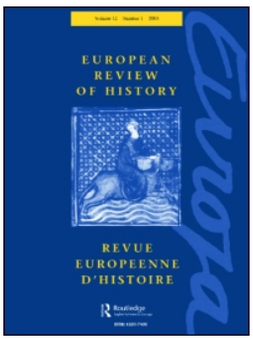

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'Playing the daft lassie with them': Gender, Captivity and the Special Operations Executive during the Second World War

Juliette Pattinson

This article examines the gender-specific experiences of female prisoners, using SOE agents arrested by the Nazis during the Second World War as a case study, in order to contribute an understanding of the complex interaction of the identities of 'woman', 'soldier' and 'prisoner'. Using oral history, as well as information gleaned from auto/biographies and SOE reports, it is argued that many female captives resorted to gender stereotypes by 'playing the daft lassie', that they experienced punishment with distinct sexist and sexual overtones and that gender was significant in their accounts of incarceration within concentration camps. Examining the gendered experiences of captivity casts light on the male chauvinistic nature of the Nazi regime, illuminating the SS and Gestapo response to being confronted with women who overstepped traditional gender boundaries by undertaking paramilitary roles.

War has generally been seen as organised round a clear gender divide with a combatant male fighting to protect the non-combatant female. Women's attributed 'innate' attachment to the domestic sphere, strengthened by their reproductive capacity and the cultural myth that women are inherently peace-loving, has precluded their undertaking a more active role in wartime. This cultural inability to acknowledge women as combatants and the presumed affront to notions of femininity that any kind of combat would represent has meant that womanpower has not been utilised to its full capacity in the context of war. However, the Second World War witnessed an unprecedented level of female mobilisation throughout Europe. The greatest subordination of conventional notions of femininity to the wartime needs of the

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nation was achieved by Britain. Over 7.75 million British women were in paid work by 1943, including almost half a million who joined the auxiliary services.[1] Nevertheless, British servicewomen could not accompany regiments into battle, were precluded from flying planes in combat situations and were not permitted to serve on ships. Thus, despite the seepage of women into the British services, combat remained an exclusively masculine role.

Although femininity and soldiering continued to be seen as fundamentally incompatible within the professional military, insurgency organisations throughout Europe offered women the opportunity to play a more active role in the defence of their homeland.[2] There were also some women who risked their lives to liberate other people's countries. Despite upholding a combat taboo within their auxiliary services, the British established an organisation that trained men and women in silent killing techniques and both armed and unarmed combat before infiltrating them into occupied Europe to organise resistance. Agents of this clandestine organisation, the Special Operations Executive (SOE), recruited, trained and armed local resisters, established communication networks, arranged parachute drops and planned sabotage operations. The female agents of the SOE were seconded to the FANY, the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry, whose independent, voluntary and civilian status enabled the British authorities to circumvent the military regulations concerning women firing weapons to which the auxiliary services were subject.

The demands of total war thus compelled a relaxation of conventional gender norms, which enabled women to participate in a range of insurgent activities. Given their extensive involvement in clandestine organisations throughout Europe, it is unsurprising that many women were arrested. And yet most research undertaken on women in resistance groups fails to explore memories of captivity. This is interesting given that when women are arrested for such activities they are punished, seemingly, for their gender transgression. They are not merely prisoners but *female* prisoners. While the specific circumstances of women in captivity have been largely omitted from the burgeoning historiography of women and war, more has been written about female political prisoners in peacetime. Writing about the experiences of women incarcerated in El Salvador's secret prisons in 1976, Lois Ann Lorentzen notes that international politics was played out on the stage of women's bodies as many experienced a very gendered form of torture: electric probes were attached to their vaginas.[3] Research on female political prisoners offers a useful comparison with the experiences of women imprisoned in war situations, of which there has been scant exploration.

This omission in the literature is intriguing considering that one argument that is still invoked to counteract strategies to include women in front-line combat emphasises the sexual behaviour of captors towards imprisoned female combatants. A filmic representation of this concern can be seen in *G.I. Jane*, featuring Demi Moore, which charts the experiences of Lieutenant Jordan O'Neil, the first woman selected to undergo Navy SEAL (Sea, Air, Land) training.[4] This film addresses not only the debate over women's capacity to play a combatant role in the defence of their country, but, in a 'mock' rape scene in which she is beaten by her commanding officer and her head

immersed under water nearly to the point of loss of consciousness, emphasises the ambiguity of captured women's dual identities of 'soldier' and 'woman'. Corinna Peniston-Bird, in her article on the representation of military women in Hollywood, notes that the torture scene in *G.I. Jane* is intended to emphasise the vulnerability of a unit which includes a woman. She notes that the film depicts O'Neil's sex as a threat to the group, 'not because she is physically weaker, and not only because it can be used against her, but because it could be used against the men'.[5] In other words, the abuse and torture of women in front of their male colleagues would prompt them chivalrously to try to stop it by any means possible—something which they were unlikely to do for their male comrades. The torture and mock rape scene is justified by her assailant; 'her presence makes us vulnerable'.[6]

This interest in the sexual vulnerability of imprisoned women is not merely confined to Hollywood. On her release from a week's imprisonment during the Second Gulf War against Iraq (2003), US freelance photographer Molly Bingham was asked at a news conference whether or not she had been sexually assaulted by her captors. Unsurprisingly, her male colleagues were not asked the same question, which is interesting considering the recent revelations concerning the sexual humiliation of Iraqi (male) prisoners in Abu Ghraib. But despite the media interest in the potential for the sexual exploitation of female captives, the burgeoning historiography of gender and war has largely omitted the experiences of women who, having undertaken a conventionally masculine role in war, were subsequently captured. Some work has been undertaken on individuals such as Edith Cavell and Mata Hari.[7] However, it is made apparent by Tammy Proctor in her study of women in espionage that neither woman was 'technically a spy'.[8] Cavell was a nurse whose treatment and hiding of refugees brought her into contact with a local escape network and Margaretha Geertruida Zelle, otherwise known as Mata Hari, was an erotic dancer who died, not because of her spying prowess but because she symbolised both the excess and danger of the independent New Woman, as well as the treasonous activities of the mutineers that were undermining France in 1917.

Therefore, this lacuna in the literature offers a wonderful opportunity to throw light upon this topic using the only historic example of a group of women who experienced long-term imprisonment. This article focuses on the experiences of women who, as a result of their involvement in a British organisation, were arrested for para-military activities in France. By analysing and comparing the experiences of imprisoned female SOE agents with those of their male colleagues, this article aims to make a vital contribution to the historiography of gender and war. It casts light on the experiences of women captured as a result of undertaking irregular warfare and, given the male chauvinistic nature of the Nazi regime, illuminates the SS and Gestapo response to being confronted with women who undertook paramilitary roles. While historians of gender and war argue that, despite women's incursions into the military services (which were a bastion of masculinity), women remained marginalised as equality stopped at the point at which combat began, the experiences of captured female agents, who had previously undertaken the gender-specific roles of courier and

wireless operator, may conversely suggest that equality began at the point at which combat stopped.

