurred in 1932 when public leisure places, such as cinemas and theatres, could legally open. Depictions of groups of young people on the streets in the evening is in-keeping with Mass Observation's description the evening in *Pool of London* as the time when Sunday's come alive, with 8pm a peak time for buses as people go to the cinemas and pubs.¹²⁰ However, for the majority of the country, including residential areas of London, Sunday was a day to be spent at home; indeed, in *It Always Rains on Sunday*, Rosie never leaves her home. Mass Observation noted that on a Sunday working class housewives are "inclined to resent the extra work that Sunday involves."¹²¹ *The Cinema*'s review of *It Always Rains on Sunday*, noted how Sundays enjoyed by the cockney "offer no escape from the sordid hurly-burly of everyday life".¹²² Rosie must maintain the house whilst hiding Tommy, her only escape from the house is in her mind, when she remembers a day in the country with Tommy.

The church at the end of Coronet Grove in *It Always Rains on Sunday* functions as a reminder of British Sunday traditions and a temporary refuge from the rain for Tommy Swan. In comparison, towards the end of *Pool of London*, as Sunday night gives way to Monday morning, Johnny wakes up in the ruins of a bombed-out church, a reminder of the damage caused by the Blitz to the historic city. Other traditions particular to London on a Sunday are evoked in both films; both depict a Salvation Army brass band playing, a tradition born in the East End in 1865, with a religious mission to help the needy. Sunday in the capital was also a day for politics and protest, particular in Speakers Corner in Hyde Park, a tradition dating back to late 1800s. In *It Always Rains on Sunday*, a group of protesters walk across the street with a banner declaring "Come to Hyde Park and Demand the Truth". The protesters are then depicted returning home in the late afternoon, providing continuity and giving the viewer a sense of time passing.

The Sunday markets in the East End were a popular pastime with locals, breaking the quiet and emptiness typical of a Sunday elsewhere in London and Britain. Stallholders in the East End were allowed to trade until 2pm, with the peak period

¹²⁰ 'Meet Yourself on A Sunday', *Mass Observation Report*, File Report No.3142, p.39.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, p.51.

¹²² C.H.B-W, *The Cinema*, 14 November 1947, p.12.

from noon to 1pm. Mass Observation reporters noted how working-class people under the age of forty populated Petticoat Lane, describing it as “a bright spot of unusual character”, and breaking with usual “aimlessness” and “lethargy” usually associated with Sundays.¹²³ The noisy, bustling nature of the market is evoked in *It Always Rains on Sunday*, albeit a toned down version, as Mass Observation describe the noise as “terrific” with the “non-stop flow of smutty talk keeps the crowd laughing”.¹²⁴ On-location shooting was used at the end of the market sequence to depict the end of the trading day at 2pm, where a lone sailor can be seen in shot, reminding viewers of the East End’s proximity to the port and connoting a return to the Sunday peace and quiet.

Critics praised *It Always Rains on Sunday* and *Pool of London*’s ability to capture the atmosphere of London on a Sunday. Phillip Hope-Wallace (*Sight and Sound*) admired how *Pool of London* “finely realised” the look of London on a summer weekend.¹²⁵ The *Aberdeen Evening Express* referred to the shots of a deserted London in *Pool of London* on Sunday as striking, while Richard Mallett (*Punch*) praised the capturing of a quiet Sunday in *Pool of London* as having been done with “such imagination, humour and visual attractiveness”¹²⁶ *The Cinema* noted that *It Always Rains On Sunday* was “as true a study of the East End of London on a wet Sunday... as could form the liveliest of backgrounds to the simplest of stories”.¹²⁷

Conclusions

Both *It Always Rains on Sunday* and *Pool of London* depict the East End of London in the immediate, austere, postwar period in a manner that was deemed authentic and realistic by critics, even if the critics themselves were not familiar with the actual areas depicted in the films. Both films’ depictions of a Sunday in various parts of the East End created dramatic tension yet also provided a realism to ensure the plausibility of the narrative. Both used soon-to-be destroyed locations in the East End of London, a London immediately after the war before rebuilding commenced.

¹²³ ‘Meet Yourself on Sunday, *Mass Observation Report*, File Report No.3142, p35 & p38.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, pp.36-37.

¹²⁵ Phillip Hope-Wallace, *Sight and Sound*, 19, no.12 (April 1951), p.174.

¹²⁶ ‘The Pool is the Star of the Film’, *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 19 April 1951, p.3; Richard Mallett, ‘At The Pictures’, *Punch*, Wed 07 March 1951, p.296.

¹²⁷ C.H.B-W, *The Cinema*, 14 November 1947, p.12.

Although *Pool of London* featured more extensive location shooting and shot in the ‘real’ locations where the film was set, *It Always Rains on Sunday* captured the atmosphere and popular perceptions of the East End with its combination of real and ‘reel’ locations. For Ian Christie, *It Always Rains on Sunday* offers “a snapshot of the condition of England in the postwar period”, while Barry Forshaw also argues that the location shooting in *It Always Rains on Sunday* “ensures that its interest as a historical document of London almost matches the dramatic values that Hamer finesses”.¹²⁸ To a certain extent the film certainly offers a snapshot of a perceived East End, one recreated partly in the studio. *Pool of London* and *It Always Rains on Sunday*, with extensive location shooting, offered a documentary, poetic and at times expressionist snapshot of the East End and Docklands. Comparisons with contemporaneous accounts of the East End, documentary footage and photography demonstrate how the films contributed to both a realistic and mythic evocation of the East End.

Both films stemmed from previously successful Ealing London-set films, as evidenced by publicity and critics’ comparisons with *Hue and Cry* and later comparisons between *Pool of London* and *The Blue Lamp*. Indeed, many of the same personnel worked on these films, as Dearden had previously directed *The Blue Lamp* and Douglas Slocombe photographed both *Hue and Cry* and *Pool of London*. In November 1947, *Kinematograph Weekly* signalled the end of realist melodramas at Ealing, announcing Balcon’s intention to release a series of comedy films in 1948.¹²⁹ However as Ealing continued production of London-based films during the late 1940s and 1950s, this use of authentic locations continued in Ealing’s London-set comedy films *The Lavender Hill Mob* and *The Ladykillers*.

¹²⁸ Ian Christie, ‘Coming in from the Rain’, Interview for DVD extra of *It Always Rains on Sunday*, released by Vintage Classics, 2012; Barry Forshaw, *British Crime Film*, p.20.

¹²⁹ ‘British Studio News- Balcon will make 1948 a Year of Comedy at Ealing’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 20 November 1947, p.16.

CHAPTER THREE

Depictions of London in Ealing comedies *Hue and Cry*, *Passport to Pimlico*, *The Lavender Hill Mob* and *The Ladykillers*

Ealing's postwar films, regardless of genre, were notable for a distinct style of comedy, gentle yet anarchic, featuring eccentric comic characters. During Balcon's term from 1938 to 1958 as Ealing's Chief Executive, over a third of films produced at Ealing were comedies and sold generically as comedy films.¹ As such, Ealing gained a reputation in the postwar period as synonymous with comedy films.

Indeed, Tim O'Sullivan locates 8 key Ealing comedies, produced between 1947 and 1955, which proved to be some of Ealing's best-known and financially successful films: *Hue and Cry*, *Passport to Pimlico*, *Whisky Galore!* (dir. Alexander Mackendrick, 1949), *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (dir. Robert Hamer, 1949), *The Man in the White Suit* (dir. Alexander Mackendrick, 1951), *The Lavender Hill Mob*, *The Titfield Thunderbolt* (dir. Charles Crichton, 1953), and *The Ladykillers* (dir. Alexander Mackendrick, 1955).² While *Hue and Cry* is considered by film scholars as the first of Ealing's postwar comedies, Charles Barr argues that due to the two-year gap between *Hue and Cry* and *Passport to Pimlico*, it was *Passport to Pimlico* which initiated the succession of successful postwar Ealing comedies.³

Contemporary critics generally regarded *Hue and Cry* to be a boy's adventure film, although in 1950 Dilys Powell did posit *Hue and Cry* as the first Ealing film to "venture into the peculiar realm of half-serious, half-fantastic fun which was presently to give us *Passport to Pimlico* and *Kind Hearts and Coronets*".⁴ *Essex Newsman* reported how there was a growing public appetite for British film comedy, with *Passport to Pimlico* one of four successful comedies released in the April and May of 1949 (although noting that historical productions and "straight films" still outnumbered comedies).⁵ These comedies, all original stories, reflected Balcon's

¹ Tim O'Sullivan, 'That Ealing Feeling: Ealing Comedies and Comedies 'Made at Ealing'', in Mark Duguid *et al.*, (eds) *Ealing Revisited*, p.135

² Ibid, p.137.

³ Charles Barr, *Ealing Studios*, p.50.

⁴ Dilys Powell, 'The Magnet', *Sunday Times*, 22 October 1950, p.3.

⁵ 'The public crave for light-hearted comedy', *Essex Newsman*, 17 May 1949, p.2.

policy of developing original stories rather than adaptations of novels or plays.⁶ While comedies satisfied a public need for light relief at a time of rationing and austerity in Britain in the late 1940s, as Jeffrey Richards and Anthony Aldgate note, successful Ealing comedies, which all “deal with people in recognisable settings plunged into extraordinary situations” were produced during a period of postwar change and complacency in the early to mid-1950s.⁷

In 1950, the *Falkirk Herald* reported how Ealing had covered the British Isles in their latest comedy films: *Passport to Pimlico* in inner London; *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (dir. Robert Hamer, 1949) in the London suburbs and Home Counties; *Another Shore* (Charles Crichton, 1948) in Ireland; *Whisky Galore!* (dir. Alexander Mackendrick, 1949) in the Hebrides, and *A Run for your Money* (dir. Charles Frend, 1949) in Wales and Central London.⁸ For Ealing, indigenous films were an important factor in appealing to the American market, as location and theme sold a nostalgic version of Britain replete with small districts and close-knit communities. Half of Ealing’s eight successful comedy films as identified by O’Sullivan are set and filmed in inner-London; *Hue and Cry*, *Passport to Pimlico*, *The Lavender Hill Mob* and *The Ladykillers*. Ealing’s postwar comedy films were a continuation of their policy of original stories yet, as Balcon explained in 1949, “are all somewhat experimental”, and departed from Ealing’s comedy films of the 1930s, which were characterised by familiar stories starring well-known comedians.⁹ Assistant Director on *The Ladykillers* Tom Pevsner argues that comedies such as *Passport to Pimlico* and *The Lavender Hill Mob* were deliberately unrealistic as a reaction against wartime propaganda films.¹⁰ However, these comedy films were still rooted in realistic use of actual locations and the contemporary socio-political milieu, with references to wartime rationing in *Passport to Pimlico* and a victorious London in *Hue and Cry*. As George Perry states, *Passport to Pimlico* “provides the modern observer with a fascinating impression of how the British capital looked more than three decades ago, with the remains of wartime bombing still apparent as well as the antique collection of trams and buses that made up most of the traffic in the days of

⁶ Michael Balcon, ‘Looking to the Future: An outline of the forthcoming films to be produced at Ealing studios’, *Focus: A Film Review*, 02, no.12 (December 1949), p.332.

⁷ Jeffrey Richards and Anthony Aldgate, *Best of British*, p.154.

⁸ *Falkirk Herald*, 11 August 1950, p.3

⁹ Michael Balcon, ‘Looking to the Future’, p.332

¹⁰ Tom Pevsner, interview by Alain Dein, recording online, <https://voices.kingscross.co.uk/> [Accessed 12 February 2017].

heavy petrol rationing”.¹¹ For Balcon, postwar comedies “have not departed from the realistic approach to production definitely associated with Ealing” with Balcon describing Ealing comedies as depicting “the humorous side of life and the effect of unusual circumstances on real people”.¹² These indigenous comedy films with characters in “recognisable situations” continued the Ealing tradition of realism and extensive location work developed in their wartime semi-documentary films such as *The Bells Go Down*.

Specific inner-London districts featured extensively in *Passport to Pimlico* and *The Ladykillers*, thus these films are now synonymous with the areas in which they were shot. Histories of postwar Lambeth include images from the set of *Passport to Pimlico*, while the area around Kings Cross St Pancras is commonly known as *The Ladykillers* territory. *A Run for Your Money*, however, differs from Ealing’s usual London-set comedies as it offers a tourist view of London as Welsh characters visit London, with some location shooting around key sites such as the Tower of London and a rugby match at Twickenham. The ‘local’ area is the characters’ home mining village in Wales, thus the film is as much a Welsh-set film as it is London-based film. Although *A Run for Your Money* was sold mainly on its comedic elements and use of Welsh characters, the film’s pressbook did note that Charles Frend had “earned a reputation as a director of outdoor subjects, and in *A Run for Your Money*, he keeps largely to exteriors, shooting scenes throughout London, including the Tower”.¹³ However, *A Run for your Money* was considered by contemporary critics to be a mediocre film, and is not generally considered by film historians as within the canon of ‘classic’ Ealing comedies.

Ealing comedies are considered by critics and film historians as a group of films with thematic links; O’Sullivan, for instance, categorises Ealing comedies as either fantasy films with established communities (*Passport to Pimlico*, *Whisky Galore* and *Titfield Thunderbolt*) or “transgressive nightmares” (*Kind Hearts and Coronets*, *The Man in the White Suit*, *The Ladykillers*).¹⁴ Charles Barr demonstrates the close connections of Ealing comedies and drama films, partly through the continuity of

¹¹ George Perry, *Forever Ealing: Celebration of the Great British Studio* (London: Pavilion Books & M. Joseph 1981), p115.

¹² Michael Balcon, ‘Looking to the Future’, p.332.

¹³ *A Run for Your Money*: Pressbook, 1950, BFI Special Collections.

¹⁴ Tim O’Sullivan, ‘That Ealing Feeling’ p.137.

T.E.B. Clarke, who penned *Hue and Cry*, *Passport to Pimlico*, *The Blue Lamp* and *The Lavender Hill Mob*.¹⁵ For Barr, the final sequences of *The Blue Lamp* compare to *Hue and Cry*, *Passport to Pimlico* is an “adult sequel” to *Hue and Cry*, while *The Ladykillers* “distils the spirit of *The Blue Lamp*”.¹⁶ C.A. Lejeune also attributed Clarke with authorial status, arguing that “he takes a large a share in the shaping of a picture as the director himself”.¹⁷ While scholars have also considered the connections between Ealing’s comedies and dramas, in terms of themes and personnel, a specific consideration of the links between locations in the London comedy films is ripe for analysis. This chapter therefore considers the continuity between Ealing’s four postwar London-set comedy and drama films and within the wider body of London films discussed in this thesis. *Hue and Cry* and *The Lavender Hill Mob* are connected through key personnel, writer Clarke and director Charles Crichton, and through the use of the blitzed area around St Paul’s. This chapter also posits location as a key factor in developing Ealing’s nostalgic view of community in *Passport to Pimlico* and *The Ladykillers*. It is important to consider, however, that *The Ladykillers* was produced when the ‘cosy’ Ealing view was considered dated, and as Mark Duguid and Katy McGahan argue, “low key realism recedes as the 1950s move on, as if driven out by the studio’s increasing embrace of Technicolor”.¹⁸

Depictions of the Docklands and Shadwell in *Hue and Cry*

London in 1946 was a drab, desolate city, ravaged by the Blitz of 1940-41 and the V1 and V2 attacks of 1944. The subsequent rubble and ruins were heavily utilised by director Charles Crichton and writer T. E. B. Clarke during the summer months of 1946 to create the fantastical, yet authentic, boy’s adventure /comedy film *Hue and Cry*. The initial idea for the film came from Associate Producer Henry Cornelius, who envisaged an ending where “for one glorious hour boys have taken over the

¹⁵ Charles Barr, *Ealing Studios* (Scotland: Cameron & Hollis, 1977), p.8.1

¹⁶ Ibid, p.81 & 95.

¹⁷ C.A. Lejeune, ‘Ealing for England,’ *Observer*, 01 July 1951, p.6

¹⁸ Mark Duguid and Katy McGahan, ‘From Realism to Tinsel to Back Again’, in Mark Duguid *et al.*, (eds.) *Ealing Revisited*, p.68.

city”.¹⁹ Although the film was produced on a modest budget with little publicity, it proved to be a financial and critical success upon its release in February 1947.

Writer Clarke recalled how a semi-documentary approach, employed in Ealing’s notable war-time feature films such as *Went the Day Well?* (dir. Alberto Cavalcanti, 1942) and *San Demetrio London* (dir. Charles Frend, 1943), influenced the film’s production team when writing and shooting *Hue and Cry*.²⁰ *Hue and Cry* marks Ealing’s deliberate departure from comedy films of the war period (escapist, musical-comedy star vehicles featuring George Formby and Gracie Fields), and heralded in a new, realistic, yet upbeat, style of comedy.²¹ The fantastical narrative, in which a gang of young boys foil a gang of fur-thieves, gave Crichton and Clarke the freedom to create “happier spaces where the mind is no longer constricted by the narrow dictates of reality”, offering a “safety valve” in “the fantasy-free zone of austerity Britain”.²² However, Crichton was clear that the settings had to be realistic as a way to enrich the fantasy.²³ Crichton drew on his documentary background in his approach to shooting the London scene. He decided to make heavy use of exteriors, use conventional camera angles, employ convincing ‘born and bred’ London children and use no back projection, or studio trickery.²⁴ Crichton also took his cameras to Covent Garden Market, depicting a bustling, cramped yet lively area, not changed since its development as a choked marketplace in the pre-war years. These scenes reflected how heavily bombed areas of London were able to a return to a pre-war ‘normality’ after 1945, contrasting with the desolate terraced streets of Battersea Park and dilapidated ruins of Shadwell Basin, thus revealing the different facets of London in this period. Here, *Hue and Cry*’s documentary-style approach even led Clarke to note that Crichton’s use of Blitz ruins “gave a certain historical value to our picture”, a trope that would continue in subsequent Ealing London-set films such as *The Blue Lamp* and *Pool of London*.²⁵ Clarke and Crichton adopted

¹⁹ Quoted in T. E. B. Clarke, *This is Where I Came in*, p.155.

²⁰ T. E. B. Clarke, *A Note of Hue and Cry* (date unknown, BFI Press Cuttings: *Hue and Cry*).

²¹ Michael Balcon, ‘A Style of their Own’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 04 October 1951, p.9; and Charles Drazin, *The Finest Years*.

²² Charles Crichton, ‘Children and Fantasy’, in Neilson Baxter, Roger Manvell and H. H. Wollenberg (eds), *Penguin Film Review* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1948), p.44; Tim Pulleine, ‘A Song and Dance at the Local: Thoughts on Ealing’, in Robert Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book, Third Edition* (London: BFI, 2009), p.262.

²³ Charles Crichton, ‘Children and Fantasy’, p.46.

²⁴ Ibid, p.47.

²⁵ Shadwell was a once-thriving industrial dock in Wapping which suffered from intense bombing during the Blitz; T.E.B. Clarke, quoted in Tom Wallace, ‘Charles Crichton: Obituary’, *Independent*, 16 September 1999, p.6.

same approach to the use of location in *Hue and Cry*, as “neither of us visualised a crazy London as the background of this crazy adventure: we saw it taking place in the sober old London we both knew” to “appear logical to the average boy”.²⁶

The old, sober London is evident from the *Hue and Cry*’s outset, as the opening conventional establishing shot pans around the London Docklands area, locating the film in a contemporary London and surveying a city suffering from the ravages of war. This opening shot depicts the Docklands as a calm, serene area, emphasised by the sounds of children singing the Christian anthem, *Hear My Prayer*, as a bridge into the first scene set in St Pauls Church, Wapping. These realistic depictions of the old war-ravaged London continue with the use of terraced streets along the fringes of Battersea Park, which provided a photogenic, yet realistic setting for Joe Fowler’s home (given the fictional and somewhat ironic name of “Rainbow Terrace”). The backdrop of Battersea Power station is a recognisable landmark and emphasises the industrial nature of London during this period. Long, establishing shots frame Joe, “a typical London boy” amidst a ruined, exposed and desolate Victorian London, before rebuilding of housing commenced, a scene poetically described in Eric Britton’s novelisation of the film: “Returning home along the battered street, with the electric trains rocking past beyond the dead end, and the vast power station dwarfing the whole untidy scene”.²⁷ Here ‘local London’, notable in later Ealing’s postwar comedies, such as *The Ladykillers*, combines with ‘landmark London’, with iconic buildings easily recognisable to audiences.²⁸ The exposed and devastated elements of the ancient city is exploited in the sequences shot on St Andrews Street, near Covent Garden, as Joe is foregrounded against the remaining buildings, revealing the scars of the Blitz. The steady pace of rebuilding in central London serves as a backdrop for the sequences where Joe and the gang chase Rhona Davis through scaffolding along Kingsway, Holborn, as the city in flux, from old to new, provides a space for a chase through the city streets.

The climactic battle between Joe Kirby (Harry Fowler) and Nightingale (Jack Warner), in a bombed-out warehouse in Shadwell Basin, demonstrates how Crichton and Slocombe also used locations for their fantastical and expressionistic

²⁶ T. E. B. Clarke, *A Note on Hue and Cry* (no pagination).

²⁷ Eric Britton, *Hue and Cry: The Book of the Film* (London, World Film Publications, 1947), p.16.

²⁸ Charlotte Brunson distinguishes between ‘local’ London and ‘landmark’ London throughout *London in Cinema*.

quality. Crichton recalled how the warehouse was chosen because it “had the air of fantasy”, with “a vast, honeycombed shell”, “gaping holes” and “criss-cross ironwork” and “twisted” stairways.²⁹ Realism and fantasy merged in this use of location as “in the foreground we could surround Joe with the distorted shapes of the warehouse, and still leave him a normal London background”, thus realism “enriched the sense of fantasy engendered by the action and setting of the warehouse itself”.³⁰ This location, and foregrounding of girders and scaffolding, filmed in a low angle and in a low key light, gives the film an expressionistic quality, common in British films noirs of the 1940s and early 1950s, such as *The Third Man* and *Night and The City* and subsequent Ealing comedy *The Lavender Hill Mob*.³¹ Crichton described how the outer walls of the bombed-out warehouse “had fallen to reveal a bright panorama of London”, combining the distorted look of the warehouse with the recognisable cityscape, merging both realistic and expressionist aesthetics.³² The exteriors of the bombed-out buildings, in which the children are able to climb and use as look-outs, also lend themselves to an expressionist aesthetic, with low angles giving the ruins an ominous, yet photogenic quality. These images, in conjunction with the finale of the film, deliberately use real locations in a fantastical way to accentuate the climatic moments of the film. This avoidance of studio shots and heavy use of location therefore contests Charles Barr’s view that *Hue and Cry* was “staged and acted in a perfectly conventional manner, much of it within studio walls” with a “fatal lack of spontaneity” in “response to locations”.³³

Contemporary critics’ emphasis on *Hue and Cry*’s realism and ability to document the postwar London environment demonstrates how the portrayal of this landscape was seen as a key selling-point, lending the film a credibility, authenticity and even ‘beauty’. Richard L. Coe (*Washington Post*) noted “an air of reality... in the scraggling homes and streets of these youngsters”.³⁴ *News of the World* claimed the Blitz scenes gave the film a “near-realism such a melodrama needs”, while the *Monthly Film Bulletin* particularly praised the “stark reality of bombed sites and

²⁹ Crichton, ‘Children and Fantasy’, p.48.

³⁰ Ibid, pp.48-49.

³¹ Robert Murphy, ‘An American in London: Jules Dassin and *Night and the City*’, conference paper delivered at Birkbeck University for *Location London Conference* (08 March 2014).

³² Crichton, ‘Children and Fantasy’, p.47.

³³ Charles Barr, *Ealing Studios* (Cameron & Hollis, 1998), p.48.

³⁴ Richard L. Coe, ‘English Kids Play Cops and Robbers’, *Washington Post*, 10 February 1951, p.7.

buildings”, and the *New York Times* in 1951 noted that “the cameras give mute evidence to London’s wartime scars”.³⁵ *Hue and Cry*’s overall projection of London were also praised in contemporary reviews; *Monthly Film Bulletin* emphasised how the film is “about London life, the London of the postwar period” and exclaiming “it is English to the backbone”, while the *Daily Graphic* commented that the film “belongs to the back-streets of London as much as chestnut barrows and frying fish.”³⁶ The ‘photogenic’, yet realistic quality of the film led critic C. A. Lejeune to marvel “I have never seen a film that gave a more vivid impression of London as a great city of buildings and wharfs; skylines and pavements, roar and silence, and changing light.”³⁷ Critics praised the film’s ability to depict a ‘beautiful’ London, a city described at the time as a “sordid and miserable place”.³⁸ Patrick Kirwan (*Evening Standard*) found the images of London “fascinating” and “a heart-warming reminder that this ancient city has lost none of her beauty”.³⁹

The City and Bankside in *The Lavender Hill Mob*

The Lavender Hill Mob was one of Ealing’s most commercially and critically successful films both in Britain and abroad, earning writer T.E.B. Clarke an Oscar for Best Screenplay of 1952. The comedy-heist takes place across a number of London and Paris locations, including; Bank, the Royal Exchange and Queen Victoria Street in the City, the blitzed area around St Paul’s, a bombed-out warehouse on Bankside, a police training college in Hendon, and the Eiffel Tower in Paris. The plot concerns bank clerk Henry Holland (Alec Guinness), who attempts to steal three million pounds worth of gold bullion from the Bank of England. Holland and his neighbour and co-conspirator Alfred Pendlebury (Stanley Holloway) smuggle the gold out of the country through moulding it into miniature

³⁵ ‘Hue and Cry: Review’, *News of the World*, 23 February 1947; ‘Hue and Cry’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 14, no.158 (February 1947), p.1; ‘A Comedy Melodrama From Overseas’, *New York Times*, 9 January 1951, p.42.

³⁶ ‘Hue and Cry’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 14, no.158 (February 1947), p.1; ‘Hue and Cry’, *Daily Graphic*, 21 February 1947, BFI Press Cuttings: *Hue and Cry*.

³⁷ C. A. Lejeune, ‘At the Films’, *Observer*, 23 February 1947, BFI Press Cuttings: *Hue and Cry*.

³⁸ Jerry White, *London in the Twentieth Century*, p.44; See also *The Cinema* gave a “special word of praise” to “the sensitive treatment of the London scene”, while Helen Fletcher, writing for the *Sunday Graphic* admired how the film “finds beauty in the void fields of rubble” in ‘Hue and Cry’, *The Cinema*, 5 February 1947, p.20; Helen Fletcher, ‘A Boy’s Film for All Ages’, *Sunday Graphic*, 23 February 1947, BFI Press Cuttings: *Hue and Cry*.

³⁹ Patrick Kirwan, ‘Films’, *Evening Standard*, 20 February 1947, BFI Press Cuttings: *Hue and Cry*.

Eiffel Tower paperweights. Rank and Ealing's key selling points in publicity materials were the film's generic elements (*The Lavender Hill Mob* was sold as a 'comedy-drama'), Alec Guinness's star appeal (mainly due to Guinness being entitled contractually to billing credit), and the scenes at the Eiffel Tower. *The Lavender Hill Mob* marked the end of a successful run of Ealing comedy films, with *Titfield Thunderbolt* (dir. Charles Crichton, 1953) and *The Ladykillers* proving later exceptions to the rule. Ealing were therefore keen to foreground the comedic elements of the film in publicity materials to capitalise on the success of their most recent comedies. While publicity material for *The Lavender Hill Mob* did state that "the action roams many parts of London and much of the picture was filmed on location", in contrast to Ealing's publicity for earlier London-set films, locations were a secondary selling point.⁴⁰ Ealing also provided colourful anecdotes about the impact of shooting in real London locations; publicity materials stated how workers around St Paul's area stopped to watch filming, and mention was made of a small market was erected on a blitzed site in Queen Victoria Street.⁴¹

The Lavender Hill Mob is closely connected to other successful Ealing drama and comedy films, notably *Passport to Pimlico*, *Pool of London*, *The Blue Lamp* and *Hue and Cry*. Both *The Lavender Hill Mob* and *Passport to Pimlico* present exotic opening sequences, as Alec Guinness resides in Brazil in the opening of *The Lavender Hill Mob*, while in *Passport to Pimlico*, the heatwave and Mexican-style music in the film's opening shots comically fools the spectator into thinking the location is a foreign holiday resort. For Clarke, *Pool of London* was the "parent" of *The Lavender Hill Mob* as the comic characters Clarke originally created for *Pool of London* developed into *The Lavender Hill Mob*.⁴² *The Lavender Hill Mob* and *Pool of London* went into production simultaneously, with units on each film shooting different areas of London concurrently. Indeed, Clarke recalled how the two films "met one day on location in the City when a shot of theirs was ruined by one of our policemen chasing Alec Guinness past the wrong camera".⁴³ In *The Lavender Hill Mob*, the area around Queen Victoria Street near St Paul's is used as the backdrop for the planned robbery and a chase through the streets. The stolen car approaches

⁴⁰ 'Meet the Mob', Information, Ealing Studios, 1951, Lavender Hill Mob Collection Fonds, N-36813, BFI Special Collections, p.2.

⁴¹ Ibid, p.2.

⁴² T.E.B. Clarke, *This is Where I Came in*, p.167.

⁴³ Ibid, p.168.

the city, described in the shooting script as “speeding through the narrow streets amidst the ruins round St Paul’s”.⁴⁴ These same ruins, including a church on Queen Victoria Street with a missing spire, were also used as a backdrop and reminder of the scars of war in *Pool of London*.

According to Crichton, Balcon was keen to replicate the success of *The Blue Lamp* with *The Lavender Hill Mob*.⁴⁵ Ealing’s publicity for *The Lavender Hill Mob* stated how Ealing personnel used their experiences on *The Blue Lamp* when producing *The Lavender Hill Mob*.⁴⁶ Critics also observed the links between *The Lavender Hill Mob* and *The Blue Lamp*; Phillip Hope Wallace (*Sunday Times*) noted how “every patrol in London is dashing through *The Blue Lamp* district”.⁴⁷ It is no co-incidence therefore that this chase through the streets of war-ravaged London in *The Lavender Hill Mob* compares visually to the opening of *The Blue Lamp*, with the camera at a low angle as the police cars speed towards Hendon Way, as *The Lavender Hill Mob*’s shooting script reveals that in the police car chase sequence, Ealing used some exterior library shots filmed for *The Blue Lamp*. Clarke’s anecdote, where after an altercation at Chelsea Police Station the Sergeant responded “aren’t you the one that wrote *The Lavender Hill Mob* – the film that takes the piss out of the police? ... It was great”, suggests that the good-standing with the police through *The Blue Lamp* gave Ealing a poetic license for gentle mockery of the police in *The Lavender Hill Mob*.⁴⁸ According to film critic George Perry in *Forever Ealing*, the three-way police car collision in *The Lavender Hill Mob* was a deliberate parody of *The Blue Lamp*.⁴⁹ Phillip Hope-Wallace (*Sunday Times*) noted how the film’s depiction of the police “mock their own obsessions cruelly, and the idolised police must caper like Mack Sennett’s Keystone Cops”, although Richard Mallet (*Punch*) commented that while “a good deal has been said about the picture being a burlesque of Ealing Studio’s own *The Blue Lamp* [...] this didn’t strike me at the time” as “the police come out of the whole affair well enough”.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ *The Lavender Hill Mob* Shooting Script, 15 September 1950, p.106.

⁴⁵ Charles Crichton, Interview by Sidney Cole, tape, London for BECTU project, 1987, BFI Library.

⁴⁶ ‘Meet the Mob’, Information, Ealing Studios, 1951.

⁴⁷ Phillip Hope-Wallace, ‘Out for Laughs’ *Sunday Times*, 01 July 1951, p.2.

⁴⁸ T.E.B. Clarke, *This is Where I Came in*, p.169.

⁴⁹ George Perry, *Forever Ealing*, p.126.

⁵⁰ Phillip Hope-Wallace, ‘Out for Laughs’ *Sunday Times*, 01 July 1951, p.2; Richard Mallett, *Punch*, 11 July 1951, p.36.

As with *The Blue Lamp* and *Hue and Cry*, Clarke drew upon his personal experiences and aimed for authenticity when developing the script for *The Lavender Hill Mob*. For the film's climatic scene where Holland and Pendlebury steal a police radio car, Clarke recollected an incident when he was on duty as a war reserve policeman and received a number of a stolen car only to discover that it was his own duty officer's car.⁵¹ To ensure that the robbery of gold bullion was scripted as realistically as possible, Clarke visited the Bank of England and took expert advice from the Transport Manager, resulting in on-screen robbery sequences that were, according to Clarke, "almost exactly as planned by those Bank of England executives".⁵²

While film scholar Ian Green compares *The Lavender Hill Mob* to earlier comedies *Hue and Cry* and *Passport to Pimlico*, including the "exotic feel" in the films' opening and closing, use of flashback devices, and children as a narrative device, there are also similarities with use of locations.⁵³ Both *Hue and Cry* and *The Lavender Hill Mob* make use of the area around St Paul's and Bankside; indeed, there was a continuity of personnel with writer T.E.B. Clarke, director Charles Crichton and Director of Photography Douglas Slocombe. For Richard Hornsey, locations in *The Lavender Hill Mob* are "far removed from the plazas of the Southbank or the tidy neighbourhood precincts sketched within the pages of The County of London Plan. Its city, in contrast, remains decayed and obsolete".⁵⁴ Such a description is equally apt for London depicted in the year succeeding the end of World War II in *Hue and Cry*. Both films use the bombed area around St Paul's as a backdrop, which by 1951, was still heavily bomb damaged, as well as a bombed-out warehouse on Bankside for narrative purposes and photogenic qualities. In both films, the bombed warehouses are framed through entrances and of low angles combine realist and expressionist aesthetics, as Slocombe makes use of the shadows and shapes created by bomb damage.

A scene in *The Lavender Hill Mob*'s shooting script, in which Holland inspects the derelict warehouse, emphasised the relationship between location, character and the

⁵¹ T.E.B. Clarke, *This is Where I Came in*, p.167.

⁵² Ibid, p.167.

⁵³ Ian Green, 'Ealing: in the Comedy Frame', in James Curran and Vincent Porter (eds.), *British Cinema History* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1983), p.299.

