Continuing to ‘Mention’ the War? Representations of Germany and Germans in Post-War British Television

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## Contents

Abstract  
Introduction  
Chapter 1: The Post-war Development of Images of Germany and Germans in British Popular Culture (1945-1960)  
Chapter 2: Don’t Mention the War (1960-1980s)  
Chapter 3: Change at Last? (1980s-2000s)  
Conclusion  
Bibliography
Abstract

Since the war, British perceptions of Germany have been subjugated by outdated stereotypes and images of the Second World War and the Third Reich. Correspondingly the second half of the 20th century witnessed the rise of television, this emerging form of popular culture offers a prism from which to review these Anglo-German perceptions. Going beyond the one-dimensional but commonly voiced study of Germanophobic perceptions, this paper will explore a selection of television shows that expressed there was more to Germany than Hitler and the Nazis. It is argued; by undertaking a chronological survey of British television shows dating back to the war, that depictions of Germany have evolved from illustrating its National Socialist past to a closer association with their economic success and its role in Europe. Implemented with opinion polls, television as a cultural phenomenon, can effectively reflect the changing public outlook towards Germany, and will continue to be pivotal in assessing Anglo-German perceptions.
Introduction

As Europe dealt with the weight of memory left behind by the Second World War, it was apparent that the events between 1939-1945 became a prominent feature of the British psyche. Since 1945 Anglo-German relations have for the most part been civil on a political platform, yet on a broader scale perceptions of Germany have been dominated by images of the Second World War and Germany’s Nazi past. Television, alongside with other forms of popular culture offer an insight into this British obsession. Through the medium of television, Germans are represented by clichés, such as a lack of humour and German efficiency, or the resolute militaristic façade of a country planning to take over the world. Kronig (1999) appropriately refers to this as ‘the British postwar folklore’ that provides material for films, jokes, newspapers, adverts and TV comedies. It is through this prism of Hitler and Nazism that many will conceive and shape negative attitudes towards Germany. Walter Gorlitz, a former editor of Die Welt commented in 1961: ‘Of course, anyone is free to view the Germans as a dangerous race. However, he who does so is poorly equipped to write history.’ (Quoted in Rosenfield 1994: 115). There has been a focus by historians on ‘Germanophobic’ popular culture, however this research paper will investigate an array of sources that are not anti-German. Certain television clips attempt to demonstrate that there is much more to Britain and Germany than Hitler, the Nazis and the two World Wars. With two significant anniversaries looming – 2014, the centenary year of the outbreak of World War One, and 2015 marking 70 years since VE day – the topic is increasingly pertinent with some already apologising to Germany for the ‘avalanche of often sickening Great War memorabilia’ (Jenkins 2014).
The dissertation will answer the following research question; How are Germans represented in post-war British television programmes, and to what extent do these representations portray public opinion? This will expose whether the sources may reflect the wit and intelligence of the individual writers and comedians in the show, as opposed to the popular mind-set. By answering this question the research will demonstrate how television can act as a link to wider societal analysis, and how representations have evolved since the war. The dissertation will cover three discursive chapters:

1) The Post-war Development of Images of Germany and Germans in British Popular Culture (1945-1960)

The opening chapter will outline how Germans are represented in the immediate aftermath of World War Two. It includes commentary on two British films, Frieda and The One That Got Away as well as a radio instalment, the Goon Show, that was later adapted for television. The chapter focuses predominantly on film, as there was a distinct lack of television shows at the time; however the limitations of studying film are also evaluated. The focus of this chapter is to establish representations, and through the use of opinion polls determine if the films mirror popular opinion in the period. The sources chosen are not typical of British cinema that reverted to the war as the apotheosis of Britishness; instead they pose a challenge to how Germans and the war are represented in popular culture.

2) Don’t Mention the War (1960s-1980s)

The second substantive chapter oversees the ‘satire boom’ in Britain through the television comedies: Beyond the Fringe, Monty Python’s Flying Circus and Fawlty
Towers. Television was increasingly gaining popularity and providing a more substantial form of social commentary in relation to a British society. A new generation proposed a change in attitudes towards Germany; but as Britain faltered economically at the expense of Germany’s ‘economic miracle’, jealousy of Germany permeated into negative stereotypes in society. These stereotypes and attitudes towards the war are ridiculed by the shows covered in this chapter.

3) Change at Last? (1980s-2000s)

It is within this final chapter where the depiction of Germans and Germany significantly changes. Television doesn’t engage in the anti-German discourse arising from Thatcher and the reunification of Germany. Shows portraying Germans as Nazis and referring to the Third Reich appear to be in decline. Furthermore the chapter explores the increasing number of television shows relating to Germany’s successful economic model and its pivotal role in the European landscape.

There is a large amount of secondary sources covering the mercurial history of Anglo-German relations. But in terms of the historiography regarding the topic of British television and representations of Germany, there is a much smaller collection of literature. The comparatively unexplored sub field of cultural history, specifically the relationship between history and television is overlooked. In the journal article ‘Britain and Germany: A Love-Hate Relationship?’ Patrick Major (2008: 468) queries the durability of out-dated perceptions in Britain by concluding: ‘It is perhaps therefore for historians to turn more closely to the popular culture and oral history of the last fifty years to discover why the love-hate relationship has lasted for so long, and whether its days are finally numbered’. It is within this context that perceptions
are dealt with in this study; they are not a ‘soft issue’, but as Alexander Heinz (2013: 4) argues, perceptions are equally as important to relations as ‘economic, structural and other factors, yet often in ways which are difficult to determine’. Hence, despite the difficulty surrounding them, it is how these perceptions have been translated into British television that is dealt with in this dissertation. Rainer Emig (2000) has edited a collection of essays in ‘Stereotypes in Contemporary Anglo-German Relationships’. Emig (2000: 1) explores how perceptions are often based on stereotypes and how ‘we continue to misrepresent each other happily’, but these fixed views can be both restricting and enabling to Anglo-German relations.

The multiple factors behind these perceptions and stereotypes have been reviewed in Ruth Wittlinger’s ‘Perceptions of Germany and the Germans in Post-war Britain’ and John Ramsden’s Don’t Mention the War. Wittlinger (2004: 453) suggests that ‘kraut-bashing’ is the only form of racism in Britain which is still considered socially acceptable’ and that economic reasons, challenges to British identity, the nature of the Holocaust, and the education system are all accountable for these negative perceptions. Wittlinger has a pessimistic outlook to any alteration to these attitudes in the near future. Whilst Wittlinger provides contextual information on post-war Anglo-German relations, her linear approach of focusing on germanophobic sentiment is expanded in this dissertation to include more positive representations and prove that not everyone was opposed to all things German. Ramsden agrees with Wittlinger by denoting Britain’s resentment to the post-war economic stagnation in Britain, and as a result, victory over the Nazism became our culture of consolation. But Ramsden divulges into positive representations through specific films and actors, particularly Hardy Kruger films, and how this can help stabilise cultural relations. The impact of 1950s British cinema is considered and how it ‘both mirrored public taste and helped
push it in a positive direction’ (Ramsden 2006: 324).

The dissertation closely examines British post-war television and its link with history, Richard Falcon’s ‘Images of Germany and Germans in British film and television fictions’ offers a fulcrum between the two. Falcon focuses predominantly on film, but gives an in-depth analysis of television shows such as *Fawlty Towers*. Additionally Simon P. Mackenzie’s journal ‘Nazis Into Germans: Went the Day Well?(1942) and The Eagle Has Landed (1976)’ highlights ‘a polar shift in moral compass’ (Mackenzie 2003: 84) between two British films separated by 34 years. Mackenzie’s research fuses historical events, popular opinion and British films to convey a change in attitudes as Germans were transferred from ‘Bad Nazis into Good Germans’ (2003: 91). Geoff Eley emphasises the importance of converging television and film with history in ‘Finding the People’s War: Film, British Collective Memory, and World War II’. Eley (2001:818) points out that television and film has meant ‘(r)emembering World War II requires no immediate experience of those years’ and that popular culture is an ‘active archive of collective identification’.