The Sample

Of the 480 agents sent to France by SOE's F section, 39 were women. They were of diverse nationality: there were British, French, Swiss, Polish, Australian, Mauritian and Indian recruits. They were of varied age, ranging from early twenties to middle age. Some were single, while others were married with children. Hence, female agents, like their male colleagues, came from a wide variety of backgrounds and were differentiated by nationality, age and marital status, as well as by class, occupation and religion.

Female recruits were allocated the gender-specific roles of either courier or wireless operator. Couriering entailed travelling between different members of the resistance group and this often necessitated the conveying of clandestine materials which, if found, would immediately lead to arrest. Two female agents were arrested when they were ambushed at checkpoints while travelling in cars loaded with weapons, and one was arrested when she visited the group's wireless operator following a radio transmission that enabled the *Abwehr* (Counter-Intelligence) to locate his position. Furthermore, while on these couriering missions, they often needed to stay the night at safehouses, which might be under Gestapo surveillance. Five female couriers were arrested in this way. The high-profile nature of the role accounts for the arrest of three other female couriers: two were arrested following denunciations and another was duped by a Gestapo agent impersonating a new member of the resistance circuit.

The second gender-specific role for which women were considered to be suitable was wireless operating. Like many of their male counterparts, two female radio operators were captured at their set, having been located by direction-finding vans. Bad luck accounts for the arrests of the other four female agents: one was denounced by a jealous wife who believed that she was having an affair with her husband; another was captured when a young resister revealed under torture the name of the safehouse that he believed his colleagues were no longer using; one was caught in a Gestapo raid that was targeting someone else; and one was captured immediately on the landing field where she was met by a German-controlled reception committee before commencing her SOE role. In total, 17 female SOE agents were arrested and incarcerated in French prisons. One, Blanche Charlet, managed to escape from Castres prison with 51 inmates on 16 September 1943 and another, Mary Herbert, who had had a baby with her SOE organiser, which put a stop to her clandestine work, was released after two months because of the lack of evidence to link her with the previous (SOE) occupant of the flat at which she was staying.

Along with 104 male agents who were arrested as a consequence of direction-finding, betrayal, poor forged documentation or carrying compromising materials, these 15 women were deported to concentration camps. In July 1944, Andrée Borrel, Vera Leigh and Diana Rowden were taken to Natzweiler to be executed by a lethal

injection of phenol. In September 1944, Noor Inayat Khan, Yolande Beekman, Madeleine Damerment and Eliane Plewman were taken to Dachau where they were shot. Violette Szabo, Denise Bloch and Lilian Rolfe were deported to Ravensbrück in August 1944 and were shot the following January. Cecily Lefort was sent to the gas chamber in Ravensbrück in February 1945, and Yvonne Rudellat, who witnessed Belsen's liberation on 15 April 1945, was one of the 14 000 people who died of starvation and typhus while awaiting repatriation.[9] Only Yvonne Baseden, Odette Sansom and Eileen Nearne (and 23 F Section men) returned from the camps.

The analysis presented in this article is based on the personal testimonies of these three women, as well as on the accounts of Blanche Charlet, the woman who escaped from prison, French women who worked in the resistance movement and male SOE agents. Not only do these accounts shed light on their own experiences, but they also note their contact with fellow SOE agents. There are no testimonies left behind by the women who died during captivity. Thus, while this is a very small sample (and I make no claims to representativeness), the case studies enable a close scrutiny of these female agents' gendered experiences during captivity.

'Playing the daft lassie'

It is clear that many men and women tried to conceal the fact that they were British agents working for the SOE because, if it became known, they would almost certainly have been executed as the Geneva Conventions concerning prisoners of war did not protect them. Furthermore, the strategies that male and female agents undertook to hide their British identities were, to a certain extent, gendered. Male agents and members of the French resistance who were captured while undertaking non-resistance acts could hope to conceal their clandestine identities by pretending to be black-marketeers. They played this role in the hope that they would shortly be released with a reprimand as this was perceived to be a lesser crime than resisting. Others pretended to be Allied aviators. SOE agents Edward Zeff and Bob Sheppard were arrested in March 1943 while crossing the Pyrenees, having been betrayed by their guide to the Gestapo. They instantaneously resolved to conceal their clandestine identities when they were arrested, as Sheppard recalled: 'We acted. We pretended at once to be pilots of the Royal Air Force. Could only speak English. We didn't know anything. And it went on rather well with the German Army who arrested us.'[10] The Germans were aware of the existence of escape lines, which had been established throughout France by resisters to enable Allied airmen to return to Britain and rejoin their squadrons. Thus, the ploy of passing as RAF pilots had a chance of being successful. Initially, their ruse worked and they were able to deceive the German soldiers who captured them, but they were later handed over to the Gestapo who, using torture, were able to extract a confession from Zeff.[11]

Occupations like airman and black-marketeer were either exclusively or predominantly undertaken by men so they were not appropriate cover for female agents. Acting out a vacuous femininity was one of the few options available. Women's

endeavours not to reveal themselves as clandestine agents while operational were often accomplished through performances of hyper-femininity. Memoirs, biographies and oral histories provide numerous tales of women who feigned helplessness and stimulated chivalrous behaviour from German soldiers, who unknowingly transported suitcases containing radio sets and weapons across borders or past checkpoints.[12] SOE courier Sonya Butt recalled:

> You just react to the moment and think 'I'll get by alright with a nice smile'. I just sort of smiled and waved to them. All the time. Women could get by with a smile and do things that men couldn't and no matter what you had hidden in your handbag or your bicycle bag, if you had a nice smile, you know, just give them a little wink. It just happened constantly, all the time. So I got away with it. It becomes sort of second nature. . .. You did that [flirted] automatically. Absolutely. That was just par for the course. Just sort of went into the role automatically, just quite naturally.[13]

Theorist Susan Brownmiller asserts that: 'Feminine armour is never metal or muscle but, paradoxically, an exaggeration of physical vulnerability that is reassuring (unthreatening) to men.'[14] Thus, there is a contradiction at the heart of such performances: women were undertaking the most gender-destabilising activities, while seemingly upholding conventional gender norms by feigning vulnerability.