⁵⁴ Richard Hornsey, *The Spiv and the Architect: Unruly Life in Postwar London*, p.87.

recent past. In the original shooting script, Lackery and Holland are inspecting the warehouse, described as “a derelict warehouse which backs on to the Thames. Incendiaries long ago reduced the place to a blackened shell”.⁵⁵ In a medium shot, Lackey surveys the ruins while Holland is behind him; Lackey “Terrible thing, war. Two million cigarettes, all up in smoke- and the country so short at the time you could flog ‘em for a dollar a packet.” This extract from the film’s shooting script evokes a nostalgia for the building’s former use, as working-class gang member Lackery (Sid James) recalls his days working in the warehouse before the Blitz:

Exterior Medium shot warehouse. HOLLAND stands at an opening in the ruin and looks out towards the Thames which is beyond. LACKERY walks past him.

Lackery: Pity this bit’s gone! It’s where they used to keep the bulk shag.

Holland: You seem to know this place extraordinarily well.

Lackery: Ought to! I used to work here

[...]

Medium Shot. HOLLAND and LACKERY. As HOLLAND goes up a path leading between other ruined houses, Lackery pauses and gazes nostalgically.

Lackery: Them was the days! Sad to see the old place now...⁵⁶

While this sequence creates nostalgia for life before the war and roots Lackey to a particular location, as the Blitz’s impact on industrial sites impacted on employment, it was omitted from the film as it was not essential to narrative development.

The locations where middle-class Holland works and resides are associated with business and respectability, contrasting with the bombed-out warehouse associated with working-class Lackery. For Hornsey, “the film’s narrative is rooted in the familiar spatial and temporal strategies of postwar urban planningthe city is exaggerated as a place of stasis, routine, and mundane spatial conformity”.⁵⁷ This routine and use of city locations is used for narrative purposes to emphasise how a thief like Holland can go unnoticeable, as stated in the plot description: “You wouldn’t notice Mr Holland among the crowds swarming across London Bridge to the City every morning, and back again at night. Just one of the crowd, respectable, bespectacled, bowler-hatted, neatly dressed. A gold thief? The boss of a desperate

⁵⁵ T.E.B. Clarke, ‘The Lavender Hill Mob’, in Roger Manvell (ed.), *The Cinema* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1952), p.32.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.32 & p.33.

⁵⁷ Richard Hornsey, *The Spiv and the Architect*, p.88.

mob?”⁵⁸ Holland resides in the fictional Balmoral Hotel in Lavender Hill, a residential and commercial Victorian street leading down from Clapham Junction, South West London. Ealing were, however, keen to point out that the use of Lavender Hill in the film was to denote a district rather than a thoroughfare.⁵⁹ In 1952, *Manchester Guardian* complained that filmgoers would now associate Lavender Hill with criminal mobs, which was “totally unjust and a grave spoken slur on the people who live there”.⁶⁰ However, Ealing justified the use of Lavender Hill for comedic effect, stating it would be unlikely for a group of gangsters to hail from what was considered a respectable area:

Any apprehensions that local inhabitants might have at hearing of a “Mob” in their midst may be quickly dispelled. Far from inferring that Lavender Hill harbours a den of gangsters, the picture shows it as possessing an ultra-respectable boarding house [...] Clapham was, in fact, chosen by T.E.B. Clarke because he wanted his characters to have an obviously respectable background.⁶¹

Ealing were keen to stress that while Lavender Hill was a familiar to Londoners, this was not the case for many overseas markets, therefore the film was titled *Tomorrow I'll be rich* for all countries except Great Britain, America and Canada.⁶²

While critics mainly focused on the film’s comedic elements as a key selling point, for C.A. Lejeune (*Observer*), the film was an example of one of Ealing’s “real London films”, an indigenous London which “makes full use of the London scene, the London habit, and the people and institutions of London”.⁶³ However, for the *Manchester Guardian*, Ealing’s presentation of British life was growing stereotyped and “the search for suitability British backgrounds seemed to be growing self-conscious”.⁶⁴ Assistant director on *The Ladykillers* Tom Pevsner argued that *Hue and Cry* was a ‘fresh film’, while *The Lavender Hill Mob* marked the end of the line for Ealing comedy. Indeed, *The Lavender Hill Mob* marked the end of a succession of immediate postwar London-set comedies, with Ealing’s next and final successful London comedy not produced until four years later in 1955, with the release of *The Ladykillers*.

⁵⁸ *The Lavender Hill Mob*: Information, Ealing Studios, 1955, Lavender Hill Mob Collection Fonds N-36813, BFI special collections.

⁵⁹ ‘Meet the Mob’, Information: *The Lavender Hill Mob*, Ealing Studios, 1955, p.2.

⁶⁰ ‘Our London Correspondence’, *Manchester Guardian*, 15 April 1952, p.4.

⁶¹ ‘Meet the Mob’, Information: *The Lavender Hill Mob*, Ealing Studios, 1955, p.2.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.2.

⁶³ C.A. Lejeune, ‘Ealing for England’, *Observer*, 01 July 1951, p.6.

⁶⁴ ‘New Films in London’, *Manchester Guardian*, June 1951, p.3, BFI Press Cuttings: *The Lavender Hill Mob*.

Lambeth in *Passport to Pimlico*

In 1948, T.E.B Clarke read a news report about Princess Juliana of the Netherlands who was expecting a baby while exiled in Canada. As the heir to the throne must be born on Dutch soil, the Canadian government decreed that the room where Princess Juliana gave birth would temporarily become part of the Netherlands.⁶⁵ Clarke developed this initial conceit of a small area belonging to a foreign land into the whimsical comedy *Passport to Pimlico*. The plot concerns the residents of Pimlico who, when an unexploded bomb is accidentally detonated and treasure is found, including a Royal Charter which states that the estate belongs to the last Duke of Burgundy, decree that Pimlico belongs to Burgundy, France. *Passport to Pimlico* was the first full-length feature film directed by Henry Cornelius, who had previously worked on propaganda shorts during World War II, then produced postwar London-set Ealing films *Hue and Cry* and *It Always Rains on Sunday*. According to Clarke, it was Cornelius who decided that *Passport to Pimlico* should be treated realistically in plot and location.⁶⁶ Clarke recalled how Cornelius even went to the council chambers to discover how the council would respond in the unlikely event of finding an ancient manuscript declaring that a small area of London belong to foreign soil.⁶⁷ This commitment to realism, including liaising with relevant state authorities to ensure accuracy, would characterise pre-production in future postwar Ealing productions such as *The Blue Lamp* and *The Lavender Hill Mob*.

Passport to Pimlico was released in Britain on 6 June 1949 and despite running over schedule and budget due to inclement weather on location, was one of Ealing's biggest commercial successes. 1949 was indeed a rewarding year for comedy at Ealing, with *Passport to Pimlico*, *Whisky Galore!* and *Kind Hearts and Coronets* all critically acclaimed box-office successes. Contemporary critics likened *Passport to Pimlico* to *Hue and Cry*; for Jympson Harman (*Evening News*), *Passport to Pimlico* had "the same authenticity and genial observation as *Hue and Cry*, while Dilys

⁶⁵ T.E.B. Clarke, *This is Where I Came In*, p.159.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p.159.

⁶⁷ T.E.B. Clarke, *This is Where I Came In*, p.160.

Powell also thought that *Passport to Pimlico* stemmed from *Hue and Cry* with “the same delighted affectionate invention in plot and situation”.⁶⁸

Passport to Pimlico is set in the fictional Miramont Place, Pimlico, although the exteriors were shot 3.5 miles further south in North Lambeth. At the time of production, Lambeth was an urban and residential working-class area, baring the scars of war, as over 4,000 homes were destroyed and 38,000 damaged during the Blitz, and described in Ealing’s publicity as a “bare, ramshackle reminder of the Blitz”.⁶⁹ According to Clarke, the film was set in Pimlico rather than Lambeth for “the pleasantly alliterative title”.⁷⁰ An entire set, comprising of a hardware store, fishmongers, dress shop, bank, pub and other buildings, was constructed on an acre and a half of bombed wasteland that used to comprise of Canterbury Place and Saville Place, off Lambeth Road. Interiors, including a full scale replica of a District Line train, were constructed and filmed on the studio lot at Ealing Studios.⁷¹ The location set was constructed out of lathe and plaster, was fully roofed but lacked interiors, which according to the pressbook “would look as realistic as the genuine buildings around and be able to stand up to the worst the weather could do”.⁷² However, the summer of 1948 was hampered by heavy rain and gales; the *Gloucester Journal* reported how the set had to be repainted and re-plastered because of the bad weather.⁷³ The location set was originally supposed to stand for a few weeks, however, due to the need to shoot indoors during inclement weather, the set stayed up for three months, therefore the film’s production was behind schedule.⁷⁴ The location set was eventually dismantled in November 1948, which the *Falkirk Herald* described as “a skeleton of steel scaffolding deserted except for the workmen who are stripping it of the last vestiges of illusion”.⁷⁵ Ealing personnel liaised with Lambeth Council and agreed that after production, the site be returned to its original state with unaltered boundary lines.⁷⁶ The location set was Ealing’s

⁶⁸ Jympson Harman, *Evening News*, 28 April 1949, BFI Press Cuttings: *Passport to Pimlico*; Dilys Powell, ‘British Burgundy’, *The Sunday Times*, 01 May 1949, p.2.

⁶⁹ Sue McKenzie, *Lambeth: The Twentieth Century* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Ltd., 1999), p.7; *Passport to Pimlico*: Pressbook, 1949.

⁷⁰ T.E.B. Clarke, *This is Where I Came In*, p.160.

⁷¹ ‘Facts from Filmland’, *Falkirk Herald*, 20 October 1948, p.3.

⁷² *Passport to Pimlico*: Pressbook, 1949.

⁷³ *The Gloucester Journal*, 21 August 1948, p.11.

⁷⁴ *Passport to Pimlico*: Pressbook, 1949.

⁷⁵ *Falkirk Herald*, 17 November 1948, p.3.

⁷⁶ *Passport to Pimlico*: Pressbook, 1949.

key selling-point for the film; according to the pressbook the set was the “biggest-ever location set”, chosen because the setting required “a complete section of a London district”.⁷⁷ To authenticate the fiction further, the producers used local characters in the film for small parts and as extras, including Mrs Polly Smith, described as “one of the most familiar figures in London’s Lambeth Walk”.⁷⁸ The pressbook described at length the process of creating the set in Lambeth and its authenticity, with anecdotes about local people who thought the set was real, including stories of labourers who asked if there was any work while the set was under construction and a clergyman who stood outside the set bank, waiting for it to open.⁷⁹ According to Ealing’s publicity, for Londoners “the buildings became a familiar site and took their place among the other shops and houses in the district”.⁸⁰ While the pressbook sold the location set with production stories, the publicity photographic stills sold the location set visually, with long shots of the construction of the location set and depict locals gathering to watch the set’s construction. This location set was newsworthy within itself, with press and trade papers reporting on the film’s production and building of a set in Blitzed Lambeth.⁸¹ A scale model of the film set, comprising the houses and shops was built in spring 1949 as a publicity stunt and displayed during the film’s release in South London cinemas.

This combination of the built set and use of North Lambeth location evokes community and village and offers a nostalgic view of working-class community, with long establishing shots depicting the railway bridge, the local pub in the background and wasteland in the foreground. Indeed, this nostalgia for a past London reflected architecturally in the exterior set design with pre-war buildings which, according to the pressbook led to a complaint from a local man, who thought that the set was new development, that modern buildings should be erected instead of old-fashioned ones.⁸² This ‘nostalgic’ London of pre-war housing and close-knit community continues those tropes of a nostalgic East End in *It Always Rains on Sunday*, although *It Always Rains on Sunday* undermines notions of the close-knit community (as discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis). For Charles Barr, the

⁷⁷ Ealing Studios, *Passport to Pimlico*: Background to the Film, 1949, BFI Press Cuttings: *Passport to Pimlico*.

⁷⁸ *Passport to Pimlico*: Pressbook, 1949.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ *Passport to Pimlico*: Pressbook, 1949.

⁸¹ A.E. Wilson, *Evening Standard*, 29 May 1949, BFI Press Cuttings: *Passport to Pimlico*; Anon, *Showmen’s Trade Review*, 18 September 1948, p.33.

⁸² *Passport to Pimlico*: Pressbook, 1949.

setting of a “close-knit London village community” in *Passport to Pimlico* was a continuation of the depiction of the London ‘village’ in Ealing’s *The Bells Go Down*.⁸³ For Barr, *Passport to Pimlico* is “quintessentially Ealing” with its “blend of fantasy and realism and of wartime and postwar feeling”.⁸⁴ However, this nostalgia for the war years and a pre-war London rooted in community was evident in postwar London-set novels, as Lawrence Phillips notes, “nostalgia for the war years often resolves upon the strong sense of community that brought classes together in universal resistance of the Blitz”.⁸⁵ *Passport to Pimlico* reflects this nostalgia while referencing the postwar reality of austerity and rationing, with images of the ration book, commonly paced next to a wreath with the title “in the memory of”. The postwar shortages impacted local responses to the location set; according to the pressbook, a local builder who thought the set were actual bricks was angered as bricks were a scarcity in Britain after the war.⁸⁶ According to the pressbook, several local people also made plans to squat in the location set building once production had ceased, at a time when squatting was common occurrence due to the housing shortages.⁸⁷

Passport to Pimlico’s apparent fantastical elements, such as the opening heatwave, which depicts a fantasy London in a comic, continental fashion, was rooted in reality as a reference to the heatwave of the previous summer of 1947. The foreign and real London merge, as the Mexican-sounding band is announced on the radio as the ‘Bethnal Green Bambinos’. As the camera pans across the Lambeth Road, we see the railway bridge in the distance and a horse and cart on the foreground. This scene would be familiar to an audience still reeling from the war, with a sign on the wasteland saying, ‘Keep clear, unexploded bomb’. The press regularly reported on unexploded bombs that had laid buried for months or years; in the immediate postwar years cordoned off areas where unexploded bombs lay were commonplace and considered a real risk for children. Ealing suggested publicity ideas around the theme of unexploded bombs, stating that “experience has taught us that people are usually

⁸³ Charles Barr, *Ealing Studios*, 1977.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p.81.

⁸⁵ Lawrence Phillips, *London Narratives: Postwar Fiction and the City*, p.159.

⁸⁶ *Passport to Pimlico*: Pressbook, 1949.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

anxious to out-do each other with their experiences regarding unexploded bombs, and will talk about them on the slightest provocation”.⁸⁸

The wasteland where the unexploded bomb lays is *Passport to Pimlico*’s focal point and is integral to the plot, rather than the ruins of war functioning as photogenic backdrops in *The Lavender Hill Mob*. Throughout the film, the wasteland is repurposed for narrative development: firstly, as an unofficial playground, evoking images of children on bombsites in *Hue and Cry*, a site of buried treasure, a market place as black-market goods flood into the area, a scene of evacuation; a reservoir, and finally, a Lido and site of a street party. Pemberton’s plans for a proper playground to “give those kids somewhere half decent to play” relates to postwar plans to provide children with safer areas to play, evoking the dangers of playing on bombsites. The council’s plans for a state lido harks back to the popularity of lidos during the 1930s, when outdoor pursuits were fashionable. Indeed, historian Sue McKenzie notes how in the 1930s lidos and paddling pools were installed in Lambeth’s parks.⁸⁹ Later, the evacuated children of Pimlico watch a newsreel about the situation ‘back home’, re-imaging and filming the area in the documentary style. Here, the commentator refers to the building of a lido as one that “rises like a Phoenix from the ash cans”, comically playing on the ‘phoenix from the ashes’ metaphor used to describe postwar cities recovering from the damage inflicted in World War II.

While, as Margaret Butler argues, in *It Always Rains on Sunday* “a communal existence can be stifling and constraining” which “contrasts sharply with the chummy congeniality of *Passport to Pimlico*”, there is some continuity between the two films.⁹⁰ In *Passport to Pimlico*, the wasteland is later used by market traders who flood Pimlico/Burgundy to sell unrationed goods, described by one local as a ‘spivs paradise’ *Passport to Pimlico* references both the real increase in black market activity in markets such as the Caledonian Road Market and the popularity of the spiv character in British cinema, as depicted in *It Always Rains on Sunday*. Indeed, three market traders from Petticoat Lane market who appeared in *It Always Rains on Sunday* also appeared in the market scenes in *Passport to Pimlico*. Both *It*

⁸⁸ *Passport to Pimlico*: Pressbook, 1949.

⁸⁹ Sue McKenzie, *Lambeth: The Twentieth Century* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Ltd.), 1999, p.6.

⁹⁰ Margaret Butler, *Film and Community in Britain and France*, p.90.

Always Rains on Sunday and *Passport to Pimlico* feature the railway line at the end of the street, particularly in long establishing shots, as a key marker of a working-class district where the steam railway and residential areas intersect. The different London districts are comically depicted in *Passport to Pimlico* in a shot which shows all the gifts presented to the people of Pimlico/Burgundy from different districts - Lambeth's gifts are placed just underneath Ealing's, in a knowing nod to the studio and location.

Later scenes of Burgundy/Pimlico under siege contrast to the earlier black-market area full of noise and bustle, evoking both the recent wartime past and then-present situation in European cities during the postwar carving up of Europe into the Soviet bloc in the East and the Allied bloc in the West. The barbed wire around Pimlico/Burgundy serves as a reminder of wartime trenches and evokes European cities which were under occupation during World War II. The scenes in which Pimlico is under siege and lacking in necessities also parodies and references the situation in Berlin - the arrival of parcels by air and railway in the segregated area evokes the Berlin airlift which began in June 1948, where allied forces provided West Berliners with essential items such as food and fuel. The *Falkirk Herald* reported how such scenes were produced, as "50 extras were taken to Waterloo and put aboard a train crossing the bridge adjoining the Lambeth site. At a given signal parcels rained onto the movie set itself".⁹¹ The *Falkirk Herald* also compared the scenes in which underground trains were held up while inspectors demanded to see passports to the current situation in Berlin now segregated into East and West.⁹² References to the iron curtain are also evident in the newsreel the evacuated children of Pimlico view, as the commentator refers to the 'self-imposed iron curtain'. Scenes where the children of Pimlico/Burgundy leave the area evokes wartime evacuations, with goodbyes as children are separated from adults and placed on public transport out of the area. This reimagining of evacuation for narrative purposes compares with *Seven Days to Noon* produced just one year later in 1950, where the residents of London are evacuated on a mass scale due to a nuclear threat (as discussed in detail in Chapter Seven of this thesis). Thus, *Passport to Pimlico*, along with *Seven Days to Noon*, exemplifies how filmmakers repurposed the postwar London landscape for

⁹¹'Facts from Filmland', *Falkirk Herald*, 20 October 1948, p.3.

⁹² Ibid.

fantasy, while simultaneously referencing the recent wartime past and contemporary realities of postwar life.

Passport to Pimlico challenges any notion that life in Continental Europe is dramatically different to postwar London. The usual drabness of London is evoked in the conversation between the Duke of Burgundy and Molly, where Molly gives a romantic description of Dijon, describing imagined cobbled streets and an orange grove. The Duke is quick to dispel such romantic notions, describing the cold and concrete factory, continuing the film's message that the grass is not always greener and 'be grateful for what you have got'. This message is enhanced in the film's finale, with a return to 'normality', replete with ration books, is celebrated with a street party, recalling Victory in Europe (VE) day celebrations. While, for Margaret Butler, *Passport to Pimlico* "showed 'the deep compulsion to dream in consensus' in reclaiming wartime solidarity, but it also exposed underlying conflicts between the recognisable past and the uncertain future", the new lido which contrasts with the bombed houses in the background, suggests a hopeful future as Pemberton hails "we're back in England", with a long shot of the lido, street party and cheering.⁹³ The chimes of Big Ben can then be heard, heralding in a thunderstorm and the end of the fantasy as the heatwave plummets and we return to a more-typical British summertime, comparable to inclement summer of 1948.

Passport to Pimlico was successful in both Britain and America; *Essex Newsman* reported that "American newspaper critics have raved about it and house records have been broken in all cinemas where it has appeared".⁹⁴ The film was adapted slightly for the American audience, including some cuts to speed up the story, and a foreword explaining that Pimlico was not the famous American race track but a bombed part of London and that rationing still continued in England. Director and critic Roger Manvell noted that in America the Ealing comedies, including *Passport to Pimlico* and *Lavender Hill Mob* were "widely appreciated for their indigenous British quality".⁹⁵ The indigenous nature of the film was a key selling point to an American audience; *Belfast News-Letter* reported on a publicity stunt when the film was screened at a cinema in Washington DC, USA where actual soil from Pimlico

⁹³ Margaret Butler, *Film and Community in Britain and France*, p.123.

⁹⁴ *Essex Newsman*, 06 December 1949, p.2.

⁹⁵ Roger Manvell, 'Letter to the Editor', *Times*, 27 September 1957, p.7.

was flown in and out in front of the cinema, while a ‘London Bobby’ issued ‘passports’ to Americans to step on British soil.⁹⁶ *Passport to Pimlico* won the Golden Laurel Award, an award presented by David O. Selznick to a European film which contributed to the mutual understandings of democratic nations and show the character and way of life of a particular nation. However, not all reviewers were convinced; for US trade journal *Harrison’s Reports*, the “thick cockney accents” made “a good part of the dialogue ... indistinguishable”.⁹⁷

Analysis of the use of location in *Passport to Pimlico* reveals a layered and complex use of the postwar London landscape, as the location-set reflects the melding of the fantastical and the realistic. Ealing would later repeat the use of a fictional set in a real London location in 1955 with their final comedy success *The Ladykillers*, although the Technicolor film, while containing elements of realism with the use of St Pancras, creates a much more macabre and expressionistic London.

The macabre King’s Cross St Pancras ‘village’ in *The Ladykillers*

The Ladykillers was penned by William Rose, based on a dream he had about five criminals who live in a house with an old lady. The film, which combines black comedy and gothic horror, concerns the sinister but charming Professor Marcus (Alec Guinness) and his gang of criminals who pose as musicians while residing with a sweet old lady, Mrs Wilberforce (Katie Johnson) in the Kings Cross St Pancras area of London. *The Ladykillers* was produced during the summer of 1955 and was one of eight comedy films produced at Ealing that year.⁹⁸ This mid-1950s was a period of financial decline at Ealing; most of their films were failing at the box office, resulting in Balcon selling the studios to pay off a loan from Film Finances in 1955. Sue Harper and Vincent Porter attribute Ealing’s decline to changes in audience tastes and “new currents in national life” as well as a loss of continuity, as by 1954 Balcon could no longer afford to employ Crichton and

⁹⁶ *Belfast News-Letter*, 24 October 1949, p.8.

⁹⁷ ‘Passport to Pimlico’, *Harrison’s Reports*, 08 October 1949, p.162.

⁹⁸ As reported in *The Independent Film Journal*, 17 September 1955.

Frend.⁹⁹ However, *The Ladykillers*, despite going over budget, bucked the trend and proved to be Ealing's last commercial success, recouping its costs at the box office.

Ealing sold *The Ladykillers* as a 'gangster comedy', in an attempt to replicate the success of previous Ealing comedy films such as *The Lavender Hill Mob*, with the pressbook urging exhibitors to "use every opportunity to make up displays which will emphasise that this is an out-and-out comedy".¹⁰⁰ Although the main focus in publicity was on the comedic elements of the film, the location work, including why King's Cross and St Pancras was chosen, was featured in BBC's *Film Programme* on 30 December 1955, and introduced by Alexander Mackendrick and with a postscript by Michael Balcon.¹⁰¹ For critics, the film's combination of critically acclaimed performances by Alec Guinness and Katie Johnson, generic-hybridity, use of three-strip Technicolor and location shooting in the Kings Cross St Pancras area, marked a return to form. For Thomas Spencer (*Daily Worker*), by 1955 "the rot has set in and Ealing films have lost much of their one-time distinction", however, *The Ladykillers*, has "reminded us of some of their [Ealing's] most characteristic virtues".¹⁰² *The Ladykillers* is now commonly interpreted by film historians and scholars such as Charles Barr as a reflection of England on the cusp of change, from Victorian values to modernity, although as Aldgate and Richard's note, *The Ladykillers* was not read by critics at the time as a reflection or critique of England, rather, critics praised the actors, particularly Katie Johnson as Mrs Wilberforce.¹⁰³

The Ladykillers was shot using three-strip Technicolor which required large cameras, yet, according to Pevsner, these cameras were conducive to location shooting as it was possible to obtain better effects in dull weather in colour and the cameras enabled greater control over the colour.¹⁰⁴ For Keith M. Johnston, *The Ladykillers* uses colour for thematics of modernity and communication, replete with red telephone and pillar boxes, rather than realism and posits the use of colour in

⁹⁹ Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s*, p.57.

¹⁰⁰ *The Ladykillers*: Pressbook, 1955.

¹⁰¹ Programme listing: 'Location King's Cross'. *Radio Times*, 30 December 1955.

¹⁰² Thomas Spencer, 'Lady Watch your Guinness!', *Daily Worker*, 10 December 1955, BFI Press Cuttings: *The Ladykillers*.

¹⁰³ Charles Barr, *Ealing Studios*; Jeffrey Richards and Anthony Aldgate, *Best of British*, 1999, p.164.

¹⁰⁴ Tom Pevsner, interview by Alain Dein, recording online, <https://voices.kingscross.co.uk/> [Accessed 12 February 2017].

The Ladykillers as an example of “low-key expressive cinematography”.¹⁰⁵

Mackendrick favoured a muted palate, and aged prints of the film, before the recent BFI restoration, were in-keeping with the faded colours Mackendrick envisaged, contributing to the film’s dark and macabre tone.

The exteriors for *The Ladykillers* were filmed in the King’s Cross St Pancras area, including Cheney Road and Argyle Street, with most of the action centred in and around Mrs Wilberforce’s home, the exterior of which was a purpose-built house on Frederica Street. *The Ladykillers* therefore continued Ealing’s tradition of location shooting in ‘local’ London districts and successful use of a location set in *Passport to Pimlico*. Production documents for *The Ladykillers*, including notes from meetings with Ealing personnel and relevant authorities, reveal the process of coordinating location shooting, while interviews with key personnel, particularly historian Alan Dein’s oral interviews with Assistant Director Tom Pevsner and Unit Production Manager David Peers, offer insights into how and why the Kings Cross St Pancras area was used. Such analysis of the production process of location shooting enriches the existing body of work on *The Ladykillers*, rooting the film in its production and historical contexts.

According to Unit Production Manager David Peers, it was the location manager’s job to find potential locations.¹⁰⁶ The location manager would then take the director to the proposed location and sort out relevant permissions.¹⁰⁷ For Peers, the crew on *The Ladykillers* did not need to scout many locations as “Kings Cross worked perfectly for our purposes” as it was “the only station that could cater to the demands of the story”.¹⁰⁸ A railway station had to be close by and railway lines needed to be visible for the final sequences, and “is atmospheric but also gives you enough daylight to film for eight hours”.¹⁰⁹ Architectural historian Gavin Stamp states that the King’s Cross area was chosen as it was one of the few locations in London that had retained its Georgian and Victorian character, having survived war-time bombing, slum clearance and post-war planning.¹¹⁰ According to Peers, it was

¹⁰⁵ Keith M. Johnston, “‘A Riot of all the colours in the Rainbow’: Ealing Studios in Colour”, in Mark Duguid *et al.*, (eds.) *Ealing Revisited*, p.205.

¹⁰⁶ David Peers, interview by Alain Dein, recording online, <https://voices.kingscross.co.uk/> [Accessed 12 February 2017].

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ David Peers, interview by Alain Dein.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Gavin Stamp, ‘Dreams and Nightmares of a Changing City’, *Times*, 03 November 1990, p.2

important that the film communicate clearly that Mrs Wilberforce was very familiar with everyone, thus the location and set had to evoke the “village” of Kings Cross.¹¹¹ For Peers, the location had a lot going for it architecturally and atmospherically, while for Gavin Stamp, what makes the area exciting and dramatic is “the abrupt change in scale between ordinary London streets and two of the greatest monuments of the railway age”.¹¹² St Pancras Station exemplifies the Victorian age of engineering and Victorian gothic style and is a recognisable icon of the London landscape, thus continuing Ealing’s tradition of filming ‘local’ London with iconic landmarks within it.

Production on *The Ladykillers* was scheduled for ten weeks, commencing in April 1955, with six weeks in the studio, three weeks on day locations and seven nights on location.¹¹³ Once the King’s Cross St Pancras locations were chosen, permissions were sought from the local police for filming in the area, although Peers and Pevsner recall how the local police were not as cooperative as the railway staff as filming in streets surrounding King’s Cross area would cause problems for the police.¹¹⁴ Ealing personnel, including director Alexander Mackendrick, held a meeting on 30th March 1955 at King’s Cross, with relevant authorities, including the Station Master at Kings Cross, the British Transport Commission Police, to consider the requirements and practicalities of location shooting.¹¹⁵ In the meeting it was agreed at the suggestion of British Railways that Sundays be scheduled for shooting the interior and exterior of King’s Cross Station to cause minimal disruption, while shooting on platform one could take place on a Monday after rush hour.¹¹⁶

The robbery scenes in *The Ladykillers* were shot in Cheney Road, a location notable for tall gasometers, designed to store gas from an adjacent gasworks. The gasometers were chosen as a backdrop for their industrial, photogenic quality and proximity to the station as according to Pevsner, you “could imagine that a hold-up could proceed in that place”.¹¹⁷ Peers recalled that it “was the thing to do to find a

¹¹¹ David Peers, interview by Alain Dein.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Minutes of Pre-production meeting on *The Ladykillers*, 30 March 1955, BFI Special Collections, Michael Balcon Collection MEB-1610.

¹¹⁴ David Peers, interview by Alain Dein.

¹¹⁵ Minutes of Pre-production meeting on *The Ladykillers*, 30 March 1955, BFI Special Collections, Michael Balcon Collection MEB-1610.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Tom Pevsner, interview by Alain Dein.

place not just for establishing shots but for whole sequences” and often the “Director of Photography would suggest a good shot in a location and the director might find a scene of action that would fit”.¹¹⁸ The sequences for the hold-up shot in Cheney Road were scheduled for two to three days, with supervision and permission from the Metropolitan Police to close the road for filming on a Sunday. Ealing personnel consulted Scotland Yard on the mechanics of the robbery, a continuation of Ealing’s commitment to narrative authenticity with Clarke’s consultation with the Bank of England for the robbery sequence.¹¹⁹

Islington, near King’s Cross, was once a suburb which provided a throughway into the city. Historian Sonia Roberts in 1977 described Islington as “geographically close to the heart-beat of London’s bustle – yet retaining its essentially village character and close-knit sense of community”.¹²⁰ Historian Alain Dein stated that the Kings Cross area of Islington was chosen as “Mackendrick wanted to show London having a dark side and he choose King’s Cross to represent this. He wanted a place that reflected industry and an old-fashioned London.”¹²¹ Indeed, by 1955, the Kings Cross area had developed a reputation as an undesirable area, with prostitution increasing along the main roads near the station entrances, although the streets off the main Caledonian Road and Pentonville Road maintained their original characteristics. These back streets housed mainly working-class families, home to workers from the small factories located in the district. One such street was the location for Mrs Wilberforce’s house, Frederica Street, Islington, a residential cul-de-sac located off the Caledonian Road (the street has now been partly demolished and redeveloped). Frederica Street was chosen for both practical and narrative purposes; according to Pevsner, Frederica Street was no-through road and therefore the crew were able to clear it easily, a rarity in an inner-city location.¹²² Frederica Street was also built right up to the embankment which, as Pevsner states, matched the demands of the narrative due to the physical connection between the tunnel face and the back of the house which could be depicted in one shot.¹²³ The shooting

¹¹⁸ David Peers, interview by Alain Dein.

¹¹⁹ Minutes of Pre-production meeting on *The Ladykillers*, 30 March 1955, BFI Special Collections, Michael Balcon Collection MEB-1610.

¹²⁰ Sonia Roberts, *The Story of Islington* (London: Robert Hale and Company, 1977), p11.

¹²¹ Quoted in Dan Carrier, *The Ladykillers at 60: Film studio unearths behind-the-scenes stills from classic Ealing comedy set in King's Cross*, *Camden Journal*, 5 November 2015, Online <http://archive.camdennewjournal.com/ladykillersat60> [Accessed: 06 March 2017].

¹²² Tom Pevsner, interview by Alain Dein.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

script describes the location in detail: “a quiet London backstreet, a cul-de-sac which backs onto the railway. Beyond we see a vista of goods yards, viaducts, and railway lines that emerge from tunnels leading towards one of the larger mainline stations.”¹²⁴ However, the street also differed somewhat to the one envisaged in the shooting script, described as a street still marred by bomb damage; “Neighbouring buildings have suffered bomb damage and are uninhabited and Mum’s [Mrs Wilberforce] house has clearly been damaged, because its walls on one side are supported by massive wood struts.”¹²⁵

The decision to use an intact street, not visibly affected by bomb damage, with flat-fronted red-brick Victorian terraced houses (although some house-front appearances changed with permission from the residents), further roots the narrative in Mrs Wilberforce’s world of a bygone Victorian age and for Pevsner, was not therefore a realistic view of English society.¹²⁶ In *The Ladykillers* shooting script, the sound in the opening sequence was originally envisaged as diegetic to emphasise the industrial landscape; “Clouds of steam billow upwards as the engines go past and there are constant sounds of whistling expresses and rumbling goods trains, noises which only serve to emphasise the peacefulness of the shabby residential street in the foreground”.¹²⁷ However, the sound used the opening scene is a musical box version of *The Last Rose of Summer*, to further reflect Mrs. Wilberforce’s character traits and create a dream-like atmosphere.

Mrs Wilberforce’s detached house, at number 59 Frederica Street (as on one side houses were numbered up to 58, while the other side started at 60), was built specifically for the film. The fence within six feet of the shunting road was built first, then the house constructed afterwards, with sections of the back of the house built on the studio lot. The house cost £2,200 to build, and as with the location set on *Passport to Pimlico*, was made of lathe and plaster to withstand poor weather conditions and constructed so that parts could be dismantled to enable certain tracking shots.¹²⁸ The temporary house stood in Frederica Street for six weeks for the purposes of location shooting, with the crew staying nearby. The house and crew

¹²⁴ *The Ladykillers*: Shooting Script, 1955, p.1.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, p.1.