Finally, the topic engages with the evolution of attitudes since the war, and how this is infiltrated into television shows. Luke Harding’s ‘The Perception of Germany in the UK Media: A Case Study of World Cup 2006 Coverage’ has proclaimed 2006 as a ‘watershed moment’ in British perceptions of Germany (2006:23). Harding’s thesis is centred on the decline of ‘old clichés of Hitler and the Second World War’ in newspaper coverage. It is from this foundation that the dissertation delves into how perceptions have changed since 2006, and explicitly in television and the context of an evolving European landscape. This is addressed by Mark Shaw (2013) in the conference ‘Still Mentioning the War? Perceptions of Germany in Britain during the Eurozone Crisis’ by imposing that there has been a ‘displacement of these war
references by representations of Germany’s role in Europe’ in the media. Evidently there is much literary discussion about the Anglo-German perceptions, and how it has changed in the post-war climate. From this literature review, the understudied aspect of television and history is identified to further the debate with a focus on recent developments in Anglo-German relations, and the research moves away from reviewing typically Germanophobic depictions.

Regarding the methodological approach of this dissertation, the research question and the relationship between history and television will be explored through a chronological survey of television programmes since the war. By analysing a selection of television programmes – and some examples of film, radio and commercial advertisement – in each chapter, the sources will reflect trends in the representations of Germans. The sources are not exclusively positive in their illustrations, but neither are they belittling of Germany. The majority of the sources are from comic sketches, whilst the project does not stray into the various theories of humour and society; comedy narrows down the scope and provides a rich source of stereotypes and perceptions. The inclusion of film and radio, as opposed to television in the first chapter is down to the lack of television programmes in the immediate post-war period; there were just 4.5 million TV licences in 1955, half the amount of licences as radio, issued to a population of 51 million (Hand 2007: 67). It was not until 1955, when ITV initiated a challenge to the BBC monopoly that there was a surge in television viewing, and a subsequent decline in cinema (Hand 2007). Consequently the succeeding two chapters focus almost entirely (exception of the Carling advertisement) on television shows. War documentaries, whilst not ignored are not the focus of the research and would only blur the scope of study.
The use of secondary literature and opinion polls will help determine how typical the various programmes were of public opinion at the time; congruently it allows the research to focus on the socio-political link between high politics and British public opinion, and how they may differentiate. Interviews and books published by the assorted writers and comedians are utilised to delve into the mind-set and establish where they stand with Germany. Newspaper articles stipulate a supplementary media outlet from which to construct depictions of Germany, and although television and newspapers do not always correlate, they are a reflection of the British outlook and are used throughout the research.

This dissertation does have its limits, and to achieve a better-rounded research project, more sources would need to be included. The sheer amount of material and number of years covered has meant that only a few sources have been chosen to represent the period. Simplifications were unavoidable, and the term ‘British’ does not refer to the various nations of the British Isles, or the various regional differences within these countries. The British perceptions in this study are English-centric, and more specifically tied to London as so many of the shows are produced by the BBC or ITV centred in the capital.
The Post-war Development of Images of Germany and Germans in British Popular Culture (1945-1960)

Politically, the post-war relationship between Germany and Britain has been a ‘curious mix of harmony and tension’ (Wright 1996: 26). Initially in the years succeeding the war it was a relationship of dominance from Britain and subordination from Germany. As a result of this hierarchical set up, Germany and Britain had an ‘uneventful’ relationship, resulting in a fairly harmonious relationship that looked to support Germany in its quest to gain economic stability (Wittlinger 2004). Winston Churchill had declared that his hate for the German people had ‘died with their surrender’ (Churchill 1986: 545), and that he wanted to help the ‘misguided people’ of Germany back on their feet again. It was the general consensus that the British people were not interested in vengeance, but were interested in prevention of further war (Michail 2001; Ramsden 2006).

However there was an ‘inherent ambiguity’ in Anglo-German relations, the ‘bad’ Germany of the past was deeply embedded in British society (Hughes 2006: 11). Tales from POW camps and the on-going Nuremberg trials manifested a society craving justice (Michail 2001). A Gallup poll asking Britons how they felt about the German people was conducted 3 months after the Allies victory. 35 per cent of the persons asked in the survey expressed a ‘hatred’ or ‘dislike’ towards Germany (Gallup 1976: 117). According to the historian Richard Crockett, it was the media and education system that created a picture of modern Germany that reinforced the premise that Germans were Nazis (Crockett 1997).

In 1941 the British government’s chief diplomatic advisor, Sir Robert Vansittart issued a series of broadcasts that were later published as the Black Record. Vansittart
claimed that German aggression was part of their history dating back to ancient Rome and Nazism was just the latest manifestation (Vansittart 1941). This ‘otherness’ of German qualities reiterated that the British were morally superior (Michail 2001). Subsequently Germany should be strictly re-educated under Allied supervision. Vansittart’s views may have been extreme and he resigned from government later that year, but some believe his ideas ‘permeated all sections of society, politics, media, the military and the civil service’ (Lee 2001: 14). It is an exaggeration to place all anti-German sentiment within Britain on Vansittart, but nevertheless it is an interest of this author to evaluate how these ideals have filtered into representations of Germans in British popular culture.

A lot of British cinema emanated in the period depicting war heroics such as: The Wooden Horse (Jack Lee, 1950), The Cruel Sea (Charles Frend, 1952), The Dam Busters (Michael Anderson, 1954), The Colditz Story (Guy Hamilton, 1955), Reach for the Sky (Lewis Gilbert, 1956), and Carve Her Name with Pride (Lewis Gilbert, 1958), which helped create a World War Two nostalgia of our ‘finest hour’ (Eley 2001). These representations can have varying impacts on Anglo-German relations; firstly it can reinforce negative images and the hatred (according to Gallup polls) that was prominent in the summer of 1945, secondly the more positive representations – which this chapter focuses on – can help stabilise cultural relations between Britain and Germany. Although there was a lot of enmity towards Germany in 1945, a quarter of those asked in the Gallup poll felt sympathy towards the Germans (Gallup 1976: 117). This provided a foundation in Britain that could help dispel any hostility towards Germany after the war and the role of British popular culture in this rehabilitation of relations is crucial.
An early illustration of ‘sympathy’ towards Germans was seen in British cinema, with the release of ‘Frieda’ in 1947 (Falcon 1994; Mackenzie 2003). Cinema was a far more popular medium of entertainment than television at the time, as many as 30 million Britons attending cinema each week (Pronay 1988: 39). Directed by Basil Dearden the plot focuses on the heroine, Frieda, a German nurse (Mai Zetterling) who aids an RAF pilot, Robert (David Farrar) escape from a POW camp in Germany. The pair consequently marry following her act of kind faith, with Frieda gaining a British passport and she moves with her husband to the small town of Denfield, England (Frieda 1947).

Initially the film gives an encouraging account of Germany with Frieda as the ‘Good German’ figure (Falcon 1994; Mackenzie 2003). Frieda is young, beautiful, and a likeable character that charms her in-laws and neighbours in the town. Any compassion towards Germans continues with the fact that her name ‘Frieda’ is derived from ‘Friede’, translating to peace in German (Kemp WWW). One particular scene embraces German high culture of the past where Frieda praises “Heine, Goethe, Schiller, Beethoven, Brahms’ as Germany’s ‘true greatness’” (Frieda 1947). Looking at these German greats emphasises a different Germany away from Nazism and Hitler, and Frieda is the symbol of this ‘other Germany’ that imposes images of peace and rebuilding.