Their strategies following arrest were often a continuation of this contradiction. The personal testimonies of female SOE agents and French resisters reveal that they often drew on the strategies that had proved effective prior to their capture. Hélène Renal, a locally born network secretary who played the 'dumb girl' when confronted with German soldiers at checkpoints, was arrested in May 1944 and recalled her continuation of this strategy: 'I played the complete imbecile who knew nothing, who did not understand what it was about, who had never heard of the Resistance. That worked more or less.'[15] Similarly, France Pejot remembered 'For my part, I always played the idiot—the dumb, naïve young girl'.[16] She also recalled:

> I had a good figure and I used to take advantage of it somewhat. My concern was to get them to release me. I didn't want to be tortured because it's pointless to play Joan of Arc, to play the martyr. So I did all I could so they would release me. I played the unhappy young thing. . .. I took his arm and asked him to help me.[17]

Unbelievably, her ploy was successful and she managed to escape.

Female SOE agents also undertook such strategies following their arrest, feigning ignorance and gullibility as the following SOE report notes:

> A woman agent 'admitted' to having been engaged in subversive activity, but said she had gone into it with her eyes closed and, at first, had no idea of what she was doing. Later, when she did realise she was afraid to give it up. In this way, she was able to represent herself as having been locally recruited, when, in fact she was a parachuted agent.[18]

This anonymous female agent was able to play upon stereotypically feminine traits, such as foolishness, innocence, lack of common-sense, anxiousness and timidity,

in order to fool her captors into believing she was a local Frenchwoman who had become mixed up in something she did not understand.

This woman was not the only female SOE agent to choose this strategy. Courier Blanche Charlet was arrested with the group's wireless operator in October 1942 after the Abwehr pinpointed the location of his radio transmission. Her debriefing report indicates her strategy for survival—she was determined to conceal her British identity. Initially, she denied having connections to the resistance but eventually the Gestapo discovered her codename:

> Informant was asked if she was really 'Christiane'. She pretended to faint, and when she recovered, pretended to play the part of a stupid woman who had wanted to play her glorious part in the resistance, but knew nothing about it.[19]

Confronted with her codename, Charlet admitted to being involved in the resistance but created the impression that she had little knowledge of what the work entailed. Feigning faintness and pretending to be ignorant proved successful as it tapped into longstanding (Nazi) assumptions that women were too emotional to be involved in political activities.[20] Charlet was not tortured and, with the help of friendly French guards, later escaped from Castres prison.

Eileen Nearne, who was caught at her wireless set in July 1944, also created the impression that she was imprudent and unaware of the political implications of her involvement. James Gleeson, a journalist who interviewed her in the 1950s, maintained that she fooled her interrogators by claiming that she was 'a bit of a scatterbrain and tomboy' 'who was helping the resistance for fun and excitement'.[21] SOE's official historian, M. R. D. Foot, noted that Nearne 'put on her act of being a sweet little thing who knew nothing she ought not'[22] and that, consequently, she 'brought off a dexterous bluff, and persuaded the Gestapo she was only a foolish little shopgirl who had taken up resistance work because it was exciting'.[23] This was a gendered strategy that was open only to women. Nearne had been informed by her training instructors that she was a good liar and found that during interrogations she could improvise plausible explanations and remain calm: 'All sorts of things I pulled from my head. And the more I was lying, the more I wanted to and the more it was easy coming to me.'[24] It was her conscious strategy 'to act confusion and misunderstanding'.[25] This was a ploy of which she had much experience. Maisie McLintock, a FANY coder who had been close friends with Nearne throughout their FANY training, recalled several episodes when Nearne had deliberately disobeyed rules, such as having baths after hours. McLintock recollected that when confronted by her FANY superiors Nearne would always 'play the daft lassie' by pretending not to understand and she asserted that Nearne had employed this strategy once arrested:

> She was very clever, I think. It explained a lot when she survived the Germans and that concentration camp using the same method as she had done when she was a FANY. Wide-eyed innocence. … But one of the first things she said when she was telling me about her experience, she was taken to the Avenue Foch in Paris, that was where she got her preliminary going over, and she said 'you see Mac, I did what you said, I played the daft lassie with them'. … She was still getting through life somehow, looking innocent and not quite sure why she was there.[26]

Nearne tried to alleviate the seriousness of the situation by performing a particular type of femininity. Feigning innocence and naivety was a way of removing suspicion: Gestapo agents were unlikely to believe that a foolish, childlike and unsophisticated young woman was a British agent. Moreover, by pretending to crave excitement and fun, Nearne depoliticised her resistance involvement, which further distanced her from her British paramilitary identity. Interestingly, Nearne decided to plead her innocence, claiming she was unaware of the Resistance, despite being caught at her wireless set and found to possess a weapon. The decision to perform in such a stereotypically feminine manner was not, then, always dependent on the limited extent of the captor's knowledge of their involvement in the Resistance.

This practice suggests that several female agents and resisters followed gendered conventions by pretending to be vulnerable and naïve. This appeared to them to be the strategy most likely to succeed, partly perhaps because of the success that they had had while operational. As one agent noted, 'it just seemed the natural thing to do'.[27] This tactic was not specific to female resisters during the Second World War. Tammy Proctor notes that German and French women imprisoned for espionage by the British during the First World War often claimed not to have understood the gravity and illegality of their activities, which, she notes, was possibly a strategy to gain sympathy from British officials.[28] It would thus appear that despite undermining conventional gender norms while they were operational as agents, resisters or spies, female prisoners often chose to manipulate their interrogators by resorting to gender stereotypes and exploiting their perceived femininity.

However, this was not always the case. While operational, Yvonne Baseden did not consciously exploit forms of femininity for clandestine purposes as some of the other female agents did: 'They played it quite differently.'[29] Baseden did not smile and flirt with German soldiers, accept dinner dates with them or request their assistance with heavy luggage and neither did she wear striking clothing to attract their attention as did other female agents and resisters. This desire for unobtrusiveness continued after her arrest. Rather than concocting elaborate stories about lovers, feigning ignorance of the political consequences of her resistance or pretending to faint, she merely remained composed and kept to her story that she was a local shorthand-typist who had become involved with members of the regional resistance group. It was never discovered that she was an SOE agent and she was deported to Ravensbrück concentration camp as a French political prisoner, which undoubtedly saved her life.

Thus, from the small number of case studies analysed here, it can be seen that female agents persisted with the strategies that they had adopted while operational. For some this included 'playing the daft lassie' by feigning innocence and vulnerability, while for others this was not considered to be an option, presumably because they doubted they could perform convincingly.

'Treated like a soldier'?

Captured SOE agents were interrogated by the Gestapo, who were eager to extract information about colleagues, arms dumps and wireless codes by any means possible.

