MAKING MOVIES:

THE STRUCTURING OF CREATIVITY

IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH CINEMA

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I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed by myself and that the work is my own.

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ABSTRACT

Film-making is a fundamentally creative process. Film studies tends to tie the concept of creativity to the romantic idea of the autonomous creative subject or film author. Creativity is rendered a subjective and transcendent construct evoked by terms such as inspiration, imagination, talent and genius. Sociology has demonstrated forcefully that individuals cannot transcend their social context and consequently that creative activity always occurs in relation to a social and material context.

We can begin to develop an understanding of film-making as a materially-based creative process by examining the context in which it occurs. Creativity is dependent on context as it determines the space within which creative activity takes place by providing the necessary resources, posing problems, suggesting solutions and imposing constraints. Film-making is therefore structured activity and should be seen in relation to such structures.

Current British cinema provides an interesting substantive area for study. The British film industry is small and the structures of that industry are amenable to examination. Creativity can be looked at in relation to the particular structures of the British film industry but also in relation to wider concerns such as aesthetic tradition and film technology. Each context: the industrial, the aesthetic and the technological, contributes significantly to the structuring of the creative process.

The production process itself is also interesting in that it is essentially collaborative with various experts making particular contributions at different stages of the process. However, the director maintains a position of overall primacy by virtue of being the creative co-ordinator supplying the necessary direction to the process.

Throughout, issues are raised and points are illustrated by the use of numerous quotations drawn from interviews conducted with around thirty leading members of the British film industry.

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INTRODUCTION

This study represents a synthesis of two separate objects of interest, one substantive, the other theoretical. On one hand this thesis is an investigation into the structures of the British Film Industry in the mid to late nineteen eighties and an analysis of the productive process that lies at the heart of that industry: the financing, production, distribution and marketing of feature films. This aspect of the study is a direct consequence of work I had done previously whilst an undergraduate in the Department of Sociology at Edinburgh University. Basically this was a brief consideration of the question of the British film 'renaissance' of the early eighties which followed in the wake of the Oscar successes of CHARIOTS OF FIRE and GANDHI in successive years. This work served to sketch in the terrain and to raise several interesting questions as to the functioning of the British film industry which it was unable to tackle. This present study is in part an attempt to explore these questions, to get under the surface and make some sense of the underlying processes and practices.

On the other hand my research is also bound up with a theoretical interest in the concept of 'creativity', the hidden dynamic behind all human and cultural process. The study afforded me the opportunity to examine theories of creativity with regard to a variety of philosophical, psychological and social contexts, with the intention of developing an explanation of the creative dynamic at the heart of such an institutionalised process as film

production. I was concerned to develop a notion of creativity which demystified the concept to some extent and grounded it in every day practical activity rather than treating it as an idealist subjective category invoked by terms such as inspiration, imagination and genius.

These two interests are brought together by treating film-making as an essentially creative process, but one which is grounded in, and determined by, the institutionalised structures of an industry which provides the all important resources necessary for creative activity while at the same time imposing constraints. This reflects the attempt to integrate human subjects and objective conditions as essentially inter-related elements of an explanation of creativity as a materially-based practical activity, in opposition to understandings which identify creativity exclusively with subjective properties and individual capacities.

Creative processes also involve aspects of both innovation and repetition. Innovation represents the sharp end of human and cultural development involving genuine novelty. This can lead to initial rejection and it may take some time before such innovations, be they in art, philosophy, science or whatever, are absorbed to the cultural mainstream, transforming that mainstream in the process. The substantive object of this study - British cinema in the nineteen eighties - can be regarded as creative more in the repetitive than the innovatory sense. Film-making is by and large a commercial undertaking and as such has a vested

interest in finding and retaining an audience. Genuine innovation confronts an audience with something it does not yet possess the capacity to easily digest thereby creating unease, confusion and sometimes resentment. Such confrontation is not in the interests of a commercial industry which cannot risk alienating its audience. Therefore commercial cinema is structured in terms of recognisable forms and narrative conventions and current British cinema is no exception. There is a institutionalised 'space' for some formal innovation within the subsidised sector in British cinema but in the political and cultural climate of the 1980's even ostensibly non-commercial cinema has had to find a substantial enough audience to justify its existence and cost. However, while the overall form may not be innovatory, the British film industry is in the business of producing novel cinematic fictions retaining an element of innovation within the process, albeit easily assimilated innovation.