The positive bearing of Germans does not hold throughout the film and Frieda is the exception rather than the rule, as presented by her ‘unrepentant Nazi’ brother, Ricki (Falcon 1994: 17). Ricki’s strong beliefs are exhibited following his surprise arrival in England, where he proceeds to give a swastika on a chain necklace to Frieda as her
wedding gift. The inclusion of Ricki’s character suggests that there are still Germans who follow Nazism and that it would not be acceptable to have a British film that only sheds Germany in a positive light. The film is also incapable of having the lead role played by a German actress; Mai Zetterling is Swedish. Other anti-German aspects of the film include the ill treatment towards Robert in a German POW camp, and how German guns killed Alan, Robert’s brother. Extending this anti-German rhetoric, the film suggests the difficulty it would be for a German to assimilate into British society. This is encapsulated by the scorn that Frieda receives from Robert’s Aunt Nell, a newly elected MP, who denounces all Germans and Germany on a public platform to dissociate herself from Frieda.

For a film that was produced with memories of the war so fresh, it is a brave example of endeavouring to show Germans in an alternative way. Roger Manvell, the first director of the British Film academy, wrote that Frieda was ‘a timely reminder to the British people that they must decide their attitude to the German people’ (Quoted in Ramsden 2006: 298). Manvell contests that the film can relate viewers to the ‘survival of Nazism’ or equally the ‘innocence of many Germans of direct involvement in Hitler’s regime’ (Quoted in Ramsden 2006: 298). This is a shift away from the initial representations of Germans as inherently ‘aggressive’ by Vansittart, to the idea poised by Churchill that the German people were ‘misguided’. Although the film does not appear to forgive Germans completely, it does have a rather optimistic prediction that the war will soon be forgotten. The positivity is personified through Aunt Nell, whose prejudice towards Frieda is weakening; “No matter who they are, no matter what they’ve done, you can't treat human beings as though they were less than human... without becoming less than human yourself” (Frieda 1947). The muddled
liberalism of the film is summarised through this quote and exemplifies that although feelings towards Germany were still raw, they would soon be forgiven.

By the 1950s, the British consented to the Federal Republic becoming a fully-fledged member of NATO. West Germany was an official ally, however relations between the two remained ‘uneasy’ and a level of mistrust was still prominent (Lee 1996). A sign of the changing times was seen in 1957 when Roy Baker was assigned to make the film, The One That Got Away based on the only known German escapee from a British POW camp, Franz Von Werra. Baker set out to have a German actor play the World War II fighter pilot, despite the principal figure behind the film, John Davies who was ‘adamant he would not play a German actor in the part’ (Quoted in Ramsden 2006: 295). Baker was fed up of the ‘depiction of Germans as homosexual Prussians, Gestapo torturers or beer-swilling Bavarians, all presented in ridiculously hammy performances’ (Quoted in Mayer 2004: 186). He was finally given permission to play a German in the role and rising out of this prejudice against German actors was Hardy Kruger– with his boyish charm, blonde hair and innocent looks– he was a stark contrast to the orthodox British interpretation of the merciless Nazi (Mayer 2004). When Baker signed Kruger to star as Von Werra, it was his first major film outside of Germany. Kruger was not unique as a German actor in Britain, he was merely ‘the first and most successful of a whole cohort of Teutonic actors working in the United Kingdom’ (Williams 2006: 86).

Kruger distanced himself from any Nazi affiliations (Ramsden 2006). His disassociation with the Nazi’s and his role as an actor meant that he could provide a figurehead for both Germans and British people alike to rally behind. Playing the
Luftwaffe pilot Franz Von Werra in *The One That Got Away* was a platform for Kruger to showcase his talent. The film is a variation of the POW escape genre that was so popular at the time with *The Wooden Horse* (Jack Lee, 1950) and *The Colditz Story* (Guy Hamilton, 1955). The main dissimilarity in *The One That Got Away* was seeing the escapee from the perspective of a German or through ‘The Enemy Eyes’ (Williams 2006: 88).

Kruger’s first press conference in the UK to introduce the film was a public relations disaster, and emulated the distrust and anger towards Germany that remained in the British public. Kruger was asked extensively about his Nazi past to which he responded why it was a sensible subject to ask about? One such journalist retorted “look in the mirror, Mr Kruger”, a reference to his tall, blonde, Aryan looks. Kruger explained that he knew Germany had much to apologise for, and that Jewish people in particular may never forgive the German people. This remark upset the converser who remarked ‘Why should you think I am a Jew?’ to which Kruger unwisely replied, “Look in the mirror” (Quoted in Ramsden 2006: 297). This created quite a furore and resulted in media journalists shunning any reporting of the film’s production. Nevertheless the film was released and on a whole reviews were positive, with success in Britain and most notably in Germany (Ramsden 2006; Williams 2006).

In a similar way to the plot of *Frieda*; *The One That Got Away* does not portray the Germans in an exclusively optimistic stance. Most importantly Von Werra is undermined himself. The hero’s confidence is diminished when in an interrogation process he is disproved of killing fighter pilots that his reputation is based upon. Von Werra does not believe he is a Nazi, but refuses to give away any useful military
information, with the interrogator commenting, “You have a unique code of ethics, Oberleutnant” (The One That Got Away 1957). It is this attempt to ‘limit the damage to British prestige’ (Ramsden 2006: 309) that enabled some to question why the film encouraged spectators to identify with a German protagonist. Picturegoer aptly titled a review of the film ‘Will You Care About this German?’ Reviews such as this and the contentious press conference surrounding the film imply that there is still a lot of fractious feeling towards the Germans.

Conversely the film and in particular Kruger’s pivotal role did help ‘normalise cultural relations between Britain and Germany’ (Ramsden 2006: 297). There was a view that Germany had significantly changed since 1945 and with the more pressing necessities of the Cold War, their Nazi past was moving away from social consciousness (Michail 2001). Germany had ‘swung from one extreme – of political fanaticism and violence – into passivity and apathy’ (Mazower 1998: 312). A strong Germany was essential to counter the on-going threat from the Soviet Union. This was reflected in the films analysed, attitudes were clearly shifting away from Nazism; between 1950 and 1960, a quarter of all films made illustrated Germans in a positive light (Cumberbatch and Wood 1995; 108).

The film industry can often be regarded as an international phenomenon, with British films being influenced by America and Hollywood. As a result, films do not always reflect the particular country’s society. Whilst Frieda and The One That Got Away are good examples of early films that show progression in Anglo-German relations, other aspects of British popular culture need to be considered. A prevalent medium of entertainment that was more exclusive to Britain and British society is radio and
television. The *Goon Show* consisting of Spike Milligan, Michael Bentine (first two series), Peter Sellers and Harry Secombe were the first group to really mock the war through the mode of radio. Broadcast on the BBC, the *Goon Show* ran from 1951 to 1960 spanning ten series. The members of the group had experienced the war first-hand, meeting in the 1940s, and like a lot of post-war entertainers, originated performing to the forces. Performing in front of such an audience could have influenced them to be anti-German, however this was not the case.

The *Goon show* consisted of ridiculous sketches full of bizarre humour, witty puns and sound effects. The chief writer and curator of the show, Spike Milligan engages with contemporary British life underlying all the madness of the sketches. Collectively as the *Goon Show*, several of the broadcasts had mocking references to the war and Germany. Peter Sellers played the recurring character of Justin Eidelberger or ‘just an idle bugger’, a German anti-hero. Sellers employed a stereotypical German accent in which his character, Eidelberger declares, “No self-respecting German would have a phoney accent like zis!” (*The Great Bank Robbery* 1956). Here the *Goon Show* engages with the ‘British postwar folklore’ that Jürgen Kronig highlights was prevalent in British society at the time (Kronig 1999). This ‘folklore’ is centred on stereotypical representations of Germany and Germans in British popular culture, particularly films, jokes, newspapers, commercials and TV shows (Wittlinger 2004). Sellers and co identified this ‘folklore’ and how British popular culture represented the Germans and lampooned it in their radio show.

The *Goon Show* explores British stereotypes of Germans to a further extent in *Tales of Men’s Shirts* (1959), with the belief that the German people ‘haven’t a sense of
humour’. Again this is not mocking the Germans, but it is satirical humour directed at British society of the time. The sardonic nature of the show continues throughout the episode when “Germany declared war in all directions’ with a ‘Bang!’” The Germans ‘master plan’ to win the war was through the use of ‘exploding shirt-tail fluid’ (Tales of Men’s Shirts 1959). This was broadcast just 14 years after the end of the war, but it is empirical evidence of certain individuals beginning to change attitudes towards the war and Germans. The Germans in these episodes are never once portrayed as Nazis or ‘Bad Germans’.