Given that some women enjoyed success with their performances of vulnerability, it might be presumed that women were treated differently than men by the Gestapo. However, evidence from veterans' testimonies suggests that, once captured, women were not automatically shielded from torture because of their sex. Certainly, the three female SOE agents who were repatriated from concentration camps all experienced physical torture, as well as several other forms of mistreatment. All were beaten. In addition, Odette Sansom had her toenails extracted and a poker laid on her spine, Eileen Nearne experienced the 'baignoire' (continual immersion in a bath of water until loss of consciousness) and Yvonne Baseden endured her bare toes being trampled upon by guards in army boots and a mock execution was staged.

Genevieve de Gaulle, Charles de Gaulle's sister, who was arrested for her involvement in the Resistance, asserted: 'I can affirm that women were treated the same as men. We were not favoured. If the Gestapo wanted some information, beatings, immersion in cold water, whatever they could imagine, was used on men or women.'[30] Despite her assertion, Genevieve de Gaulle was not tortured, which might suggest that she had something at stake in affirming that the Gestapo did not differentiate between male and female resisters. She was interviewed when women's involvement in the resistance was still overshadowed by the emphasis on sabotage and military action, which were both largely undertaken by men. Whatever agenda she may have had, her assessment is confirmed by other testimonies, such as those of SOE agent Yvonne Baseden and resister Jacqueline, Comtesse de Lorne d'Alincours, who wrote a note that was smuggled out of prison stating: 'Gestapo told me; you're acting like a soldier; silent; you'll be treated as such, not like a woman.'[31] This implies that Nazi interrogators regarded female resisters as paramilitary soldiers, not women, and treated them accordingly. Certainly, from the outset, the Nazis did not differentiate between male and female political opponents. In her work on radicalism in Berlin between 1929 and 1933, Pamela Swett notes several incidents in which Nazis attacked Communist bars, resulting in the injury and even death of women.[32] Moreover, German female resisters, such as Sophie Scholl, were executed along with their male colleagues, which indicates that no distinctions were drawn. The fact that these political opponents were women did not protect them from being killed, and neither would it seem to have shielded French resisters from torture. De Gaulle, Baseden and d'Alincours all suggest that no concessions were made to women on the grounds of their gender as they were seen as 'honorary men'. For these women, who had all undertaken resistance roles with a distinct gender tag, perhaps 'equality' did start at the point at which combat stopped.

However, although it would certainly appear that neither female resisters nor SOE agents were afforded any dispensations because of their gender, there is also evidence to suggest that the violence inflicted on women's bodies by male interrogators was gender based. Thus, despite Baseden's assertion that her German interrogators regarded her as a resister, not specifically as a *female* resister, personal testimonies indicate that female political prisoners experienced punishment with distinct sexist and sexual overtones. As in other contexts, the torture meted out by Gestapo interrogators was often directed against body parts associated with female sexuality,

which might suggest that women were being punished by the Gestapo for transgressing their allotted gender role by participating in the masculine task of combat. Resisters' testimonies note that some women had electric currents run through their nipples, electrodes inserted into their vaginas, their nails extracted, their breasts severed and some were raped by guards.

The rape of civilian women has been used as a weapon of war in many conflicts and is commonly perceived by combatants as 'accepted' soldierly behaviour: about two million women in eastern Germany were raped by Soviet soldiers in 1945, which in part led to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which explicitly forbade rape. Despite this legal prohibition, sexual violence perpetrated by soldiers continues to occur: the rape of Vietnamese women by American GIs was, according to one soldier, 'an everyday affair; you can nail just about everybody on that—at least once'.[33] The rape of Bengali women by Pakistani soldiers in 1971 during the Bangladesh war of independence, the ethnic cleansing campaign embarked upon by Serbian and Croatian soldiers in ex-Yugoslavia, which involved the rape of female Bosnian Muslims, and the rape of Kuwaiti women by Iraqi troops in 1990 confirm Cynthia Enloe's assertion that sexual violence during war is symptomatic of its gendered nature.[34]

There was widespread sexual mistreatment of women by German soldiers during the Second World War. SOE agent Edgar Hargreaves, who served in Yugoslavia until his capture in 1943, recalled that in his interrogation sessions in Belgrade he was forced to observe the sexual mistreatment of female prisoners: 'I saw a number of occasions, girls particularly were brought in and they were *always* stripped and raped and I saw one girl having her nipples cut off. That was much, much worse than anything that ever happened to oneself.'[35] He considered that he was treated better than partisan women who were both physically mutilated and sexually abused. Evidence from women who befriended female SOE agents during captivity indicates that some of the women who were executed experienced sexual intimidation. A documentary about Violette Szabo featured a woman who had shared a cell with her in Limoges immediately following her capture. Resistance worker Hugette Desore recalled that Szabo had told her that an SS man had put his pistol into her neck, said he could kill her tomorrow if he so desired and then raped her.[36] This abuse of power by the male guard was clearly not an exception. Two of the three women who survived deportation also recollect intimidating moments. Yvonne Baseden recounted one occasion when she thought that she was going to be raped:

> I felt a threat once. . .. I was in solitary confinement at the time and somehow or other I had a feeling that there was something afoot to possibly try to get me down into the cellars by two or three of the guards. But this is something I vaguely understood through their shouting and things like that. Certainly nothing like that happened. I wasn't raped.[37]

The sexual intimidation experienced by Odette Sansom is clearly noted in her biography by Jerrard Tickell, who had access to various official documents and interviewed members of the SS and Sansom herself. He claims that the interrogator's

assistant 'began leisurely to unbutton her blouse. She said "I resent your hands on me or on my clothes. If you tell me what to do and release one hand, I will do it." "As you wish, unbutton your blouse."' Having been burnt by a poker on her spine, she was then told to remove her stockings and her toenails were extracted. 'To be tortured by this clean, soap-smelling, scented Nordic was one thing. To be touched by his hands was another.' Before her fingernails were removed, a higher-ranking officer stopped the interrogation but she was warned, 'if you speak about what has happened to a living soul, you will be brought here again and worse things will happen to you'. Tickell concludes his description of this interrogation by writing: 'though she had kept silent, she was filled with sickness and fear for she had heard of some of the other things that the Gestapo could do to women's bodies'.[38] Sansom appears to have accepted torture as an inevitable and 'appropriate' consequence of her capture and, certainly, agents were prepared for this mistreatment during their training with mock interrogations but, paradoxically, she also feels vulnerable owing to her femininity. This description of Sansom's interrogation as narrated by Tickell indicates the additional concerns of female captives—or they may, of course, reveal more about his construction of femininity under threat than Sansom's actual experiences.