¹²⁶ Tom Pevsner, interview by Alain Dein; Minutes for Meeting on *The Ladykillers* held at Great Northern Hotel, 23 April 1955, p.4, BFI Special Collections, Michael Balcon Collection MEB-1610.

¹²⁷ *The Ladykillers*: Shooting Script, 1955, p.1.

¹²⁸ David Peers, interview by Alain Dein.

became a temporary feature of the area; Pevsner recalls the “warm and welcoming” local residents who intermingled with the crew, in comparison to the Boulting’s positive experiences of filming with local people in Methley Street, Lambeth for another earlier London-set film, *Seven Days to Noon* (as discussed in detail in Chapter Six of this thesis). The crew temporarily became part of the community during production and would eat with local residents at the ‘greasy spoon’ at the end of Frederica Street.¹²⁹ The crew fostered a community atmosphere off set by hosting a street party for the residents of Frederica Street once filming had concluded. Pevsner’s description of the street as a “community” where “most people knew each other” reflects that of the depiction of community in the film, as Mrs Wilberforce is familiar with all the residents, police and shopkeepers in the area.

In *The Ladykillers*, Mrs Wilberforce walks home through a commercial and residential street and berates the local barrow boy (Frankie Howerd). The scene depicts the local area as a village, where residents and shopkeepers are all familiar with each other, a continuation of Ealing’s local ‘village’ London. Mid-shots and close ups of the street with the newsagents were constructed on the lot at Ealing for practical purposes; Pevsner recalls how it was cheaper and practical to use a street set as it had been in another film and set was still standing at Ealing and also facilitated complicated tracking shots which are difficult to do on location.¹³⁰ Ealing also took liberties with the location as the shots through Mrs Wilberforce’s front door look out along Argyle Street, not Frederica Street. According to Pevsner, Argyle Street was ‘patched’ in for concise reasons, as the view of St Pancras station tied Mrs Wilberforce’s house directly to the station.¹³¹ Argyle Street was also “a step up the social ladder after Frederica Street”, thus emphasising Mrs Wilberforce’s respectability.¹³²

The Ladykillers was screenwriter William Rose’s second collaboration with director Alexander Mackendrick after *The Maggie* (dir. Alexander Mackendrick, 1954). Both Rose and Mackendrick were American born, yet able to produce ‘typically’ British films. Rose’s screenplay for *The Maggie* depicts a nostalgic view of Britain, stuck in its ways and resistant to change, in comparison to the nostalgic London and

¹²⁹ Tom Pevsner, interview by Alain Dein.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Tom Pevsner, interview by Alain Dein.

¹³² Ibid.

character of Mrs Wilberforce depicted in *The Ladykillers*. Mackendrick was adept at directing comedies on location, having previously directed successful Ealing comedies *Whisky Galore!* and *The Maggie* in Scotland. For Clare Mortimer, *The Ladykillers* is consistent with Mackendrick's comedies which "depict a society frozen on the cusp of fundamental change, unable to adjust to the downscaling of Empire and the demands of a new world order – an in-between, liminal society".¹³³ Mackendrick's background was in documentary films and fiction films shot in city locations; he produced and directed documentary films for the MOI during World War II, then for the Psychological Warfare Division in Rome. Mackendrick also approved production for Italian Neo-Realist film *Rome Open City* whilst working in Italy, and upon return to England, was the co-writer and second unit director at Ealing, responsible for location establishing shots on *The Blue Lamp*. However, *The Ladykillers* departs somewhat from Ealing's immediate postwar realism through its macabre, expressionist elements as reflected in the set design and through the use of Technicolor. Despite Mackendrick's previous notoriety for realism, for Phillip Kemp, *The Ladykillers* was a deliberate attempt by Mackendrick to cut ties with documentary realism, with Mackendrick later describing the film as a "horror comic".¹³⁴ Indeed, it was Mackendrick's idea that Mrs Wilberforce's house and everything in it should be lopsided, in part a homage to German Expressionist films.¹³⁵ Phillip Kemp categorises *The Ladykillers* as a generic hybrid beloved by Mackendrick, a "comedy crossed with a heist movie and affectionate parody of silent Fritz Lang thrillers" replete with "deranged master criminals, lopsided sets and sinister expressionistic shadows".¹³⁶ Charles Barr's analysis of the gang, as a reflection of modernity and change, is indeed contested by Phillip Kemp, who argues that Marcus is more of a "Dickensian Nosferatu".¹³⁷ These Dickensian characteristics extended to location, as Peers recalls how London at the time of production "carried a lot of Dickensian flavours".¹³⁸ Claire Mortimer argues that *The Ladykillers* takes the enclosed world found in Ealing comedies even further

¹³³ Claire Mortimer, 'Alexander Mackendrick: Dreams, Nightmares and Myths in Ealing Comedy', in Joanna E. Rapf, and Andrew Horton (eds), *A Companion to Film Comedy* (US: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p.409.

¹³⁴ Phillip Kemp, *Lethal Innocence: The Cinema of Alexander Mackendrick* (London: Meuthen, 1991) p. 118.

¹³⁵ David Peers, interview by Alain Dein, recording online, <https://voices.kingscross.co.uk/> [Accessed 12 February 2017]

¹³⁶ Phillip Kemp, *Lethal Innocence*, p.112.

¹³⁷ Ibid, p.121.

¹³⁸ David Peers, interview by Alain Dein.

with the majority of the film taking place in Mrs Wilberforce's house.¹³⁹ However, for Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, Jim Morahan's interior set design for *The Ladykillers* was "uninspired" reflective of Ealing's stagnated film design and "conceived around a running gag which was worked to death –the contrast between the upright rectitude of Mrs Wilberforce, and the crazy tumbledown house she inhabits".¹⁴⁰ For Richards and Aldgate, Mrs Wilberforce is "herself the spirit of England. She is the living embodiment of the Victorian age" and "an apt metaphor for mid-1950s England, a cul-de-sac slumbering peacefully but shortly to be violently awakened".¹⁴¹

Mrs Wilberforce's house backs onto the Copenhagen Tunnel at the back of St Pancras station, where the gang meet their grisly deaths, an area described in *Nairn's London* in 1966 as "incredibly moving: tunnels, perspectives, trains on the skyline".¹⁴² Here the film uses noir imagery and uses the smoke of the steam trains for both atmosphere and realism. Mackendrick's extensive handwritten notes and sketches in the shooting script reflects his authorial presence and the complexity of shooting the Copenhagen tunnel scenes.¹⁴³ Some shots were filmed at the actual location, while some shots matched location in the studio at Ealing to ensure actors' safety.¹⁴⁴ Mackendrick suggested that the smoke be created by a special effects, either matted in afterwards or by filming trains on a Sunday.¹⁴⁵ A meeting between Ealing personnel and relevant authorities was held at the Great Northern Hotel, Kings Cross, to discuss the requirements of the Copenhagen Tunnel sequence which reveal the process of production; two camera towers were constructed by the crew at Ealing for the sequence, scheduled for shooting on 8th, 9th and 10th June 1955, where was noted that tunnel entrance sequences should be shot in daylight.¹⁴⁶ The scene was originally intended to end with a montage of five location shots of goods trains to show where the bodies ended up and extend the range of locations; "one in the

¹³⁹ Claire Mortimer, 'Alexander Mackendrick', p.425.

¹⁴⁰ Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s*, p.203.

¹⁴¹ Jeffrey Richards and Anthony Aldgate, *Best of British*, p.161 & p.165.

¹⁴² Quoted in Gavin Stamp, 'Dreams and Nightmares of a Changing City', *Times*, 3 November 1990, p.2.

¹⁴³ *The Ladykillers: Shooting Script*, 1955.

¹⁴⁴ Minutes of Pre-production meeting on *The Ladykillers*, 30 March 1955, BFI Special Collections, Michael Balcon Collection MEB-1610.

¹⁴⁵ *The Ladykillers: Shooting Script*, 1955.

¹⁴⁶ Minutes of Pre-production meeting on *The Ladykillers*, 30 March 1955, BFI Special Collections, Michael Balcon Collection MEB-1610.

farm country. One at Crewe Junction. One against the horizon of the sea. One in the industrial Midlands. One in the wild landscape of the highlands of Scotland”.¹⁴⁷

Critics praised *The Ladykillers*’ depiction and use of the King’s Cross St Pancras area; For Dilys Powell “everything here is right: the seedy little street, the trains smoking and shrieking past under the back windows”.¹⁴⁸ Richard Findlater (*Tribune*) thought the film brought to life the area around King’s Cross and St Pancras “with loving care” and was “another illustration of their insistence on genuine backgrounds”.¹⁴⁹ The film continues Ealing tropes of an enclosed village London found in *Passport to Pimlico* and *It Always Rains on Sunday* and exaggerates them for a darkly comic and macabre effect. Indeed, Thomas Spencer, despite a positive review, noted that while *The Ladykillers* displays the best of Ealing, it also contains a few of Ealing’s “vices”, including an “excessive preoccupation with the cult of quaintness”, as reflected in the design of Mrs Wilberforce’s house, as it was evident that the Ealing style was becoming out dated.¹⁵⁰ *The Ladykillers* demonstrates Ealing’s ability to capture and reimagine a familiar location, in this case King’s Cross St Pancras. The combination of imposing Victorian Gothic architecture, industrial gasometers, tunnels and viaducts and terraced streets fitted the demands of the narrative and becomes a character within itself, as the billowing smoke, muted colours makes full use of the remaining Victorian city to macabre effect. Indeed, in 1976 the Greater London Council defined the area around Euston Road as a “national set piece” defined later by King’s Cross conservation team as “a group of buildings, streets, spaces and monuments that contribute to London's role as a capital city”.¹⁵¹

Conclusions

¹⁴⁷ *The Ladykillers*: Shooting Script, 1955, p.113b.

¹⁴⁸ Dilys Powell, *Sunday Times*, 11 December 1955, p.11.

¹⁴⁹ Richard Findlater, ‘Guinness Goes One Better’, *Tribune*, 23 December 1955, BFI Press Cuttings: *The Ladykillers*.

¹⁵⁰ Thomas Spencer, ‘Lady Watch your Guinness!’, *Daily Worker*, 10 December 1955, BFI Press Cuttings: *The Ladykillers*.

¹⁵¹ Conservation Area Statement No.22: King’s Cross, Kings Cross Team and Conservation & Urban Design Team, London Borough of Camden, (Camden Design & Print, June 2004), Online: www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/cms-service/download/asset?asset_id=2634543 [Accessed 02 March 2017].

Analysis of the use of location in Ealing's London-set comedies demonstrates how the impetus for realism of location was evident in more fantastical stories and genres, rooting stories in familiar locations and making the fantastical elements plausible. The local London depicted in these comedies continues Ealing's wartime tropes of the village London and community ethos. There is a clear continuation of Crichton and Clarke's use of the postwar London landscape in *Hue and Cry* and *The Lavender Hill Mob*, particularly the area around Shadwell and St Pauls, with use of familiar locations as backdrop and expressionist use of bombed-out warehouses. The London depicted in *The Lavender Hill Mob* also links with Ealing's two other London-set films produced in 1950, *Pool of London* and *The Blue Lamp*, with library shots from *The Blue Lamp* used in *The Lavender Hill Mob* and crews shooting the same parts of the city for both *The Lavender Hill Mob* and *Pool of London* simultaneously.

Analysis of the use of location-set and surrounding area in war-ravaged Lambeth in *Passport to Pimlico* reveals a complex reading of the postwar landscape with references to the contemporary postwar landscape in Britain, the carving up of Europe, and imaging a fantasy, continental-style London, free of postwar restrictions and inclement weather. Behind-the-scenes stories of the use of location-set in *Passport to Pimlico* reveal postwar anxieties about material shortages and the want for modernist buildings, rather than the nostalgic London created by Ealing. The nostalgic London continues and is exaggerated further to comic effect in *The Ladykillers*, a film which uses and exaggerates the tropes of Ealing's previous successes – the location-set, close-knit village community and rooting in specific districts with recognisable landmarks within it. While *The Ladykillers* was a success during Ealing's decline, its Victorian London lacked the social relevance of *Passport to Pimlico*. *The Ladykillers* use of Islington, in areas relatively unscathed by The Blitz, roots the film in a bygone, mythic and macabre London, a clear move away from the use of the immediate postwar landscape in Ealing's London-set films between 1946 and 1951.

Analysis of the production processes of these comedy films reveals how the documentary impetus continued even in fantastical genres such as comedy, imbuing postwar London-set comedies with a realism of location and historical significance. Filmmakers were encouraged by Balcon to shoot amid the ruins, offering the

spectator both a local, residential and working-class London, with recognisable landmarks. These landmarks take on extra historical significance as symbols of victory and resilience, as demonstrated by the use of St Pauls in *Hue and Cry* and *The Lavender Hill Mob*. While *Hue and Cry* is considered by critics as the first of Ealing's postwar comedies, a marked shift from their star-led interwar comedies, the film's focus on child protagonist who follow clues in a comic book also root the films within the children's adventure genre and within another key trope of postwar London-set films explored in the next chapter, the child on the bombsite.

CHAPTER FOUR

Depictions of youth in the city in *Hue and Cry*, *Skid Kids*, *The Salvage Gang*, *Innocent Sinners*, *The Blue Lamp* and *Cosh Boy*

Postwar bombsites on the British landscape were, as Ben Highmore states a “habitat for ‘feral’ youth”, serving not just as a reminder of the trauma of the Blitz but as “sites of present day moral as well as physical danger”.¹ Working-class children on bombsites were a familiar image and narrative device in British films set in the contemporary postwar city; from *Passport to Pimlico*, where children playing on a bombsite in Pimlico cause an undetonated bomb to explode, to the Belfast street urchins on bombsites in *Odd Man Out* (dir. Carol Reed, 1947). This association with working class children on bombsites and the city streets was one that was common in visual culture generally, including the postwar street photography of Roger Mayne. Mayne’s images depict working-class children and teenagers on the streets of London, notably his photographs taken in the late 1950s of working-class youths on Southam Street, North Kensington of children playing and groups of teenagers at leisure. Such postwar images, argues Stephen Brookes, stemmed from the nineteenth century, continuing “a long-standing association among the representations of children, the street and working-class identity”.²

There are a significant number of postwar British films featuring youths in the war-ravaged city, which differ in their portrayals of youths according to the film’s genre and target demographic. For instance, ‘Spiv’ films aimed at adult audiences, such as *The Yellow Balloon* (dir. J. Lee Thompson, 1953) and *Hunted* (dir. Charles Crichton, 1952), play on adult’s fears in the mid-1950s of abandoned, bombed-out buildings as dangerous places for children. In contrast, films aimed at child and family audiences portray working-class children as heroic, plucky and resourceful, while films about juvenile delinquency depicted bombsites, city streets and places of leisure as spaces of danger, where delinquents would plot and commit crimes.

¹ Ben Highmore, ‘Playgrounds and Bombsites: Postwar Britain’s Ruined Landscapes’, *Cultural Politics*, 9, no.3 (2013), p.330 & p.324.

² Stephen Brooke, ‘Revisiting Southam Street: Class, Generation, Gender and Race in the Photography of Roger Mayne,’ *Journal of British Studies*, 53, no.2 (April 2014), p.476.

Postwar youth culture, particularly the development of subcultures and the teenager has been the subject of sociological study from the mid-1950s onwards. Early sociologist John Barron Mays set the prescient in discussing the causes and possible solutions to postwar delinquency in working-class areas of Liverpool.³ Cultural historians and sociologists have since documented the development of street subcultures and the influence of American popular culture, with literature focusing on the Teddy Boy phenomenon of the mid-1950s onwards.⁴ With regards to films, while there is literature on American rock and roll films of the 1950s and their appeal to the increasing fragmented youth audiences, such as Thomas Doherty's *Teenagers and Teenpics*, analysis of early 1950s postwar urban delinquent films remains in Britain remains underexplored.⁵ Children's relationship with the city and urban spaces has attracted a wide body of literature; Colin Ward's seminal *The Child in the City* remains a key text in the study of British urban youth as Ward explored the relationship between urban children and their environment.⁶ This chapter examines images of urban youth in London in the postwar period, to consider the depictions of urban youth within their production and reception contexts, and their wider relationships to London films of the postwar period.

Heroic London children in *Hue and Cry*

Hue and Cry is commonly categorised in critical literature as the first of Ealing's postwar comedies; absurd, yet 'gentle' films, characteristically rooted in contemporary life and markedly different from the musical-comedies of the war period.⁷ However, the film is rarely discussed in critical reviews of the time as a comedy (although the referred to it as a "comedy melodrama"). It was commonly categorised by British critics as a "children's adventure story" and a "boy's

³ See, for instance, John Barron Mays, *Growing up in the City: A Study of Juvenile Delinquency in an Urban Neighbourhood* (Liverpool: Liverpool University, 1956).

⁴ See, for instance, Keith Gildart, *Images of England Through Popular Music: Class, Youth and Rock 'n' Roll, 1955-1976* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Amy Helen Bell, 'Teddy Boys and Girls as Neo-flâneurs in Postwar London', *The Literary London Journal*, 11, no.2 (Autumn 2014), pp.3-17.

⁵ Thomas, Doherty *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s*, 2nd ed., (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002).

⁶ Colin Ward, *The Child in the City* (London: Architectural Press, 1978).

⁷ Ian Green, 'Ealing: In the Comedy Frame'.

adventure”, and by Ealing’s own publicity as a “new Ealing thriller”.⁸ Recent historical reassessment of *Hue and Cry* in academic literature places the film into different critical, historical categories; Paul Newland argues that *Hue and Cry* signals the “emergence of a cinematic sub-genre – the East End rubble film” that “employ bombed-out and dilapidated east London spaces”, although he alludes to only a handful of films, many produced in the early 1960s.⁹

Hue and Cry’s portrayal of heroic children in the war-torn environment continued Ealing’s tropes of “heroic” images of London during and immediately after World War II in films such as *The Bells Go Down*, which Paul Newland notes portrays the heroic spirit of the working-class East End.¹⁰ These depictions were “inscribed into a broader international story as beleaguered but defiant”, with postwar bombsites portrayed as “exciting places in contrast to the tragic bombsites of mainland Europe.”¹¹ For Frank Mort, Britain’s victory in World War II meant that the conflict “produced powerful ideas about the metropolis [London] as the heroic rallying cry for the free world: the European capital not to fall to Fascist or Communist regimes.”¹² Indeed, such depictions contrast with the prevalence of children in European neo-realist films of the same era, including *Bicycle Thieves* (dir. Vittorio de Sica, 1948) and *Germany, Year Zero* (dir. Roberto Rossellini, 1948). While both neo-realist films and *Hue and Cry* feature resourceful children who navigate the ruins of the bombed-out city, ultimately the narratives and depictions of children in neo-realism are ones of despair, as Italian directors depicted the defeat and near-destruction of post war cities such as Berlin and Rome. In these neo-realist films children are often alone, in contrast to the gangs in British films and have a sense of fatalism. Bruno in *Bicycle Thieves* cries as he wanders the streets of Rome with his penniless father, while twelve-year old Edmund (Edmund Moeschke) in *Germany Year Zero* commits suicide by jumping off the roof of a bombed-out building. *Hue and Cry* in contrast depicts a ‘heroic’ use of space, as hundreds of boys stampede across London’s landmarks and the flattened landscape, descending

⁸ ‘A Comedy Melodrama from Overseas’, *New York Times*, 09 January 1951, p.42; Arthur Vesselo, ‘British Films of the Quarter’, *Sight and Sound*, 16, no.61 (Spring 1947), p.40; C. A. Lejeune, ‘Films’, *Observer*, 23 February 1947, BFI Press Cuttings: *Hue and Cry*; *Hue and Cry*: Pressbook, 1946.

⁹ Paul Newland, *The Cultural Construction of London's East End: Urban Iconography, Modernity and the Spatialisation of Englishness* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008), p.143.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.139.

¹¹ Charlotte Brunsdon, *London in Cinema*, p.210.

¹² Frank Mort, *Capital Affairs*, p.7.

on Shadwell Basin to defeat the enemy, which Margaret Butler argues acts as “a timely metaphor for a more significant recent victory”.¹³

Ben Highmore argues that the depictions of the Blood and Thunder gang in *Hue and Cry* depicts bombsites used as a “force for good”, offering a counterpoint to images of ‘feral youth’ and perhaps allaying concerns about working-class children on the streets.¹⁴ This was indeed a reassuring portrayal of children in the city in a period when juvenile delinquency was a salient issue. Colin Sell elaborates further, arguing that the children in *Hue and Cry* serve to show young people “as potential movers and shakers in tomorrow’s postwar Britain” where bombsites function as “loci of child autonomy”.¹⁵ This heroic portrayal of London children stems from Clarke’s own experiences during the war, as Clarke spent time with children who fought fires and observed them playing in the streets.¹⁶ Indeed, there is a clear correlation between the heroic actions of the ‘Blood and Thunder’ gang in *Hue and Cry* and the ‘Dead End Kids’, a group of working class children from Wapping who helped fight fires in the Blitz, who demonstrated the ‘hardiness and self-reliance bred in London children’.¹⁷ Crichton’s account of the production of the film also emphasises the pluckiness of the child actors in their ability to use the environment, and his admiration for their fearlessness is evident:

These boys were launching themselves through the air on a terrain of broken brickbats, lumps of concrete and bits of twisted iron and shattered glass. I saw one who, in take after take, flung himself clean over the lip of a bomb crater on to the ragged rubble which lay below.¹⁸

This continuation of children’s war-time heroism was also evident in Ealing’s publicity documents, as the film’s pressbook suggested that cinemas could run a youth ‘National Service’ competition to help promote the film, harking back to youth clubs that assisted in the war effort, and promote the film’s narrative where a “bunch of boys do a good service to the community”.¹⁹ A clear influence on the narrative of *Hue and Cry* was popular novel *Emil and the Detectives* (Erich Kastner,

¹³ Margaret Butler, *Film and Community in France and Britain*, p.91.

¹⁴ Ibid, p.330; Arrests of juveniles rose by almost 25 percent between 1938 and 1945 - Figures cited in Jerry White, *London in the Twentieth Century*, p.44.

¹⁵ Colin Sell, ‘The Children of Ealing’, in Mark Duguid, Lee Freeman, Keith M. Johnston and Melanie Williams (eds.) *Ealing Revisited*, p.324 & p.330.

¹⁶ John Morley, ‘The Screenwriter: T. E. B. Clarke’, *Films in 1951* (London: BFI, 1951), p.14

¹⁷ Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography*, p.742.

¹⁸ Charles Crichton, ‘Children and Fantasy’, p.47.

¹⁹ *Hue and Cry*: Pressbook, 1946.

1929) set in contemporary Berlin about a boy caught up in crime. The novel was also adapted as a British film *Emil and the Detectives* (dir. Milton Rosmer, 1935) in 1935 with the setting changed to London. The 'boy's adventure' narrative is also reminiscent of popular children's comic books. Indeed, comics are integral to the narrative of *Hue and Cry*, as the gang locate the thieves following clues left in a comic book. The narrative continues tropes found in children's wartime comics, including *The Rover Book for Boys* 'The Blitz Kids', featuring heroic children who work together as a bicycle rescue brigade to save people and pets from bombed houses.²⁰

In *Hue and Cry*, the children accept bombed-out London as their home and are able to carve out their own spaces amidst the rubble. For Michael Boyce, the ruins offered children "refuge from the monotony of home and school life", while Phillip Gillett argues Joe's home-life "is sketchily presented" to emphasise that "this is a world where life takes place on the streets".²¹ The children take ownership of the streets, away from the constraints of the home as the film depicts children, mainly boys, on the street. The Blood and Thunder gang's meeting space, located underneath a bombed house, the 'clubhouse', provides a surrogate home and 'private' space for the children. Here the children make effective and imaginative use of the space with craters that provide hiding spaces and a makeshift 'bed' under a pile of bricks. The character of Terry plays war games, mimicking the Battle of Britain sounds while sitting aloft a ruin in the streets, offering a reminder of children's Blitz experiences. Such images from *Hue and Cry* correlate with images of children using these spaces in photojournalism, such as *Camberwell Junk Playground*, which appeared in the *Times Educational Supplement* on 5 June 1948, with a long shot of children carving out their own playgrounds on bombsites. The popularity of bombsites as playgrounds was also highlighted in the November 1946 edition of *Picture Post*; "...it is little wonder that they prefer the dumps of rough wood and piles of bricks and rubbish of bombsites".²²

Images of children playing in the rubble in *Hue and Cry* are also comparable to contemporary newsreel footage of the period. In the 1947 Pathe newsreel, *Pathe*

²⁰ James Chapman, *British Comics: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001).

²¹ Michael W. Boyce, *The Lasting Influence of the War on Postwar British Film*, p.1; Phillip Gillett, *The British Working Class in Postwar Film*, p.169.

²² 'Why Not Use Our Bombsites Like This?', *Picture Post*, 16 November 1946, p.26.

Pictorial Looks East... West, East End children are depicted on the streets, playing in the ruins, with the commentary illustrating how children make creative use of these spaces; “East End kids may dream of the Oval or Old Trafford, but their playground is all too often a place where the bomb dropped. He learns to take his pleasure where he can.” *Pathe*’s images of children playing in the mud of the Thames (1947) and photographs that appeared in the *Daily Mail* between 1940-45, which depict children in long shot, playing along the River Thames, are similar to *Hue and Cry* in their framing of children along the River Thames. It is no surprise that filmmakers of the period used ruins as not just a backdrop but also an integral element of high adventure, appealing to the child audience’s sense of adventure. *Hue and Cry* therefore offered a realistic portrayal of city children’s use of ruins and rubble, images that may have resonated with child audiences and enhanced the authenticity of the fictional narrative.

Postwar London in the early films of The Children’s Film Foundation: *Skid Kids* and *The Salvage Gang*

There is a small body of published academic literature on the films of the CFF; Rowana Agajanian focuses specifically on the CFF’s output during the 1960s, while Terry Staples provides useful data on audience figures and first-hand accounts for CFF screenings at Saturday matinees.²³ The early films of the CFF are however beginning to attract academic and public attention; Robert Shail’s recent monograph, *The Children’s Film Foundation*, provides an overview of the foundation’s work with some mention of the importance of location work and an interview with *The Salvage Gang*’s director, John Krish.²⁴ The BFI’s 2015 ‘London on Film’ season has brought to public attention CFF film *Skid Kids* through its availability on BFI Player, while in 2014 the BFI released *The Salvage Gang* and *Soapbox Derby* with brief essays on each film, meanwhile, a documentary charting the CFF’s history, produced by Jallas Productions, is nearing the end of post-production.²⁵ This section contributes to existing literature through a detailed

²³ Rowana Agajanian, ‘Just for Kids: Saturday Morning Cinema and Britain’s Children’s Film Foundation in the 1960s’, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 18, no.3 (1998), pp.395-409; Terry Staples, *All Pals Together: The Story of Children’s Cinema*, (Edinburgh University Press, 1997).

²⁴ Robert Shail, *The Children’s Film Foundation: History and Legacy* (London, BFI Publishing, 2016).

²⁵ At the time of writing, July 2017.

analysis of the use of London locations in *Skid Kids* and *The Salvage Gang* through a detailed contextual exploration of the films' extensive use of location shooting and depictions of the postwar London environment of the mid-to-late 1950s.

The CFF was a not-for-profit organisation, founded in 1951 by former teacher and educational filmmaker Mary Field and Rank Organisation's J. Arthur Rank. Their purpose was to produce entertainment films for children aged between seven and fourteen. Field's background was in documentary; Field first directed films in the 1930s for the educational unit at Gaumont-British Instructional, and then during World War II made government propaganda films. Field then headed Children's Film Department, set up by J. Arthur Rank in 1944. In 1947, it was renamed Children's Entertainment Films (CEF), with a remit to produce matinee films with moral messages for child audiences. However, the CEF was a financial burden for Rank, therefore in 1951 Rank collaborated with producers, exhibitors and unions to create the Children's Film Foundation. Independent production companies were commissioned by the CFF to produce high-quality films on a small budget of under £20,000 to tight production schedules. The films were usually shot within a fortnight and filmmakers were generally given the freedom to make the films in their own way, with minimal supervision.

CFF films were screened exclusively for children in Britain as part of film clubs and Saturday afternoon matinees, with audiences comprised of predominantly working-class children, which, according to Terry Staples, caused concern for some middle-class parents about the 'unruly' nature of aspects of the audience.²⁶ Mary Field undertook extensive research into what excited children when watching films, concluding that children between the ages of seven and twelve look to identify with the children on screen, expect minimal dialogue and do not want to see lead characters in too much danger.²⁷ Field's policy of showing "ordinary children and adults behaving well, but not too well, into situations into which our audiences could project themselves" encouraged filmmakers to use realistic situations and real locations for their films.²⁸

²⁶ Terry Staples, *All Pals Together*, p.188.

²⁷ Roger Manvell, *The Film and the Public* (London: Penguin Books, 1955).

²⁸ Terry Staples, *All Pals Together*, p.190.

Field described how the formula for a successful film would be to take a writer to a specific location and advise them to “do a story here”.²⁹ Stories were offered to production companies who Field considered best suited to the project, therefore small, low budget production companies, who specialised in documentary shorts, often produced the films, as they could be relied upon to work to tight schedules and were experienced in location shooting. During the 1950s, a number of London-set films were produced for the CFF, including *Skid Kids*, *The Dog and the Diamonds* (dir. Ralph Thomas, 1953) *Soapbox Derby* (dir. Darcy Conyers, 1958) and *The Salvage Gang*. Field’s belief that the films should have a clear continuity with no unexpected change of location, ensured that the CFF’s London films were filmed outdoors within a small radius, using the real streets, parks and bombsites of postwar London.³⁰ The predominance of outdoor shooting was also a continuation of the CEF’s policy that films be shot outdoors, due to a shortage of studio space during the 1940s.³¹ Field’s contention that films should take place during the daytime so as not to scare children and in all weather conditions ensured the films were shot quickly outdoors using the daylight hours.³² Critics praised this formula as a key selling point for the films; the *Times* praised how CFF films achieved a “considerable freshness and immediacy” as “lack of money encourages filmmakers to use enterprising locations”.³³

While the visual look of the children and locations in early CFF films, including *Skid Kids* and *The Salvage Gang*, posits them as working-class, the child actors used were middle-class, clearly coded through their RP accents. Working-class child matinee audiences were aware of the inauthenticity of the child actors’ accents, booing the child protagonists during the opening scenes, before eventually settling down to enjoy the film.³⁴ Contemporary critics also noted this lack of authentic working class accents; *Monthly Film Bulletin* argued that the dialogue and accents in *Skid Kids* “fails to catch the authentic back-street flavour”.³⁵ For Field, however, there were valid reasons for these ‘inauthentic’ accents: firstly, due to restrictions on

²⁹ Mary Field, ‘Children and Films’, *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 105, no. 4999 (March 1957), p.342.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.337.

³¹ Geoffrey Macnab, *J. Arthur Rank and the British Film Industry* (Routledge: London and New York, 1993), p.155.

³² *Ibid.*, p.337.

³³ *Times*, 01 August 1958, p.11.

³⁴ Terry Staples, *All Pals Together*, p.197

³⁵ Anon, ‘Skid Kids’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 20 (1952), p.50

the employment of children, it was easier for filmmakers to use stage school actors. Secondly, Field felt the films should be comprehensible to children all over the UK and considered the accents to be “BBC English” rather than middle class. Thirdly, such accents stemmed from Field’s sense of moral duty, as she thought such accents and the ‘wholesome’ nature of the films would set a good example for children at a time when juvenile delinquency was on the rise.³⁶ The tensions between Field’s insistence on middle-class child actors in working-class environments and directors’ want for plausibility is evident in director John Krish’s recollections of filming *The Salvage Gang*. Krish recalled how Field insisted on stage school actors, despite Krish’s own views that these children were not appropriate for the subject matter.³⁷ For Krish “her [Field] view of childhood was out of date, even in the 1950s.”³⁸ Both *Skid Kids* and *The Salvage Gang* are typical CFF films in this respect, as both feature wholesome, middle-class, yet are clearly coded as working-class through location and lifestyle.

Bermondsey Bombsites in *Skid Kids*

Skid Kids was produced in September 1952 by small, low budget Bushey Studios. The simple narrative concerns a fictional Junior Speedway team, the *Burton Bullets*, led by ‘Swanky’ Clarke, who foil a gang of bicycle-stealing spivs. The film was shot and located mainly in the working-class and war-ravaged area of Bermondsey, South East London, and nearby Camberwell. *Skid Kids* was released on the Odeon and Gaumont circuits, with its premiere on Sunday 8th February 1953 at the Astoria Cinema in Brixton, with local Junior Speedway riders who appeared in the film as extras in attendance.³⁹ *Skid Kids* was popular with its intended audience, as *Today’s Cinema* reported standing ovations for the film.⁴⁰

Junior Speedway originated in the bombsites of East London, where young working-class boys emulated the popular sport of Motor Cycle Speedway, using

³⁶ Terry Staples, *All Pals Together*, p.197

³⁷ Robert Shail, *The Children’s Film Foundation*, p.100.

³⁸ Robert Shail, *The Children’s Film Foundation*, p.101.

³⁹ Email from Dennis Daniels (a speedway rider who appeared Sid Kids and attended the premiere) to author, 26 August 2015.

⁴⁰ *Today’s Cinema*, 23 October 1953, p.6

bombsites as tracks, second-hand cycles, and hand-stitched uniforms. The sport reached the height of popularity during the 1950s, particularly in East London, where the races would draw large crowds of adults and children.⁴¹ Thus, the premise for *Skid Kids* adhered to CFF's policy of depicting children in realistic and recognisable situations, enabling children to relate to the actors on screen. This realism was enhanced through the use of real Junior Speedway riders who featured as riders in matches and stunt-doubles for lead actors and use of local children who volunteered to appear in the film.⁴²

Skid Kids' opening sequence immediately establishes the location as south-east London, with a board displaying the Junior Speedway team names of the real *Ruskin Flyers* and fictional *Burton Bullets*. The use of location serves to authenticate the fiction as the track used for the opening match was the real track used by the *Ruskin Flyers* and *Peckham Stars*, at Wyndham Road, Camberwell, South East London. This track was chosen as it was "state of the art" and one of the few in the country equipped with an electric starting gate and floodlights.⁴³ Camberwell suffered heavy damage during World War II, with nearly all the houses in the area damaged and many destroyed.⁴⁴ Long shots of the Junior Speedway race in the film's opening illustrate this level of devastation, as ruins surround the bombsite used for the race. Long shots depicting hordes of working-class children reflect the sport's popularity, demonstrating how children adapted the spaces around them, as the half-existing walls and ruins function as stadium terraces.