Individually Milligan wrote a series of memoirs based on his exploits in the war with the premier book of the collection titled Adolf Hitler: My Part in His Downfall. Although it was published in 1971, the book is based on memoirs dating back to the war and therefore it gives an insight into Milligan’s mind-set and how he perceived the Germans at the time. The book is comprised of jokes and anecdotes, where Milligan does not mock the Germans, but ridicules the ordeal of war. After months of trying to avoid the war with ‘appendicitis’ and a slipped disk in his back, Milligan reveals that on the train to the barracks the Rail Transport Officer hands him a ticket and a picture of Hitler marked “This is your enemy”, to which Milligan replied “I searched every compartment, but he wasn’t on the train…” (Milligan 1971: 20). The book continues in the same vein of humour and rarely refers to any direct confrontation with the Germans, and much like the radio show it does not make any negative reference towards Germans and Germany.

Milligan, Peter Sellers and Harry Secombe were hugely popular in Britain, and received praise from notable comedians including John Cleese. Cleese commended
the show as taking comedy 'into territory where nobody has been before' (Ventham 2002: 151). However in this praise lies the fundamental reason why the Goon Show does not represent British society as a whole. For all their individual brilliance and intelligence, it does not reflect the average British person. The radio show, plus individual work such as Milligan’s war memoirs exemplify that they are not anti-German, and deride society and factors surrounding the war. Whilst their work may not have represented the mind-set of the majority, they were the first British group to poke fun at the war.

Although they are not typical of the period, it was films such as Frieda and The One That Got Away that initiated a challenge to how Germans were represented in Britain. The films comply with the muddled liberalism in British society at the time; although prejudice still remained, there was sympathy and an optimistic outlook to Anglo-German perceptions. By mocking the war and peoples attitudes towards it, the Goon Show offered a unique viewpoint of the war that would inspire a generation of comedy writers. It is from these foundations that there was a polar shift in moral compass in Britain towards having a progressive outlook of Germany (Mackenzie 2003). In a fairly short period, there has been a transfer in British Popular culture away from depictions of ‘Nazis’ and negative connotations of the war, towards making fun of the war and representing them as Germans, and in particular cases ‘Good Germans’.
Don’t Mention the War (1960s-1980s)

‘The recovery took not one decade, but several. Germany was exposed to the power of Hitler for a mere 12 years. The process of restoring normality to the country would take much longer.’ (Crawshaw 2004: 22)

An obsession with Germany’s Nazi past is not restricted to Britain, the fixation with World War Two is a national hobby shared by the numerous countries that were involved in the conflict (Oltermann 2012). Whilst in the immediate post-war years, memories of the war may have been tender and raw. The 1960s and 1970s saw a generational shift, as those with immediate war experience were gradually becoming a minority. This shift in psyche is exemplified through another contested bi-national relationship, Germany and France. France had just as much reason to harbour a grudge towards Germany as Britain, if not more. Nevertheless Hartmut Kaelble observed that the younger generations in the respective countries were not experiencing one another through war, but through ‘school exchanges, holiday and business trips, town twinning, French literature’ and the everyday consumption of goods from the other country (Kaelble 1991 cited in Heinz 2013: 7). In a more liberal and globalising world, relations were positively evolving. The question is whether these changes were also implemented within Anglo-German relations and perceptions?

In 1962 over half of the Britons questioned described their attitudes towards Germans in positive terms (Gallup 1976: 617). However this positive outlook towards Germany did not mean that stereotypes and referring to the war were removed from society. Donald Cameron Watt commented that ‘British opinion has remained fixed in
the stereotypes established in the two world wars’ (Watt 1965 cited in Emig 2000: 5). The British have often been accused of being ‘stuck in the past’ and having an outdated view of Germany (Ramsden 2006; Heinz 2013). The Goon Show picked up on this British trait and mocked it in their shows, and accordingly they inspired a whole cohort of British comedic writers.

Stemming from the Goon Show, the 1960s experienced the so-called ‘satire boom’ within British popular culture (Carpenter 2000). One particular show is heralded with kick-starting this movement, Beyond the Fringe (Wagg 2002). The group consisted of four writer-performs; Peter Cook, Dudley Moore, Alan Bennett and Jonathan Miller. They all graduated from Oxford or Cambridge University, and created a series of satirical sketches and musical pieces reflecting events in the post-war generation. Their new form of comedic entertainment was not necessarily well received at the time. During a sketch at the Edinburgh festival, Peter Cook mockingly impersonated the prime minister of the time, Harold Macmillan. Michael Frayn, the playwright observed a couples reaction as the prime minister was mimicked:

‘(T)he man turned to the woman and said in an appalled whisper, ‘I say! This is supposed to be the Prime Minister’, after which they sat in silence for the rest of the evening’ (Quoted in Wilmut and Gascoigne 1980: 20)

Despite alienating certain members of the audience, the four young Oxbridge graduates gained critical acclaim at the Edinburgh festival and ventured into the new world of television (Bishop 2007). Originating as a revue in 1961, The Aftermyth of War and other popular sketches were published on the BBC three years later. Like
the Goon Show it does not depict Germans in a negative way at all. Most of the
humour in the sketch is directed at the British, they satirised the nostalgic accounts of
homefront life by the upper class and the supposed heroes of the war (The Aftermyth
of War 1964). This attack on war-nostalgia culminated with the line “Then,
unavoidably, came peace”, entailing a reluctance to end the war. During the 15 years
after the war there was no fewer than 85 war films produced reflecting on the war
(Pronay 1988: 39). Beyond the Fringe was an outbreak towards this assortment of
films, particularly those that had romanticised the war, such as The Dam Busters and
Reach for the Sky (Carpenter 2000: 213).

Any reference to Germany or Germans from the quartet has a serious undertone.
Whilst listening to Bach, the squadron leader (Alan Bennett) declares, “the music you
are listening to Timothy, is German music, and we are fighting the Germans. That is
something you’re going to have to work out later on” (The Aftermyth of War 1964). It
is a dig at the concept of war and how relations between the two countries would
suffer as a consequence. This sentiment is comparable to Frieda, moving away from
typifying Germans as Nazis, but referring to the greatness of German culture. It is
apparent that the writers of the show do not feel that Anglo-German relations have
been ‘worked out’ since the end of the war. This is emphasised at the end of the
sketch when the veteran soldiers comment, “Well, we have done our best. Now its up
to the youngsters. I wonder what they will make of it” (The Aftermyth of War 1964).
They then proceed to sing Auld Lang Syne, a song with connotations of ‘new
beginnings’ and forgetting about ‘auld’ acquaintances. The 1960s were a period of
cultural radicalisation and Beyond The Fringe and other left wing iconoclasms looked
to attack the post-war settlement ‘angrily and exuberantly exposing its deficiencies
and denouncing its congealing of values into a normalised resistance to change’ (Elley 2001: 821).

It is questionable whether the jeering at the war and British attitudes towards the war reflected the entirety of social consciousness in Britain. The show was scorned for its ‘insensitivity’ to the war (Bishop 2007). Tony Iveson, a former RAF pilot reflected on the show and felt ‘it seemed unnecessary, in view of how many we lost.’ (Quoted in Bishop 2007: Prologue). Peter Cook was reluctant to include the *Aftermyth of War* in the final selection of sketches. Cook knew that it might have been well received by Cambridge students, but not by his parents’ generation (Thompson 1997). Cook’s fears were realised when during a show in Brighton, one man stood up and shouted ‘You young bounders don’t know anything about it!’ before storming off (Thompson 1997:105). It is evident that the older generation still harbours a traditional view of the war and of Germany. Cook, Bennett et al created a TV programme ‘catering to political and cultural minorities’ (Wagg 2002: 332). The ‘aspiring prole satirists’ appealed principally to the younger and middle class (Tynan 1961). There was a clear generational rift highlighted by *Beyond the Fringe*, as the younger pacifists in a permissive society clashed with war veterans.