While rape has been used by soldiers as a weapon of war to reward themselves, to humiliate and emasculate the enemy who cannot protect 'their' women or for purposes of ethnic cleansing, the use of rape by guards had very different motivations. The gender-based violence inflicted upon women arrested for their resistance activities may have been a way for male guards and interrogators, who perhaps felt emasculated by female prisoners' participation in actions traditionally perceived as masculine, to express their disapproval and to displace their impotence. Women arrested for their resistance activities were strong, independent women who destabilised conventional notions of what it means to be a woman: weak, dependent, inferior and submissive. Nazi views of ideal femininity, underpinned by the glorification of domesticity in which women's activities were to be limited to '*Kinder, Kirche und Küche*', were challenged by these women who were active in the public domain. Because of the pervasiveness of an ideology which placed women firmly in the home, it was not surprising that Nazi interrogators perceived that their female captives had transgressed conventional gender boundaries in such an explicit way. Being sexually aggressive was a way to reclaim their masculinity and to re-feminise their prisoners.[39]

Sexual violence or the threat of it was used against female political prisoners as a supplementary punishment, which suggests that, because women were sexually vulnerable, their experiences of captivity were always tinged with this ominous threat, however vague. In contrast, no male veterans have mentioned this concern in their accounts. Although French interrogators sometimes used sex to humiliate Arab nationalists during the Algerian war in the 1950s, attaching wires to their genitalia and forcing men to masturbate and rape other prisoners, there is scant evidence to indicate that this took place during the Second World War. One possible explanation for the lack of evidence for the sexual abuse of male prisoners is that it is harder for men to discuss such overt challenges to their masculinity. A 1996 ChildLine study noted that

boys were inhibited in confiding in someone about sexual abuse because they often felt ashamed that they could not defend themselves, that they perceived a failure of their masculinity and wondered whether they had unwittingly attracted male sexual attention because they were gay.[40] This may account for the absence of rape within the testimonies of male political prisoners—or it simply may not have occurred.

More common were accounts of physical abuse that focused upon signifiers of masculinity, such as the penis and testicles. Edward Yeo-Thomas, who was arrested for his SOE activities and survived incarceration, wrote down his memories of captivity, which two biographers used to reconstruct his experiences.[41] He recollected an interrogation session in which two men restrained him, while three others rained blows down on his testicles: 'They concentrated on the most vulnerable part of my anatomy. I could not restrain a scream, the agony was intense and they continued to slam away.'[42] SOE agent Edgar Hargreaves also recollected an incident during his captivity in which his genitals were the focus of abuse:

> One of the sort of petty but unpleasant things that happened during one of my interrogations, all my clothes had been removed . . . [and] one of the Germans was smoking a large cigar and he thought it would be a very amusing thing to come across and stub it out on my penis . . . [Later that day, a doctor] put the tip of the syringe into my penis and injected corrosive acid into my bladder.[43]

In addition to the physical mistreatment of male genitalia, another gendered aspect of interrogation sessions was the use of laughing women to 'unman' male prisoners, to strip them of their dignity and to fracture their morale. Yeo-Thomas was repeatedly immersed in water to the point of drowning while uniformed female clerks looked on: 'I could hear voices, laughs, feminine laughter. What was so funny? Me, of course. I must look a fool, wilting like a doll that has lost its stuffing.'[44]

Thus, male and female political prisoners had explicitly gendered experiences of captivity; this gender specificity continued to shape their experiences in concentration camps.

Gendered experiences in the camps

Once agents had been interrogated, and either refused to talk or divulged information and had ceased to be of any further use, they were sent to concentration camps across Nazi-occupied Europe where the authorities expected that they would disappear without trace. Although seven female agents were executed immediately upon arrival,[45] the others endured many months of camp life. This section will examine whether gender was significant in their accounts of incarceration, as it would appear to have been noteworthy in other contexts, such as in the Gulag. In a chapter specifically on women, Alexander Solzhenitsyn asserts that between the first years of the Revolution and the end of the Second World War when camps were mixed sex, life was 'easier for women' as they could prostitute themselves. Women's position in the camps changed, however, in 1946 when men and women were separated and women could no longer capitalise on finding a 'taker'.[46] Gender was clearly a structuring force in the

Gulag. Was it so significant in the concentration camps, such as Ravensbrück, the women's camp near Berlin, to which female political prisoners were mostly sent, where there was less opportunity for sexual bargaining?[47]

Lillian Kremer, in her research on Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, argues that although male and female prisoners endured similar hardships during their captivity within camps, their highly gendered socialisation produced very different responses.[48] On arrival at the camp, prisoners were ordered into shower rooms where they were told to undress, were disinfected, often had their hair shorn, were given camp uniform and were allocated a number in order to strip them of their individuality. While the Jewish male writers whose accounts Kremer has analysed have described their loss of personal dignity and autonomy during this initial phase of camp life, women, socialised by both religious teaching and by gendered values to be modest, were likely to experience this humiliating process as a form of sexual assault: they were 'shamed and terrified by SS men who made lewd remarks and obscene suggestions and poked, pinched, and mauled them in the course of delousing procedures and searches for hidden valuables in oral, rectal and vaginal cavities'.[49] Kremer also noted that Jewish women who have borne witness to their experiences of camp initiation emphasise the humiliation associated with having shorn hair and the replacement of their personal items of clothing with deliberately ill-fitting and mismatched garments. Cessation of menstruation, fear of sterilisation and frequent sexual harassment were further identified by Kremer as being significant in the writings of Jewish women who survived the camps.

Political prisoners' recollections of camp initiation confirm Kremer's arguments. Male SOE agents also experienced an erosion of their self-respect. Bob Sheppard for example, recollected an episode following his arrival at Neubremme, when he was compelled to undress before he emptied the latrines. He asserted: 'Now after a few weeks or months in camp, getting undressed was nothing at all. We lived like that. But just imagine for us, coming out of normal life, getting undressed suddenly in the afternoon and I was absolutely naked.'[50] Sheppard was singled out and had to undress in front of other (clothed) inmates who observed this degrading spectacle, which undoubtedly added to his humiliation. Brian Stonehouse, the wireless operator who was arrested with Blanche Charlet, also commented on the indignity of the camp initiation when he arrived at Mauthausen: 'Stripped of everything, all your clothing, and your hair is shaved off. You're nothing but a hunk of meat, a slave. . .. We had been robbed of everything. Not just our lives, but our dignity.'[51] It would seem that male agents, like the Jewish writers that Kremer analysed, experienced the camp initiation as diminishing their self-esteem.