Real-life adult concerns about a working-class boy's sport are reflected in the film through the character of Mr Johnson, a local factory owner whose bowler hat, smart suit and status, codes him as a different social class to the working-class boys, who ride on the wasteland next to his factory. Mr Johnson relays his concerns to a local police officer while the children play on his private ground; "Look at that lot. They're the cause of all this trouble... Look at the crowd hanging around them. Half of them haven't got bikes. Can't find the money for them. What do they do? Help themselves!" The camera cuts to a point of view shot, showing Mr Johnson's

⁴¹ *Sports Reporter*, 19 May 1950, p.14

⁴² Alfred Richman, 'It's a Riot When the Skid Kids Ride' *Daily Herald*, 27 August 1952, from Dennis Daniels personal collection of newspaper clippings.

⁴³ Email from Dennis Daniels to author, 26 August 2015.

⁴⁴ Mary Boast, *The Story of Camberwell* (London Borough of Southwark Council, 1972), p.21.

perception of the riders ‘hanging around’, reflecting judgemental and stereotypical views of working-class boys using bombsites. The child protagonists’ fear of losing their track because of perceived bad behaviour alludes to real-life cases; in 1951 *Sunday Pictorial* reported how Paddington Borough Council dug up the local track, much to the dismay of the Skid Kid riders, following complaints of “obscene language and hooliganism”.⁴⁵ Indeed, there were also reports of bad behaviour on the set of *Skid Kids*, as according to *Daily Herald*, police were called on set due to child extras behaving badly.⁴⁶ However, a number of working-class adults in the film are portrayed as supportive of the sport, including Swanky’s father, a local taxi driver (Tom Walls), the local policeman and Mr Johnson’s assistant, Antonio. These characters reflect those adults who considered Junior Speedway to be a positive outlet for young people; Jean Shillibeer, Secretary of the *Clapham Panthers*, argued that “Skid Kids should be encouraged. Take a look around tracks on London bombed sites, and see what a grand outlet for teen-agers cycle speedway is. It keeps them out of gangs, and develops in them a team spirit.”⁴⁷ This ‘team spirit’ gives the children in *Skid Kids* a sense of belonging and local identity as the *Burton Bullets* work together, aided by local children, to defeat the real bicycle thieves and thus challenge negative perceptions of the sport. This is reinforced in the film’s final sequence, where Mr Johnson realises he wrongly judged the children and the team and rewards them with a new track. The depiction of local children as heroic through teamwork culminates in a chase across Bermondsey, as local children all band together to rescue Swanky from the bicycle thieves. Children race through the streets *en mass* on bicycles, roller-skates and on foot. These images are reminiscent of the finale of *Hue and Cry*, where the children take ownership of the city, racing through the streets through a montage, taking in various locations, albeit on a smaller scale due to a tighter budget.

The practice races in *Skid Kids* were filmed on the real Bermondsey Greyhounds track, located on a bombsite located between Larnaca Street and Stanworth Street, Bermondsey, an area with an estimated 289 bomb-damaged sites, a high concentration of young people (48,000 children aged under fourteen in 1949), with

⁴⁵ Emma Alies, ‘Cycle Speedway: The ‘Skid Kids’ who Raced Bicycles on World War II bomb sites, *BBC News Magazine Online* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-31013387>, April 20, 2015 [Accessed 17 September 2015].

⁴⁶ Alfred Richman, ‘It’s a Riot when the Skid Kids Ride’ *Daily Herald*, 27 August 1952.

⁴⁷ *Daily Mirror*, 20 August 1951.

few designated playgrounds available.⁴⁸ Scenes of the fictional speedway races in *Skid Kids* closely resembled newsreel footage, as *Pathe's* newsreel *Cycle Speedway* (1948) features the bombed out ruins as a backdrop, with cyclists racing in the foreground. The depiction of the races, with the camera positioned low as the riders cycle into shot compares with images of the sport in photojournalism, as local and national newspapers regularly covered Junior Speedway races, such was the popularity of the sport, while Mass Observation's 1949 report, *Meet Yourself on Sunday*, described how Junior Speedway entertained young people on the streets of London on Sunday afternoons.⁴⁹ Observers described one track on a wasteground in Hammersmith on the site of four or five bombed houses, where children had self-organised the waste ground with circles of bricks and stones.⁵⁰ The report observes how while mainly youths of both sexes came to watch the sport, it was also enjoyed by some older residents, as evidenced by an interview with a fifty-year old workman who watched the sport "It's a good sport [...] Sometimes this side street is packed with cars and cycles and people, crowds come to watch them sometimes".⁵¹

Authentic depictions of Junior Speedway in *Skid Kids* are due in part to the filmmakers' documentary backgrounds. Cinematographer S.D. Onions had previously shot documentary city films *Looking at London* (1946) and *Merseyside* (1946), while scriptwriter Jack Howells also wrote and directed documentary films, with *Skid Kids* being one of his few feature fiction films. Director Don Chaffey also cut his teeth in filmmaking in documentary, producing shorts for scripts before directing the documentary *Cape Cargoes* (dir. Don Chaffey, 1948). His first foray into fiction film was for the CFF with *The Mysterious Poacher* (dir. Don Chaffey, 1950), marking the first of several comedy films for the CFF. Chaffey had a reputation as a reliable filmmaker, able to work well with children and make films within tight budgets.⁵² Critics praised Chaffey's documentary style; *Manchester Guardian* compared *Skid Kids* to Italian neo-realist film *Bicycle Thieves* and considered its depiction of working class life as authentic.⁵³

⁴⁸ 'Removing the Scars of War', *Manchester Guardian*, 09 November 1949; Alderman T. A. Prichard, 'Letters to the Editor', *Observer*, 02 October 1949, p.9.

⁴⁹ 'Meet Yourself on Sunday', *Mass Observation Report*, July 1949. File Report No.3142.

⁵⁰ *Meet Yourself on Sunday*, Mass Observation (London: The Naldrett Press, 1949) p.22.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.22.

⁵² 'Don Chaffey', *Daily Telegraph*, 29 January 1991, p.19.

⁵³ *Manchester Guardian*, 09 February 1953, p.4.

The documentary aesthetic in *Skid Kids* is most prominent in the sequences where a young boy Bobby follows the spivs on his bicycle from Tower Bridge Road to the New Caledonian Market. The camera follows Bobby from a distance, shot from inside a vehicle. The realism is heightened through shooting a real street scene, as children in the distance notice the camera and stare into it, reminiscent of early ‘phantom ride’ films and amateur footage. This style continues with the next scenes at the New Caledonian market (which had recently relocated to Bermondsey Square from Islington in May 1949) as it is evident the scene was filmed on an actual market day. Bobby’s arrival at the market is filmed in long shot and again local people can be seen who have noticed the camera, thus filmmakers capture the feel of a real busy market day. The use of the market reflects how specific locations were integrated into CFF films’ narratives, as an ancient law meant that stolen goods could be traded at the market, as the spivs sell stolen goods there. Shooting completely on location on a real market day also contrasts to *It Always Rains on Sunday*’s depiction of the Petticoat Lane markets, where a larger budget and studio space enabled a studio recreation of the market.

The documentary aesthetic in *Skid Kids* is also employed in the film’s finale with a chase across the streets of Bermondsey, capturing all facets of the area before redevelopment; the prefabs on Grange Street through to the terraces and ruins of Stanworth Street. The filmmakers also capture the shops and houses of Ralph Street, a street demolished in the 1960s. *Skids Kids* extensive outdoor shooting and realism offers the contemporary viewer images of South East London which no longer exist; the bombsites and remaining damaged terraces of Camberwell were cleared and replaced in the early 1960s for large council-owned estates. The film received admirable praise for its use of location. *Monthly Film Bulletin* argued that the fact the film was made quickly “is its salvation” with South East London offering “not only a wonderfully varied and interesting background, but also... a beauty which the film has caught without the glamorisation usual in feature film photography of back street locales...”⁵⁴

⁵⁴ *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 20, no.231 (1953), p.50.

Children on the streets and building sites of Islington in *The Salvage Gang*

Worldwide Pictures, specialists in industrial and sponsorship documentaries, produced *The Salvage Gang* for the CFF on a small budget of just £17,000. The film was well received by its intended child audience; *Manchester Guardian* reported the excitement felt during the film's premiere on 14 September 1958 at the Century Theatre, Kings Cross, where "the only sounds were excited, responsive cries of delight or anxiety."⁵⁵ The whimsical and comical story concerns three boys (Ali, Kim and Freddy) and one girl (Pat), who, one Saturday afternoon, raise money to pay for a new saw to rebuild a broken rabbit hutch through various odd-jobs. After failed attempts to raise the money, three of the children mistakenly sell Freddy's bed for scrap. The children set out on a journey through the streets of London to retrieve the bed, then wheel it back home.

Much of *The Salvage Gang* was shot over four weeks in Angel and Islington, North London, an area still reeling from the effects of two high explosive bombs dropped during the Blitz between October 1940 and June 1941.⁵⁶ The characters' homes are located within a narrow range of streets around Duncan Terrace and Devonian Road, characterised by surviving Georgian terraces, still populated by working-class residents before the area became fashionable in the early 1960s. The film depicts the ethnic diversity of the area, with one of the main protagonists Ali, a black child, and the stereotypical Mr Caspanelli, an Italian immigrant who owns a tea and bun van. The character of Mr Caspanelli reflected the new wave of Italian immigrants who came to Clerkenwell in the 1950s to fill gaps in the catering industry by setting up fish and chip shops and workmen's cafes.⁵⁷ The children's search for scrap metal to sell also plays upon the rise of raising money from scrap and junk in London during the 1950s and 1960s.⁵⁸

The canals, streets and part-built high-rise flats in Islington are used for various scenarios involving the children trying to raise money through odd-jobs, such as barge painting on Regent's Canal and dog-washing on a wasteland in Duncan St.

⁵⁵ 'No Need for Violence', *Manchester Guardian*, 15 September 1958.

⁵⁶ Bombsite.org, Online <http://bombsight.org/bombs/27790/> [Accessed 18 September 2015].

⁵⁷ Verusca Calabria, 'Italians in Clerkenwell from the 1800s to the 1960s' Online, http://untoldlondon.org.uk/articles/read/italians_in_clerkenwell_from_the_1800s_to_the_1960s 14 November 2006 [Accessed 23 September, 2015].

⁵⁸ Jerry White, *London in the Twentieth Century*, p.250.

Long shots root the children in the residential environment, using the wasteland across from the Georgian terraces as a space to work. The authenticity is enhanced through a real-life continuity as the children draw an accurate map of Union Square, Chantry Street and Linton Street to show where they will drop leaflets asking for scrap metal. The scenes depicting the children posting letters around the aforementioned streets bring a life and energy to the eerily quiet and uniformity of the neighbourhood. This is emphasised when the character of Ali exclaims “all these houses look the same”. The streets are often framed in long shot using low and high angles; low to locate us at street level with the children and high to give a sense of perspective.

Director John Krish recalls location scouting by driving around the Islington area on Sunday mornings, taking stills of locations which looked interesting to photograph.⁵⁹ For Krish “lots of research went into getting the locations right. Everything was tightly planned.”⁶⁰ Krish was himself a documentary filmmaker, best known for a poetic style in London Transport documentaries *This Year- London* (dir. John Krish, 1951) and *The Elephant will Never Forget* (dir. John Krish, 1953). Director of Photography James Allen was also skilled in shooting cities for documentary films such as *Cathedral City* (dir., Don Chaffey, 1949) and location shooting on CFF film *Peril for the Guy* (dir. James Hill, 1956). Indeed, it was the location shooting that was most praised by critics; *Times* noted that “to the adult the chief advantage of the film resides in its excellently photographed views of unfamiliar London”, while *Monthly Film Bulletin* praised the “splendidly photographed” London backgrounds.⁶¹

The chase across London to retrieve Freddy’s bed takes the children out of Islington and through to a familiar, tourist view of landmark London. The children’s bus journey on the Number 78 from Aldgate to Tower Bridge reflects Krish’s style in his poetic documentary about London’s last trams in *The Elephant will Never Forget* (dir. John Krish, 1953). Both films present views of the city from the top deck; the shots of children gazing out onto the streets and point of view of the different facets of the city in *The Salvage Gang* match the elderly couple’s

⁵⁹ Email from John Krish to author, 28 August 2015.

⁶⁰ John Krish quoted in Robert Shail, *The Children’s Film Foundation*, p.58.

⁶¹ ‘A Good Film for Children’, *Times*, 01 August 1958. p.11; ‘The Salvage Gang’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, October 1958, p.130.

experience of the city from the top deck of a tram in *The Elephant will Never Forget*. The ‘travelogue’ documentary-style of the scenes also compares with those in *Skid Kids*, where Bobby chases the bus on his bicycle. Once the children hop off the bus and retrieve the bed, the journey back home with imagery of the children wheeling the bed across famous landmarks again depicts the photogenic quality of the London scene, providing the opportunity for child audiences to gaze in awe at recognisable landmarks. The dominance of wide dolly shots in these sequences further emphasises London as a great spectacle and makes the children look small amid the space. The ‘spectacle’ of London continues as the children wheel the bed into the City, taking in more tourist landmarks, with a long, high angled shot off the side streets off Cannon Street, with bomb-damage on the buildings present, then through to Monument and the streets near St Paul’s Cathedral. The children stop to survey the bomb-damage around St Paul’s area, an area Krish chose to use as he “found it emotional”.⁶² The emotional impact is emphasised in the film with a long shot, showing St Paul’s in the distance with bomb-damage in the foreground, functioning now in the later 1950s as point of reflection as a reminder about the impact of the war, harking back to wartime depictions of St Paul’s in *London Can Take It* and St Paul’s as symbol of beauty and heroism in *Pool of London*. Such imagery contrasts to the portrayal of bomb damage around St Paul’s in *Hue and Cry*, where bomb damage was more extensive in the immediate aftermath of the war, and thus functions in *Hue and Cry* as a symbol of victory as the children clamber across the ruins to defeat the villains. The combination of the local London and vast tourist London also compares to *Pool of London*’s combination of the two Londons, as the filmmaker’s familiarity with local areas combines with landmark’s recognisable to audiences who live outside London.

In *The Salvage Gang*, the children wheel the bed across ‘old’ London, with bomb-damage visible in the background, and pass the newly constructed high rises around Old Street. The low-angle camera looks up at these high-rise flats as if gazing in wonder at the new features of the London landscape in the late 1950s. These depictions capture the zeitgeist, as postwar high-rise building was generally celebrated. This is evident the documentary film *The Changing Face of London* (New Decade Films, with cooperation of the London County Council, 1960)

⁶² Email from John Krish to author, 28 August 2015.

produced just two years after the release of *The Salvage Gang*, where children stand on ruins and gaze upwards at the new architecture, with old buildings described as “out-dated” and “unwanted”. In *The Changing Face of London*, the montage of high angled shots of newly-built high rises accentuating ‘the new face of London’ as “Londoners’ look upwards”, compares with the use of high angles looking upwards of the ‘new’ London in *The Salvage Gang*. The shift in environment, from war-ravaged St Paul’s, through to Finsbury Park and Old Street, juxtaposes the old and new and demonstrates how the city is always one in flux, providing visual pleasures for the audience with a range of architectural styles.

The Salvage Gang’s footage of newly-built estates captures the boom in building high-rise flats from 1956. This boom was made possible due to government subsidies, which ensured councils would be given more money for flats higher from the ground. The ‘new’ postwar rebuilding of London plays a pivotal role in the film as building site in the final stages of a large high and low rise municipal development functions as a key location; firstly, when the children offer to wash Mr Caspinelli’s car (as he is located there serving tea to builders), and then in the film’s penultimate sequences; and secondly when the bed is mistakenly picked up by a crane and lifted across the part-built flats to the other side of the estate. The building site illustrates how the new merged with the old in Islington, as the site is located in the film as around the corner from the Georgian terraces, reflecting extensive postwar rebuilding in the area.⁶³ Low and high angles reflect the scale of rebuilding and photogenic quality of building sites as the children balance across girders on the estate still under construction. Here the building site, rather than ruins and wastelands, functions as adventure playground, reflecting the changes in the London landscape in the late 1950s. Low angles are used to emphasise the children within that space and function in the same way as the ruins in *Hue and Cry*, where children are shot from high and low angles using girders to balance and navigate the terrain.

The aesthetic of *The Salvage Gang* continues the documentary ethos in the use of location in Ealing’s *Hue and Cry* and previous CFF films, including *Skid Kids*, with recognisable child characters in familiar situations, navigating the varied terrain of London in the late 1950s. In one sense *The Salvage Gang* functions as a travelogue,

⁶³ The exact location of the new development is not clear –John Krish does not recall where the scenes were shot, email from John Krish to author, 28 August 2015.

with plot devices used to showcase differing London environments, the old and new, the residential and tourist landmarks. However, one element Krish did not control was the editing style. Krish recalled how he was instructed by Field to “stick to simple cuts” as “she [Field] said that they wouldn’t be understood by ‘Hammersmithites’, by which I took her to mean that working-class kids would not be understand such sophisticated techniques”.⁶⁴ Both *Skid Kids* and *The Salvage Gang* are indicative of the distinct aesthetic of CFF films, which can be defined as a documentary ethos, simple cuts and extensive location shooting. This distinct aesthetic was partly the result of the unique conditions of production, with tight budgets, on location shooting companies and filmmakers who specialised in documentary production.

Bombsites, Pimlico streets and childhood innocence in *Innocent Sinners*

Innocent Sinners concerns a thirteen-year-old cockney girl, Lovejoy Mason (June Archer), who, with the help of the head of a boy gang, Tip Malone (Christopher Hay), plants seeds in a bombed-out church in an effort to create a beautiful garden amid war-ravaged London. The film is faithful to its source material, the novel *An Episode of Sparrows*, as the author, Rumer Godden, also co-wrote the screenplay. Godden envisaged the outline for the book after returning to bombed-out London where she came across a “strange phenomenon... weed flowers blossoming through the ruins.”⁶⁵ *Innocent Sinners* was produced in the autumn of 1957 and released in the UK in March 1958, during a period of economic decline at Rank, which Vincent Porter attributes to Chair John Davis and Executive Producer Earl St. John’s production of “unimaginative and conservative” films, which display little understanding of changes in public taste during the 1950s.⁶⁶ While *Innocent Sinners* firm sense of morality and billing as family entertainment adhered to Rank’s Chair John Davis’ ethos of clean, entertaining moral films, *Innocent Sinners* ‘realism’ through its focus on a tough working class cockney girl in bombed-out London, and

⁶⁴ Interview with John Krish in Robert Shail, *The Children’s Film Foundation*, p.101.

⁶⁵ Rumer Godden, ‘Preface to the Third Edition’, *An Episode of Sparrows* (Pan Books, originally published 1946, Third edition published 1993).

⁶⁶ Vincent Porter, ‘Methodism versus the Marketplace: The Rank Organisation and British Cinema’, in Robert Murphy (ed.) *The British Cinema Book, 3rd Edition*, p.271.

the success of *Violent Playground* (dir. Basil Dearden, 1958), a juvenile delinquent drama depicting tough working class teenagers on a Liverpool estate, suggests that not all Rank's output was unimaginative and conservative. Indeed, *Innocent Sinners* financial success in the UK and overseas bucked the trend of economic failures at Rank.

Director Phillip Leacock recalled how Rank allowed him relative freedom on the film despite tight budget constraints, with the only stipulation from Rank that the film's title be changed from *An Episode of Sparrows* to *Innocent Sinners*.⁶⁷ Leacock began his film career directing documentary shorts and continued a documentary aesthetic into later films such as *The Brave Don't Cry* (1952), a drama-documentary based on a real-life mining disaster. Indeed, Leacock noted how if you come from a documentary background "that side is always important to you".⁶⁸ Leacock was experienced in shooting London locations for fiction films such as *Appointment in London* (dir. Phillip Leacock, 1952). His first foray into directing actors was for a CFF film for Mary Field, *Riders of the New Forest* (dir. Philip Leacock, 1948), all shot on location using documentary techniques, which Leacock noted was not the "usual way" of shooting a feature.⁶⁹ Leacock later carved out a reputation for an ability to direct children in family films (e.g. *The Kidnappers* (dir. Phillip Leacock, 1950)) and produce films with a strong moral purpose.⁷⁰ Ronald Bergan (*Guardian*) noted how most of Leacock's films "share a certain innocence and idealism which the child protagonists represent."⁷¹ Thus *Innocent Sinners* combines Leacock's combination of 'innocent children' theme with 'authentic' use of locations, a combination criticised by the *Manchester Guardian* as somewhat at odds with the authenticity of the London scene.⁷²

Director of Photography, Harry Waxman, was also adept at shooting city exteriors, as evidenced by his photography of Brighton in *Brighton Rock* (dir. John Boulting,

⁶⁷ Phillip Leacock, interview by Stephen Peet, transcription of interview for the *BECTU History Project*, 28 October 1987, available online: <https://historyproject.org.uk/interview/philip-leacock> [Accessed 15 August 2015].

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Phillip Leacock, interview by Stephen Peet, transcription of interview for the *BECTU History Project*, 28 October 1987, available online: <https://historyproject.org.uk/interview/philip-leacock> [Accessed 15 August 2015].

⁷⁰ Robert Shail, *British Film Directors: A Critical Guide* (Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p.128.

⁷¹ Ronald Bergan, 'Obituary: Celebrations of Innocence', *Guardian*, 18 July 1990, p.39.

⁷² 'Innocent Sinners', *Manchester Guardian*, 08 April 1958, p.3.

1947). *The Daily Cinema* praised Waxman's photography on *Innocent Sinners* as catching "the true light of London", while the *Times* praised Leacock's ability to capture the atmosphere and "almost the very smell" of London.⁷³ *The Daily Cinema* remarked how the filmmakers made "full use of London exteriors, with well-matched studio work and interiors."⁷⁴ However, not all critics praised the 'authenticity' of location. For John Cutts (*Sight and Sound*), the mix of Battersea and Victoria locations was "weird" with "an inability to bring to life its background", while *Monthly Film Bulletin* criticised "the film's failure to reproduce the working-class milieu with any conviction".⁷⁵

Innocent Sinner's illustrated opening titles depicts the local Pimlico area and iconic Battersea Power Station, which also appears on the film's publicity material. This recognisable icon functions in a similar way to its function in *Hue and Cry*, framed in the distance, with bombed-out terrace houses in the foreground. The back of the bombed-out houses with Battersea Power station in the distance provides the setting for Lovejoy's initial attempt to make a garden in the ruins. *Innocent Sinners* depicts the varied London landscape; commercial streets, industrial landscapes and bombed-out ruins, facets of London commonplace *Hue and Cry*, *Skid Kids* and *The Salvage Gang*.

Pimlico's postwar reputation, as an area of contrasts, is reflected through the film's narrative. Both novel and film are set in Mortimer Square, an affluent square where houses are divided into flats on the edge of poorer streets, and the fictional Catford Street, described in the novel as "drab and shabby".⁷⁶ The Catford Street scenes and bombsites were shot in Pimlico and the bombed-out terraces (with Battersea Park in the distance) in nearby Nine Elms. Indeed, Pimlico suffered considerable bomb damage, with over 400 houses destroyed.⁷⁷ Mortimer Square, used to depict Markham Square, was located in west London near St James' Gardens. Both the novel and film's pressbook do not suggest a specific area, as this could be 'anywhere' London. The film's pressbook only describes "a London backstreet" and stresses "but it could be a backstreet anywhere", in comparison to the promotion of *It*

⁷³ 'Innocent Sinners', *The Daily Cinema*, 10 March 1958, p.4; *The Times*, 24 March 1958, p.3.

⁷⁴ 'Innocent Sinners', *The Daily Cinema*, 10 March 1958, p.4.

⁷⁵ John Cutts, 'Innocent Sinners', *Sight and Sound*, 27 (Spring 1958), p.203; 'Innocent Sinners', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, April 1958, p.43.

⁷⁶ Rumer Godden, *An Episode of Sparrows*, p.48.

⁷⁷ Adam Stout, *Pimlico: Deep Well of Glee* (Westminster City Archives, 1997)

Always Rains on Sunday as “secrets of a street you know”.⁷⁸ However, the locations were recognisable to critics as Pimlico; William Whitebait, (*New Statesmen*), recommended the film specifically for its portrayal of Pimlico, for which he thought the filmmakers “feel an affection; its markets, its wider intersections and little rows [...] squares, honks and fog from the river have a melancholy charm.”⁷⁹ Indeed, Leacock and Godden’s fondness for the area is evident in *Innocent Sinners*’ opening sequences, which presents Pimlico from the perspective of an elderly resident Olivia, who looks down on the bustling street below, with a point of view shot of the busy Vauxhall Bridge Road. Olivia exclaims “It’s because it’s so busy that I like it so much. It’s so rich, rich in all the things I never had.”

Innocent Sinners’ use of Vauxhall Bridge Road, a busy commercial area, presents bustling postwar life on the streets with a cross-section of society, as Sparkey (Brian Hammond) stands with his newspaper seller mother and gangs of boys run about. The film’s portrayal of Pimlico was described by *Kinematograph Weekly* as authentic and an area “where the shabby and the elite frequently meet”.⁸⁰ *The Times* also praised the film’s ability to capture “a curious and cosmopolitan area of mixed poverty and wealth...south of a line between Belgravia and Westminster”, with “elegant squares and noisy, bustling little streets”.⁸¹ Historian Adam Stout describes the change in Pimlico during the 1950s with younger professional people moving in, creating a ‘socially mixed’ community, with large numbers of houses converted into flats.⁸² The sense of different social classes living in close proximity is reflected in Lovejoy’s visits to Mortimer Square, shot in Markham Square; a pretty square in the middle of Georgian town houses in affluent Chelsea, around 1.5 miles away from Vauxhall Bridge Road. The garden in Markham Square was re-landscaped after World War II as a country garden and provides a calm atmosphere from the busy streets nearby. The contrasts between working-class and middle-class London exteriors are emphasised with the bombed-out ruins and rubble of the terraces contrasted with the neat square with its sense of privacy with iron fences. Here Lovejoy seeks to find an escape in the smart garden square, bombed-out terraces and bombed-out church ruins. The tensions

⁷⁸ *Innocent Sinners*: Pressbook, 1958.

⁷⁹ ‘Innocent Sinners’, *New Statesman*, 29 March 1958, BFI Press Cuttings: *Innocent Sinners*.

⁸⁰ *Kinematograph Weekly*, 06 March 1958, p.26.

⁸¹ ‘A Week of British Films’, *Times*, 24 March 1958, p.3.

⁸² Adam Stout, *Pimlico: Deep Well of Glee*, p.78.

between older, middle-class residents living in Regency houses and working-class children on the streets are also depicted through the character of Angela, Olivia's judgemental neighbour who confronts Lovejoy for kicking dirt around in the square garden. Later Angela blames 'street gangs' for taking dirt from the garden as it is 'scarce and valuable' in London.

Innocent Sinners first depicts child protagonists Lovejoy and Sparkey outside on the city streets, rather than in the home, a key trope in postwar London-set films featuring child protagonists. Finding beauty amid the ruins outside provides an escape for Lovejoy, who is neglected by her promiscuous mother. As with *Hue and Cry*, *Skid Kids* and *The Salvage Gang*, working-class children are portrayed as resourceful, as Lovejoy sings in the streets to raise money, then later Tip and Lovejoy make use of the church ruins by creating a garden. Tim Edensor and Colin Ward outline this appeal of ruins for children as they are able to "make their own rules" and utilise objects from the outside world in the creation of their own space.⁸³ Later, when Lovejoy is rehomed in a church 'House of Compassion', Angela's reassurance that there is a big playground is met with Lovejoy's refusal to accept her new home and response of "I play on the streets". Lovejoy creates a garden in a ruined church, a continuation of the motif of the use of bombed-out churches in films such as *It Always Rains on Sunday* and *Pool of London*. The destruction of Lovejoy's garden comes not from the boy gangs but from the bulldozing of the church to pave the way for new buildings, representing a loss of the 'old' London. Here the destruction of Lovejoy's garden represents the end of Lovejoy's escape and sanctuary from her reality. Leacock's rather sentimental approach is evident as Tip saves a rose from the garden for Lovejoy. This scene where the bombed-out church is bulldozed, depicts a nostalgia for a London being dismantled, in contrast to *The Salvage Gang*, where the 'new' London is celebrated and presented with a sense of wonder. Indeed, in *Innocent Sinners*, there is little trace of the 'new' London.

The focus on a female protagonist sets the film apart from boy's adventure *Hue and Cry* and CFF films as the feminine story of a girl finding escape through planting a garden on a bombsite, contrasts with the more masculine stories of *Hue and Cry* and

⁸³ Colin Ward, *The Child in the City*; Tim Edensor, *Industrial Ruins: Space, Aesthetics and Materiality*, (Oxford: Berg, 2005), p.26.

Skid Kids. This was a key selling point for the film; *Kinematograph Weekly* noted the *Innocent Sinners* had “obvious feminine and family slants”.⁸⁴ The perception that bombsites belong to working-class boys, whose ownership of the spaces is reflected in the character of Tip Malone, a tough, working-class boy who Sparkey warns “There’s a girl on your bombsite.” Tip responds with “Don’t be silly. No girl would dare”. This notion that bombsites are spaces for boys is reflected in Lovejoy’s response to Tip’s suggestion that the bomb-site at the back of the terraces are a “stupid place to make a garden” as he says “There isn’t anywhere. Nowhere that the boys don’t spoil”. However, Lovejoy is portrayed as a tough, rather than overtly feminine character. Actress June Archer as Lovejoy Mason was praised by critics for her ‘authentic’ performance and working-class toughness. Phillip Oakes (*Evening Standard*) noted that “the accent is right. There’s no softness there”, while the *Daily Express* praised her “tough” characterisation as making the story “an enjoyable experience that somehow rings true”.⁸⁵

Overall, *Innocent Sinners* depicts the streets and bombsites of Pimlico as spaces where children can take ownership, and in particular where a girl attempts to carve out a private space and escape through the planting of the garden. Its combination of realism and sentimentality reflects Rank’s moral, family-centred ethos and feminine quality offers a different depiction of the children’s use of bombsites, yet retains the same theme of the city and ruins as a place of sanctuary and escape. The film’s ability to navigate realism and fantasy was praised by critics; *Manchester Guardian* noted the “realistic settings” where “script and direction have made a rare, beneficial marriage between fantasy and realism”, while the *Financial Times* described the film as “halfway between fairy-tale and neo-realism”.⁸⁶ Leacock’s ability to combine fantasy and authenticity through location shooting is similar to *Hue and Cry* and the CFF London films, as all integrate a documentary-style approach to location, thus rooting fantasy in reality.

⁸⁴ ‘Innocent Sinners’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 06 March 1958, p.26.

⁸⁵ Phillip Oakes, ‘The Dream that Grew in a Bomb-site Garden’, *Evening Standard*, 20 March 1958, p.6; ‘Innocent Sinners’, *Daily Express*, 21 March 1958; *Sunday Times* film critic Dilys Powell also praised the realism of the child characters in Dilys Powell, ‘Innocent Sinners’, *Sunday Times*, 21 March 1958, BFI Press Cuttings: *Innocent Sinners*.

⁸⁶ ‘Innocent Sinners’, *Manchester Guardian*, 22 March 1958; ‘Innocent Sinners’, *Financial Times*, 24 March 1958.

Urban delinquency and *The Blue Lamp*

Young working-class street gangs emerged in Britain during the Industrial Revolution of the late 1800s, as street corners became places of leisure for working class boys.⁸⁷ Urban street gangs proliferated in slum areas of major cities and gained press attention; the ‘scuttlers’, working-class fighting gangs with distinctive clothing originating in working-class districts of Manchester, were reported in 1888 as an ‘epidemic’, while Birmingham’s ‘Peaky Blinders’ or ‘sloggers’, attracted press attention for their use of violent weapons.⁸⁸ Public fears about youth street gangs re-emerged in the press after World War II amid concerns about the reported rise in juvenile crime.⁸⁹ Postwar urban delinquents were distinct from delinquent gangs of the industrial revolution, due to postwar societal changes and a culture of consumption. The popularity of American music, namely jazz in the 1940s and rock and roll during the 1950s, and the changes in the urban landscape after the war, as wastelands became synonymous as spaces of leisure for postwar teens, contributed to the defining characteristics of the postwar juvenile delinquent.

Delinquency and urban areas were inextricably linked by the press and sociologists; in 1949, the *Times* reported how organised young gangs, such as the Diamond Gang of Islington and Brick Gang of Bermondsey, created a “reign of terror in certain neighbourhoods”.⁹⁰ In 1953, sociologist John Barron Mays observed that areas with high levels of juvenile crime “were nearly always adjacent to the industrial parts of large cities. They were nearly always areas where bad housing was chronic”.⁹¹ Politicians, criminologists and newspaper editorials cited a combination of causes of delinquency, including: upheaval during World War II; ‘broken homes’ and lack of parental control; poor housing in slum areas; and the influence of American popular culture. The 1944 Ministry of Information documentary film, *Children of the City* (dir. Budge Cooper, 1944) suggested that child delinquency in Scotland was a result of overcrowded housing and lack of suitable play areas, while John Barron Mays

⁸⁷ John Springhall, *Coming of Age: Adolescence in Britain 1860-1960* (Ireland: Gill and Macmillan, 1986), pp.138-139.

⁸⁸ ‘The ‘scuttling’ Epidemic in Manchester’, *Nottingham Evening Post*, 03 April 1888, p.3.