The political elite of Britain did not see eye to eye with the newly formed Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR). In 1963, the labour party leader Harold Wilson stated ‘We have no respect either for Adenauer or for Ulbricht’ (Quoted in Hughes 2006: 20). Britain at the time did not recognise the GDR as a state. As the 1960s progressed it was a phase where Britain was experiencing relative decline in manufacturing compared to Germany. These on-
going political and economic pressures forced the labour government of the 1960s to revise its policy on joining the EEC (West Germany was a founding member) (Pugh 2012). Identifying the state of affairs, the historian Watt stressed that Britain should look to Germany for its future (Watt 1965). Corresponding with this, the social milieu in Britain was identified with youth culture and breaking away from national traditions and institutions (Landy 2005).

Relations on a political platform were improving, but were Germans represented in British television changing accordingly in this permissive society? Inspired by the Goon show and Beyond the Fringe came a larger comedy group, Monty Python. The BBC first broadcast Monty Python’s Flying Circus in 1969, and it spanned 6 years covering 45 episodes. Again a large crux of the group came from Oxford and Cambridge University. The name ‘Monty Python’ has premise in the war, ‘Monty’ referring to Lord Montgomery ‘our great general of the Second World War’ (Live at Aspen 1998). From the outset Monty Python were picking up from where the Goon Show and Beyond the Fringe left off in mocking the war. In their very first episode titled Wither Canada (1969) they included the sketch ‘The Funniest Joke in the World’. It wholly ridicules World War II, as ‘Ernest Scribbler’ (Michael Palin) develops a joke that is so funny he, and anyone who reads it accordingly dies (Wither Canada 1969). The British Army get hold of this joke and translate it into (nonsensical) German, which they use as ‘Joke Warfare’ to defeat the laughing Germans.

Not only do they satirise the concept of war, but also play on stereotypes of Germans in British society. In the skit, the Germans attempt to counter this type of warfare with a joke of their own: “Der ver zwei peanuts, walking down der strasse, and von vas . . .

25
assaulted! Peanut” *(Wither Canada 1969)*. The German version of the joke proved ineffective. In British society the German is atypically humourless and authoritarian *(Ritchie and Harris 2007)*, both of these traits are present in *Monty Python*. The British could make the Germans laugh to death, however the Germans failed, and as a result of their lack of humour they lost the war. *Monty Python* may have been replicating British attitudes at the time, but some members of the group were also guilty of this stereotyping of Germans. This came about when the group embarked on a Germans version of the show, *Monty Python’s Fliegender Zirkus* in 1971. Michael Palin was sceptical of the choice of country and reflected that ‘At the time, to be perfectly honest and a little racist we had not thought Germany was an obvious place for comedy, but we were wrong’ *(Palin 2004)*. Eric Idle recounted the sensitive nature of Germany and its Nazi past; upon arriving in Germany the Pythons were driven to Dachau concentration camp, they insisted to go in but were refused by a security guard, at which Graham Chapham supposedly remarked ‘Tell them we’re Jewish’, and they were let in *(Live at Aspen 1998)*.

Despite Chapham’s remark, references to Germany’s Nazi past were according to Simon Mackenzie *(2003)*, becoming more of a rarity. Mackenzie writes extensively about how certain aspects of the war are depicted in film and television. By looking at two British films with a similar plot but separated by 34 years; *Went the Day Well* and *The Eagle Has Landed*, Mackenzie judges how the ‘contrasting moral positions’ convey changing British perceptions of Germany *(Mackenzie 2003)*. Attitudes have clearly changed from the 1940s into the late 70s, but it is too narrow to look at just two individual films. A wider scope is needed to assess how perceptions have changed in British popular culture, whilst Germans are increasingly being portrayed
as ‘Good’ Germans, Mackenzie ignores stereotypes and the impact this can have on Anglo-German perceptions. Stereotypes of German’s as despotic and lacking a sense of humour continued to be reinforced in the 1970s through, *Morecombe and Wise, Dad’s Army, It Ain’t Half Hot Mum* and *Secret Army* (Ritchie and Harris 2007). This was despite Britain achieving European Economic Community (EEC) membership in 1973 through the ‘staunch backing of Chancellor Willy Brandt’ (Hughes 2006). Increased British-German cooperation meant that the relationship was ‘much more compatible than British and German attitudes had been a decade earlier’ (Morgan 2000: 200).

Stereotypes of Germans in British television are not necessarily negative; they provide an awareness that cultures work differently (Emig 2000). Emig (2000) contends that stereotypes contain elements of the truth, however within their generalisation they do not take into account diversity and change within a country. In this sense stereotypes can be used as a contradictory tool for both assimilation and isolation. Within this paradox the ‘other’ is both attractive and threatening (Emig 2000). The various programmes are thus instilling these stereotypes into social consciousness, and through this they can provide a ‘basic interaction with cultural difference’ (Emig 2000: 8-9). As each decade passed since the war, the stereotypes are increasingly out-dated as Watt stressed in 1965. It is this danger of maintaining the stereotypes for a lengthy period that can have a negative impact on Anglo-German relations and create xenophobic tendencies in society. Television has a vital role in reinforcing or dismissing these stereotypes (Falcon 1994).
There was still a generational divide in how Germany was perceived. Mackenzie (2003: 91) discredits the attitudes of middle-aged and older critics as ‘mostly an irrelevance’. However a former python, John Cleese offers an insight into the negative condition of Anglo-German relations in Fawlty Towers. The anguished hotel owner Basil Fawlty in The Germans embodies the confusing situation at the time. Struggling in the economic climate of Britain he coincidentally encounters some West German guests. A conversation with the ‘Major’ who personifies the older generation sets up the ensuing mayhem:

“The Major: Bunch of Krauts, that's what they are, all of 'em. Bad eggs!

Basil: Yes well, forgive and forget, Major... God knows how, the bastards.” (The Germans 1975). Basil did neither forgive nor forget and when the new guests try to make themselves understood he remarks “Oh, Germans! I thought there was something wrong with you”. Despite his famous remark ‘Don't mention the war’, Basil lets off a stream of references to the war and racist comments that reduce one of the guests to tears in which one argues “Well, we did not start it!” Basil replies, ‘Yes you did! You invaded Poland!” (The Germans 1975).

In the genre of comedy it is easy to misinterpret the meaning behind the act, and this was certainly the case with The Germans (Falcon 1994; Ramsden 2006; Oltermann 2012). Out of the 12 episodes of Fawlty Towers produced by the BBC, The Germans was the only episode not to be transmitted onto German television (Falcon 1994). The Germans in the sketch are stereotypically stiff, formal, lacking a humour and embarrassed. But Cleese is quick to point out that the Germans are not the butt of the joke: ‘The point I was trying to make is that people like Basil are utterly stuck in the past’ (Quoted in Crawshaw 2004: 133). Through the character of Basil Fawlty
and the Major, he engages with the changing economic fortunes and the evolving European landscape by mocking British attitudes towards Germany.

It is apparent that as relations between the countries improved at a governmental level, there is no correlation of positive improvement in British attitudes towards Germany. A new generation in society promised for change as those with first-hand experience of the war began to diminish. But as the lampooning of British attitudes in this chapter display, mind-sets towards the war and Germany had stayed in flux. It appears that straight after the war there was more sympathy towards Germany (as shown in Frieda) and the position they were in. Ruth Wittlinger (2004) places this anti-German discourse as a response to the contrasting economic fortunes of the two countries. Whilst Britain was experiencing relative decline, the defeated nation (West) Germany underwent an ‘economic miracle’ to outperform Britain. This is summed up with the phrase that Britain ‘won the war but lost the peace’ (Wittlinger 2004: 461). Britain was no longer an international superpower and this created a resentment amongst many who had not experienced the war, such as Basil Fawlty. A simpler explanation for these perceptions is outlined by Alexander Heinz (2013: 155), who digresses that the perceptions ‘were largely a natural means for orientation in the world’, and they are not ‘morally questionable’ as others have suggested.