My basic approach to the study is to connect the creative process to a variety of contexts, inter-related but separated for analytic purposes, which serve to structure that process. These contexts help focus the creative energies of film-makers by providing material resources, imposing material constraints, raising practical problems and suggesting possible solutions to these problems. Creativity is fundamentally rooted in such contexts. Without a material context creativity does not exist. Consequently the creative process I am attempting to explain in this study is much less mysterious than the concept of 'divine inspiration' implied in idealist accounts, in that it is seen in

terms of a series of practical tasks with clearly defined parameters and possible choices.

The first two chapters of the study serve to introduce the concept of creativity: in a general sense in chapter one with an attempt to draw upon certain insights from the work of Raymond Williams and Theodor Adorno to build a understanding of creativity as a practical activity, and in chapter two with regard to the treatment of the concept in film theory and criticism. The theoretical question of realism and cinema, and the implications this has for a consideration of film-making as an essentially creative process, is also considered. This in turn leads into chapter three - a discussion of the role of technology in the process which touches upon various theoretical questions such as the relationship between technology and aesthetics in a historical framework as well as introducing substantive issues such as the utilization of technology in current British cinema. The future of video, as opposed to film, technology is also considered.

Chapters four to seven comprise an in-depth consideration of the industrial structures of the British film industry. Chapter four is a brief historical review of the economics of film-making in Britain with an emphasis on the relationship between the British industry and its American counterpart, while chapters five and six deal with the financing, distribution and marketing of feature films in the current context and the implications these structures have for the creative process. Emphasis here is placed

on a small group of financing and production companies who effectively form the backbone of the industry including Channel 4, British Screen, Handmade, Zenith, Palace, Working Title and the BFI Production Board. Chapter seven considers the question of industrial relations in British film-making by examining the history and current practices of the major film industry Trades Union: the A.C.T.T.

Chapter eight consists of an examination of the aesthetic context of British cinema which is less tangible in material terms but which plays as much a part in the structuring process as technology or economics in that it provides a cultural tradition with specific forms and genres which provide an inevitable reference point for all film-makers. The concentration is placed on current generic patterns in British cinema and broader aesthetic tendencies which relate the cinema to other cultural forms such as literature, theatre and television, effectively locating it within a broader cultural context.

Chapters nine and ten comprise an exploration of the production process which attempts to go beyond 'auteurist' conceptions by arguing that film production is an essentially collaborative undertaking involving a range of specialist skills. Chapter nine assesses the working relationships between the major creative collaborators: directors, screenwriters, producers, designers, cinematographers, actors, and editors. Finally, chapter ten reaffirms the primacy of the director within the collaborative process, serving to retain some notion of individuality and

overall direction.

The substantive part of the study draws heavily on interview material extracted from conversations I had with several individuals currently active in the British film industry including directors, producers, commissioning editors at the various companies noted above, cinematographers, designers and editors. These interviews were conducted in the period from July 1987 to November 1988. This study is concerned with production rather than consumption and consequently the understandings and experiences of the individuals involved is of major importance and interest as well as providing major insights as to how the industry functions on a day to day basis.

Finally, as this work deals with a contemporary subject it is vulnerable to change, particularly in an industry where fortunes can change overnight. For example in the early part of this decade Goldcrest was the flagship of the British film industry. They subsequently found themselves in financial trouble and were forced to withdraw from feature film financing. In terms of my own study, companies and individuals I have identified as important may withdraw from the game. For example Zenith Productions - one of the four companies I examine in some depth in chapter five - at the moment (summer 1989) appear to be committing themselves more to television production than feature films. Yet when I wrote that particular chapter they were one of the major equity financiers of British films. Equally some of the individuals I interviewed may no longer hold the posts they are

accredited with in the text. This is a major problem with such an up to the minute piece of research but I have attempted where possible to update the information in the various chapters with the final amendments being made in September 1989.