⁸⁹ In 1948, 15,980 boys and girls aged between 14 and 17 were found guilty of indictable offences, with this figure rising to 17,274 in 1951. Figures quoted in ‘Checking Child Crime’ by our Educational Correspondent, *Times*, 22 July 1953, p.4.

⁹⁰ Editorial, ‘Children in Trouble’, *Times*, 10 February 1949, p.5.

⁹¹ ‘80 Per Cent of Juveniles Delinquent’, *Observer*, 23 August 1953, p.3.

suggested that both poor housing conditions and the boredom of working-class youths living in urban areas encouraged delinquency as mischief brings “a sense of adventure into the dreary streets and even drearier homes”.⁹² More recently, Andrew Spicer argues that in the early 1950s “the delinquent replaced the spiv as a ‘concealed metaphor’ for fears about the long-term effects of wartime dislocation, social change, lack of community cohesion and the breakdown of traditional values, particularly among the working-classes”.⁹³ However, while delinquency was a real problem, according to historian David Kynaston, it “was almost certainly not as widespread as the moral panic imagined”.⁹⁴ British films contributed to the debate, as filmmakers were keen to exploit the commercial value of the youth ‘crime wave’. Robert Murphy notes how the success of Gainsborough’s ‘social problem’ film cycle of 1945-50, including delinquent films *Good Time Girl* (dir. David MacDonald, 1947) and *The Boys in Brown* (dir. Montgomery Tully, 1949), tempted other producers to try a similar formula.⁹⁵ It was Ealing’s *The Blue Lamp*, however, which was the most commercially successful and critically acclaimed British film to tackle the issue of delinquent crime in the city.

Although *The Blue Lamp* focuses mainly on the work of the Metropolitan Police, the film deals directly with the juvenile ‘problem’ through the character of juvenile delinquent Tom Riley (Dirk Bogarde). The opening sequences depict images of young men in a coffee bar in central London, anchored by the voice over, “These restless and ill-adjusted youngsters have produced a type of delinquent which is partly responsible for the postwar increase in crime.” The West End is depicted as a place of excitement and transgression for postwar delinquent youth; the jazz score and bright flashing lights that accompany runaway Diana as she walks along Shaftesbury Avenue, demonstrates the appeal the West End had for young people looking for escape and excitement away from the home. A voiceover posits Diana as a girl who shows the “effects of a childhood spent in a broken home and demoralised by war.” Film historians have analysed how character and locations in *The Blue Lamp* were used to illustrate the oppositions between the ‘restless youth’ and the stable, routine-led bobby on the beat; Sue Harper and Vincent Porter note

⁹² ‘Crime in the Streets’, *Manchester Guardian*, 15 August 1952, p.4.

⁹³ Andrew Spicer, *Typical Men: The Representation of Masculinity in Popular British Cinema* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2001), p.133.

⁹⁴ David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain, 1945-51* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007), p.364-368.

⁹⁵ Robert Murphy, *Sixties British Cinema* (London: BFI, 1992), p.47.

the contrast between the “controlled” Dixon and his wife and insecurity of the delinquents.⁹⁶ Steve Chibnall contrasts the settled home of PC Dixon with Diana’s aimlessness along Shaftsbury Avenue, while Andrew Spicer posits Tom Riley’s sensation-seeking in West End milk bars and amusement arcades and his seedy bed-sit with an intrusive railway, as a clear contrast to the stable Dixon home.⁹⁷ Indeed, Frank Mort describes Soho in the first half of the twentieth century as a site of pleasure and danger, with spaces of leisure such as cafes as pubs as conveying “the optimistic possibilities of the modern city, produced through consumerism and the leisure activities, and a negative, deracinated idea of urban impurity, rootlessness and disorder.”⁹⁸ Riley and Diana embody this youthful consumerism, drawn to the disorder and leisure offered in Soho. The seedy glamour of Soho with youth lounging milk bars and coffee shops also foreshadows, yet contrasts with, the swinging London cycle of films from the mid-to-late 1960s, where young characters use the now-‘hip’ London as a playground for leisure and adventure.

Public concerns about the possible impact of delinquent films in Britain was reflected in BBFC’s Assistant Censor Frank Croft’s Scenario Report for *The Blue Lamp*: “I deplore this type of film being produced in this country. I feel certain in my own mind that it does a great deal of harm to those of the younger generation who are criminally minded.”⁹⁹ Crofts warned that “it would be disastrous to treat the dangerous subject of adolescent criminals with any glamour.”¹⁰⁰ However, the BBFC were reassured that the Metropolitan Police’s involvement in the production of *The Blue Lamp* would result in a less sensational depiction of delinquency.¹⁰¹ The film ultimately reassures its audiences with the message that stability, law-and-order, and cooperation with the local community can defeat the delinquent problem. As Eugene McLaughlin states, *The Blue Lamp* emerged from British studios looking to forge a national identity in the decade following the war, and merge the fictional and documentary, at the same time as a moral panic about juvenile delinquency.¹⁰²

⁹⁶ Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s*, p.60.

⁹⁷ Steve Chibnall, ‘Dramas of Social Tension and Adjustment’, in Alan Burton and Tim O’Sullivan, *Cinema of Basil Dearden and Michael Relph*, p.206; Andrew Spicer, *Typical Men*, p.133.

⁹⁸ Frank Mort, *Capital Affairs*, p.222.

⁹⁹ Frank Crofts (Assistant Censor) *The Blue Lamp*: BBFC Scenario Report, 12 April 1949, BFI Library Special Collections: *The Blue Lamp*, BBFC 1-12-1236.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Frank Crofts (Assistant Censor) *The Blue Lamp*: BBFC Scenario Report, 12 April 1949, BFI Library Special Collections: *The Blue Lamp*, BBFC 1-12-1236

¹⁰² Eugene McLaughlin, ‘From Reel to Ideal: The Blue Lamp and the Popular Construction of the English Bobby’, *Journal of Crime, Media, Culture*, 01, no.1 (2005), p.14 &15.

As such, the film gained a level of respectability and praise not afforded to more sensationalist delinquent films, which focused on the delinquent rather than authority figures seeking to control the problem. *Derby Evening Telegraph* admired *The Blue Lamp* for differing from other ‘social problem’ films popular after the war, arguing that *The Blue Lamp* lacked the pretension of other “films with a social message” with a message “that concerns us all – the alarming growth of violence and terrorism by young thugs and the difficulties that a depleted police force has in combatting this threat to the community”.¹⁰³ Dearden and Relph would again tackle juvenile delinquency in London in *I Believe in You* (dir. Basil Dearden, 1952), this time from the point of view of the kindly probation officers. *I Believe in You* gained favourable reviews, yet lacked the financial success or influence of *The Blue Lamp*. Although not wholly a delinquent film, *The Blue Lamp*’s depiction of the juvenile delinquent would, as film historian Jeffrey Richards notes, “set the pattern for a series of threatening young males which emerge in the 1950s”¹⁰⁴ As such, these threatening young males would manifest in British cinema in accordance with the changing dynamics of urban youth crime, such as the ‘cosh boy’ panic in the early 1950s with *Cosh Boy*.

The cosh boy ‘menace’ on the streets of Battersea in *Cosh Boy*

Cosh Boy was an independent co-production between producers John Woolf (Romulus Films) and Daniel Angel (Daniel Angel Films). Angel began his career in 1945, producing low-budget documentaries, while producer John Woolf tended to adapt films from successful plays and novels, with a keen eye on what might attract the American audience.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, *Cosh Boy* was an adaptation of the play *Master Crook* by Bruce Walker, which ran in London theatres in 1952. Both the theatre production and subsequent film were an attempt to capitalise on the ‘cosh boy’ panic prevalent in British newspaper headlines in 1952-3.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ ‘Film Puts Over its Message – Which Concerns Us All’, *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 04 March 1950, p.3.

¹⁰⁴ Jeffrey Richards, ‘Basil Dearden at Ealing’, in Alan Burton, Tim O’Sullivan and Paul Wells (eds.), *Liberal Directions*, p.21.

¹⁰⁵ Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s*, p.170.

¹⁰⁶ James C. Robertson, ‘The Censors and British Gangland, 1913-1990’ in Steve Chibnall and Robert Murphy (eds.), *British Crime Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p.18.

‘Cosh boys’ originated in the East End of London after World War II, and were so-called because they typically used razors, bicycle chains and knuckle-dusters to ‘cosh’ their victims. As Frank Mort notes, these Cosh Boys prefigured the Teddy Boys, a youth phenomenon not recognised by the press until the murder of teenager John Beckley on Clapham Common in July 1953.¹⁰⁷ *Cosh Boy*’s narrative and locations depicted stereotypical perceptions of juvenile delinquents as violent, masculine young males. *Cosh Boy* concerns Roy (James Kenney), a sixteen-year-old delinquent and his ‘slow-witted’ friend Alfie (Ian Whittaker), who ‘cosh’ unsuspecting victims one summer on the working-class streets of Battersea, south west London. Roy bullies Alfie’s sister Rene (Joan Collins) and then rejects her when he discovers she is pregnant with his child. Roy’s gang targets a dance hall, which results in Roy firing a gun at a staff member. The film posits corporal punishment and a strong father figure as the solution to delinquency, ending with the police arriving at Roy’s home and then walking away to allow Roy’s new stepfather to give him a thrashing. This punishment reinforced popular opinion, as letters pages in newspapers during 1952 called for the flogging of cosh boys as a suitable deterrent and punishment.¹⁰⁸

Cosh Boy cost a modest £37,162 and was financed by Lloyds Bank (£18,000), National Film Finance Corporation (£6,000) and Independent Film Distributors (£7,500), with a total of £525 spent on location shooting.¹⁰⁹ The film was scheduled for release as a double-bill with Woolf and Angel’s other ‘social problem’ film *Women of Twilight* (dir. Gordon Parry, 1952). However, both films were eventually released separately as Daniel Angel felt they both turned out better than expected. Bruce Walker publicly praised the film adaptation, although he thought that *Cosh Boy* included more action and less moralising, thus “the moral may have got submerged in the action”.¹¹⁰ Critics dismissed *Cosh Boy* as sensationalism; in 1953, the *Times* complained that *Cosh Boy* was another example of an “English-speaking cinema... unhealthily obsessed with crime and criminals, with vice and violence, with brutality and bullying”.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Frank Mort, *Capital Affairs*, p.87.

¹⁰⁸ David Kynaston, *Family Britain 1951-57* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009), p.259.

¹⁰⁹ London, Film Finances Archive, *Cosh Boy*: Box File no.46.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Robert Muller, ‘Is Coshboy a Menace?’, *Picture Post*, 28 February 1953, p.15.

¹¹¹ ‘Violence on the Screen’, *Times*, 09 February 1953, p.4.

Cosh Boy premiered in the UK in January 1953. The film gained an unexpected topicality after the shooting of a police officer by juveniles Christopher Craig (aged 16) and Derek Bentley (aged 19) during an attempted burglary at a Croydon warehouse in November 1952.¹¹² As a result, critics compared *Cosh Boy* to the Bentley case and wider cosh boy panic, and called for the film to be banned; John Prebble (*Sunday Dispatch*) complained, “haven’t we enough trouble with these young men?”, while the *Manchester Guardian* remarked that this was a particularly bad time for showing the film.¹¹³ The perception that juvenile delinquent films, and in particular *Cosh Boy*, had a negative influence on teenage audiences was evidenced by subsequent newspaper reports: in November 1953, George James Newland (aged 21) was found guilty of murdering a pensioner, where “it was said in a statement Newland said he got into his mind a cosh-boy picture he had seen”, while a South East London youth club leader accused films of glamorising “wide boys” and complained “while Clubland was being smashed up, *Cosh Boy* was being shown at the local cinema”.¹¹⁴ However, *Picture Post*’s ‘investigation’ into the film, which elicited the responses of 30 working-class youth club members in North Kensington, concluded that all 30 adolescents considered *Cosh Boy* to be a good film, that Roy Walsh was not glamorous nor a ‘tough guy’, and that the film did not show crime to be worthwhile.¹¹⁵ The BBFC defended their decision to grant the film a certificate, arguing that the X certificate was awarded two months prior to the Christopher Craig case and thus the film could be seen as a social document and warning to parents (*Cosh Boy* and *Women of Twilight* were the first two British films to be granted the new X certificate).¹¹⁶ However, despite the BBFC’s justification, Hull, Hove, Birmingham, Surrey, Nottingham, East Sussex, and Coventry councils banned the film. Sue Harper and Vincent Porter state that *Cosh Boy* was not a financial success, due in part to local council bans and because “it did not address the regulation of violent crime in a manner that suited the emotional constitution of the audience”.¹¹⁷ However, the subject matter ensured that the film

¹¹² Bentley was subsequently executed for his role in the crime. However, it later emerging that Bentley had severe learning difficulties.

¹¹³ John Prebble, ‘Ban This Film’, *Sunday Dispatch*, 11 January 1953, BFI Press Cuttings: *Cosh Boy*; *Manchester Guardian*, 07 February 1953, BFI Press Cuttings: *Cosh Boy*.

¹¹⁴ ‘Death Sentence on Toy Caster (21)’ *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 12 November 1953, p.1; ‘Youths who Rip Settees’, *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Mercury*, 04 March 1954, p.5.

¹¹⁵ Robert Muller, ‘Is Coshboy a Menace?’, *Picture Post*, 28 February 1953, p.15.

¹¹⁶ Cecil Wilson, ‘He Filmed the Craig Story Before It Happened’, *Daily Mail*, 18 December 1952, p.5.

¹¹⁷ Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s*, p.269.

gained publicity and public interest; *Picture Post* stated that *Cosh Boy* had become “the talk of London”, while the *Larne Times* reported that the film was a popular success all over the country, despite the protest raised.¹¹⁸

Although many critics derided *Cosh Boy* for its sensationalism of delinquency, some did praise the authenticity of dialogue and locations. Both *Today's Cinema* and *Kinematograph Weekly* applauded the Cockney dialogue for its realism, although *Variety* was concerned that the dialogue would be “largely unintelligible to American audiences”.¹¹⁹ For C. Dixon (*Daily Telegraph*), “the half-world of drab streets and tawdry dance halls... comes to depressing life”, while Ray Nunn (*Daily Graphic*) described the coshings as having a “documentary realism”.¹²⁰ *Kinematograph Weekly* said the film was ‘semi-documentary in its approach’, with “excellent use [...] made of the drab London exteriors”, while *Today's Cinema* praised the “realistic settings”.¹²¹ Indeed, the background and ethos of director Lewis Gilbert contributed to this realist use of locations. Gilbert began his career during the war as an assistant director in training and propaganda films, and continued to work in documentary in the early postwar years. Gilbert was a keen advocate of location shooting, believing it added to the effectiveness of a film.¹²²

Cosh Boy's interiors were shot over a four-week period at the Riverside Studios on Aspenlea Road, Hammersmith. While the film is set in Battersea, the majority of exterior location shooting took place in various streets, pubs and bombed wastelands of Hammersmith, in close proximity to Riverside Studios. Exterior shooting was scheduled for one week in late July and early August 1952. However, due to inclement weather when shooting on a bombsite and along the River Thames, exterior shooting was extended to two weeks, raising production costs and concerns for the guarantor at Film Finances.¹²³ The bombsites, dark alleyways and terraced houses around Crisp Road and Leamore Street, that typified Hammersmith in this period, provided the gritty, working-class milieu which functioned as Battersea.

¹¹⁸ Robert Muller, ‘Is Coshboy a Menace?’, *Picture Post*, 28 February 1953, p.15; ‘An X-certificate film comes to the Larne Screen for first time and it’s “keep out” for under 16s’, *Larne Times*, 25 March 1954, p.4.

¹¹⁹ *Kinematograph Weekly*, 15 January 1953, p.14; *Today's Cinema*, 08 January 1953, p.8; *Variety*, 1 March 1953, BFI Press Cuttings: *Cosh Boy*.

¹²⁰ C. Dixon, ‘Delinquents, Plain and Coloured’, *Daily Telegraph*, 09 February 1953; Ray Nunn, ‘A Cruel Smear!’, *Daily Graphic*, 06 February 1953, BFI Press Cuttings: *Cosh Boy*.

¹²¹ *Kinematograph Weekly*, 15 January 1953, p.14; *Today's Cinema*, 08 January 1953, p.8.

¹²² Lewis Gilbert: Biography, 06 February 1970, BFI Press Cuttings: Lewis Gilbert.

¹²³ London, Film Finances Archive, *Cosh Boy*: Daily Progress Reports, 06 August 1952, 01 August 1952, Letter from John Croydon to Mr. Garrett, 24 July 1952, *Cosh Boy*: Box File no.46.

Almost most of the exteriors were shot in Hammersmith, landmarks such as Battersea Festival Gardens, Battersea Power Station and Battersea Dogs' Home, clearly establish the film's location as working-class Battersea.

Cosh Boy's opening immediately establishes the location as a working-class area of London, as the Hammersmith Bridge is visible in the distance, while cockney accents can be heard emanating from the local pub, The Duke of Wellington. *Cosh Boy*'s shooting script further establishes the postwar, working class milieu where delinquency thrives; "A narrow street runs down the side of the pub, with a row of small, rather dilapidated houses on one side and an extensive flat piece of ground on another – obviously originally a bombed area, now cleared and become wasteland."¹²⁴ In comparison to *The Blue Lamp*, *Cosh Boy*'s on-screen announcement refers to the juvenile delinquent as a 'postwar tragedy' and posits the delinquent as one who takes ownership of particular spaces. A wasteland on Crisp Road, Hammersmith, is used throughout the film as a space where young male delinquents frequent and menace older women. Roy and Alfie cosh a drunk older woman on a wasteland as she leaves a pub in the film's opening sequence. Later, Roy and Alfie cosh Queenie (Hermione Gingold), a local prostitute in the dark streets of Broadmead, Battersea. Such visual depictions mirrored contemporary press accounts of the spaces where juvenile crime proliferated – "It is in the dark alleyways and the open lots around the desolate bombed sites that they [cosh boys] acquire a love of excitement and adventure which can develop with such fatal ease into something more sinister".¹²⁵

Images of Roy and Alfie loitering on the wasteland prefigure later images in photojournalism of Teddy Boys on London bombsites, such as photographer John R. Simmons image of three Teddy Boys loitering on a street corner in Elephant and Castle, with rubble from the Blitz still visible (circa. 1955) Critic Leonard Mosley (*Daily Express*) complained that in *Cosh Boy* "there is a beating, a bashing, a bombsite robbery, a sleazy bombsite seduction in every scene".¹²⁶ A bombed-out cellar, a combination of an actual location and a studio composite, is used by Roy as a space to meet, plot his crimes, and bully Rene. This masculine ownership of space

¹²⁴ London, Film Finances Archive, *Cosh Boy*: Final Shooting Script, *Cosh Boy*: Box File, no.46.

¹²⁵ 'Cosh Boys: Mr Bevan Must Share the Blame', *Portsmouth Evening News*, 27 March 1950, p.2.

¹²⁶ Leonard Mosley, 'The Payoff can't save it', *Daily Express*, 06 February 1953, BFI Press Cuttings: *Cosh Boy*.

near, yet away from the home, contrasts with the maternal space inside the home, where Roy's mother and grandmother reside. The depiction of Roy's home-life, in a cramped basement flat, reflected common concerns that cramped housing and no father figure were factor in the rise of delinquency. The final sequence depicts a policeman walks down Leamore Street, suggesting that the problem is best taken care of in the home, while the police deal with the outdoor, public sphere.

In *Cosh Boy*, the city is essentially Victorian still, with quiet, dimly lit cobbled streets, where the industrial meets the residential, as railway lines intersect with residential streets. The exteriors used as Roy's home was Leamore Street, Hammersmith, a series of three storey terraces with a railway viaduct at the end of the road, a common trope to establish a working-class residential London (as discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis). The industrial city is seen in the sequences shot in Broadmead, as the smoke billowing out of Battersea Power Station contributes to the film's noir visual aesthetic. This dark, shadowy atmosphere created by using Battersea station contrasts with its use in *Hue and Cry* and *Innocent Sinners*, where the power station forms part of an industrial, daylight landscape. The notion of the 'dark' city, one where gangs loiter on unsuspecting victims, contrasts with the 'light' tourist London, used by the films' moralistic male characters. Rene describes her boyfriend, Brian (Michael McKeag) as "different from the others", a good, stable (if dull), young man. This difference is marked in location, as Brian takes Rene on a daytime river tour of the Thames, away from the bombsites and dark streets of Battersea. The contrast between tourist London and the seedy, crime-ridden London is further emphasised in *Cosh Boy* when Brian exclaims to Rene "It's just like the pictures, isn't it?" The broad daylight and recognisable tourist locations contrast with the following scene, which dissolves to a dark wasteland as Roy and the gang prepare for another coshing, described in the shooting script as "a very lonely street as it consists mainly of bombed houses".¹²⁷ Low-key lighting and low angles emphasis menacing and unsafe nature of the streets of Battersea. These scenes compare with the 'safe' tourist London frequented by Johnny and Pat versus the 'up close' dark London Johnny encounters alone in *Pool of London*.

¹²⁷ London, Film Finances Archive, *Cosh Boy*: Final Shooting Script, *Cosh Boy*: Box File no.46.

The notion that a ‘good’ man can show women who live in working-class Battersea a different London is also evident in *Cosh Boy* through the character of Bob, who dates Roy’s mother Elsie and eventually marries her. Bob takes Elsie for a date at Battersea Festival Gardens, as the filmmakers made use of the amusement park constructed in 1951 as part of the Festival of Britain, and describes the pleasures of walking in Battersea Park. Both Brian and Bob use leisure spaces for their intended purpose, in contrast to Roy, who, like Riley in *The Blue Lamp*, transgresses these spaces. In *The Blue Lamp*, Riley’s robbery on the cinema leads to his panic and the shooting of Dixon, while in *Cosh Boy*, Roy’s plans to raid a dance hall go awry as Roy shoots a member of staff in the ensuing panic. Dance Halls were the most popular leisure spaces for young working-class patrons after cinema, and had reached a golden age in the 1950s.¹²⁸ As such, these spaces feature heavily in postwar films such as *Dance Hall* (dir. Charles Crichton, 1950) and *I Believe in You* (dir. Basil Dearden, 1952), with associations with working-class sex, romance, youth and crime.

Overall, producers’ Woolf and Angel’s attempt to capitalise on the current moral panic and previously successful delinquent films, combined with director Lewis Gilbert’s documentary background and preference for location shooting, resulted in a film which combined both sensationalism and authenticity. *Cosh Boy*’s shift away from a focus on the containing forces of delinquency, as seen in *The Blue Lamp* and *I Believe in You*, and instead on the violent delinquent, resulted in the film’s notoriety as sensationalism. However, the film’s use of war-ravaged Hammersmith, posing as Battersea, lent the film an authenticity even the press admired. *Cosh Boy*’s depiction of Hammersmith contributed to the popular notion that bombsites and alleyways were menacing, dark places frequented by delinquent youths.

Conclusions

Hue and Cry, *Skid Kids*, *The Salvage Gang* and *Innocent Sinners* represented a body of films which captured the zeitgeist of postwar London life and environment for children, with stories featuring heroic children. They provided a familiarity for

¹²⁸ James Nott, *Going to the Palais: A Social and Cultural History of Dancing and Dance Halls in Britain, 1918-60* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

children, during a period where playing on the streets and making use of bombsites and wastelands was commonplace for postwar working-class children. It is evident from the positive critical reception that these films received that they were held in high regard, and low budgets were used to the filmmakers' advantage in capturing the streets of specific districts of London. The documentary ethos of the filmmakers ensured that the films used extensive location shooting, giving the films a realism and authenticity praised by critics. Andrew Moor argues that although there is a visual similarity in *Hue and Cry* with Italian neo-realist films of the same period, any attempt at realism is discarded in scenes with Alistair Sim's character, Felix H. Wilkinson.¹²⁹ However, *Hue and Cry*, *Skid Kids*, *The Salvage Gang* and *Innocent Sinners* also differ significantly to the neorealist and *Trümmerfilm* ('Rubble films' produced in Germany between 1946 and 1949) movements in purpose and mood, as these movements shared a serious "political mission", clearly devoid from these high adventure and family entertainment films. Thus, the films are typical of immediate British postwar period which, as Stephen Guy notes, had a tendency to adopt the visual style of documentary without the social commentary.¹³⁰

In contrast, locations in *The Blue Lamp* and *Cosh Boy* have a number of key functions; they locate the delinquent as an urban, working-class male problem, depicting the bombsites, tenement courtyards and street corners as territorial and menacing places. These films represent working-class districts as spaces where the delinquent has a sense of belonging, in contrast to the light, 'landmark' of *The Salvage Gang* and morally righteous characters in *Cosh Boy*. The delinquent in *The Blue Lamp* and *Cosh Boy* transgresses spaces of industry and leisure through crime; Riley robs a cinema and shoots a police officer, while Roy attempts to rob the local dance hall. *Cosh Boy*'s 'sensationalism' derives from its focus on Roy, rather than an older, middle-class and/or authority figure in the more reassuring delinquent films such as *I Believe in You* and *The Blue Lamp*. While *Cosh Boy* and *The Blue Lamp* offer different solutions to the delinquency problem, in-keeping with the general consensus at the time of each film's production, *Cosh Boy*'s use of cramped housing suggested that the home environment was a key factor in the cause of

¹²⁹ Andrew Moor, 'Kind Hearts and Campery: The Ealing Family Perverts', in Mark Duguid *et al.*, (eds), *Ealing Revisited*, p.131.

¹³⁰ Stephen Guy, 'After Victory: Projections of the Second World War and its Aftermath in British Feature Films, 1946-1950' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Queen Mary, University of London, 2002), p.16.

delinquent behaviour. *Cosh Boy* was considered by critics to be a sensationalist depiction of the juvenile delinquent as the lead protagonist is the delinquent himself, in contrast to *The Blue Lamp*, where delinquency is viewed from the perspective of police officers. Indeed, *The Blue Lamp* was produced in conjunction with the Metropolitan Police, thus the film can also be interrogated as London-set police-drama produced in the postwar period, where police officers are depicted as part of a local community, offering reassurance in the city streets during a perceived 'crime wave'.

CHAPTER FIVE

Policing the streets of postwar London in *The Blue Lamp*, *Street Corner* and *The Long Arm*

In 1945, Scotland Yard appointed Percy Horne Fearnley to the new role of Public Information Officer (PIO) to improve the public image of the police, by liaising with filmmakers, journalists and advertisers. As a result, Fearnley oversaw Metropolitan Police supervision, guidance and approval on three London-set police drama films produced between 1950 and 1956; *The Blue Lamp*, *Street Corner* (dir. Muriel Box, 1953) and *The Long Arm* (dir. Charles Frend, 1956). These three films gave the Met a certain degree of control of the image of policing in these films, and producers were able to use the Met's seal of approval as a key selling point. All three films feature extensive location shooting in West and Central London. Both *The Blue Lamp* and *Street Corner* depict working-class districts of West London, where police officers deal with runaway delinquents who seek adventure and crime in nearby Soho, whereas *The Long Arm*, a Scotland Yard-based film, offers a recognisable, landmark London, with extensive use of Westminster and landmark buildings such as Festival Hall. The studios' publicity departments emphasised the use of real London locations in publicity materials for all three films, while critics praised the films' authenticity and realism.

The Blue Lamp was the first commercial feature film fully endorsed and supervised by the Met. Both Robert Murphy and James Chapman consider the film to be a "watershed" in its shifting of focus in British crime films from the spiv to the police or detective.¹ The film was hugely influential in future depictions of policing; the success of the film encouraged the Metropolitan Police to further collaborate on *Street Corner* and *The Long Arm*, while the character of George Dixon in *The Blue Lamp* was resurrected for the popular series *Dixon of Dock Green* (BBC 1955-1976), and a succession of police procedural drama films were produced throughout the 1950s onwards.

¹ Robert Murphy, 'Riff Raff: British Cinema and the Underworld' in Charles Barr, *All Our Yesterdays*, p.302; James Chapman, 'Sordidness, Corruption and Violence almost Unrelieved: Critics, Censors and the Post-war British Crime Film', *Contemporary British History*, 22, no.2 (2008), p.197.

Much secondary literature on *The Blue Lamp* focuses on the film's legacy in British cinema, its portrayal of the postwar 'crime wave' and juvenile delinquency (as explored in Chapter One and Four of this thesis).² Secondary literature on *Street Corner*, tends to couch the film within Sydney and Muriel Box's post-Gainsborough productions and within the wider body of Sidney Box's work, while film historians, such as Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, discuss *The Long Arm* within its industrial context, as it was the final film shot at Ealing Studios.³ Alexander Rock's recent PhD thesis uses the meticulous Metropolitan police files to explore the level of involvement of the Metropolitan Police in the production of *The Blue Lamp*, *Street Corner* and *The Long Arm*.⁴ This chapter compliments Rock's thesis by combining primary research, including production documents, Metropolitan Police files, publicity material and critics' responses, to critically analyse how each film used locations to depict policing in their respective London locations.

Policing Paddington in *The Blue Lamp*

Guardians of law and order, such as detectives, special agents and superheroes, have always been commonplace in US and British popular fiction. However, the ordinary 'bobby on the beat' was often a figure of ridicule, with police officers often the 'butt of the joke' in early slapstick shorts. This image of policing continued into the interwar period with films such as the slapstick comedy *Blue Bottles* (dir. Ivor Montagu, 1928) and the Will Hay comedy film *Ask A Policeman* (dir. Marcel Varnel, 1939). In crime dramas, police officers were often secondary characters, as main protagonists tended to be the more enigmatic detective figure. One of the first postwar British fiction films to feature London policemen as main protagonists was the crime drama *Night Beat* (dir. Harold Huth, 1948), a film about two ex-commandos, Don (Hector Ross) and Andy (Ronald Howard) who join the police force. Don (Hector Ross) becomes a CID detective, while Andy is lured into the

² See, for instance, Steve Chibnall, 'The Teenage Trilogy: The Blue Lamp, I Believe in You and Violent Playground' in Alan Burton, Tim O'Sullivan and Paul Wells (eds.), *Liberal Directions: Basil Dearden and Postwar British Film Culture*, pp.137-153.

³ See, for instance, Andrew Spicer, *Sydney Box* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2006); and Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s*.

⁴ Alexander Rock, 'The Metropolitan Police and the British Film Industry, 1919-1956: Processes of Collaboration and Control' (Unpublished doctoral thesis, De Montfort University, Leicester, June 2014), p.296.

seedy Soho underworld of the postwar spiv. Despite moderate box office success, the film received poor reviews and is generally regarded by film historians as an unrealistic depiction of postwar crime.⁵ In newspaper reviews of *Night Beat*, critics appealed to British studios to produce a more positive portrayal of the police force; Margaret Lane (*Evening Standard*) argued that, “It is time somebody explored this fascinating field [the Metropolitan Police], for the convention is worn out that a London policeman can appear in a play or film only to be baffled or otherwise funny”, while the *Times* suggested that “a good story could be told, and a good film made out of the night life of London as seen from the point of view of the police. *Night Beat* is not that film”.⁶

In May 1948, Jan Read wrote to Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Commissioner Harold Scott, asking for police cooperation in the development and production of a film about police officers on the beat in London, stating that “A great deal of public sympathy exists for the police in their tackling of the current crime wave.”⁷ Read was keen to reassure Scott that this police film would be very different in tone and subject matter to *Night Beat*: “We should not want to make another film like *Night Beat*, which, as it seems to us, used the police as an excuse for yet another cops and robbers story about spivs in the East End”.⁸ Read’s persuasive arguments, as well as a need for more positive depictions of police work, convinced the Metropolitan Police to collaborate on *The Blue Lamp*. Ted Willis developed the character of George Dixon after accompanying Inspector Mott, an East End officer who knew every part of his beat, on his duties.⁹ The press later reported that the film was based on the real-life shooting of PC Nathaniel Edgar in February 1948, a story which ran in the popular press as the hunt for his killer intensified, however, according to a minute sheet in the Metropolitan Police files, the film was not based on this incident.¹⁰ The *Daily Telegraph* later reported how this policy of collaboration with the police might also increase the success of British films in the US.¹¹

⁵ See Andrew Spicer, ‘British Film Noir’, in Andrew Spicer (ed.) *European Film Noir* (Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2007), p.95.

⁶ Margaret Lane, *Evening Standard*, 16 January 1948; ‘New Films in London’, *Times*, 19 January 1948, p.7.

⁷ TNA: MEPO File 2/8342, *The Blue Lamp*: Letter from Jan Read to Sir Harold Scott, 06 April 1948.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Jeffrey Richards and Anthony Aldgate, *Best of British*, p.128.

¹⁰ TNA: MEPO File 2/8342, *The Blue Lamp*: Minute Sheet, 13 August 1949.

¹¹ ‘Yard Aid in Crime Film’, *Daily Telegraph*, 17 January 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *The Blue Lamp*.

The Blue Lamp's opening sequences immediately establish the message that the bobby on the beat is a necessary and reassuring figure, at one with the city streets. In the opening sequences, a series of dissolves depicts police officers on the beat in the city streets; low angles and eye-level shots give the impression of both authority and familiarity are anchored with the voice over of a Judge at the Old Bailey stating "I have no doubt the best preventatives of crime is the regular uniform officer on the beat". The film reinforces the belief that figure of the bobby on the beat was invaluable, as John B Mays noted in his study of police in working-class Liverpool "nothing could replace the constable moving on foot in a limited area, knowing the alleys and back-ways where patrol cars could not penetrate".¹² When George Dixon is first introduced he is giving directions to a passer-by, Man: "Paddington Station?" Dixon: Yes, Sir. Straight across the green, turn left over the iron bridge and you're there", immediately signalling a familiarity with the area only a "veteran" (as stated in the voice over) like Dixon could know. In one sense, the film depicts the familiar trope of a younger officer's journey, as PC Mitchell transforms from a rookie who is yet to learn the beat, to an accomplished officer who, in the film's final sequence, is able to give directions to a passer-by, providing a neat circular narrative through the mirroring of Mitchell and Dixon. *The Blue Lamp* ends in typical long shot, as Andy patrols the now-familiar Harrow Road, with a sense of belonging and reassurance of law and order emphasised through the camera pan upwards to the familiar blue police station sign.