The 1960s satire boom revolutionised television and the sources dissected in this chapter were a part of that movement. Beyond the Fringe hints at the troubles that the younger generation will have at making peace with Germany. It is not derogatory to Germany, but how the war has been romanticised in Britain. Likewise Monty Python play on the ordeal of war, but they begin to incorporate stereotypes of
Germans in their sketches that are rooted in British society. These stereotypes of the efficient, authoritarian and humourless German have replaced that of the ‘evil’ or ‘Nazi’ German. In this sense representations of Germany have improved, but stereotypes are not harmless and can impact Anglo-German relations. As Germany prospered at the expense of Britain, resentment amongst those who had never fought Germany in the war grew. This is encapsulated in *Fawlty Towers* as Basil Fawlty symbolises those in society who are firmly stuck in the past.
Change at last? (1980s-2000s)

The cordial bilateral relation between Germany and Britain was not sustainable; as equality increased between the two states, the former hierarchical relationship was no longer applicable (Larres and Meehan 2000: 1). (West) Germany and its politicians were becoming increasingly established within Anglo-German parameters, yet it was unsettled by the arrival of Margaret Thatcher (Wittlinger 2007). Thatcher was publicly against German reunification and she rejuvenated collective memory of Germany’s Nazi past. On her first visit to Germany as the Conservative party leader in 1975; Thatcher ‘attempted’ to make the victory sign as she felt it was ‘all the more appropriate since I was in Germany’ (Thatcher 1995: 343).

Corresponding with the rise to power of Thatcher, the depiction of German stereotypes in British television remained resilient. The abundance of television, films and advertisements portraying Germany or the war reflected public opinion of the period. This cannot be solely attributed to the relative economic decline in Britain, but a host of other factors (Wittlinger 2004). The lasting legacy of the holocaust, the notion of Britishness in its ‘finest hour’, and the (lack of) German history and language education in Britain resulted in Germany and the war being deeply entwined in social consciousness (Paterson 2001; Kershaw 2003; Wittlinger 2004). Germany and its National Socialist past were not going to be consigned to history, and if anything its memory was getting stronger with each passing decade.

Exemplifying the obsession with Germany and the war in popular culture was the British television comedy ‘Allo ‘Allo! (1982-1992). The show was a parody of the
prevalent war-based films and TV dramas, in particular the BBC drama *Secret Army* (1977-79). The sitcom is distorting the nostalgic attitudes of so many dramas that depicted war as our ‘finest hour’ through scenes of heroic action, anticipation, tragedy and calamity (Delabsatita 2010). This iconographic is subverted in ‘*Allo ‘Allo!’ through jokes and caricatures in the German-occupied France and the protagonist café-owner, Rene Artois. It is not a show that is isolating the Germans and scorning them, but every single nation that comes into viewing, whether it’s French, Italian, German or British; the national stereotype is taunted. The French have a promiscuous sex life, are greedy and live off wine and onions; the Italians are vain womanisers who suffer from bouts of cowardice; the Germans are militaristic, have an air of superiority and are efficient; whereas the British are pompous, practical and display an insular narrow-mindset (*The British Are Coming* 1982, *Good Staff Are Hard to Find* 1987). Deeper issues surrounding the war such as the Holocaust, mass killings, and the French collaboration under Philippe Petain are tactfully avoided from the screenplay (Delabsatita 2010).

The sensitive and painful realties may have been omitted from the show, but Hitler and Germany’s Nazi past was caricatured (Delabsatita 2010). The SS made the most of the wartime situation with their exploitative business ideas: they promote ‘Gestap-o-grams’ with Male SS strippers and ‘if anyone is cheaper they will be shot’ (Ramsden 2006: 386). Delabsatita (2010: 196) claimed that the ‘comic atmosphere prevails entirely’ while the World War II setting merely provides a ‘context’ for the sketches antics. But it is impossible to forget the war in ‘*Allo ‘Allo!’, the jokes always have inferences leading back to the war. In one such example, Captain Geering mistakenly runs over Herr Flick’s car with a steamroller, much to Herr Flick’s dismay:
“This is very serious... The Gestapo is only insured third party” (Flight of Fancy 1986). The humour relies on the war and it is crucial to the success of the show. The sitcom regularly pulled in 12 million viewers per episode (Ramsden 2006: 385). Michael Portillo (2004) commented on this success: ‘few subjects can rival the Führer for viewing figures. Somehow, too, it is true that we find the Third Reich funny’. Portillo attributes both ‘Allo ‘Allo! and Fawlty Towers as a reason to why Britain is so engrossed with Germany’s Nazi past (Portillo 2004). However, Portillo has not grasped that both shows are mocking the post-war culture in Britain itself and not the Germans or the war. Unintentionally ‘Allo ‘Allo! (and Fawlty Towers) had become the face of the British being stuck in the past.

When Watt boldly announced in 1965 that Britain should look to Germany, not many adhered to his words. Yet in 1983, ITV took Watt’s advice quite literally and rendered the show Auf Wiedersehen, Pet (1983-2004). The comedy captures the sombre mood in Britain. Along with antagonising the Anglo-German relations, Thatcher’s policies created a lot of unemployment within Britain. Between 1978 and 1982, unemployment in Britain had doubled to almost 3 million (Pugh 2012: 345). Auf Wiedersehen, Pet makes several references to the state of unemployment as it follows a group of British construction workers, forced to find work on a site in Dusseldorf. The Germans that the Brits interact with are represented in a largely positive bearing. It is questionable as to whether they are ‘presented in a wholly positive light’ as Christopher Young suggests (Young 2007: 9). National stereotypes remain, but similarly to ‘Allo ‘Allo! it is just as critical of the British. The show goes to the extent of incorporating internal British stereotypes of regional difference with characters from Newcastle (hence ‘pet’ in the title), Liverpool, Birmingham and
Bristol. The Germans are charming and extremely welcoming to the British, however these exchanges are too brief and they ‘rarely allow any Germans to develop as characters’ (Ramsden 2006: 388).

The second episode released *Who Won The War Anyway?* (1983), draws parallels with *The Germans* (*Fawlty Towers*). The title is a direct reference to Basil Fawlty’s famous line, and the British attitude of ‘mentioning the war’ is teased. But in this case, the anti-German attitude is juxtaposed with examples of good faith. Two characters, Oz and Neville, symbolise this; Neville befriends a German co-worker, Helmut, who invites him for dinner with his family. The sketch inevitably confronts the war, when Neville has a conversation with Helmut’s grandfather who coincidentally worked on a U-boat that killed Neville’s great-grandfather. The grandfather proposes a toast to his memory, Neville is initially apprehensive but he then confides; “might as well, it was a long time ago” (*Who Won The War Anyway*, 1983). Meanwhile Oz gets fired for fighting a German worker, but he is reinstated following strike action from that same German. Despite this Oz continues to want to ‘hammer’ the Germans “Cos they’re the bastards that bombed me granny” (*Who Won The War Anyway*, 1983). If in *The Germans* it is sometimes misinterpreted at who is the victim of the humour, there is no doubt in this episode that the racist, parochial fool stuck in the past is Oz.

*A Carling Black Label* (1989) advert provides an illustration of how references to Britain’s heroic part in the Second World War were used in a commercial setting. Carling uses the famous ‘bouncing bombs’ from *The Dam Busters* that threaten a dam, only to be thwarted by a German guard posing as a goalkeeper (Carling 1989). In light of the German guards acrobatic efforts, a member of the aircraft crew proclaims ‘Bet he drinks Carling Black Label’. The significance of the advert is
reviewed by Jonathan Glancey (2003): ‘It neatly associated lager drinking with football, British humour and, in a self-deprecating way, reminded us that we can win when we try.’ Football is inextricably tied up with Anglo-German relations, with *The Dam Busters* song regularly sung at matches between England and Germany (Beck 2003; Bishop and Jaworski 2003: Garland 2004; Young 2007). Along with the ‘yobbish’ chants, football provided ‘compensation for lack of success’ (Kershaw 2003); linking back to the argument that references to the Second World War were embedded in a resentment of Germany.