PART ONE: THEORETICAL OBSERVATIONS

CHAPTER ONE

CREATIVITY: THE THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Towards a Theoretical Definition of Creativity

Any academic study which explicitly defines 'creativity' as one of its primary concepts sets itself the initial problem of defining what the concept actually means in the context of the project in hand. Creativity is a somewhat ambiguous idea, understood and utilized in different ways by different people be they psychologists, sociologists, philosophers, critics or the ordinary person in the street. To avoid the very real risk of confusion, the writer has a duty to clarify his or her position in relation to the appropriation and use of the concept within the given context. This is good academic practice but when one is dealing with such an ambiguous concept as 'creativity' such a consideration takes on added importance. The purpose of this chapter therefore is to define 'creativity' in relation to how the concept will be utilized in this study: as essentially a process which is constituted in relation to and structured by certain material constraints, in this case the institutional and aesthetic structures of the British cinema. The construction of such a working definition necessarily entails an examination of the concept 'creativity' in some depth, incorporating a brief review of certain theoretical explanations of the concept with a particular emphases on those writings which I have found useful in attempting to build my own theoretical understandings of this very elusive thing called 'creativity'. I shall subsequently go on, in chapter two, to examine the ways in which notions of

creativity have been used in film theory and criticism. Taken together, these two separate but related discussions will form the basic theoretical introduction to the substantive body of this study.

The idea of creativity is bound up with notions of change, development and process and is therefore a central, though often unacknowledged, component of social scientific explanations. Social change occurs through the actions of individuals regardless of whether the theorist in question holds 'creative activity' to be structurally compelled or the product of human volition. In this way all theorists - be they proponents of structure or action - embrace the idea of creativity, although the latter group may claim that by virtue of their acknowledgement of the human ability to act spontaneously; to freely form ends and choose between means, they have a more appropriate understanding of creativity as something characterised by elements of freedom and indeterminacy. However, as I shall attempt to demonstrate in due course, such a position does not necessarily tackle the problem more adequately than structural or deterministic theories. There are problems with both types of approach but if anything I am more inclined towards structural theories in their stressing of external factors such as social conditions and material resources, as opposed to the idea of creativity as an innate human capacity. However, as I shall attempt to show, variants of the latter perspective tend to hold more sway, particularly in terms of popular conceptions of creativity, but also in academic circles. This position can be

generally referred to as the Romantic Ideal and its roots stretch back to classical philosophy.

The Romantic Ideal

In his second major publication THE LONG REVOLUTION, Raymond Williams begins his elaboration of cultural theory with an interesting discussion of the development of ideas of creativity or the 'creative mind' as he puts it.(1) At the onset he refers to the Renaissance as the period when explicit ideas of human creativity first emerged. However, he suggests that there are important links between Renaissance thought and the earlier tradition of Plato and Aristotle. Williams concentrates his discussion around the idea of artistic endeavour: the most popular locus of discussions of creativity although the idea can and does extent to all forms of human activity. It is important however to be explicit when a distinction is being made between creativity on a general level as the dynamic of social change, and in a specific sense such as the creation of particular art objects. The Greeks saw art in essentially mimetic terms: art being an imitation of external reality rather than the 'creation' of new objects, adding to reality as such. This is interesting in itself because it forms the basis of several subsequent understandings of artistic activity, including the vulgar Marxist notion of cultural production as a reflection of aspects of the Capitalist mode of production, and also many common sense notions of art which tend to evaluate art works in terms of their correspondence to physical reality and seem to have problems

comprehending abstract or more conceptual art. The issue of realism and its relation to ideas of creativity is also very important with respect to film and I shall also explore this question in the second part of this theoretical discussion.

While both Plato and Aristotle essentially looked at artistic activity in relation to reality, they display in their writings different conceptions of creativity, as Rothenberg and Houseman point out.(2) Plato saw creativity as essentially divine inspiration, the intervention of the gods. This forms the origin of the more elitist - in the sense that only exceptional individuals possess creative capacities - formulations of the romantic ideal. In any case, the Platonic conception locates the origin of creativity in an essentially 'supernatural' domain. Aristotle on the other hand tended to see artistic creativity in terms of a productive activity following natural laws. The influence this idea has on deterministic explanations is obvious but it is also important in its relation to conceptions of creativity as a human 'essence', through the stressing of the idea of natural laws. Aristotle's ideas can also be seen as representing the more democratic pole of the romantic ideal.