Female SOE agents were also likely to have felt embarrassed by having to strip naked, given the sense of modesty that prevailed at this time. Women were unlikely to have been seen naked by members of their own family and thus the shock and humiliation of being observed by others is likely to have been extreme. This was exacerbated by the fact that male officials were present. French political prisoner Denise Dufournier noted the 'revolting shamelessness' of standing naked and

recollected that in particular, 'the older women could not overcome their humiliation'.[52] During their incarceration, female prisoners were frequently made to stand naked waiting to be scrutinised by male SS doctors who often made sexual comments: Micheline Maurel recollected an 11-hour wait without clothing for an examination of hands and teeth.[53] Older women made desperate attempts to look younger, in order to boost their chances of survival, by smearing dirt into their scalps to conceal grey hairs and trying to hold themselves upright. This became even more urgent following the arrival of Hungarian Jews in Ravensbrück in spring 1944 when the camp was severely overcrowded and selections were made. Every few days, older women were forced to strip to the waist and run past male doctors who would select the oldest and weakest. Yvonne Rudellat, a 48-year-old SOE courier, tried to colour her grey hair with a boiled onion skin that she had found but her thick hair, which had become brittle from persistent dying, would not change colour. Instead, she resorted to wearing a piece of cloth like a turban to mask her grey hair.

Sometimes these cursory checks indicated signs of illness. Cecily Lefort, a 43-year-old SOE courier, was forced to undergo further tests and was found to have cancer of the stomach. Even within the camps, medical experiments were undertaken, most famously by Josef Mengele on twins in Auschwitz. Treiter, an SS doctor at Ravensbrück, was eager to operate on her as he was interested in post-operational treatment. He put her on a diet of porridge and thick vegetable soup, but despite successful treatment, she was not saved from being sent to the gas chamber.

Having one's head shaved also had different meanings for women. Testimonies indicate that this was experienced as highly defeminising and disempowering as it represented the reduction of the individual to part of a uniform mass.[54] Erika Buchmann noted that a frequent response among her fellow prisoners was to commit suicide immediately following this procedure[55] and Micheline Maurel recalled: 'For most of those who, at Romainville [prison], had been coquettish enough to improve their appearance by wearing make-up and curling their hair, this experience was almost like a foretaste of death.'[56] This affront to femininity can be seen in other contexts in which women's heads were shaved as a gendered form of punishment. An early reference to the indignity of shaved hair is made by Paul in his epistle to the Corinthians, claiming that 'it was a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off'.[57] This symbolic act of purification was forced upon Frenchwomen who slept with Germans in 1918, on German women who consorted with French soldiers in the 1920s during the occupation of the Rhineland, on German women caught with foreign workers in the early 1940s and was also witnessed on a wider scale in some French towns following the liberation. On arrival at the camps, many women underwent this procedure, which could also include the removal of pubic hair, often with scissors and razors blunted by the processing of hundreds of new inmates, but shaving was also used as a form of punishment to undermine morale and to reinforce social control. During her incarceration at Ravensbrück, Eileen Nearne refused to work in a factory, assisting the German war effort, whereupon guards shaved her head and threatened her with execution.

Another source of humiliation on arrival was the camp clothing that the women were obliged to wear. Deliberately mismatching and ill-fitting clothes were distributed: short women were often given baggy garments that enveloped their bodies, while tall women were often provided with insufficient clothing. Yvonne Baseden for example recollected that upon arrival at Ravensbrück, she was allocated a pleated red skirt and a sailor boy's shirt, 'dished out just enough to cover yourself with'.[58] Prisoners were forbidden to exchange their outfits. However, despite their camp clothing, French political prisoners tried to retain their style according to Danish prisoner Astral Blumensaadt-Pederson: 'In spite of regulations against this, they wore their kerchiefs in a hundred different ways.'[59] Resisting in such minor ways to reassert their individuality was crucial for prisoners' morale and self-esteem. This has also been seen in other contexts. In Penny Summerfield's oral history of British women workers during the Second World War, many of those who had served in the auxiliary services recollected attempts to assert their individuality and femininity by adapting their uniforms, nipping in the waist and shoulders and wearing silk knickers instead of regulation 'passion-killers'.[60] Many also wore their hair longer than was allowed and used make-up, which was also prohibited.

A further psychological hardship for female inmates may have been the complete absence of make-up, especially in view of the investment in glamour to signify respectability, which had been a crucial strategy of many while operational. Kremer notes: 'Women socialised to invest in their physical appearance—to use make-up, to dress well, to style their hair—were radically defeminised.'[61] Although make-up, fashionable clothing and hairstyles can not be compared with the privations of lack of food and water, overcrowded sleeping quarters, disease, overwork and poor sanitary conditions, it may have further undermined an already desperately low morale. The importance of appearance to female agents, even during their imprisonment, can be illustrated by the testimony of Odette Sansom, who used margarine from her food allowance as face-cream,[62] turned her skirt an inch every day so that it would not look worn in the same place and put rags from her stockings in her hair every night to act as rollers. She recollected: 'I used to put them on every evening religiously in case they would fetch me the next morning to put me to death. I wasn't going to be seen going to my death without my curls.'[63] Hair, an important signifier of femininity and individuality, was clearly important to female prisoners who fought to reclaim some dignity.

Women also had to cope with diarrhoea, cystitis and the lack of sanitary products (until they ceased menstruating). Without rags, menstruating women had no choice but to let the blood run down their legs. There was a widespread belief that the SS had put chemicals, such as bromide, in their soup to stop the menstrual cycle, which increased fears about future fertility. It was, however, likely that severe malnutrition, coupled with excessive exercise (required by manual labour) caused oestrogen levels to drop, which prevented ovulation. For some women, this had already occurred following lengthy imprisonment in France. Fanny Marette, for example, noted that the entire French contingent who arrived in Ravensbrück with her had ceased menstruating.[64]

Female inmates imprisoned in the Soviet Union experienced similar cessation of menstruation as noted by both Alexander Solzhenitsyn in *The Gulag Archipelago* and by the *British Medical Journal*,[65] which confirms that malnutrition was the cause.

Female agents, therefore, experienced both the humiliation and loss of personal dignity that their male counterparts endured, as well as suffering more gendered hardships, such as sexual harassment, loss of menstruation and low morale from the lack of feminine accoutrements.

Kremer also noted that while many male Holocaust survivors have commented on the lack of support from other inmates, Jewish women have testified to the solidarity and mutual cooperation that existed between female camp inmates and many attribute their survival to friends who found extra food and nursed them through sickness. Despite this being a prevalent idea in survivor testimonies[66] and with historians,[67] this emphasis on sisterhood has, however, been recently challenged. There was much mistrust between different groups, in particular between Communists and Catholics and between political prisoners and 'asocials'. This can be evidenced in personal accounts in which there is a marked stigmatisation, especially against prostitutes, 'gypsies' and lesbians. There is also evidence to suggest that there was little cohesion within categories. Jewish inmate Rosi Muskopf, who arrived at Ravensbrück in late 1944, aged 16, recollected: 'I experienced neither friendship nor solidarity with fellow prisoners.'[68] Such testimonies suggest that Kremer's argument that there was widespread female solidarity is perhaps not the whole picture. What do the accounts of female resisters indicate?