* Auf Wiedersehen, Pet * and characters such as Neville proposed an optimistic future for Anglo-German relations. However as the possibility of a united Germany was looming towards the end of the 1980s, Thatcher’s fight against German reunification at an elite level ‘gave new impetus to the anti-German discourse at the public level’ (Wittlinger 2004: 464). When Germany’s plans for reunification were realised in 1990, there was a lot of anxious attention in Britain towards the newly formed country (Michail 2001). This anxiety was transferred predominantly into sensationalist newspaper articles, rather than British television. Corresponding with Neo-Nazi murderous attacks against foreign workers, *The Economist* (1997) feared ‘a Germany thrown back on Prussian ways’. This was not just consigned to the media, but politicians feared of a German domination in Europe. Nicholas Ridley, then Trade and Industry secretary consigned in an interview with the *Spectator*, that the Germans were power-hungry and keen to dominate Europe (Lawson 1990: 8-10).

Television in Britain did not engage to the same extent in the anti-German hysteria created by other forms of the media and certain politicians. Some television producers continued to try and exploit that the war was ‘funny’, but it was beginning to lose its appeal. One such attempt was *Heil Honey I’m Home*, which originally aired
the same year as Germany regained its status as a singular country. The Nazi-themed sitcom centred on fictionalised depictions of Adolf Hitler and Eva Braun in their apartment in Berlin, and their ‘annoying’ Jewish neighbours, the Goldsteins. On 30th September 1990, British Satellite Broadcasting (BSB) aired a pilot episode of the proposed franchise. Styled like the 1950s American TV shows, it derides sitcoms and was described as ‘Holocaust meets The Honeymooners’ (Schimkowitz 2012). In this strangely styled sitcom, the Hitlers are a typical urban couple who face the challenge of Neville Chamberlain coming for dinner. Although it is ultimately the sitcoms that are being parodied, it does allude to the war. Chamberlain’s attempts at appeasement and ‘peace in our time’ are imitated as Hitler has been “rather a naughty boy, all this Czechoslovakia nonsense” (Peace In Our Time 1990).

Following the pilot viewing, the show never aired again, and was quickly dropped by BSB. Perhaps the Third Reich was not as funny as Portillo (2004) argued, by the 1990s even the war was becoming out-dated for British television. In an interview, Geoff Atkinson the shows writer, felt that the show was released in the wrong decade: ‘different periods accept or deny certain things’ (Atkinson 2013). Alternatively the breakdown of the show could be attributed to its poor production, rather than the concept of the show itself. The portrayal of the Jewish neighbours was ‘slammed’, and combining this with Hitler it was always going to create an ‘insensitive’ show (Nkwocha 1990).

In 1994, David Croft looked to cash in again on the war theme that he was so prosperous with; including Dad’s Army, It Aint Half Hot Mum and ‘Allo ‘Allo!. However his new franchise Which Way To The War, that pictured British and Australian troops in the desert during World War II, was not as fruitful and did not make it past the pilot viewing. It proved to be Croft’s last attempt at a World War II sitcom. The 1990s
appeared to be the demise of Germans being represented on the television as ‘Allo ‘Allo! ended in 1992, and the characters of Auf Wiedersehen, Pet returned from Germany after just one series. In the shadow of the medias and politicians’ public dismissal of German reunification and its ‘aggressive’ European policies, the 1990s had potential to release a television programme deriding the Germans or their Nazi past. However Public opinion was closely exemplified by television, there was substantial British public support for the merging of the two Germanys: as much as 70 per cent of the public wanted a unified Germany (The Economist 1990: 49). Germany and its Nazi past were rapidly retreating from the television sets.

Germany and the war did not disappear from popular culture entirely, documentaries surveying the wartime antics continued to surface including a BBC series titled The Nazis: A Warning from History (1997). Fawlty Towers and Monty Python’s Flying Circus were regularly repeated on the BBC, in 2000 both shows were voted in the top 10 British television shows of all time; with Fawlty Towers earning the title of the greatest British TV show of all time (BFI 2000). Harry Enfield did prove that there was still something to be found in mocking the Germans with the character Jurgen the German (Harry Enfield and Chums 1992) who cant stop apologising for ‘ze war’ and displays some neo-Nazi tendencies. Following his success in the 90s, Enfield devised the sketch Gay Nazis where Hitler has written the book ‘I’m Kamp’, the tanks are named ‘Pansies’ and Goering is head of the ‘Puffwaffe’ (Harry Enfield’s Brand Spanking New Video 2002). Additionally the latter skit was with BSB and only lasted the one series; Enfield described the characters as ‘over the top’ (Hattenstone 2010).

If the prominence of the Second World War and German stereotypes can be rooted in jealousy during an economic downturn, then correspondingly British perceptions should improve as the economic situation progresses. Paterson (2001: 220) stresses
the importance of a ‘British growth in self-confidence’ under the labour government. In 1998, the German Social Democrats modelled their election campaign on the successful labour government (Emig 2000); with The Guardian (1998) announcing it an ‘Anglo-German love-in’. The decline in television programmes depicting Germans in this period is suggestive of this change in attitudes. This transformation in the British outlook went largely unnoticed as the tabloids continued their polemic attack on Germany. The German elite expressed their concern at British perceptions, including the German Minister of Culture, Michael Naumann who believed that Britain’s view of Germany was stuck in the 1940s (The Economist 1999). Similarly the German ambassador to Britain, Thomas Matussek stated that the British are ‘obsessed with the Nazi period’, and do not know what the real Germany is about owing to ‘dangerous misunderstandings’ created in popular culture (Quoted in Day 2005). Wittlinger (2004: 458) goes as far as to suggest that ‘kraut-bashing’ is the only form of racism that is socially acceptable in Britain. Television may have reinforced this in the past; but as the war was becomingly decreasingly popular on television, it was the newspapers that exploited Germany’s past.

What has been labelled as a ‘watershed’ moment in Anglo-German relations is the 2006 football World Cup (Harding 2006; 23). Hosted by Germany, thousands of British people travelled to the country to experience the sporting event. The tabloid war initiated by Thatcher was seemingly over as the World Cup created a ‘new, more positive image of Germany’ (Harding 2006; 23). But it is evident from reviewing previous sources that attitudes cannot change that promptly. To herald one event as responsible for changing 60 years of attitudes is one-dimensional; it was a change in outlook of a particular group of journalists and football fans, not the British public. The development of Germans in British television signalled a more gradual change in
attitudes that dates back to immediately after the war. The World Cup did not change attitudes overnight, but what it did do is address the cultural imbalance between Germany and Britain. This ‘other’ Germany has been highlighted extensively in British television programmes, but the British see it through a ‘prism’ of war and its fascist past has corrupted our view of German culture (Crawshaw 2004).