Alexander Rock demonstrates that this "ideological impetus" to focus on police strengths and grounding in their communities was due mainly to the Met Press Bureau's involvement in development and production.¹³ For Robert Murphy, the image of the benign bobby on the beat with "star-gazing, choir-singing policemen, audaciously transfers from country village to inner-city working-class community" and, with the postwar crime wave "seemed to make people receptive to the idea of the police as a reassuring, protective force".¹⁴ The original shooting script for the film included a montage using stock footage to contextualise the work of the police in London to depict them as heroic, including images of Coronation Day and police in the 1946 Victory march, interspersed with shots of Dixon helping workers burrow

¹² Quoted in David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain, 1945-1951*, p.361.

¹³ Alexander Rock, 'The Metropolitan Police and the British Film Industry', p.148.

¹⁴ Robert Murphy, 'Riff Raff: British Cinema and the Underworld', p.302.

through a blitzed house.¹⁵ This footage was not included in the final edit, as perhaps reminders of the importance of the police in British national culture were unnecessary.

Ealing succeeded in creating what was perceived by the Met and police forces around the country to be a positive portrayal of policing. Commissioner Harold Scott and the Chiefs of Home Counties police attended the films' premiere in Wardour Street on 16th January 1950 and publicly praised the film.¹⁶ Police forces were keen to exploit the film for opportunities for recruitment and greater public understanding of police work; across the country, police forces launched various exhibitions, stunts and demonstrations to use the film as a promotion for their own activities; West Hartlepool Police, for instance, planned stunts during the film's screening where audiences would see and hear the dialling of 999.¹⁷ The press reported how members of the police force attested to the film's accuracy, while City of Liverpool police used the film as a training tool for young recruits.¹⁸ *Daily Graphic* also praised the depiction of London police, describing them as "unfailing courteous, decent, steady, good-natured chaps".¹⁹ However, a minority of critics felt the film did not accurately portray the daily workings of the London police; the *Herald* argued that "the real problems of the police are ignored in favour of Dick Barton stuff. The understaffed, overworked, poorly housed London bobby is not shown".²⁰ While most critics praised the varied location work, both *Monthly Film Bulletin* and *Sight and Sound* critiqued the location work for lacking the range and variety of that in *The Naked City*.²¹ However, the repeated use of the Harrow Road reflects police beat restrictions and reinforces the sense of familiarity Dixon and Mitchell have with 'their' streets. It is on the Harrow Road where they encounter both the mundane and the dramatic, from routine encounters with local characters including barrow boys and motorists to the shooting of Dixon outside the Coliseum Cinema. The repetition in use of locations at different times of day depicting the

¹⁵ *The Blue Lamp*: Shooting Script, 1950.

¹⁶ *Evening Standard*, 17 January 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *The Blue Lamp*.

¹⁷ 'Film Puts Over Its Message – Which Concerns Us All', *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 04 March 1950, p.3; *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 14 March 1950, p.2.

¹⁸ 'Oxted Author of The Blue Lamp is an ex-PC', *Sevenoaks Chronicle*, 14 April 1951, p.1; 'Blue Lamp is to Train Police Boys', *Evening Standard*, 04 February 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *The Blue Lamp*.

¹⁹ *Daily Graphic*, 20 January 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *The Blue Lamp*.

²⁰ *Herald*, 20 January 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *The Blue Lamp*.

²¹ 'The Blue Lamp', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, January-February 1950, p.2; Frank Enley, 'The Blue Lamp', *Sight and Sound*, April 1950, p.76.

daily beat reflects, as Richard Hornsey argues, the “social stability” as Dixon and Mitchell “remain content with their allotted station in life and happily enact its prescribed routines”.²² The Metropolitan Police were keen to show how dramatic crime did not interrupt the more routine daily work of the police, thus Clarke included the sequence where P.C. Mitchell deals with the case of a missing dog.²³

The Blue Lamp’s focus on policing in the streets of Paddington, shot in a documentary style, served to depict the area as one blighted by the perceived postwar ‘crime wave’, yet one that was protected through the familiar routines and belonging of the bobby on his beat. Alexander Rock proposes that *The Blue Lamp* was “a triumph of the Met’s control of production of culture exerted through the Press Bureau” and as such “they sought to take this forward through further collaborations with film interests involved in the production of *The Blue Lamp*”.²⁴ This next collaboration would be with producer Sydney and director Muriel Box on the development and production of *Street Corner*.

Policewomen on the beat in Chelsea in *Street Corner*

In 1948, Scotland Yard collaborated on a low-budget film *The Girl from Scotland Yard* (dir. Paul Baralett, 1948), as a part of a recruitment campaign to encourage women to join the police force. After the success of *The Blue Lamp*, both the Met and British film producers realised the potential in more commercial films about police work, thus *Street Corner* provided an opportunity for the Met and London Independent Producers (LIP, an independent company set up by producers’ Sydney Box and William MacQuitty in 1951), to replicate the success of *The Blue Lamp*, and promote the work of policewomen to wider audience. By 1953, policewomen amounted to just three percent of the total police force, with over 1000 female police officers nationwide and over 400 serving with the Metropolitan Police.²⁵ *Street Corner* consists of three main interrelated plots demonstrates the varied work of policewomen on the beat in Chelsea. Policewomen encounter a homeless couple

²² Richard Hornsey, *Spiv and the Architect*, p.23.

²³ ‘Oxted Author of The Blue Lamp is an ex-PC’, *Sevenoaks Chronicle*, 14 March 1951, p.1.

²⁴ Alexander Rock, ‘The Metropolitan Police and the British Film Industry’, p.213 & p.214.

²⁵ *Street Corner: General Coverage Story and Brief Biographies* (Mayfair: JARO, 1952), p.1; Jerry White, *London in the Twentieth Century*, p.293.

where the wife turns out to be an army deserter, a neglected child who has crawled onto a window ledge in a crumbling block of flats, and a young shoplifter Bridget (Peggy Cummings) who has a relationship with Ray (Terrance Morgan), a jewel thief. The film climaxes with the police chasing Ray across the streets of Chelsea, where a police dog finally captures Ray. *Street Corner* was produced at a time of a changing, more positive public perception of policewomen; Roy Nash (*Star*) proposed that “not so long ago such a picture would have been unthinkable... Now all that has changed. Policewomen today are taken seriously as helpful, efficient, and trimly decorated guardians of the law”.²⁶

Street Corner combined Sydney Box and William MacQuitty’s expertise in documentary, with a film rooted in reality and with extensive location shooting, with a commercially viable project. Sydney Box had previously established Verity Films, which by 1942, were the biggest producer of short documentary films in Britain and was thus accomplished at what Box referred to as “the documentary method of social reporting with a fictional story”.²⁷ Box then became managing director of Gainsborough Pictures in 1946, with a view to produce more commercially successful fiction films. At Gainsborough and then LIP, Sydney Box developed a reputation for “topical, social realism focusing on the respectable working-class and an economical script”.²⁸ For Andrew Spicer, *Street Corner* was in keeping with Sydney Box’s aforementioned trademarks and continued his previous work Gainsborough, with successful topicals such as *Good Time Girl* (dir. David MacDonald, 1948), and films with multiple stories such as *Holiday Camp* (dir. Ken Annakin, 1947).²⁹ William MacQuitty’s expertise was also in documentary, having previously produced documentary films with heavy location shooting such as *Out of Chaos* (dir. Jill Craigie, 1944), *The Way We Live* (dir. Jill Craigie, 1944), a point Rank was keen to stress in publicity materials for *Street Corner*.³⁰ Rank also publicised the previous work of the two key female personnel; production manager Elsie Hatchett was a Londoner with previous experience of documentary production, while director Muriel Box had just directed the

²⁶ Roy Nash, *Star*, 13 March 1953, BFI Press Cuttings: *Street Corner*.

²⁷ Sydney Box, ‘Puzzle - Find the Director’, Peter Noble (ed.) *The British Film Yearbook, 1949-50* (London: Skelton Robinson, 1951), p.91.

²⁸ Andrew Spicer, *Sydney Box*, p.152.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p.149.

³⁰ *Street Corner*: Exploitation Folder (Publicity Division: J. Arthur Rank Organisation, 1953), BFI Special Collections, Muriel and Sydney Box Collection N-37231.

commercial successful film *This Happy Family* (dir. Muriel Box, 1952), about the disruption caused by the festival of Britain on a family who own a grocery shop on the South Bank.³¹ Muriel Box, Sydney Box's wife and third partner at LIP, was therefore an obvious choice to direct *Street Corner*, as Muriel Box proved adept at directing a film rooted in real locations, on schedule and under budget. *Street Corner* also played to Muriel Box's feminist sensibilities (Muriel Box later described herself as a feminist). For Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, *Street Corner* forms part of a coherent body of work at LIP at this time under Muriel Box's directorship, alongside *This Happy Family* (dir. Muriel Box, 1952) and later the *The Beachcomber* (dir. Muriel Box, 1954) with Muriel's direction giving the films "a clear feminist theme".³²

LIP and Rank emulated *The Blue Lamp* in both *Street Corner*'s development and subsequent publicity. Jan Read, who also co-authored the original treatment for *The Blue Lamp*, originally set *Street Corner* in West End Central station, then located in Saville Row and notable for being the largest police station in Europe (Indeed, the original treatment was titled *West End Central*). As with *The Blue Lamp*, the film's location changed during several script revisions, this time from West End Central to Chelsea Station.³³ Sydney Box set aside three weeks to research London's policewomen when developing Read's original treatment, including time at Paddington and Marylebone stations, with Box and Read basing the script on actual cases from the records of Scotland Yard.³⁴ Rank's publicity division also replicated the key selling points for *The Blue Lamp* by emphasising the use of real locations; "the film will be made largely on location around Charing Cross, Piccadilly Circus and Chelsea", while an early press release stated that "the story of *Street Corner* radiates from Chelsea Police Station to dramatic happenings set against authentic London backgrounds".³⁵ The use of the real Chelsea Police Station as a key selling point compared with the real Paddington Green Station in *The Blue Lamp*; *Daily*

³¹ Ibid.

³² Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s*, p.160.

³³ The scenes set in the fictional 'Downbeat Club', Soho, were one of the few elements of Read's original treatment retained in the final film.

³⁴ One working title for the film was *Policewomen*, one Sydney Box was never entirely comfortable with (*News of the World*, 07 September 1952), another was *The Woman in Blue*. Other considerations for the title were *The Gentle Arm*. Earl St John's decision to change it to *Street Corner* was one the Metropolitan Police were not happy with. In the US, the film was released as *Both Sides of the Law*. Information about name changes in *Street Corner*: *General Coverage Story and Brief Biographies*, (Mayfair: Jaro, 1953), p.1.

³⁵ *Street Corner*, Exploitation Folder, 1953, located in Steve Chibnall's personal archive; *News of the World*, 07 September 1952, BFI Press Cuttings: *Street Corner*.

Herald reported how the police were lending parts of Chelsea Police Station with a full replica of the station built at Gate Studios.³⁶ *Street Corner*'s publicity materials explicitly referenced *The Blue Lamp* in press releases and publicity documents. Critics were also quick to point out the similarities between the two films; Leonard Mosley (*Daily Express*) thought "you might almost be seeing *The Blue Lamp* again", while Roy Nash (*Star*) described *Street Corner* as "a sort of *Blue Lamp* with a frilly pink shade on it".³⁷

The Met's involvement with the development and production of *Street Corner* proved to be a fraught experience for Muriel Box, who complained that "our troubles with Scotland Yard are never ending".³⁸ Muriel Box noted in her diary that "Sydney takes pages to Jan Read who checks every word in case we are falling foul of the police. It's a very trying way to write a script and wearing on the nerves".³⁹ Alexander Rock concludes that these ongoing revisions were due to Fearnley's increased control over production after *The Blue Lamp*.⁴⁰ However, Sue Harper and Vincent Porter argue that Scotland Yard were reluctant to cooperate in the same manner as *The Blue Lamp* as the melodramatic nature of the female-centred plots meant that the Met "feared the film's feminism".⁴¹ Percy Fearnley was, however, keen to replicate and even exceed the success of *The Blue Lamp*, stating in a letter to Sydney Box that "I see no reason why the film should not at least equal the excellence of *The Blue Lamp*; although quite frankly, I would prefer it to be welcomed by the press and public as an even better film".⁴² The Metropolitan Police also granted facilities to LIP on the same scale as those for *The Blue Lamp*, an aspect of production which Rank's publicity division were keen to exploit; "the police provided advisors who were constantly in attendance at the studios and on the

³⁶ 'This *Blue Lamp* will star PoliceWOMEN', *Daily Herald*, 19 September 1952, BFI Press Cuttings: *Street Corner*.

³⁷ Leonard Mosley, *Daily Express*, 13 March 1953, BFI Press Cuttings: *Street Corner*, Roy Nash, *Star*, 13 March 1953, BFI Press Cuttings: *Street Corner*.

³⁸ Muriel Box, *Odd Woman Out: An Autobiography of Muriel Box* (London: Leslie Frewin Publishers, 1974), p.218.

³⁹ Muriel and Sydney Box Diaries, 12 May 1952, BFI Special Collections, Muriel and Sydney Box Collection N-37231.

⁴⁰ Alexander Rock, 'The Metropolitan Police and the British Film Industry', p.216.

⁴¹ Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s*, p.160.

⁴² TNA: MEPO File 2/9040, *The Blue Lamp*: Letter from Percy H. Fearnley to Sydney Box, 14 August 1952.

sites of location filming, and policemen controlled the traffic wherever the film unit went".⁴³

Location shooting for *Street Corner* was undertaken on the streets of Chelsea, Camden and Pimlico in September 1952, with studio work completed in October 1952 at Gate Studios, Boreham Wood. Location work proved challenging due to adverse weather during a particularly cold September, with little sunshine necessary for outdoor shots.⁴⁴ Certain locations had to be changed for practical reasons, such as the exteriors for Bridget's home, which were originally all to be shot in Wilton Row, Belgravia, a crescent shaped mews of then working-class terraces. However, as Wilton Row was always in shadow, the location was moved to Lennox Gardens, a row of pre-war terraces located in Chelsea (Wilton Row can be viewed in a couple of shots where Bridget looks out of her front window).⁴⁵ Despite the difficulties Muriel and Sydney Box encountered, *Street Corner* was completed on schedule on 25 November 1952 and £10,000 under budget.⁴⁶

Both *The Blue Lamp* and *Street Corner* compare in their depiction of West London locations to convey sense of belonging for officers on the beat, and reassurance that law and order prevails. The circular opening and ending of *Street Corner* parallels *The Blue Lamp*; two policewomen patrol Chelsea Embankment, the low-key lighting and ominous music lend a noir-like quality to the film and establish this part of Chelsea at night as a place of potential danger, nevertheless one that the two policewomen confidently patrol by dealing with a homeless couple. *Street Corner* ends with two policewomen in long shot, patrolling along the Thames towards Westminster Bridge, in scenes reminiscent of *The Blue Lamp*, where Andy Mitchell patrols along the Harrow Road. *Street Corner*'s climatic sequence, involving the police chasing Ray across a bombed site, also compares with the climax in *The Blue Lamp*, where Riley runs across a bombed wasteland near White City, continuing the association in British crime films of bombed sites as spaces where criminals run and hide.

⁴³ TNA: MEPO File 2/9040, *The Blue Lamp*: Memo, 04 September 1952; *Street Corner*, Exploitation Folder, 1953; *News of the World*, 07 September 1952, BFI Press Cuttings; *Street Corner*.

⁴⁴ Muriel and Sydney Box Diaries, 13 September 1952, BFI Special Collections, Muriel and Sydney Box Collection N-37231.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Andrew Spicer, *Sydney Box*, p.151.

The motif of the West End as an underworld, attracting young criminals and runaways, as depicted in *The Blue Lamp*, continues in *Street Corner* through publicity materials. Rank's general coverage of the story describes the familiar areas of the West End as such; "Piccadilly Circus at midnight with loitering G.I.s, down and outs and derelicts on Chelsea's Riverside, playground of vice whose victims a gallant band of women fight to save"⁴⁷. However, Rank were also keen to highlight the crime wave as a generally urban problem, not one restricted to the West End; "In every big city there exist men and women whose lives have drifted into the dark byways and sin-smeared corners of the underworld"⁴⁸. The character of Bridget (Peggy Cummins), a young Irish mother and her relationship with Ray, a gangster, reflects that of Riley and Diana in *The Blue Lamp*; Jan Read's original treatment describes Bridget as "the sort of kid who comes from a respectable suburban home and has drifted into the West End in search of excitement". This compares with *The Blue Lamp*'s introduction to Diana, as she walks down Shaftsbury Avenue the voice over describes "restless and ill-adjusted youngsters". The theme of working-class youths who transgress spaces of leisure as seen in *The Blue Lamp* and *Cosh Boy* is sustained in *Street Corner* as Bridget is caught shoplifting in an upmarket department store on Sloane Square. These 'upmarket' spaces, such as Sloane Square, are depicted as areas poorer residents can ill-afford, in contrast to certain working-class residential streets in Chelsea, where criminals such as Ray and young mothers such as Bridget reside.

Christine Geraghty distinguishes between the "public sphere of the streets, cafes and snooker halls" of *The Blue Lamp* and the private sphere of female policing in *Street Corner*, which tends to involve "intervention in the homes of working-class families"⁴⁹. Although policemen in *The Blue Lamp* do deal with domestic spaces and issues, such as the incident of domestic abuse in the slum tenements, however there is more of an emphasis on the domestic in *Street Corner*. A common public misconception was that policewomen were trained to deal exclusively in matters involving women and children, whereas in reality, policewomen were given the same training, powers and duties as men.⁵⁰ Joan Lock, a policewoman assigned to

⁴⁷ *Street Corner: General Coverage Story and Brief Biographies*, 1953, p.1.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p.1.

⁴⁹ Christine Geraghty, *British Cinema in the Fifties*, p.148.

⁵⁰ Kerry Seagrave, *Policewomen: A History*, 2nd Edition (US: McFarland & company Inc., 2004), p.205.

the West End in the 1950s recalls how police work tended to deal with “offences committed by prostitutes, shoplifters, street traders, buskers and street photographers”.⁵¹ *Street Corner* reflected this perception that policewomen dealt exclusively with domestic issues involving women and children, as they monitor runaway young girls, neglected children and single mothers in the working-class areas of Chelsea.

In both *The Blue Lamp* and *Street Corner* the police officers are deployed away from the areas they live, reflecting actual practice. Geraghty also notes the differences in social status between the upper-middle class policewomen and their working-class subjects, whereas the policemen of *The Blue Lamp* are of the ‘respectable’ working-class.⁵² In the sequence with Mrs. Dawson’s neglected child, these class differences are evident through accents, dress and location; the policewomen’s trim attire and RP accents are a direct contrast to the working-class women who live in the flats, who smoke, wear headscarves, gather on the streets and refer to the neglected child as a ‘poor bastard’. PC Susan’s (Anne Crawford) daring rescue of the child across the flat’s window ledges emphasises the bravery of policewomen and sometimes dangerous nature of the work. In this scene, there are comparisons with *It Always Rains on Sunday*: firstly there is a clear sense that the women and children know each other’s business, more through close proximity in slum housing rather than a sense of community; secondly, both films use a street in Camden, characterised by pre-war terraces and a railway line at the end of the street, to function as another location.⁵³ The sound of the steam railway can be heard loudly and as Crawford rescues the girl, the steam from the railway can be viewed, again continuing the common motif of the intersection of railways and working-class domestic spaces as depicted in *It Always Rains on Sunday*, *The Blue Lamp* and *Cosh Boy*.

Street Corner’s focus on policewomen ensures it departs from *The Blue Lamp* in its use of certain locations and aspects of policing the West London streets. Although location work is not as extensive in *Street Corner* as it is in *The Blue Lamp*, there is less repetition of the same locations, reflecting real practice, as policewomen were

⁵¹ Joan Lock, *Lady Policeman* (London: Michael Joseph, 1968), p.11.

⁵² Christine Geraghty, *British Cinema in the Fifties*, p.148.

⁵³ In *Street Corner* the actual street used was Mornington Terrace, Camden.

not restricted to set routines or streets in the way policemen were.⁵⁴ The importance of the streets and urban geography of Chelsea in *Street Corner* reflects Louise A. Jackson's analysis of the memoirs of female police officers in London, where, for policewomen of the 1950s and 1960s, "the social and environmental geography of London is foregrounded: urban life is presented as a constitutive of the experience of policing rather than a backdrop to the narrative that unfolds".⁵⁵ This variation in the postwar London environment was emphasised as a selling point by Rank's Publicity Division, as when the police discover the whereabouts of Ray and Chick, "there follows a hide and seek drama against such typical London scenes as vast modern blocks of flats and quaint cobbled mews".⁵⁶ The estate used for Ray's home was the new prestigious Churchill Gardens in Pimlico, Westminster, (built between 1946 and 1962), which in 1951 won the Festival of Britain Architectural awards.⁵⁷ Filming of the flats at night with empty rain washed streets and striking vertical lines gives the estate a noir eerie and desolate quality and contrasts to the older, noisy housing where Mrs Dawson's child is recused. Such scenes reflect changing postwar London housing and differences between the older cramped terraces and newer municipal estates, yet demonstrate how the old and new London co-existed together.

While *Street Corner* did not have the lasting legacy of *The Blue Lamp*, it was successful for the independent company LIP. Muriel Box was pleased with the film's success and boasted that it broke records for the Gaumont on its London release.⁵⁸ Unfortunately, *Street Corner*'s marketing campaign did not accurately reflect the film's plot. Roy Nunn (*Daily Sketch*) reported that a 'Surrey housewife' thought the advertising poster depicted Peggy Cummins as "an over-roughed, under-dressed pick up girl in a slum [...] looked sordid".⁵⁹ However, the 'Surrey housewife' was reported as emerging from the cinema smiling, as "the film was nothing like the advertisement suggested... It is the everyday story of London

⁵⁴ Louise A. Jackson, 'Lady Cops', p.69.

⁵⁵ Louise A. Jackson, 'Lady Cops' and 'Decoy Doras': Gender, Surveillance and the Construction of Urban Knowledge, 1919–59', *The London Journal*, 27, no.1 (2002), p.63.

⁵⁶ *Street Corner*: Exploitation Folder, 1953

⁵⁷ Christine Hui and Lan Manley, 'Building of the Month: Churchill Gardens', August 2013, Twentieth Century Society, online: <http://www.c20society.org.uk/botm/churchill-gardens-pimlico/> [Accessed 13 September 2016]

⁵⁸ Muriel and Sydney Box Diaries, 28 April 1953, BFI Special Collections, Muriel and Sydney Box Collection N-37231.

⁵⁹ R. Nunn, *Daily Sketch*, 13 March 1953, BFI Press Cuttings: *Street Corner*.

policewomen”.⁶⁰ Indeed, even Sydney Box thought that the film’s publicity campaign was “sleazy”.⁶¹ Despite the sensationalist publicity campaign, the actual film itself was well-received by police officers; Inspector Jessie Dean, a policewoman in Leeds, praised *Street Corner*’s accuracy, particularly the “scene where a policewoman tackles a thug” as “almost the very same thing happened in Leeds last week”.⁶² Fred Majdalany (*Daily Mail*) felt the film had “a modest little stab” at “one of those half-documentary films we reckon to be so good at”.⁶³ However, not all critics considered the film to be realistic or authentic; the *Times* referred to the realism as “pathetic” and “in spite of authentic shots of Chelsea and its police station, as suspect as a period piece in a dubious antique shop”.⁶⁴ Following completion and release of *Street Corner*, the Metropolitan Police could now commence supervision on another Ealing production in development since 1951, *The Long Arm*.

Westminster and the Royal Festival Hall in *The Long Arm*

In November 1950, the Met were keen to collaborate with Ealing on a film with a documentary ethos that would place “CID in the foreground and uniform in the background”, as a “*The Blue Lamp* in reverse”.⁶⁵ The original story, with the working title *Phantom Fingers*, was scripted by Janet Green and television documentary writer Robert Barr, based on real-life case files from Scotland Yard.⁶⁶ However, development and production was postponed for five years as the Met had already agreed to collaborate with LIP on *Street Corner*. Production finally commenced in October 1955, concluded in January 1956, and the film was released as *The Long Arm* the UK in June 1956.⁶⁷

The Long Arm concerns Detective-Superintendent Tom Halliday (Jack Hawkins) and Detective-Sergeant Ward’s (John Stratton) hunt for a safe-breaker, Gilson,

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Andrew Spicer, *Sydney Box*, p.151.

⁶² ‘Film Tribute to Women Police’, *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 20 April 1953, p.6.

⁶³ Fred Majdalany, *Daily Mail*, 13 April 1953, p.8.

⁶⁴ ‘New Films in London’, *Times*, 16 April 1953, p.11.

⁶⁵ TNA: MEPO File 2/8736, *The Blue Lamp*: Minutes, 13 November 1950.

⁶⁶ ‘Hawkins of the Yard’, *Today’s News*, Ealing Studios Press Release, 01 July 1955.

⁶⁷ *The Long Arm* was released in the USA as *The Third Key*.

(Richard Leech) who poses as a night watchman. Halliday and Ward's search for Gilson takes them across the country, from London to North Wales and back again, culminating with the detectives finally tracking down Gilson at the Royal Festival Hall. The film features a variety of locations, including; the streets surrounding Scotland Yard in Westminster and the Southbank, the outer London suburbs as exteriors for Halliday's home, exteriors at Pen-Y-Gwyrdd in North Wales, and the Royal Festival Hall on London's South Bank. *The Long Arm* was a moderate financial success in both the UK and US, and the film won a Silver Bear award at the Berlin Film Festival. *News of the World* reported that the film was well-received by Scotland Yard, with one senior Scotland Yard detective exclaiming: 'This will do for the C.I.D. what *The Blue Lamp* did for the chaps on the beat'.⁶⁸

For Ealing, *The Long Arm* was an opportunity to capitalise not only on the success of *The Blue Lamp* but also on the success of *The Cruel Sea* (dir. Charles Frend, 1953) by reuniting director Charles Frend and star Jack Hawkins.⁶⁹ Ealing approached the production of *The Long Arm* in a similar vein *The Blue Lamp*, with an emphasis on authenticity. Producer Tom Morahan requested an advisor from the Met be present for the film's shoot, reminding Percy Fearnley that the use of an advisor on *The Blue Lamp* was what gave the film much of its authenticity, thus Chief Inspector Joseph Burton, acting as Technical Advisor from Scotland Yard, was assigned to oversee production.⁷⁰ Studio sets were replicas of real locations, including the offices at Scotland Yard, shipping firms and the jewellers. Charles Frend, producer Tom Morahan and other studio executives visited rooms at Scotland Yard and took photographs to ensure accurate studio set building.⁷¹ The actual Commissioner's Office at Scotland Yard was used for filming on the nights of the 18th and 25th November 1955, with false arches erected in certain rooms to screen the lights.⁷²

Alexander Rock notes how Frend's approach was even more hands-on than that of Basil Dearden for *The Blue Lamp* and Sydney Box for *Street Corner*.⁷³ Indeed, this

⁶⁸ *News of the World*, 24 June 1956, BFI Press Cuttings: *The Long Arm*.

⁶⁹ Hawkins of the Yard, *Today's News*, Ealing Studios Press Release, 01 July 1955.

⁷⁰ TNA: MEPO File 2/8736, *The Long Arm*: Letter from Tom Morahan to Percy H. Fearnley, 19 September 1955.

⁷¹ TNA: MEPO File 2/8736, *The Long Arm*: Memo - Chief Superintendent, 02 April 1955.

⁷² TNA: MEPO File 2/8736, *The Long Arm*: Memo, Commissioner's Office, Press and Information Department, 16 November 1955.

⁷³ Alexander Rock, 'The Metropolitan Police and the British Film Industry', p.283.

hands-on approach was evident in regard to the use of exterior locations. For the scene where Wharton tracks Gilson, Frend provided the Met with detailed location plans of Cockspur Street and Pall Mall East as an alternative location to Lower Regent Street.⁷⁴ Frend's experience of exterior shooting is evident in his suggestion to Percy Fearnley that hidden cameras would reduce problems for both the film crew and the Met when shooting street locations, and suggested that post office shelters would be appropriate hiding places for cameras when shooting on Sloane Square.⁷⁵ Ealing's publicity department used Frend's expertise in blending documentary and fiction as a selling point for *The Long Arm*, reminding audiences and press of Frend's success with films using extensive location shooting such as *A Run for Your Money* (dir. Charles Frend, 1949) and *The Magnet* (dir. Charles Frend, 1950), billing him as a director "more at home out of doors than inside a studio".⁷⁶

The Long Arm opens with a montage of Scotland Yard at night, including the interior of the information room, then located at 4 Whitehall Place in South West London, close to Trafalgar Square and Victoria Embankment. The opening credits are on the busy streets, with the camera in front of the no.13 bus at London Bridge, a familiar landmark. The suspenseful music over the images lacks the documentary style of *The Blue Lamp*, yet the locations and title card stating, "We gratefully acknowledge the help given by Commissioner of the Police of the Metropolis, Sir John Nott Bower, k.c.v.o., and his staff at New Scotland Yard" lend the film an instant gravitas and realism. The images of Great Queen Street and Dury Lane off Kingsway at night, with interiors of Stone and Co, replete with low key lighting and low and high angles and bar imagery from the staircase, gives the film a noir quality akin to American detective thrillers popular in the late 1940s and early 1950s. As with *The Blue Lamp* and *Night and the City*, Soho is portrayed as an area of vice and underworld activity, as Wharton meets an underworld contact, Slob, on in Soho car park at night replete with a café bar in the distance.

⁷⁴ TNA: MEPO File 2/8736, *The Long Arm*: Letter from Charles Frend to Percy H. Fearnley, 16 October 1955; The day-to day difficulties of location shooting around Pall Mall East on 12 October 1955 were noted in the Metropolitan Police minutes, TNA: MEPO File 2/8736. The police advised Norman Priggen how to avoid unnecessary disruption, including shooting on a weekday rather than a weekend to avoid busy periods and use an ordinary LTE bus for a scene at an ordinary bus stop so as not to attract attention.

⁷⁵ TNA: MEPO File 2/8736, *The Long Arm*: Letter from Charles Frend to Percy H. Fearnley, 16 October 1955.

⁷⁶ *The Long Arm*: Press Release Booklet, Ealing Studios, 1956.

The Long Arm's locations depict the old and new London co-existing, as reconstruction was underway during the relative affluence of the mid-to-late 1950s, while remnants of the older, Victorian London remained. The film displays a variety of London locations, from the recognisable landmark locations such as Pall Mall and a darker, Victorian London, as evidenced by the use of Crisp Road, Hammersmith, posing as the fictional Blackwall Road, Poplar.⁷⁷ This is the same Crisp Road used in *Cosh Boy* and compares in its use of the street to convey an older, seedy and crime-ridden London, here replete with low-key lighting and a rain-washed road. Here, it is the location used for the scene where the workman is killed outside the Blackwall Shipping Company. *The Long Arm* uses a variety of West London locations for their photogenic quality, incorporating the modernist style with flats on Queen Caroline Street, Hammersmith, the modern department store in Sloane Square, and the spectacle of Royal Festival Hall. Modernist municipal flats on Queen Caroline Street in Hammersmith were chosen as the location for the workman's home, described in the shooting script as a place where "electric lights burn in the long balconies of this handsome building".⁷⁸ The estate is framed in long shot with low-key lighting, illuminating the modernist elegance and desolation. Mrs. Elliot/Gilson's aspirational status is reflected in the spaces where Wharton tracks her, from prestigious department store Peter Jones on Sloane Square, built in the mid-1930s with its photogenic streamlined architecture on Sloane Square to her affluent apartment in Crispin Court (the actual estate used was Cramer Court, Hampstead). In contrast, the detectives' homes are semi-detached houses in the suburbs, indicative of their middle-class status. Sue Harper and Vincent Porter describe the interiors of Halliday's home as "chilly" and "isolated", contrasting with the "warm, solid, communal" working-class home of Dixon in *The Blue Lamp*.⁷⁹ Detective Halliday's home is clearly coded as middle-class suburbia, as noted in the film's shooting script, which describes the exteriors of Halliday's street as "an unremarkable street of fairly new middle-class houses".⁸⁰ This is a stark contrast to the dark, seedy city, as the film cuts from the dark, shadowy and rain-washed Long

⁷⁷ As noted in *The Long Arm*: Shooting Script, p.48.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p.45.

⁷⁹ Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s*, p.66.

⁸⁰ *The Long Arm*: Shooting Script, p.6.

Acre, where a robbery has taken place, to Halliday's home, located in the film as Bromley, in bright daylight.

The use of Royal Festival Hall stems from *The Long Arm*'s original development stage in 1951, when the Festival of Britain was at the forefront of the British psyche, heralding in a new era, from immediate postwar austerity to a new, modern Britain. Alexander Rock notes how it was Fearnley's suggestion that the film incorporated the optimism of the festival and ride the bandwagon.⁸¹ However, Royal Festival Hall, the only permanent construction of the festival, was only used for the final climatic scenes, as by 1956 the Festival did not have the same immediate relevancy. The importance of the building was noted by historians, in 1963 Harry Hopkins stated that Festival Hall was "the first modern postwar building in London", describing it as "insulated and suspended like an egg on a cradle, a place of space and light and simple gaiety totally unlike anything the capital had ever known before".⁸² Royal Festival Hall functions as the backdrop and spectacle to be admired from the offices at Scotland Yard, with short scenes showing Mrs Elliot's visit to the office, where she gazes out at Royal Festival Hall and exclaims "not many offices have such a lovely view". This tourist view continues the Ealing trope in *Pool of London* of characters admiring landmarks in the city for afar. Towards *The Long Arm*'s climax, documentary-style shots of the exterior of Royal Festival Hall are also used, first in long establishing shot and then a close up of the sign. The gala night is described by Tom to Wharton as a night of "gaiety, glamour and romance". The finale takes place on the night of a firework display, signalled in the film by a poster, which states the date as Friday 25th November. Long shots of the fireworks, which create reflections in the Thames, add to the spectacle of the location. The clean, empty, modern interiors are shot in a low-key noir lighting, in keeping with how Harry Hopkins states the architecture and Festival style was perceived; clean and contemporary.⁸³

While *The Long Arm* is a continuation of *The Blue Lamp* with its extensive location work, use of real locations and Met supervision and approval, the film lacks the saliency of *The Blue Lamp*. The narrative is more in line with a standard detective

⁸¹ Alexander Rock, 'The Metropolitan Police and the British Film Industry', p.272.