French political prisoners' common language, resistance to Nazism, patriotism, shared experience of interrogations and the fact that many arrived in Ravensbrück together helped to foster strong friendships. Genevieve de Gaulle noted in her autobiography that it was her fellow French comrades 'whose fraternal affection has enabled me to survive'.[69] Numerous testimonies, including de Gaulle's, indicate that inmates gave comrades small gifts on birthdays such as poems, hand-made dolls, combs, handkerchiefs and bags in which they could carry their few possessions. Some examples of these gifts are now on display in the museum at Ravensbrück. However, this *esprit de corps* went deeper than friendship: Yvonne Baseden recollected that on one occasion she was nearly killed by a guard. A feather from a pillow that she was unloading from a truck landed on his uniform. He immediately raised his truncheon to strike her but a fellow inmate pushed her out of the way and instead of hitting her head, the weapon landed on Baseden's thigh.[70] Baseden's life was saved by someone she did not know, who risked turning the guard's anger upon herself. As a result of her intervention, this unknown woman was severely beaten by the guard. Baseden, who had been diagnosed as having tuberculosis, was also saved from being transferred to Belsen concentration camp by another woman who managed to take her name from the list and get her admitted to the hospital block. It is likely that in Belsen, where conditions were worse as a result of rampant typhus, Baseden would have died, as did Yvonne Rudellat, who left Ravensbrück in relatively good health. These episodes

illustrate that female political prisoners, like the Jewish women that Kremer has studied, looked out for one another.

This solidarity was even more acute between members of the SOE. Violette Szabo, Denise Bloch and Lilian Rolfe, who were known to be British agents, formed a close attachment following their deportation to Ravensbrück and both Baseden and Nearne, who continued to conceal the fact they were British, considered joining their group. The inducements were presumably that they would no longer be on their own and would have the support, companionship and protection of fellow SOE comrades. The disincentives were undoubtedly the exposure of their British clandestine identity, which they had endeavoured to conceal throughout their interrogations. Unlike Nearne and Baseden, Szabo and her colleagues had not been mistreated during their interrogations and they believed that they would be protected by their British status. But following discussions with the three SOE women, both Nearne and Baseden opted to retain their cover as French resisters and not identify themselves as agents, which, with hindsight, was prudent as they would undoubtedly have shared their fate and been executed with them. The survival of Nearne and Baseden was a direct result of their passing as Frenchwomen during their interrogation sessions and their decision to continue concealing the fact that they were British agents while imprisoned in Ravensbrück. Baseden left the camp on the last convoy run by the Swedish Red Cross in April 1945, a fortnight before the camp was liberated and Nearne managed to escape while on a 'transport', camp terminology for a work assignment that took inmates away from the camp, in April 1945 and made her way across Germany towards advancing American troops.

One woman who did not experience companionship was Odette Sansom, who was kept in solitary confinement for two years in the camp prison. During her interrogation, she pretended that she was married to Peter Churchill, her organiser, and alleged that he was the British Prime Minister's nephew. Thus Sansom courted danger for the greater protection that it might offer in the belief that the Germans would execute neither Churchill nor herself but rather use them as diplomatic prisoners who could later be exchanged for high-ranking Germans who had been caught by the British. (Her ruse was successful as immediately prior to Ravensbrück's liberation in May 1945, the camp commandant, Fritz Suhren, still believing Sansom to be related to Winston Churchill, drove her to the American lines and tried to plea-bargain with American officials.) While in solitary confinement, Sansom occupied her mind by visualising the domestic chores that wives and mothers routinely undertake, including making clothes for her daughters and decorating rooms:

> I imagined what I wanted them to wear, then I would get the pattern, then the material, lay it out, cut it out and stitch it. Every single stitch I'd sew until it was all finished. Then I would refurnish all the houses of people I'd known, starting with walls, carpets, curtains.[71]

While incarcerated in Paris before her deportation, Sansom, a mother of three girls, had succeeded in making two dolls out of scraps of material that she found, and these

are now on display at the Imperial War Museum. Sansom's homemaking skills, either real or imagined, were therefore crucial to her endurance of imprisonment. She was not unique in being creative: as noted previously, female inmates crafted purses, small bags, handkerchiefs, doilies and scarves with scraps of material, and sang, wrote poetry and told stories.[72] Genevieve de Gaulle recollected being given a birthday cake: 'everyone contributed a handful of breadcrumbs, which we kneaded together with several spoonfuls of the molasses-like substance they call "jam" or "jelly". For candles, we used 24 twigs, and for decoration some leaves we had furtively and hastily picked along the banks of the swamp during our work convoys there.'[73] Nor was Sansom exceptional in reflecting upon routine domestic tasks: survivors' testimonies indicate that female prisoners often dreamed about food, swapped recipes during roll calls and planned menus for imaginary banquets.[74] These peculiarly gendered coping strategies enabled women to connect with their lives prior to incarceration. Psychiatrist Judith Herman notes: 'Prisoners tenaciously seek to maintain communication with a world outside the one in which they are confined. They deliberately practice evoking mental images of the people they love in order to preserve their sense of connection.'[75] The example of Sansom suggests that there was often a gendered element to this particular coping strategy; I have found no evidence of such tactics within the accounts of male political prisoners.

Conclusion

This examination of the testimonies of political prisoners of the Nazis has revealed the gendered dimensions of captivity in order to contribute an understanding of the specificity of female prisoners' experiences. Analysis of agents' accounts has uncovered the gender dynamics that were in operation during interrogations and in concentration camps. Because there were no special allowances made for women, as they were subjected to torture and deportation like their male colleagues, some female political prisoners believed that they were regarded, and consequently punished, as soldiers, not as women, which paradoxically implies that equality did indeed commence following their arrest. However, female captives could not escape the fact that they were guarded and interrogated by men who belonged to a regime that held distinctly sexist attitudes. Thus, the captured female SOE agents were *not* merely 'soldiers' but female prisoners who had been arrested for their involvement in illegal political activities and were treated accordingly. That some women felt a sexual threat, while others experienced interrogations which focused on parts of the body identified as particularly feminine, indicates that women who resisted the Nazi occupation of their countries during the Second World War were being penalised in a gender-specific way. Moreover, gender was also significant in female agents' accounts of daily life in Ravensbrück, with women enduring not only the personal humiliation that male agents experienced while being processed into the camp, but also sexual harassment, loss of menstruation and lack of feminine morale boosters. This is not to say that women suffered more during captivity than men, but that the violence inflicted upon women's bodies by male interrogators

was gender based and that there were gendered differences in their experiences of suffering in camps. Indeed, as a Harley Street dentist said to Odette Sansom when she visited him shortly after her release from Ravensbrück, 'I understand you were a prisoner of war in Germany . . . how very tiresome for a woman'.[76]