Spurned on by the World Cup there was a renewed interest in Germany’s past in British television as Steve Crawshaw (author of Easier Fatherland) presented the programme Germany Inside Out (2007), which engaged with everyday German life and culture. A few years later BBC Four issued the ‘Germany Season’ that enlightened viewers on the art, landscape, culture and history of Germany. Part of this season included a series hosted by Al Murray, a comedian who has profited at the expense of German jokes with his pub landlord character. Murray ventured into a different side ‘beyond our British filter of the Great Escape, Jeremy Clarkson and Fawlty Towers’ in Al Murray’s German Adventure (2010). A more respected Germany emerged on television, but the threat of the past haunting them remained. Emig (2000: 6) suggests if stereotypes or opinions are to change it is only if they are 'superseded by an even larger myth'. This new myth came in the form of Germany’s economic prowess and its role in Europe. Instead of reviewing German culture, new shows looked to dissect the German economic model; such as Make Me a German (2013) and The Making of Merkel (2013) corresponded with The Guardian’s series of articles, films and reports titled: ‘Germany The Accidental Empire’. What they all have in common is an appreciation of the German economic model and speculation for future of the European Union. If the 1970s can be defined as a decade of resentment towards Germany’s ‘economic miracle’, then the most recent period of economic growth can be associated predominantly with admiration for Germany.
The shift is personified by the comments of a predecessor to Matussek, Georg Boomgaard, the current German ambassador to Britain who seemingly noticed this British alteration in morality. In interviews with *The Guardian* (18 September 2012, 21 September 2012) he noted that references to Germany’s Nazi past had ‘passed away’ and been replaced by ‘more positive’ representations. Boomgarden argued that the main issue that could divide Germany and Britain in the future would be that of Europe, rather than the past. Evidence of this transferal can also be placed within public opinion, as a YouGov survey conducted in February 2012 found Germany to be the second most admired country in Britain (behind Sweden). When given a series of descriptions of Germans, fifty five per cent associated German people with ‘hard-working’, eclipsing the older stereotype of lacking a sense of humour (YouGov 2012: 2). Relating to the European problem, the survey posed the question ‘Germany should be prepared to do more, spend more and work more closely with other European countries to tackle these problems’ to the interviewees. Over half completely agreed that Germany should do more with these European countries (YouGov 2012: 3). The same question was asked about Britain, but almost half of the respondents disagreed with the statement, suggesting that there is a larger consensus of those opposed to British involvement. This displacement of war references to Germany’s role in Europe has led some to believe that Britain has ‘finally got over the war’ (Oltermann 2012).
Conclusion

It is clear that Germany and its belligerent past has been entwined deep into British collective memory. By undertaking a chronological survey of British television, trends have emerged. Firstly television does not always reflect British popular opinion. Earlier films such as *Frieda* and *The One That Got Away* exhibited the Germans in a positive light, when the war was still a raw memory and the public were distrustful of Germany. The shows that emerged in the 1960s; *The Goon Show*, *Beyond The Fringe*, and *Monty Pyton’s Flying Circus* all lampooned British attitudes to the war during the ‘satire boom’. Despite the anti-war sentiment that surfaced, Germany was still not well received. The parodying in the shows can be attributed to the intellect of Milligan, Cook, or Cleese, as opposed to the British public’s outlook. None of them were anti-German, yet this was a period where the British were notoriously known for having an out-dated view of Germany (Watt 1965; Ramsden 2006; Heinz 2013). Television programmes and their writers were aware of the cultural imbalance in Britain that was obsessed with the war and Nazism long before other forms of popular culture.

It is easy to misinterpret these comic sketches as mocking the Germans, and *Fawlty Towers* is often quoted as being a show that derides Germans, but it is the British characters of Basil Fawlty and the Major that are humiliated. There has been a focus on germanophobia in the scholarship surrounding Anglo-German relations, but a lot of the sources analysed in this research are not anti-German at all; these television programmes demonstrate that there was no homogenous view of Germany across all
spheres of society. In this context television is vital in documenting change and it is the bridge to wider societal analysis (Eley 2001).

Secondly the lack of political animosity in the post-war period between Germany and Britain (Wright 1996; Paterson 2001: Wittlinger 2004) had little impact on British representations of Germans. At a governmental level, relations between the two countries have been progressive from the end of the Second World War to the 1980s. It is therefore important not to underestimate perceptions; the negative depictions of Germany at a public level were down to British society clinging onto wartime memories as a result of a weakening British identity, the loss of the British Empire, and economic decline. There is a differentiated image of Germany between ‘high’ politics (politicians and diplomats) and British public opinion (Heinz 2013). The Second World War was an important iconographic event in British popular memory. At a time where Britain was branded as the ‘Sick Man of Europe’, and Germany was undergoing an ‘economic miracle’; the war was quite often portrayed on television as Britain’s ‘finest hour’ to invoke patriotic memories of a better time. ‘Allo ‘Allo! and the Carling Black Label advert both mock this British melancholy, whilst Auf Wiedersehen, Pet highlighted the economic disparity between the two countries. Germans being depicted as Nazis was becoming a rarity (Falcon 1994; Williams 2007; Mackenzie 2010) but the resentment in Britain invoked stereotypes of strict, sullen Germans.

Television is not coherent with other forms of British popular culture and the media. It is films such as The Dam Busters and The Great Escape that are scorned on television for their glamorisation of the war. Likewise the media really latched onto
Thatcher’s dismissal of German reunification and for much of the 1990s newspapers engaged in sensationalist anti-German discourse. Contradictorily to this, television did not get involved in this hysteria to the same extent, programmes such as *Heil Honey I’m Home* and *Which Way to the War* attempted to, but failed. Television, unlike during the satire boom, now reflected public opinion more closely, as making fun of the Germans no longer bought in viewing figures. Television was always included in the ‘British postwar folklore’, which employed images of Germany in the Second World War and its Nazi past in television, film, comedy, advertisements, and newspaper reporting (Kronig 1999; Wittlinger 2004). But by the 1990s it could be excluded from this post-war culture, and it was not until after the football World Cup that other forms of popular culture began to do the same (Harding 2006). The catchphrase ‘Don’t mention the war’ is no longer applicable as it appears to finally being consigned to history. There is a repositioning of British popular memory away from post-war stereotypes to more positive images of an economic powerhouse (Shaw 2013). Any negative images that may arise on the television sets are more likely to be associated with friction over Europe, rather than past atrocities.

It would be short-sighted to claim that perceptions have changed completely, but according to television there is far less shows representing Germans and the war than there were in the 1960s. Similarly public opinion has improved and in 2013, according to a BBC poll, Germany was viewed as the most popular country in the world with 59% of the 26,000 respondents seeing it in positive ways; in Britain alone it was as high as 78% (BBC poll 2013). Consequently it would be easy to predict a constructive future for Anglo-German relations, however 2014 is pivotal in that it marks 100 years since World War One. It is in this build up to anniversaries of the
war that it reasserts ‘the centrality of the titanic struggle against Nazi Germany in public consciousness’ (Kershaw 2003). The BBC has planned for 130 newly commissioned war programmes, spanning 2,500 hours between 2014 and 2018 (BBC 2013). World War One is not represented in popular culture to the extent that the Second World War, Nazism, Hitler and the Holocaust is; but nevertheless the huge array of documentaries could reignite memories and incite negative views of Germany. David Cameron has placed a lot of funding to this centenary in the face of devolution and the impending Scottish independence vote. The Prime Minister is hoping that Britain will ‘unite in remembrance’ of the war (David Cameron 2013). Coincidentally 2014 welcomes the comeback of Monty Python, it is through these revived performances that the evolution of British attitudes can be witnessed; in the opinion of this author they will not include any material dating back to the war.

To get a more comprehensive grasp of British television and the representation of Germans, more television programmes and other forms of popular culture must be included. This research has covered a large period utilising a number of sources to reflect the period. Nevertheless even with the fairly small pool of sources it is evident that attitudes have changed, and the British are (reluctantly) confining the Nazis to the past. The sheer magnitude of the struggle between Germany and the rest of the world meant that it would not easily be forgotten. The uniqueness of the events that Britain and Germany encountered has resulted in an equally distinctive cultural legacy. Popular culture played an important role in the rehabilitation of the British people, and clinging onto wartime memories through the medium of television aided this process. This is not always morally problematic, but television has reinforced memory of war to generations that have never encountered it, and through this lens it
can manifest stereotypes and distorted memories of the events. In some cases it has provided examples of members of society who are not germanophobic. Certain television sources have displayed that there is so much more to Anglo-German relations than just the war. For such a major event to be forgotten, the pressing issue of Europe has created a sense of admiration for the German economic model. The sustainability of these perceptions may be short-lived with the impending anniversaries of the war, but for now Britain and its television programmes are apparently recovering from winning the Second World War.

**Word Count: 11,999 (excluding abstract and bibliography)**
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48


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