⁸² Harry Hopkins, *The New Look: A Social History of the Forties and Fifties in Britain* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1963), p.277.

⁸³ Harry Hopkins, *The New Look*, p.271.

film, as opposed to the interweaving and multiple cases dealt with in *The Blue Lamp* and *Street Corner*. *The Long Arm*, due to its narrative structure as CID track Gilson across various locations, also lacks the ‘locality’ of *The Blue Lamp* and *Street Corner*, where the police deal with crime as they encounter it on a familiar beat. Alexander Rock also notes that key changes took place from the release of *The Blue Lamp* to the release of *The Long Arm*, including; a more critical view of the police, the decline of cinema audiences, the beginning of the British New Wave, and political instability, including three general elections.⁸⁴ Jeffrey Richards and Anthony Aldgate argue that the shift to films about more senior officers such as *The Long Arm* and *Gideon’s Day* (dir. John Ford, 1958), as the 1950s progressed, were “symptomatic of a reassertion of hierarchy in the culture of the 1950s with the return to power of the Conservatives”.⁸⁵ By 1956 the Ealing formula was beginning to look outdated; Derek Granger in *The Financial Times* complained that the film’s cosy quaintness “makes England seem almost as false as the copy for an advertisement by the British Travel Association”, concluding that “Ealing has given us a lot of fun but it was fast becoming the death of the British character”.⁸⁶

For some critics, the Ealing documentary-fiction film style was also lacking in originality. *Sunday Express* described *The Long Arm* as “another of those Ealing fiction, documentary pieces, a film which “does not attempt anything original, but is a generally efficient example of popular British filmmaking”, while *Monthly Film Bulletin* referred to the film as “workmanlike”.⁸⁷ The ‘workmanlike’ style of Ealing are, argue Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, down to the “workaday sets” and realist ethic of 1950s Ealing. Edward Carrick, the set designer for *The Long Arm*, Harper and Porter argue, is marked by “undistinguished” and “predictable set-dressing”.⁸⁸ However, *The Long Arm* also garnered some favourable reviews praising the documentary elements of the film and Gordon Dines’ photography. *News Chronicle* noted that “the London background – criminal -suburban and constabulary- is beautifully observed” and Gordon Dines “cut shots of indescribable loveliness (like the Thames by moonlight)” while Alan Brien (*Evening Standard*) praised how “the

⁸⁴ Alexander Rock, ‘The Metropolitan Police and the British Film Industry’, p.258.

⁸⁵ Jeffrey Richards and Anthony Aldgate, *Best of British*, p.136.

⁸⁶ Derek Granger, ‘Haunts of Crime’, *Financial Times*, 25 June 1956, p.10.

⁸⁷ *Sunday Express*, 24 June 1956, BFI Press Cuttings: *The Long Arm*; ‘The Long Arm’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, July 1956, p.86; F.J., *Daily Film Renter*, 28 May 1956, p.26.

⁸⁸ Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s*, 2003, p.204.

documentary realism of the camerawork – in the car park of the Royal Festival Hall at night [...] in the streets of South Kensington and Soho, sets the action in a real and solid world”.⁸⁹

Conclusions

The Blue Lamp and *Street Corner* depict Paddington Green and Chelsea as working-class districts with a community ethos, whereas *The Long Arm* differs to earlier Ealing London-set films due to its focus on the work of Scotland Yard, rather than the ‘bobby on the beat’. Both *The Blue Lamp* and *Street Corner* depict the police as integral to local community, at one with the local streets, offering a reassuring presence and sense of belonging, continuing the trope of local community-led London as depicted in earlier Ealing films such as *Passport to Pimlico*. The extensive use of location shooting in all three films was made possible through the supervision and approval of the Met. As with London-set films of the period discussed in this thesis, the extensive location shooting and use of real police stations and replicas imbued the films with an authenticity appreciated by critics, and were used by Ealing and LIP as key selling points.

The involvement of the Met in *The Blue Lamp*, *Street Corner* and *The Long Arm* was of equal benefit to both Ealing and LIP, and the Metropolitan police; Sydney Box was able to exploit the success of *The Blue Lamp* with *Street Corner*, while Balcon was hoping to achieve the same level of success in *The Long Arm* as he did with *The Blue Lamp*. Alexander Rock’s thesis and notes in the MEPO files demonstrate the heavy involvement of the Metropolitan Police in all three productions and the tensions this created between filmmakers and the Met.⁹⁰ For the Metropolitan Police, these three films served to help change the image of British police in popular culture and could be used as tools for recruitment. *The Long Arm* signals the end of the success of Ealing’s postwar London-set films, along with the success of *The Ladykillers*, released just one year earlier. Rock notes how, after the release of *The Long Arm*, the British police in cinema saw a focus away from

⁸⁹ *News Chronicle*, 22 June 1956, BFI Press Cuttings: *The Long Arm*; Alan Brien, *Evening Standard*, 21 June 1956, BFI Press Cuttings: *The Long Arm*.

⁹⁰ Alexander Rock, ‘The Metropolitan Police and the British Film Industry’.

London and towards the North.⁹¹ Indeed, the move north in British cinema of the late 1950s, as exemplified in the British New Wave, would signal a brief hiatus in a focus on London, until the emergence of the 'swinging London' films of the mid-to-late 1960s.

⁹¹ Ibid, p.303.

CHAPTER SIX:

Cold War threats to London in *Seven Days to Noon* and *High Treason*

While postwar juvenile delinquent films and police dramas were pertinent to contemporary audiences, exploring possible solutions for urban delinquency and crime, another salient perceived threat was that of the emerging Cold War and possible nuclear attack. This chapter explores how two Boulting brother's films, *Seven Days to Noon* (1950) and *High Treason* (1951), depicted Cold War threats to London in a manner deemed realistic by contemporary critics. The Boultings were identical twins who together produced, directed and edited socially engaged films throughout World War II and thereafter. They represent the independent spirit in British cinema of the 1940s and 1950s, having set up their own company Charter Films in 1937, thus maintaining a large degree of artistic control over their films. *Seven Days to Noon* and *High Treason* were produced in what critics consider to be their most commercially and artistically successful period, from 1947 to 1951, with films that were socially and politically relevant to the period.

Seven Days to Noon, set in 1952, imagines how an atomic bomb threat would affect the citizens of London and how this threat might be contained, while *High Treason* focuses on 'the threat within' as communist saboteurs plot to destroy Britain's major power stations. *Seven Days to Noon* comprised of extensive location shooting in over seventy London locations, and received considerable critical attention and praise. Its successor, *High Treason*, featured the London dockyards and Battersea Power station for climatic set-pieces, yet did not garner the level of success or critical praise as *Seven Days to Noon*. This chapter examines extensive press coverage of the films' production, and detailed textual analysis with comparisons to relevant British World War II propaganda films, to discuss the importance of London locations as a key selling point and 'character' within the films. The focus of the chapter is mainly on *Seven Days to Noon*, due to its extensive use of locations throughout the film and importance in the canon of British cinema and Cold War films.

Film and cultural historians discuss *Seven Days to Noon* and *High Treason* as British ‘Cold War’ films, and consider the films within their genre and auteur contexts. Tony Shaw considers *Seven Days to Noon* and *High Treason* as part of the first wave of British Cold War films during the early 1950s, when Communism was viewed as “a palpable menace to British Society”.¹ For Shaw, the Cold War enabled the creative exploration of the theme of espionage, popular in 1930s and early 1940s British cinema.² Julian Petley explores the political context of *Seven Days to Noon* and *High Treason* as responses to Britain’s involvement in the Cold War, while Matthew Grant places *Seven Days to Noon* within a wider discussion of how visual representations of nuclear war in British cinema and television shaped changing public perceptions of nuclear attack.³ Sarah Street categorises *Seven Days to Noon* as science fiction, while Andrew Spicer places the film within the sub-genre of the ‘mad scientist’ film, despite, as Marcia Landy points out, “no lurking monsters and catastrophe is avoided”.⁴ However, it is David Seed’s recognition of the generic hybridity of *Seven Days to Noon* which is most useful for understanding the Boulting’s realist and dramatic ethos and aesthetics.⁵ For Seed, the film combines elements of the thriller, the documentary, the social drama, and the British film noir.⁶ Seed also roots the depiction of London within the public’s memory of World War II, to discuss the now-present threat of the atomic bomb.⁷ Location shots in *Seven Days to Noon* are also considered by Stephen Guy within their World War II and Cold War contexts, with some consideration of how the depiction of London compares with films such as *London Can Take It* (dir. Humphrey Jennings and Harry Watt, 1940) and *The Third Man* (dir. Carol Reed, 1949), while Charlotte Brunsdon compares location work in *Seven Days to Noon* to the opening sequences

¹ Tony Shaw, *British Cinema and the Cold War: The State, Propaganda and Consensus* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), p.36.

² Tony Shaw’s examples include: *The 39 Steps* (1935), *The Lady Vanishes* (1938) and *Went the Day Well* (1942), in Tony Shaw, *British Cinema and the Cold War*, p.35.

³ Julian Petley, ‘The Pilgrim’s Progress: The Politics of the Boulting’s Films’, in Alan Burton, Tim O’Sullivan and Paul Wells (eds.) *The Family Way: The Boulting Brothers and British Film Culture*, pp.15-34; Matthew Grant, ‘Images of Survival, Stories of Destruction: Nuclear War on British Screens from 1945 to the Early 1960s’, *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 10, no.1 (2013), pp.7-26.

⁴ E.g. Sarah Street, *British National Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1997); Andrew Spicer, ‘Misfits and the Marginalised: Gender in the Boulting’s Feature Films’, in Alan Burton, Tim O’Sullivan and Paul Wells (eds.) *The Family Way*, pp.68-80; Marcia Landy, *British Genres: Cinema and Society, 1930-1960* (Princeton University Press, 1991), p.403.

⁵ David Seed, ‘Seven Days to Noon: Containing the Atomic Threat’, *British Society for the History of Science*, 45, no.4 (December 2012), p.651.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ David Seed, ‘Seven Days to Noon: Containing the Atomic Threat’.

of *28 Days Later* (dir. Danny Boyle, 2002).⁸ Laurie Ede discusses *Seven Days to Noon* and *High Treason* in context of the Boulting's trademarks, such as the important of realism and factual backgrounds.⁹ This chapter builds on this existing literature by discussing the use of London locations in *Seven Days to Noon* and *High Treason* within their production and reception contexts. The national and provisional press' avid reporting on *Seven Days to Noon*'s production and extensive location work, enables the film historian to trace the production process and identify the importance of location work as a key selling point.

Nuclear threats to London in *Seven Days to Noon*

Seven Days to Noon was produced for London Films, a production company owned by producer and director Alexander Korda. At the time of production, London Films was experiencing a period of financial crisis, despite a reputation for producing sophisticated, glossy and intelligent films.¹⁰ Historian Charles Drazin attributes this crisis to the emergence of new generation of British filmmakers, such as Michael Balcon and Alberto Cavalcanti, schooled in documentary tradition and producing more topical films that reflected contemporary society.¹¹ Indeed, it was two contemporary films with extensive location shooting that bucked the trend for London Films and proved to be financial and critical successes, *The Third Man* (dir. Carol Reed, 1949) and *Seven Days to Noon*.¹² *Seven Days to Noon* was produced at a time when the threat of a nuclear attack on Britain seemed a real possibility, as Matthew Grant states, Britain was deemed especially vulnerable to attack as it was urban, industrial and compact.¹³ Cold War tensions were rising, compounded by the Soviet Union's successful testing of an atomic bomb in August 1949, and Cold War espionage stories were rife in the British press.

⁸ Stephen Guy, "'Somebody Presses a Button and its Goodbye Sally': *Seven Days to Noon* and the Threat of the Atomic Bomb", in Alan Burton, Tim O'Sullivan and Paul Wells (eds.) *The Family Way: The Boulting Brothers and British Film Culture*, pp.143-154; Charlotte Brunsdon, *London in Cinema*, p.48.

⁹ Laurie Ede, 'High Reason: The Boultings Meet the Ghost of Matthew Arnold', Alan Burton, Tim O'Sullivan and Paul Wells (eds.) *The Family Way: The Boulting Brothers and British Film Culture*, pp.35-47.

¹⁰ Charles Drazin, *Korda: Britain's Only Movie Mogul* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 2002), p.331.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.328.

¹² Charles Drazin, *Korda: Britain's Only Movie Mogul*, p.331.

¹³ Matthew Grant, *After the Bomb: Civil Defence and Nuclear War in Cold War Britain, 1945-68* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.16.

Seven Days to Noon forms a body of Cold War films of the early 1950s, mainly produced in the USA such as *Panic in the Streets* (dir. Elia Kaza, 1950), also notable for its semi-documentary style and extensive location shooting in the streets of New Orleans. *Seven Days to Noon* explores the threat of atomic disaster through the character of nuclear scientist Professor Willingdon (Barry Jones), who threatens to destroy London with one of his bombs. The film is structured chronologically, with a title card signalling the start of each new day, revealing how the actions of one man can affect a whole city over a one-week period. The climax takes place over three days; on Friday the city is evacuated, on Saturday the army search the whole of the deserted city for Willingdon and the bomb, and on Sunday morning Willingdon is finally located and shot dead. The film ultimately reassures audiences that relevant state institutions, including the government, police and army, are capable of an efficient mass evacuation of London, and could successfully eliminate the threat of atomic disaster.

The Boulting's commitment to authenticity contributed to their growing critical reputation for producing realistic and quality drama. John Boulting defined film realism in the manner of Italian Neo-Realism, as an "authenticity of background and light as we know it".¹⁴ Through working in independent production companies, Roy and John Boulting retained an artistic freedom they felt would not be possible in a large studio.¹⁵ They directed, developed scripts, chose subject matter and sometimes even edited their films. In 1937, brothers Roy and John formed an independent production company, Charter Films, and within a few years graduated from producing short documentaries to feature fiction films, such as anti-Nazi propaganda film *Pastor Hall* (dir. Roy Boulting, 1940). World War II would continue to shape the Boulting's output; John Boulting's directorial debut was the documentary-style drama *Journey Together* (dir. John Boulting, 1945) produced for the RAF Production Unit, while Roy Boulting directed the war propaganda documentary *Desert Victory* (dir. Roy Boulting, 1943) for the MOI, on Britain's role in driving out the German and Italian army from North Africa. The Boultings retained a realist approach in their films of the late 1940s and early 1950s; *Seven Days to Noon* and

¹⁴ Pat Bowman, 'The Boultings on Location', *Film Industry*, 07, no.54 (11 August 1949), p.6; Laurie Ede, 'High Reason: The Boulting's Meet the Ghost of Matthew Arnold', p.39.

¹⁵ Alan Burton, Tim O'Sullivan and Paul Wells, 'Introduction', in Alan Burton, Tim O'Sullivan and Paul Wells (eds.) *The Family Way: The Boulting Brothers and British Film Culture*, p.5.

High Treason contributed to the Boulting's postwar reputation for producing films with a commitment to authenticity and narratives rooted in contemporary life.

Extensive location shooting on *Seven Days to Noon*, which took place in the unseasonably dry and warm late summer and early autumn of 1949, was regularly reported in the British press during the film's production. *Motherwell Times* provided readers with humorous production stories about a stubborn boy who would not stop gazing at the camera and the actions of a confused police officer who delayed filming in a Bayswater street.¹⁶ The *Daily Mail* conveyed the dangers of shooting in postwar bomb-damaged London, reporting that during production of *Seven Days to Noon*, actress Shelia Manahan was injured after falling on a piece of masonry in a bombed building in Victoria.¹⁷ Margaret Thompson (*Essex Newsman Herald*) reported that people who had seen the film were curious as to how the scenes of an empty London were filmed.¹⁸ Donald Zec (*Daily Mirror*) reported that cameraman Ray Sturges was able to quickly acquire shots of the exterior of Scotland Yard by stacking cameras in the back of a phoney police car.¹⁹ Even the provincial press outside of London reported on the film's production; *Derby Daily Telegraph* described how residents in Lambeth were so used to filming, that when a scene shot in Lambeth Walk awoke residents, they "went back to bed in the knowledge that another scene for *Seven Days to Noon*...had been completed."²⁰

State authorities, including The War Office, the Met, and British Railways, are acknowledged in *Seven Days to Noon*'s opening titles, immediately lending the film a gravitas and realism, echoing *The Blue Lamp* and MOI documentaries that were produced for state institutions. The press avidly informed readers how particular sequences were made possible through permissions gained from these institutions, including the *Gloucester Journal* who reported that the Boultings had consent to film on the steps of No.10 Downing Street.²¹ Sequences involving the police and Scotland Yard offices were produced with supervision and advice from the Met; Ian

¹⁶ 'Not in the Picture', *Motherwell Times*, 09 September 1949, p.12.

¹⁷ 'Actress Hurt', *Daily Mail*, 12 September 1949, p.1.

¹⁸ Margaret Thompson, 'The Real Story Behind Seven Days to Noon', *Essex Newsman Herald*, 24 November 1950, p.2.

¹⁹ Donald Zec, *Daily Mirror* 'Studio Man Dialed 999'. 04 January 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Seven Days to Noon*.

²⁰ 'A Shot Rang Out in Lambeth Walk', *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 29 September 1949, p.1.

²¹ 'Victor Stood Out', *Gloucester Journal*, 27 August 1949, p.15; See also Anon, *Star*, 12 September 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Seven Days to Noon*; *The Times*, 25 December 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Seven Days to Noon*.

Coster for the *Daily Mail* reported how an ex-superintendent observed a sequence to give advice on accuracy, while Donald Zec (*Daily Mirror*) informed readers that Art Director John Elphick constructed the interior sets of Scotland Yard based on sets of photographs and by dialling 999 and asking them to describe their surroundings.²² This strategy of working with state institutions compares with Ealing's production of *The Blue Lamp*, where close involvement of the Met enabled an authenticity and extensive location work. In both cases, location shooting and involvement of state institutions was used as key selling points during production and release, thus contributing to the films' commercial and critical success.

The Boulting's approach to location shooting in *Seven Days to Noon* derived from their experiences in documentary filmmaking, as they chose to not over-plan exterior shots and instead shape location material in the editing process.²³ Laurie Ede posits their approach, that films should reflect reality in both thematics and aesthetics, as a deliberate attempt to eschew Hollywood-style fantasy and Herbert Wilcox's popular escapist British films of the late 1940s, which depicted an illusory, upper-class London.²⁴ However, as Laurie Ede also notes, in some sequences in *Seven Days to Noon*, the Bouldings adopted a more stylistic approach.²⁵ This is most evident in the sequences where Willingdon leaves Methley Road at night; a searchlight beam travels along buildings as if it were chasing Willingdon, creating chiaroscuro lighting effects, as the release script indicates, Willingdon "comes out of the shadows and runs across the roadway and is lost in the darkness on the far side of the road".²⁶ Willingdon runs across bombsites through the deserted city, continuing the association of bombsites and crime in postwar British 'city' films. A looter takes advantage of the dark, empty space around Charing Cross railway arches, contributing to the common trope in postwar London-based films of criminality in dark, Victorian spaces.²⁷ This depiction of a bomb-damaged London where danger lurks, compares to Ealing's use of Victorian London for chase sequences in *It Always Rains on Sunday* and *The Third Man*'s blending of a realist

²² Ian Coster, *Daily Mail*, 01 November 1949, p.3; as reported in Donald Zec, *Daily Mirror* 'Studio Man Dialed 999', 04 January 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Seven Days to Noon*.

²³ As reported in Frank Enley, 'Film in the Making', *Sight and Sound* (February 1950), p.13-15.

²⁴ Laurie Ede, 'High Reason: The Boulting's Meet the Ghost of Matthew Arnold', p.40.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p.41.

²⁶ *Seven Days to Noon*: Release Script, 1950.

²⁷ Stephen Guy also compares the images of desolate London with the depiction of Vienna in *The Third Man*, made up of bombed-sites and deserted streets in Stephen Guy, "'Somebody Presses a Button and its Goodbye Sally'" p.149.

and expressionist style, shot in the war-ravaged streets of Vienna. This combination of realist and noir aesthetic evident in *Seven Days to Noon* was in part due to Director of Photography, Gilbert Taylor, whose main influence was cinematographer Gregg Toland as “he wasn’t a stylist working in the fashion of the day... he treated each subject for what it was worth”.²⁸ Taylor had previously worked in both actuality and fiction film; in 1939, Taylor joined the RAF where he photographed events such as night-time raids over Germany and the liberation of the concentration camps. He then worked as a camera operator for various British studios, including Gaumont-British. The Boultings initially employed Taylor as Director of Photography on three pictures, *Journey Together* (dir. John Boulting, 1945), *The Guinea Pig* (dir. Roy Boulting, 1947) and *Seven Days to Noon* (1950). Taylor acknowledged that it was while working on *The Guinea Pig* that he moved away from contrasts and direct lights and towards a more realistic aesthetic, the dominant aesthetic in *Seven Days to Noon*, by making use of natural light.²⁹ Indeed, Taylor’s preference was for a natural, documentary-style lighting that “keyed into the demands of actuality”.³⁰

In *Seven Days to Noon*, the Boultings present both a familiar, landmark London and a ‘local’ London, evident in the film’s poster image with a residential street in the foreground and Westminster in the background. Through the character of Willingdon, *Seven Days to Noon* depicts a mainly working-class local London, as Willingdon travels from a middle-class village on the outskirts of the city to working-class districts of inner London, where he plots and hides out. The exterior used for Willingdon’s initial lodgings was a nineteenth-century house in Westbourne Park Villas, off Westbourne Park Road in West Paddington (named Clisby Road in the script). This location served a practical purpose, as the alleyways and footbridge to the now-closed Westbourne Park railway station provided a gateway for Willingdon to access central London. The familiar tropes of working-class London are evident in the depiction of Westbourne Park Villas; paint peels off the exterior concrete walls, children play outside and the industrial impedes on the domestic, as the nearby railway can be heard from Willingdon’s room. Later,

²⁸ As reported in Frank Enley, ‘Film in the Making’, *Sight and Sound* (February 1950), p.13-15.

²⁹ Biography of Gilbert Taylor, September 1980, BFI Press Cuttings: Gilbert Taylor; David E. Williams, ‘High – Key Highlights’, *American Cinematographer*, 01 February 2006, pp.56-67.

³⁰ Biography of Gilbert Taylor, September 1980, BFI Press Cuttings: Gilbert Taylor.

Willingdon stays with an older soubrette Goldie (Olive Sloane) in the fictional Lanark Street, Kennington. To authenticate the fiction, the Boultings used the exteriors of Methley Street, Kennington, which then comprised of 60 Victorian tenements. Kennington residents were a cosmopolitan East End ethnic mix, including Jews, Italians, Irish and Portuguese. The Boultings employed the actual residents of Methley Street as extras, an aspect of production that became another selling point of the film's authenticity; Harry Proctor for the *Daily Mail* published an extensive report on the Boulting's use of locations, including Methley Street, stating that the Boultings were looking for "warm human streets which would naturally come to life under the cameras".³¹ Proctor reported how local people who served as extras in the film were proud of their performance and the street's inclusion, with locals such as a retired policeman who lived at no.23, able to perform his regular routine of watering his geraniums for the cameras.³² According to Proctor, 300 residents from Methley Street then viewed the film at a special screening at the Kennington Granada Cinema.³³ John Boulting was quick to praise locals for their cooperation during filming in residential parts of Kennington, Bayswater, Westminster and Paddington. According to the *Motherwell Times*, the Boultings were pleased to be able to "proceed at double the estimated speed" due to the cooperation of local people.³⁴

The depiction of the impact of Cold War threats on ordinary people drew comparisons between *Seven Days to Noon* and wartime drama-documentary films; for Penelope Huston (*Sight and Sound*), *Seven Days to Noon* stemmed directly from propaganda films *The Way Ahead* (dir. Carol Reed, 1944) and *Millions Like Us* (dir. Sidney Gilliat and Frank Launder, 1943).³⁵ Indeed, all three films serve to highlight the civilian sacrifice and focused on the ways in which ordinary British people were involved in, and impacted by, the war effort. A title card thanking the citizens of London in the opening sequences of *Seven Days to Noon* echoes *Millions Like Us*, which addresses the audience directly with the title card "Millions like you". In *Seven Days to Noon*, the Prime Minister delivers instructions on the evacuation through a direct address to the nation on BBC radio. The Boultings merge fictional

³¹ Harry Proctor, '300 see their side street screened', *Daily Mail*, 06 November 1950, p.3.

³² Ibid, p.3.

³³ Harry Proctor, '300 see their side street screened', *Daily Mail*, 06 November 1950, p.3

³⁴ 'Not in the Picture', *Motherwell Times*, 09 September 1949, p.12.

³⁵ Penelope Huston, *Sight and Sound*, 19, no.8 (December 1950), p.332.

and factual footage in a montage of London residents listening to the Prime Minister's speech. They depict the mix the differing social classes and habits in London during the period of the late 1940s, including: speakers at Hyde Park; working class women listening over the garden fence; middle class men smoking cigars at an upscale bar; a worker's canteen and locals in a pub, interspersed with stock footage of crowds listening to the announcements on a loudspeaker outside.

The trope of the effect of war on 'ordinary' people in films such as *Millions Like Us* continues as Londoners then evacuate the city *en mass*, recalls the image of the Londoner as stoic, steadfast and unified, echoing wartime public service announcements which served to bond the nation against the enemy. More recently, Stephen Guy compares the commentary on the evacuation sequence in *Seven Days to Noon* with World War II documentary *London Can Take It*.³⁶ Indeed, there are clear comparisons between the two films beyond just the commentary in both sound and visual imagery, as the Boultings repurposed and expanded upon the now-familiar trope of stoic Londoners in *London Can Take It*. Journalist Quentin Reynolds' voice-over in *London Can Take It* states that the Blitz "cannot kill the unarguable spirit and courage of the people of London" and describes civilians as "good soldiers", anchoring images of Londoners heading to the public shelters. At dawn in *London Can Take It*, a siren signals the all clear with the voice-over stating "6am... in this last hour of precious sleep, this strange new world finds peace". A montage of empty and now-bomb-damaged streets is anchored with the voice-over stating the courage of the Londoner: "fused together, not by fear but by a surging spirit of courage the like of which the world has never known". In *Seven Days to Noon* the similar sentiments and imagery are depicted to rouse civilians into harnessing the same spirit when dealing with the new threat of the atomic bomb. The ominous low tones of the planes approach compare to the portentous drumbeat in *Seven Days to Noon*.

Overhead shots of Londoners leaving their homes and boarding buses in *London Can Take It* is replicated in *Seven Days to Noon*, where Londoners evacuate the city using every available means of transport (trains, buses, boats, bicycle and car, and even horse and cart). As with *The Blue Lamp*, the authenticity of the evacuation

³⁶ Stephen Guy, "'Somebody Presses a Button and its Goodbye Sally', p.148.

scenes was again due in part to the cooperation of state authorities including the police, and organisations such as the Royal Automobile Club (RAC) and the Automobile Association (AA). In *Seven Days to Noon*, the enormity of a packed Waterloo station with queues of people waiting to leave is emphasised through long overhead shots, contrasting to the normality of morning rush hour depicted at the start of the film when Willingdon's train arrived into the station.

The Boultings suggest that the atomic bomb would cause more devastation than the Blitz, as here it is not only children who are to be evacuated, but all the residents of London. Working-class citizens leaving the city and saying goodbyes on railway platforms was commonplace during the war, and the trope of the goodbye on a railway platform common in British war films. Such scenes also compared with the evacuation sequences in *Passport to Pimlico*, where children board buses out of Pimlico, which for critic Margaret Thompson (*Essex Newsman Herald*) was a clear evocation of wartime evacuations.³⁷ However, the focus on the impact of war on working-class citizens in these sequences drew criticism from C.A. Lejeune (*Observer*), who complained that the evacuation scenes focus on the working classes ignored what might have happened to other groups such as the middle and upper classes.³⁸ The use of real locations for these evacuation sequences were the subject of press interest; Margaret Thompson (*Essex Newsman Herald*) reported how these scenes were shot at Waterloo station overall several nights from 7pm to 6am, made possible with permissions granted from the railway authorities.³⁹

Reminders of the Blitz are most apparent in *Seven Days to Noon*'s most notable and critically acclaimed sequence, where the army check a deserted London for Willingdon and the bomb. The montage first shows an empty London in a series of long shots, including; ships stood dormant on the Thames, Covent Garden; and empty residential and commercial streets, including Kensington High Street.⁴⁰ Army troops then search familiar landmarks of London, such as London Zoo, Wembley Stadium, the blitzed area around St Paul's and Edgware Road Underground Station. In comparison to the use of blitzed landmarks in *Pool of London* and *The Lavender*

³⁷ As reported in Margaret Thompson, 'The Real Story behind Seven Days to Noon', *Essex Newsman Herald*, 24 November 1950, p.2.

³⁸ C.A. Lejeune, 'Against the Clock', *Observer*, 17 September 1950, p.6.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p.148.

⁴⁰ As reported in Margaret Thompson, 'The Real Story Behind Seven Days to Noon', *Essex Newsman Herald*, 24 November 1950, p.2.

Hill Mob, reminders of the Blitz are provided through carefully chosen locations; in one scene, troops walk across the London Wall, a symbol of the City of London's history almost entirely destroyed during the Blitz. Film historians have noted how *Seven Days to Noon* harks back to the public's recent memories of the Blitz and the devastation still manifest in London; David Seed, for instance, compares the scenes of a bomb-scarred St Paul's in *Seven Days to Noon* with the Battle of Dunkirk.⁴¹ For Matthew Grant, the enormous map in the operations room reflects the desire to dwell on elaborate civil defence arrangements and the power of Willingdon's bomb, while Stephen Guy argues that familiar images of the war are "the fabric of the film", from the operation rooms evoking Churchill's underground cabinet rooms, through to the evacuation scene.⁴² This use of blitz imagery also compares to *Passport to Pimlico*, where recent reminders of the Blitz and the war-ravaged urban landscape are used evoke a fantasy rooted in the recent postwar reality.

Reminders of the Blitz are also evident in *Seven Days to Noon*'s use of religious iconography. The religious overtones of a doomsday scenario on London are connoted through Willingdon's papers with the scrawled words "The wicked beareth rule... thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down". In comparison to the use of actual bombed London churches in postwar London-set films *It Always Rains on Sunday* and *Innocent Sinners*, in *Seven Days to Noon* Willingdon enters the fictional St Stephen's Church in Westminster which bears the scars of war. The Boultings used Holy Trinity Church near Vauxhall, built in 1849, as it suffered extensive bomb damage during the Blitz, thus depicting the state of many churches after the war (the church was demolished in 1954). A close up of a sign 'please help us rebuild' further reminds the audience of the destruction of war and need for citizens to aid the rebuilding process. It is on Sunday when Willingdon is finally caught as he returns to the fictional St Stephen's church. The exteriors used for Willingdon's death scene, when Willingdon is finally shot by a soldier was St John's Church, Ladbroke-Grove, likely chosen for its imposing grand, gothic style. Ian Coster for the *Daily Mail* reported how filming took place outside the

⁴¹ See Julian Petley, 'The Pilgrim's Progress: The Politics of the Boulting's Films', in Alan Burton, Tim O'Sullivan and Paul Wells (eds.) *The Family Way: The Boulting Brothers and British Film Culture* pp.15-34; David Seed, 'Seven Days to Noon: Containing the Atomic Threat', *British Society for the History of Science*, vol.45, no.4 (December 2012), p.643.

⁴² Matthew Grant, 'Images of Survival', p.13; Stephen Guy, "'Somebody Presses a Button and its Goodbye Sally'", p.148.

church over three days to make use of the natural light as the sun was only in a particular position suitable for filming between 3pm and 4.30pm.⁴³ Inside the church, a poster ‘help rebuild our church’ reminds audiences of the importance of rebuilding in the aftermath of war. The final scene, shot on Westminster Bridge, melds the containing of the religious fanaticism of Willingdon with the protection and importance of government. As Goldie walks back over Westminster Bridge with Westminster clearly in the distance, the film’s closing shot serves to remind us of the importance of British state institutions such as the army and the government in protecting the public from the threat of nuclear attack.

While critics praised *Seven Days to Noon*’s realistic depiction of Cold War threats, it was the documentary style and use of authentic London locations which garnered most attention. For film critic Gavin Lambert, *Seven Days to Noon* had “a straightforward naturalistic style so many British filmmakers prefer today” and “succeeds in reanimating the British “semi-documentary” style”.⁴⁴ *To-Day’s News* praised the skill at which the evacuation scene was handled and location work which “for once captures the authentic atmosphere of the city”.⁴⁵ Critics’ accounts of how the film depicted the “beauty” of London mirrored those for Ealing films of the period such as *Hue and Cry* and *The Blue Lamp*; *News of the World* considered that that “the London backgrounds are beautiful”, while *Daily Graphic* declared that “the star is London, lovely old London, grimy and grand, the greatest city in the world”.⁴⁶

It is evident, though examination of the film’s production, critical reception and depictions of London, that *Seven Days to Noon* presented Cold War threats in a realistic manner that related to audiences’ experiences during the Blitz and World War II generally. The film’s realism continued the wider trend in British cinema of the period of, as Fred Majdalany stated, “intelligent melodrama with realistic background and overtones of comedy or fantasy or both” of which *State Secret*, *The*

⁴³ Ian Coster, ‘Lingering death’, *Daily Mail*, 25 August 1949, p.3.

⁴⁴ Gavin Lambert, 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Seven Days to Noon*.

⁴⁵ P.H. *To-Day’s News*, 1950, *Seven Days to Noon*: BFI Press Cuttings: *Seven Days to Noon*.

⁴⁶ *Star*, 12 September 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Seven Days to Noon*; *Daily Graphic*, 15 September 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Seven Days to Noon*.