Notes

[1] Braybon and Summerfield, *Out of the Cage*, 167–68.
[2] Collins Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance*; Rossiter, *Women in the Resistance*; Schwartz, "Partisanes and Gender Politics"; Schwegman, "Women in Resistance Organisations in the Netherlands"; Bruzzone, "Women in the Italian Resistance"; Fourtouni, *Greek Women in Resistance*; Saywell, "Uprising, Poland, 1939–1945".
[3] Lorentzen, "Women's Prison Resistance".
[4] *G.I. Jane*, 1997, directed by Ridley Scott, screenplay by David Twohy and Danielle Alexandra.
[5] Peniston-Bird, "Delilah Shaves Her Hair", 328.
[6] Ian Fleming's novel *Casino Royale* raises similar issues. When MI5 agent Vesper Lynd (who incidentally, is based on the SOE agent Christine Granville, with whom he had an affair) is ambushed, James Bond feels compelled to rescue her. This leads to his capture by Le Chiffre, a Russian agent, who threatens him: 'If you continue to be obstinate, you will be tortured to the edge of madness and then the girl will be brought in and we will set about her in front of you.' Fleming, *Casino Royale*, 114.
[7] Proctor, *Female Intelligence*; Wheelwright, *The Fatal Lover*.
[8] Proctor, *Female Intelligence*, 100.
[9] *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (1971), Vol. 4.
[10] Personal interview with Bob Sheppard, 30 July 2002. See also Zeff's file HS 6/584, held at the National Archives, London.
[11] Both survived incarceration in various concentration camps.
[12] For an in-depth analysis of the gendered enactments undertaken by female SOE agents, see Pattinson, "The Best Disguise".
[13] Personal interview with Sonya Butt, 19 June 2002.
[14] Brownmiller, *Femininity*, 51.
[15] Collins Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance*, 203.
[16] Ibid. 251.
[17] Ibid. 252.
[18] File HS 7/66, National Archives.
[19] File HS 6/568.
[20] Swett, *Neighbors and Enemies*, 92.
[21] Gleeson, *They Feared No Evil*, 80.
[22] Foot, *SOE in France*, 430.
[23] Ibid. 409.
[24] Jones, *A Quiet Courage*, 278.
[25] Ibid. 282.
[26] Personal interview with Maisie McLintock, 24 October 1999.
[27] Personal interview with Sonya Butt, 19 June 2002.
[28] Proctor, *Female Intelligence*, 48.
[29] Personal interview with Yvonne Baseden, 11 April 2000.
[30] Collins Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance*, 92.
[31] Chevrillon, *Code Name Christiane Clouet*, 176.

[32] Swett, *Neighbors and Enemies*.
[33] Member of Charlie Company cited in Russell, "Rape and the Masculine Mystique", 331.
[34] Enloe, *The Morning After*.
[35] Tape 5378, IWM.
[36] "Homeground: Secret Agent: The True Story of Violette Szabo", Channel 4, (2002).
[37] Personal interview with Yvonne Baseden, 11 April 2000.
[38] Tickell, *Odette*, 222–26.
[39] Nira Yuval-Davis notes that female soldiers, who are perceived by their male colleagues as castrators, 'are threatening unless controlled and distinguished from male soldiers by emphasizing their femininity'. *Gender and Nation*, 101.
[40] ChildLine, "We know it's tough to talk".
[41] Marshall, *The White Rabbit*; Seaman, *Bravest of the Brave*.
[42] Seaman, *Bravest of the Brave*, 147.
[43] Tape 5378, Hargreaves, held at the Imperial War Museum.
[44] Seaman, *Bravest of the Brave*, 141.
[45] Andrée Borrel, Vera Leigh, Diana Rowden, Noor Inayat Khan, Yolande Beekman, Madeleine Damerment and Eliane Plewman.
[46] Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*, 217.
[47] An opportunity for Ravensbrück inmates to improve their living conditions, clothing and diet and to secure their release following six months' service arose after 1942 for those who volunteered to staff the brothels in men's camps in Mauthausen, Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. Unsurprisingly, these guarantees were not honoured.
[48] Kremer, *Women's Holocaust Writing*, 10.
[49] Kremer, *Women's Holocaust Writing*, 10.
[50] Tape 10445, IWM.
[51] Tapes 9852 and 18156, IWM.
[52] Dufournier, *Ravensbrück*, 16.
[53] Maurel, *An Ordinary Camp*, 7. Despite this voyeurism, there are no accounts of female inmates having been raped by male officials: while some survivors remembered feeling a threat (Dufournier, *Ravensbrück*, 141), others felt that their emaciated appearance, lice and lack of cleanliness protected them (Maurel, *An Ordinary Camp*, 155). As rape is a violent act of power rather than a sexual deed, this absence in the testimonies of survivors is less to do with prisoners' appearance and more likely a result of strict regulations concerning fraternisation between prisoners and the male SS officials.
[54] Bitton-Jackson, *Elli*.
[55] Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, 33.
[56] Maurel, *An Ordinary Camp*, 3.
[57] 1 Corinthians 11: 6.
[58] Personal interview with Yvonne Baseden, 11 April 2000.
[59] Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, 118.
[60] Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, 91.
[61] Kremer, *Women's Holocaust Writing*, 10.
[62] Churchill, *Spirit in the Cage*, 233.
[63] Sansom cited in Jones, *A Quiet Courage*, 303.
[64] Marette, *I was Number 47177*.
[65] Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*; R. F. A. Dean, "Women War Captives in Russia".
[66] Delbo, *None of Us Will Return*; De Gaulle Anthonioz, *The Dawn of Hope*; Maurel, *An Ordinary Camp*.
[67] Ringelheim, "Women and the Holocaust".
[68] Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, 73.

[69] De Gaulle Anthonioz, *The Dawn of Hope*, 7.
[70] Personal interview with Yvonne Baseden, 11 April 2000.
[71] Sansom quoted in Nicholson, *What Did You Do in the War, Mummy?*, 242.
[72] Maurel, *An Ordinary Camp*, 15–16; 74–78.
[73] De Gaulle Anthonioz, *The Dawn of Hope*, 5–6.
[74] Dufournier, *Ravensbrück*, 108; Maurel, *An Ordinary Camp*, 25; 62; 95–97.
[75] Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 81.
[76] Jones, *A Quiet Courage*, 341.

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RÉSUMÉ *Cet article considère l'expérience de captivité des agents secrets féminins de façon à questionner les catégories de prisonnier, femme et soldat. Basé sur une recherche d'autobiographies et d'histoire orale, cet article met en valeur l'utilisation de stéréotypes féminins pour déjouer des punitions souvent caractérisées par leur tonalité sexiste et sexuelle dans des camps de concentration. Ce conflit entre ces femmes atypiques et les SS et la Gestapo permet une nouvelle perception de l'importance des rôles masculins dans l'idéologie nazie.*