Blue Lamp, *The Third Man*, *Passport to Pimlico* were, according to Majdalany, “the most recent evidence of this”.⁴⁷

The ‘threat within’: The Dockyards and Battersea Power Station in *High Treason*

High Treason, the sequel to *Seven Days to Noon*, concerns militant dockers and intellectuals’ attempts to disable a number of power stations throughout Britain. *High Treason* is an espionage film, a popular genre in British cinema, here made salient through the perceived communist threat. Indeed, the film’s working titles all highlighted the espionage theme: *I Spy Strangers*; *Sabotage*, and *Secret Plan X23*. In this sense, *High Treason* mirrors the growing popularity of ‘Red Scare’ films produced in the USA in the late 1940s onwards, including *Red Menace* (dir. R.G. Springsteen, 1949) about a soldier who is lured into the Communist Party. Although the film’s location shooting is not as extensive of that in *Seven Days to Noon*, *High Treason* does feature real, iconic London locations for the film’s key sequences. The first set-piece, in which firefighters attempt to control a docklands fire as a result of sabotage, was filmed at London’s dockyards, while the climax, featuring a battle between the saboteurs, the Army and the Police, was filmed in the interior and exterior of Battersea Power Station. Other notable locations included Embankment and, as the shooting script states, “sundry London streets”.⁴⁸ Indeed, the film’s shooting script emphasises the use of real locations as the film is described as “a thriller set against natural backgrounds”.⁴⁹ Soskin and Boulting’s commitment to authenticity was evident through the use of these actual locations, rather than studio sets, made possible through the permissions and assistance of The Port of London Authority and the chiefs of Battersea Power Station, while MI5 checked the script for errors.

Roy Boulting and scriptwriter Frank Harvey based *High Treason* on the real-life explosions in Portsmouth Dockyards in July 1950, which the press and government initially speculated could be an act of sabotage (although no evidence was found to

⁴⁷ Fred Majdalany, *Daily Mail*, 15 September 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *Seven Days to Noon*.

⁴⁸ *I Spy Strangers / High Treason*: Shooting Script, 03 January 1951.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

verify these suspicions). Julian Petley contextualises the film as one produced at a time when the Communist threat was high, as Prime Minister Clement Attlee warned listeners to “guard against the enemy within”.⁵⁰ Although the film’s saboteurs are never explicitly named as Communists, as Shaw states, *High Treason* depicted Communism as having “burrowed deep into British society”.⁵¹ As a result, the film predictably received criticism from the CPGB (Communist Party of Great Britain) who, in their newspaper *Daily Worker*, complained that public money (the film was partly funded by the Film Finances Corporation) was being spent on a “rubbish” production, “designed to whip up anti-Labour and anti-Communist feeling and war hysteria”.⁵² During production, the press reported that the film was being made in secret, with the cast given clauses in their contracts, forbidding them to discuss the film. *Portsmouth Evening News* also reported that location shooting at the London Docklands and Battersea Power Station were shot in secrecy at night.⁵³ While these press reports may have reflected the producers’ genuine concerns with the sensitive nature of the film, this reporting of ‘secret’ filmmaking also served to generate advance publicity for the film.⁵⁴

A spokesperson at Rank announced that *High Treason* would not be premiered until 26 October 1951, the day after the general election, to “avoid the possible criticism of political bias during the election”.⁵⁵ The release of *High Treason* in 1951 also gave the film an unexpected further topicality, as London and Manchester Dock strikes took place in September 1951. However, the film was unsuccessful at the British box office, grossing £69,657, which Tony Shaw speculates could be the result of “clumsy depictions of the communist threat”, while “others had their fill of Hollywood red-baiting melodramas”.⁵⁶ The film also lacked *Seven Days to Noon*’s affection for and emphasis on the citizens of London, as noted by critic Paul Dehn,

⁵⁰ Julian Petley, ‘The Pilgrim’s Progress: The Politics of the Boulting’s Films’, Alan Burton, Tim O’Sullivan and Paul Wells (eds.) *The Family Way: The Boulting Brothers and British Film Culture*, p.23.

⁵¹ Tony Shaw, *British Cinema and the Cold War*, p.43.

⁵² Quoted in ‘Treason Film Made in Secret’, *Daily Mail*, 18 May 1951, p.3.

⁵³ ‘Night Packed with Action’, *Portsmouth Evening News*, 03 November 1951, p.4.

⁵⁴ ‘News from studio and location’, *Falkirk Herald*, 03 October 1951, p.3; See ‘Treason Film Made in Secret’, *Daily Mail*, 18 May 1951, p.3.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Stephen Watts, ‘Observations on the London Screen Scene’, *New York Times*, 28 October 1951, p.93.

⁵⁶ Tony Shaw, *British Cinema and the Cold War*, p.45.

who argued that overall “there has been a loss of love interest... *Seven Days to Noon* was permuted by the love of its Londoners for London”.⁵⁷

High Treason was produced by Paul Soskin for his independent production company Paul Soskin Productions (also known as Conqueror films). Production was scheduled between January and May 1951, with night locations to be shot first over 25 nights commencing in mid-January, followed by studio filming, and finally day locations, scheduled for ten days from 30th April to 11th May 1951.⁵⁸ This production schedule caused concern for personnel at Film Finances; John Croydon advised Robert Garrett that production appeared to proceed at “an extremely slow rate of progress”.⁵⁹ Garrett suggested that this was possibly due to John Boulting’s perfectionist style of directing, concluding that “I can only imagine that the producer and director expect a film of superb quality”.⁶⁰ The location shooting and use of some interiors of real locations were of particular concern to Croydon, as Battersea Power Station and the dockside scenes involved battles and explosions, while interiors involved “tricky camera angles”.⁶¹ Croydon’s concerns were valid, as location work on the film proved to be a slow process and as such the film was behind schedule and incurred extra costs. Day location shooting was hampered by adverse weather conditions and as such production was four days behind schedule, while according to Garrett the shooting inside Battersea Power station caused “considerable difficulties”.⁶² Production diaries reveal the complications of day location shooting, as much of the crew’s time was spent waiting for the sun.⁶³ The light also dictated the use of locations; on 20th May 1951 the crew abandoned filming at Hooper’s Court, Knightsbridge as the light was not good enough and moved to Warwick Street, Victoria.⁶⁴ Film Finances suggested that Soskin and Boulting speed up shooting on the studio lot to make up for the shortfall lost during location shooting. However, further problems down the line, including delays to

⁵⁷ Paul Dehn, *Sunday Chronicle*, 28 October 1951, BFI Press Cuttings: *High Treason*.

⁵⁸ London, Film Finances Archive, Production dates outlined in a letter (undated) from John Croydon to Robert Garrett *High Treason*: Box File no.14.

⁵⁹ London, Film Finances Archive, Letter from John Croydon to Robert Garrett, 19 December 1950, *High Treason*: Box File, no.14.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ London, Film Finances Archive, Letter from John Croydon to Robert Garrett, 19 December 1950, *High Treason*: Box File, no.14.

⁶² London, Film Finances Archive, Letter from Robert Garrett to Paul Soskin, 19 February 1951, *High Treason*: Box File, no.14.

⁶³ London, Film Finances Archive, *High Treason*: Box File no.14.

⁶⁴ London, Film Finances Archive, *High Treason*: Daily Production Diary, no.80, 20 May 1951, *High Treason*: Box File no.14.

dubbing and adding music resulted in over-costs of £13,572, bringing in the total cost of production at £168,325. As a result, *High Treason* was the first British film unable to fulfil its guarantee to Film Finances that the film would be completed on budget, thus British Lion incurred additional costs.

High Treason's first climatic sequence, the explosion at the docks, was shot at night on The Royal Albert Dock, located in East London. However, shots of the burning ship were shot at Pinewood studios to overcome obvious safety concerns such a scene would have presented while shooting on location. The sequence has little dialogue and combines drama with a documentary style, cross-cutting between the raging dock fires and the fire brigade racing to the scene. The footage of the fire brigade putting out the fire is reminiscent of Blitz newsreels such as Pathe's *London City Fire and Damage* (1941), as firefighters in both *High Treason* and the Pathe newsreel are depicted in silhouette in the foreground of long and mid-shots while the fires rage behind them. The scene is also reminiscent of Ealing's *The Bells go Down*, with combines staged footage of the fire service attending to the blitzed fires with stock footage of the actual fire Brigade.

High Treason's final climatic set-piece, shot at Battersea Power station, was presented as the key selling point in the film's pressbook, which emphasised the fact that the scenes were shot in the actual station itself.⁶⁵ The interiors and exteriors were shot over 14 nights in February 1951 and cost a relatively expensive £3,320.⁶⁶ This set-piece combines elements of different styles, including the documentary and noir style, with Gilbert Taylor's stark low-key lighting creating shadows and low angles, while the smoke from the machinery adds realism and atmosphere. Such depictions of an iconic London landmark compare with Ealing's later use of Royal Festival Hall in the climatic sequences for *The Long Arm*, replete with noir lighting and low angles. In *High Treason*, the climatic sequence is also reminiscent of the war film, as the interiors at Battersea are presented as a battlefield. The interiors also perform the same function as dark alleyways and railways lines in *Seven Days to Noon* as spaces to hide. For critics, Taylor's photography of dockside and Battersea Power Station sequences were the film's centrepieces; critic Paul Dehn praised the

⁶⁵ *High Treason*: Pressbook, 1951.

⁶⁶ Figures and production schedules noted in Film Finances Archive, *High Treason*: Box File no.14.

photography of the dockside explosions as carrying ‘the punch of authenticity’, while the *Telegraph* praised the “effective photography of the station itself”.⁶⁷

Overall, British reviews responded to *High Treason* with less enthusiasm for that afforded to *Seven Days to Noon*, with a few notable exceptions; Dilys Powell, despite having reservations about the film as a whole, thought it “well made, fast-moving entertainment”.⁶⁸ However, it was *High Treason*’s photography and use of real London locations which critics considered were worthy of praise; Richard Mallet (*Punch*) commended the film for “making admirable use of London backgrounds”, while the *Aberdeen Evening Express* admired the film’s realism and “the sharp, almost harsh photography, the authentic backgrounds”.⁶⁹ Critics also admired the film’s documentary ethos; the *Sunderland Daily Echo* stated that the film was “distinctly documentary in its approach”, while the *Evening News* argued that “the film pretends to be absolute realismall the characters are in the documentary tradition”, although it did criticise the “bogus crooks and detectives” which “are all right in unashamed detective fiction, but they completely sabotage authenticity.”⁷⁰ The use of realism to authenticate fantasy was one that Fred Majdalany (*Daily Mail*) observed in his review of *High Treason*: ‘By incorporating news reels, that staid, familiar voices of the BBC announcers, evening paper headlines, and backgrounds of everyday life, they have maintained credibility while getting us to swallow stories about anything from a London district that becomes an independent state to a duck which lays an atomic egg’.⁷¹

Conclusions

Seven Days to Noon and *High Treason* continue the tropes of wartime British documentary film, to explore perceived possible nuclear threats to the city in a manner deemed realistic by critics. It is evident through close examination of the Boulting’s use of exteriors that *Seven Days to Noon* offered a fictional version of

⁶⁷ *Telegraph*, 29 October 1951, BFI Press Cuttings: *High Treason*; Paul Dehn, *Sunday Chronicle*, 28 October 1951, BFI Press Cuttings: *High Treason*.

⁶⁸ Dilys Powell, *Sunday Times*, 28 October 1951, p.2.

⁶⁹ Richard Mallet, *Punch*, 07 November 1951, p.516; ‘It Could All Happen So Easily’, *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 14 November 1951, p.4.

⁷⁰ *Sunderland Daily Echo*, 03 November 1951, p.3; *Evening News*, 25 October 1951, BFI Press Cuttings: *High Treason*.

⁷¹ Fred Majdalany, *Daily Mail*, 26 October 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *High Treason*.

wartime newsreels and documentaries, which, as Tony Shaw notes, from 1948 were outwardly anti-Soviet and were still an integral part of the cinema-going experience in the early 1950s.⁷² In comparison to Ealing's London-set films, the Boultings combined the documentary and noir style, framing and lighting the war-ravaged and older, Victorian City and landmarks for an expressionist aesthetic.

Analysis of the production process of location shooting and depictions of London in *Seven Days to Noon* and *High Treason* posits the films alongside Ealing's London-set films in creating a corpus of postwar London-set films which offer a distinct depiction of the city in the immediate postwar period. *Seven Days to Noon* and *High Treason* contribute to tropes of postwar London-set films, replete with the use of bombed-out churches, references to the recent wartime past with scenes of evacuation, and use of familiar landmarks such as St Paul's as a symbol of London's wartime heroism and victory. Both Ealing and the Boultings used of the war-ravaged landscape as reminders of the war and a way to re-imagine these landscapes to explore current threats to the city such as nuclear attack and crime.

As with Ealing's London-set films of the same period, *Seven Days to Noon*'s production in real London locations were a key selling point in the film's publicity materials. The Boultings were keen to exploit their use of actual locations as a key selling point, at a time when exterior shooting was on-trend, as evidenced by new-realist movements in Italy and the popularity of American film noirs.

⁷² Tony Shaw, *British Cinema and the Cold War*, p.29 & p.32.

CONCLUSION

Postwar film movements or cycles, with heavy location shooting, such as The British New Wave, Italian neorealism, and Swinging London films, have a privileged place in film history and criticism. Film historians and scholars have discussed key motifs, themes and filmmakers' ethos across the selected body of films within their respective movements or cycles. This thesis has identified a body of commercial British fiction films, which made extensive use of the postwar London landscape, as a distinct body of films with key motifs and themes. The aftermath of the war had a striking visual presence, one utilised by filmmakers to root fictional stories in a recognisable reality. The amount of exterior shooting in the case study films captured a London still reeling from the war, yet victorious and on the cusp of change. London had a particular resonance in film and popular culture in the wake of the aftermath of World War II, due to its position as an unoccupied European capital that did not fall to Fascist or Communist regimes. The London typified by residential working-class districts, crowded, bustling central areas, and ruins which exposed the remaining Victorian, pre-war city, offered its own photogenic beauty, one that was exploited by filmmakers. British filmmakers were particularly attuned to the postwar London landscape and character, partly due to the major British film studio's proximity to inner London and filmmakers who were skilled in documentary filmmaking who resided in London. Indeed, critics noted filmmakers' familiarity with London locations in films such as *The Blue Lamp*, in contrast to the 'unfamiliar' London depicted in *Night and the City*.

Ealing Studios were at the forefront of this corpus of films, due to the sheer volume of films efficiently produced by a close-knit team and Balcon's policy for shooting in real locations. This thesis has established *The Blue Lamp* as the most significant postwar inner London film, due to its popularity, influence, extensive location shooting, and encapsulation of a 'village' London. Indeed, inner London-set films were subsequently judged by critics against the standards of authenticity of location set by *The Blue Lamp*. The London evoked in *The Blue Lamp* stemmed from Ealing's London in *The Bells Go Down* and from the success of immediate postwar films such as *Hue and Cry* and *Passport to Pimlico*. The work of independent studios and other film production companies, notably Sidney and Muriel Box with *Street Corner*,

Daniel Angel Productions with *Cosh Boy*, the London-set films of the CFF, and the Boulting's films *Seven Days to Noon* and *High Treason*, contribute to a wider corpus of distinctive inner London-set films. The particular depictions of London in these films were partly a result of the films' production and institutional contexts. For Ealing, shooting outdoors in real locations was a key policy and ethos, while in the case of the CFF, it was budget restraints and limited shooting schedules, which encouraged filmmakers to shoot quickly in real locations, rather than build sets. For films such as *The Blue Lamp*, *Seven Days to Noon*, *Street Corner* and *The Long Arm*, it was the involvement of state institutions and national organisations, such as the Metropolitan police, who supervised production to ensure authenticity and granted permissions for location shooting, thus easing the process of exterior location work.

Analysis of publicity materials reveals that postwar London was a key selling point in London-set films of the immediate postwar era, while later films, such as Ealing comedies *The Lavender Hill Mob* and *The Ladykillers*, were sold mainly on their generic elements. It is evident that realism and authenticity were key selling points within the films themselves, as titles appear at the start of *The Blue Lamp* and *Seven Days to Noon* thanking state institutions which made the film possible, lending these films a realism, gravitas and documentary feel. Filming in real London locations provided the press with anecdotes and reports during production which helped publicise the films; indeed, the Boultings use of real London locations in *Seven Days to Noon* was a cause celebre in press reports, as were Ealing's anecdotes of shooting on the location-set in Lambeth for *Passport to Pimlico*. These films depicted a London that was familiar to British critics, while simultaneously offering a nostalgic and landmark London easily saleable overseas.

Consideration of the case study films' production reveals how the war-ravaged London environment was utilised by filmmakers for both realism and fantasy. Filmmakers adopted a realist aesthetic in their approach to shooting in London locations. They made extensive use of the war-ravaged landscape, as did neorealist directors in Italy, yet did so in a uniquely British way. It is evident when considering the filmmakers' backgrounds that filmmakers drew upon the traditions of the British documentary and wartime drama-documentary films. Indeed, particular directors such as Charles Crichton, Lewis Gilbert and John Krish explicitly stated that they favoured exterior location shooting. Analysis of locations in Ealing comedies, *Hue and Cry*,

Passport to Pimlico, *The Lavender Hill Mob* and *The Ladykillers*, demonstrates how, with regards to location, the realist ethos was adopted to make fantastical stories appear plausible. Both *Passport to Pimlico* and *The Ladykillers* merged sets with real locations to evoke a nostalgic and village London. However, while *Passport to Pimlico* is a more salient film with its references to rationing, the iron curtain and recent memories of evacuation, *The Ladykillers* depicted a darker, macabre, gothic London, produced at a time when Ealing tropes of nostalgia and community were increasingly viewed as outdated. Comparisons of the films' depictions of particular London districts with those in newsreel footage, photography, contemporary accounts and local histories, further reveals the impetus for realism in regard to location shooting.

The case study films discussed in this thesis also merged the realist, documentary style with the expressionist, noir style. This is particular evident in the analysis of *Hue and Cry*, *It Always Rains on Sunday*, *Seven Days to Noon*, *High Treason*, *The Lavender Hill Mob* and *Pool of London*. These films employed the expressionist style for scenes of high drama, often with use of the older, Victorian London. Railway arches, narrow alleyways and dimly lit streets, used for dramatic sequences, continue the traditions of British gothic horror and dominant styles in filmmaking, particularly the low-key style of American film noirs. The negative critical response to *Night and the City* which adopts a doom-laden, expressionistic style throughout, suggests, however, that when shooting in London, British critics preferred the combination of the realist documentary style with expressionism, in keeping with the postwar ethos that London was a symbol of victory rather than one of doom.

Consideration of the films' critical reception reveals how their appeal lay mostly in the depiction of the London landscape. Analysis of the critics' responses reveals how critics perceived what constituted an authentic and familiar London. There was a clear discourse around the films, with critics' description of the films' 'realism', 'authenticity' and 'beauty' reappearing in reviews. For critics, London appears as a character in these films, for instance, critics referred to Harrow Road in *The Blue Lamp* as 'the real villain' and praised filmmakers for capturing 'her [London's] beauty'.¹ While these films are often considered by film historians within their genre,

¹ See, for instance, Paul Holt, *Daily Herald*, 20 January 1950, BFI Press Cuttings: *The Blue Lamp*; Patrick Kirwan, 'Films', *Evening Standard*, 20 February 1947, BFI Press Cuttings: *Hue and Cry*.

auteur and institutional contexts, it is evident from critics' responses that these films were often linked through location, as critics considered many of these films to be part of a wider family tree of London films. There are of course limitations to what critical response tells us about audience's perceptions of these films. Critical reception does not inform us of how audiences interpreted these films or if audiences' views reflected those of critics. One can only rely on the scant evident in newspaper articles, such as reports of standing ovations for *Skid Kids* and *Picture Post*'s reports on young people's responses to *Cosh Boy*.² However, consideration of a variety of critical responses in national and provincial press does enable an understanding of the general critical consensus surrounding these films.

This thesis has identified a set of general themes in London-set films of the postwar period. The case study films typically played upon memories of the recent wartime past, through the use of the war-ravaged city, and narratives concerning communities working together for the common good, whether it be fighting crime, delinquency or nuclear threats. It posits children's use of bombsites, the postwar crime wave, juvenile delinquency and concerns about nuclear threats, as key salient issues and themes. As many of these films were produced during a perceived postwar 'crime wave', filmmakers exploited this for dramatic purposes, with films featuring crooks, spivs and delinquents. The shooting outside the Coliseum cinema in *The Blue Lamp* dramatised the new threat of the chaotic, postwar teenager, versus the orderly world of PC Dixon, while the alleyways and wastelands of working-class Battersea (although shot in Hammersmith) in *Cosh Boy* exploited fears of the increase of juvenile crime in working-class urban areas. *Cosh Boy*'s sensationalist portrayal of juvenile violence was one which perturbed critics, as the film's main protagonist is a delinquent, not the figure of law and order as seen in *The Blue Lamp*. In both films, however, the urban working-class environment is one which fosters delinquents, where leisure spaces are transgressed. Such depictions contrast to films featuring younger children, where bombsites are repurposed as a force for good. The public need for reassurance and the new role of PIO at the Met led to the production of three inner-London police dramas, *The Blue Lamp*, *Street Corner* and *The Long Arm*, enabling extensive location shooting. Themes evident in *Seven Days to Noon* and

² *Today's Cinema*, 23 October 1953, p.6; Robert Muller, 'Is Coshboy a Menace?', *Picture Post*, 28 February 1953, p.15.

High Treason pertain to political issues which threaten London and its key landmarks. *Seven Days to Noon*'s use of the London landscape compares to that Ealing's London in *The Blue Lamp* and *Passport to Pimlico*, with evocations of evacuations and wartime community spirit, with a realism of location praised by critics. While *High Treason* was not as commercially or critically successful as *Seven Days to Noon*, it is notable for its set-pieces in real London landmarks, particularly the fire sequences on the docks, which drew upon wartime footage of the Blitz in London, to envisage the new perceived threat of communist sabotage.

As well as identifying a broader set of themes, this thesis has also mapped a set of recurring motifs across the body of films. As London was the capital city, recognisable and iconic, specific landmarks functioned not only as backdrop, but also as signifiers of the wartime past and present. Iconic landmarks such as St Paul's Cathedral took on a particular resonance in this period, having survived the Blitz. St Paul's features in *Hue and Cry*, *Seven Days to Noon*, *Pool of London* and *The Salvage Gang* as a symbol of victory, resilience and beauty. Battersea Power Station also features in a number of these films as a key landmark, as seen in *Hue and Cry*, *High Treason* and *Innocent Sinners*. It functions in *Hue and Cry* and *Innocent Sinners* as an indication of a working-class area, where the power station looms in the background, while in *High Treason*, Battersea Power Station is the site of possible sabotage, with use of interiors evoking a war-like battleground. As it is common for climatic sequences to take place in grand, iconic landmarks, it was White City Greyhound Track in *The Blue Lamp*, Battersea Power Station in *High Treason*, then later Royal Festival Hall in *The Long Arm*, where climatic sequences play out. Landmarks also function as spectacle to be marvelled at. A character gazes out of the window of Scotland Yard at Royal Festival Hall in *The Long Arm*, Pat and Johnny gaze in awe at London's landmarks in *Pool of London*, while in *Seven Days to Noon*, Willingdon looks out over St Paul's while plotting to destroy the city.

The village London and sense of community is evoked in these films through the portrayal of the working-class street or square, as evidenced in the use of a Lambeth wasteland in *Passport to Pimlico*, Paddington Green and the Harrow Road in *The Blue Lamp*, Methley Street, Kennington in *Seven Days to Noon* and Frederica Street, Islington, in *The Ladykillers*. The importance of the local street and/or square in *Passport to Pimlico* and *The Ladykillers* are a key trope in Ealing's films, where life

plays out and close-knit communities interact. The local street, as representative of the wider British postwar street and community, was also a key selling point in publicity materials and press reports for *It Always Rains on Sunday*, *Passport to Pimlico* and *Seven Days to Noon*. The local working-class street or square is often characterised by terraced, pre-war housing, a railway which often impacts on the domestic space through the sound of the trains and the polluting effects of steam, and the church at the end of the street. The church is a common marker of a residential district and community, and commonplace in these case study films. As churches were bombed during the war, here they take on a new significance; in *It Always Rains on Sunday* the partially destroyed church spire becomes a marker of a postwar setting and iconographic of a Sunday in the postwar East End. In *Seven Days to Noon*, the bombed-out church and religious iconography are a key motif of symbols of hope and reminders of destruction of war, while in *Innocent Sinners*, a garden in the church ruins provides a place of sanctuary and the church's subsequent demolition evokes a nostalgia for the 'old' London.

Characters' experiences and use of the city are determined in these films by factors such as age, class, gender roles and race. The immediate postwar London landscape provided perfect fodder for children's adventure films, playing on now-familiar imagery of the imaginative street child in the ruins, and recent war-time imagery of the heroic 'Dead End Kids'. Therefore, films featuring child protagonists, who are able to use the postwar landscape and repurpose bombsites, ruins and wastelands as a force for good, are prevalent in the postwar period. This thesis posits *Hue and Cry* as a key film in this regard, as it was the first British postwar film to make extensive use of the war-ravaged London landscape and draw upon recent notions of wartime heroism and victory. Its success also encouraged production of subsequent London-set fiction films. *Hue and Cry* and subsequent films featuring heroic children in postwar London, such as *Skid Kids*, are therefore distinct from the parallel movement of Italian neorealism, featuring individual children with downbeat, beleaguered themes and aesthetics, particularly as London's position as a symbol of victory differed to that of occupied and defeated European cities. In *The Salvage Gang*, the journey across London provides a sense of wonder for child audiences, as director John Krish's drew upon his earlier, poetic evocation of London in *The Elephant will Never Forget*. *Pool of London* offers a visitor's view of the city through sailor Johnny,

reflecting the immigrant experience and arrival of people from the Caribbean to London in 1948 on the SS Windrush. In *Innocent Sinners*, Lovejoy turns the bombsite into a site of beauty, a contrast to the masculinised use of spaces for boys playing, and gangs of teenage boys plotting crimes on wastelands in juvenile delinquent films. Rose Sandigate, in *It Always Rains on Sunday*, experiences Sunday inside the home, and yearns for a more exciting life than that offered through her current position as a housewife in working-class Bethnal Green. In *Cosh Boy*, Rene takes a trip along the river Thames, offering her a glimpse of a London far removed from the dimly-lit alleyways and crime-ridden wastelands offered by delinquent Roy. Meanwhile, *Street Corner* perpetuated the notion that policewomen dealt mainly with domestic issues, in contrast to their male counterparts in *The Blue Lamp*, as they enter the homes of working-class women and deal with issues child neglect and delinquent young female runaways.

Many of these case study films use wartime tropes of community spirit, refigured to defeat new threats of delinquency, crime and potential nuclear attack. *Passport to Pimlico* offers a nostalgic view of community, evoking a wartime community spirit in the face of adversity, ending with scenes which serve as reminders of VE day street parties, while *Seven Days to Noon* depicts Londoners working efficiently together to evacuate the city in the face of nuclear threat. However, some films do undermine this sense of community spirit; in *It Always Rains on Sunday*, the community is depicted as intrusive rather than helpful, while in *Cosh Boy*, Roy's only community is that of juvenile gangs.

Recent memories of the Blitz are also used and repurposed in these films to explore more contemporary issues or fantastical scenarios. In *It Always Rains on Sunday*, reminders of the war are integrated into the plot and mise en scene, as Tommy Swan hides out in an air-raid shelter in the back yard. In *Passport to Pimlico*, memories of the war, and then-current situation in European cities, are interwoven into the plot as the wasteland in Lambeth is repurposed as a site of an unexploded bomb, then later as a 'spiv's paradise', a scene of evacuation and finally a street party. A yearning and nostalgia for a past London is evident in the some of these films. An analysis of *It Always Rain's on Sunday's* evocation of Bethnal Green, compared with that found in Nigel Henderson's photography reveals how the film straddles a nostalgic, soon-to-be destroyed East End of pre-war terraces and the reality of cramped conditions in pre-

war housing. *Passport to Pimlico* is overtly nostalgic for a pre-war and wartime London through its narrative, themes use of location-set designed in a pre-war style. Meanwhile, *The Ladykillers* straddles a nostalgia for a village London and a gothic macabre London, interwoven through the use of surviving Victorian terraces of Islington, the location-set and the gothic architecture of St Pancras station. However, later film *The Salvage Gang* portrays the newly-built estates in London with a sense of awe and wonder, as new, modern London and older pre-war London, co-exist side-by-side.

This study enables opportunities for further research. It has demonstrated how a ‘new film history’ approach, combining archival research, critical reception and textual analysis, enables a complex understanding of films within their historical, production and reception contexts. As this thesis is limited to a specific time period (1946 – 1958), future research using this approach could build on the findings presented in this thesis to extend the time, by comparing depictions of London in postwar London-set films with those of the interwar period. Likewise, one other avenue to further extend this thesis further would be to extend the period beyond the immediate postwar period, including the ‘Swinging London’ films of the mid-to-late 1960s, enabling historical comparisons of the depictions of the changing London landscape and social milieu.

The case study films discussed in this thesis are imbued with a historical value, as filmmakers captured now-demolished streets and buildings due to the impetus for outdoor shooting and realism of location. For instance, *Hue and Cry* captured the area around Shadwell replete with bombed-out warehouses before their eventual demolition, while the ethos of the CFF to shoot outdoors and quickly ensure that their films have a particular immediacy and authenticity, capturing the streets and bombsites of postwar Bermondsey in *Skid Kids*. The use of now-demolished real buildings in *The Blue Lamp* and *Pool of London* ensures that films take on a further historical resonance, as these buildings now only exist in popular memory and media depictions. When undertaking research on particular now-demolished buildings which appeared in popular films, images from films, in particular The Metropolitan Music Hall and Paddington Green Police Station in *The Blue Lamp*, images were circulating

in local history online forums as former residents use the images to discuss their memories of these spaces. Indeed, qualitative research developing from this thesis, including interviews with former local residents, could prove a fruitful endeavour in understanding the role of popular film and architecture in memory formation.

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Appointment in London (dir. Phillip Leacock, 1952)
The Beachcomber (dir. Muriel Box, 1954)
The Bells Go Down (dir. Basil Dearden, 1943)
Bicycle Thieves (dir. Vittorio de Sica, 1948)
The Big Blockade (dir. Charles Frend, UK, 1942)
Blue Bottles (dir. Ivor Montagu, 1928)
The Blue Lamp (dir. Basil Dearden, 1950)
The Boys in Brown (dir. Montgomery Tully, 1949)
The Brave Don't Cry (dir. Phillip Leacock, 1952)
Brighton Rock (dir. John Boulting, 1947)
Cathedral City (dir., Don Chaffey, 1949)
The Captive Heart (dir. Basil Dearden, 1946)
Cape Cargoes (dir. Don Chaffey, 1948)
The Changing Face of London (New Decade Films, with cooperation of the London County Council, 1960)
Children of the City (dir. Budge Cooper, 1944)
Cosh Boy (dir. Lewis Gilbert, 1953)
Dance Hall (dir. Charles Crichton, 1950)
Dead of Night (dir. Alberto Cavalcanti, 1945)
Desert Victory (dir. Roy Boulting, 1943)
The Dog and the Diamonds (dir. Ralph Thomas, 1953)
Doss House (dir. John Baxter, 1933)
The Elephant will Never Forget (dir. John Krish, 1953)
Emil and the Detectives (dir. Milton Rosmer, 1935)
The First Days (dir. Humphrey Jennings, Harry Watt & Pat Jackson, 1939)
Germany, Year Zero (dir. Roberto Rossellini, 1948)
Gideon's Day (dir. John Ford, 1958)
The Guinea Pig (dir. Roy Boulting, 1947)

Good Time Girl (dir. David MacDonald, 1947)
This Happy Family (dir. Muriel Box, 1952)
High Treason (dir. Roy Boulting, 1951)
Holiday Camp (dir. Ken Annakin, 1947)
Hue and Cry (dir. Charles Crichton, 1947)
Hunted (dir. Charles Crichton, 1952)
I Believe in You (dir. Michael Relph and Basil Dearden, 1952)
I Know Where I'm Going (dir. Michael Powell, 1945)
In Which We Serve (dir. Noel Coward and David Lean, 1942)
Innocent Sinners (dir. Phillip Leacock, 1958)
It Always Rains on Sunday (dir. Robert Hamer, 1947)
Johnny Frenchman (dir. Michael Powell, 1945)
Journey Together (dir. John Boulting, 1945)
The Kidnappers (dir. Phillip Leacock, 1950)
Kind Hearts and Coronets (dir., Robert Hamer, 1949)
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The Long Arm (dir. Charles Frend, 1956)
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Millions Like Us (dir. Sidney Gilliat and Frank Launder, 1943)
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New Towns for Old (dir. John Eldridge, 1942)
Night and the City (dir. Jules Dassin, 1950)
Night Beat (dir. Harold Huth, 1948)
Odd Man Out (dir. Carol Reed, 1947)

Out of Chaos (dir. Jill Craigie, 1944)
Painted Boats (dir. Charles Crichton, 1945)
Panic in the Streets (dir. Elia Kaza, 1950)
Passport to Pimlico (dir. Henry Cornelius, 1949)
Pastor Hall (dir. Roy Boulting, 1940)
Peril for the Guy (dir. James Hill, 1956)
Pool of London (dir. Basil Dearden, 1951)
Red Menace (dir. R.G. Springsteen, 1949)
Riders of the New Forest (dir. Philip Leacock, 1948)
A Run for your Money (dir. Charles Frend, 1949)
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San Demetrio London (dir. Charles Frend, 1943)
Seven Days to Noon (dir. John and Roy Boulting, 1950)
Skid Kids (dir. Don Chaffey, 1953)
Soapbox Derby (dir. Darcy Conyers, 1958)
State Secret (dir. Sidney Gilliat, 1950)
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Street Corner (dir. Muriel Box, 1952)
The Third Man (dir. Carol Reed, 1949)
The Titfield Thunderbolt (dir. Charles Crichton, 1953)
This Year- London (dir. John Krish, 1951)
Violent Playground (dir. Basil Dearden, 1958)
The Way Ahead (dir. Carol Reed, 1944)
The Way We Live (dir. Jill Craigie, 1944)
Went the Day Well? (dir. Alberto Cavalcanti, 1942)
Whisky Galore! (dir. Alexander Mackendrick, 1949)
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