Williams does not consider these aspects of Plato and Aristotle's writing and their implications for the development of ideas, preferring instead to concentrate on the mimesis/creativity distinction. However to be fair, he does stress the continuities in the development of ideas, beginning with Plato and Aristotle and continuing down through the centuries, rather than presenting

them as 'breaks' or 'ruptures'. But within the melting pot of Renaissance thought Williams does identify the emergence of a novel conception of artistic endeavour which shifts the stress away from the relation between art and reality and towards the idea of art as essentially creative. This doctrine, Williams argues, represented a movement in thought which asserted the human right to break out of the order of nature and to exercise creative will. It constituted human beings as autonomous self-determining entities. M H Abrams identifies two diverse currents within the early nineteenth century romantic aesthetic which he describes in terms of metaphors of 'the mirror' and 'the lamp'. The former conceptualises the mind in terms of 'a reflector of external objects' and clearly dates back to the ideas of Plato and Aristotle, while the latter sees the mind as 'a radiant projector which makes a contribution to the objects it perceives': typifying the prevailing romantic conceptions of the mind and the autonomous subject, constituting the first shift towards notions of individual genius and the creative imagination.(3) This movement in thought has, as Williams points out profoundly religious connotations in that art was the creation of humankind in the same way that nature was the creation of God. In other words the creative principle was regarded in terms of:

"an energy of the soul which is an approach to God."(4)

This shift in perception from art as imitation to art as creation was a gradual process constrained by theological influence which had to relax sufficiently to allow comparisons to

be made between the work of human beings and that of God which would escape charges of blasphemy.

The creative impulse was originally restricted to certain 'exceptional' individuals, particularly poets (shades of the Platonic influence). However, this slowly developed into a more democratic idea of creativity which regarded the 'creative imagination' to be a general human faculty. But even this essentially organic idea of creativity, with its stress on spontaneity, inspiration and imagination, retained a certain elitism in that while every human being was seen to be endowed with creative capacities, these were most highly developed in the case of the poet or artist. This idea still persists in the popular usage of terms like 'genius', 'talent' and 'gifted' to explain outstanding artistic achievements.

Concurrent with the divine conception of creativity within romantic thought is the idea of the romantic agony. This is consistent with the romantic ideal in that the artist is seen as an autonomous creative subject. However, the idea of the romantic agony involves a shift in emphasis in that the creative act is seen in terms of the artist struggling with his or her demons in the act of creation. The divine conception of creativity does not invoke such notions of pain and struggle. Creativity is therefore seen as a traumatic or painful experience and this has influenced popular notions of artistic creativity as intrinsically linked to pain, suffering and madness. Raymond Williams for one acknowledges the idea of pain as intrinsic to the creative process. He talks

about 'the excitement and pain of the effort' being 'followed by the delight and rest of completion' in his description of the dynamics of the creative act.(5)

Warren Steinkraus is another commentator on creativity who explores the idea of pain as an essential component of the creative process - a fact that is, he argues, often repressed in the works themselves.(6) There seem to be particular painful experiences which are unique to artistic creativity. One example is the pain of making a selection from the available material: choosing between possible solutions to a given problem. The richer the context of one's mind, the more difficult it is to decide between the available alternatives. Steinkraus goes on to identify other kinds of pain suffered by the artist as a implicated in, or as a consequence of, the creative process. There is the pain of personal exposure; of having one's innermost thoughts and feelings made public through the work of art. The fear of, and ability to endure, public rebuffs are important considerations in this context. Finally there is the pain of suppressed emotion. This is the torment generated by the need to create, in a sense the need to perceive a need; to formulate an intention or to identify a problem. Thus Steinkraus identifies pain as integral to all parts of the creative process: the setting up of the problem, the solution and the subsequent exposure of the solution.

The problem with the romantic ideal is that in enshrining creative ability as a naturally given attribute, an exercise of

will on the part of autonomous 'free' subjects, it disguises its own specific and historical nature by making its central concept transcendent. (This postulates creativity as an aspect of mind or 'spirit' and consequently aligns the romantic ideal with idealist philosophy such as that associated with Kant and Hegel.) The unmasking of the romantic ideal as a historically generated discourse rather than a transcendent truth was accomplished by writers in the Marxist tradition who attacked it as a bourgeois construction. The German Critical theorist Theodor Adorno, whose ideas will be discussed in some depth later on, attacks the conception of the creative genius as diverting attention from society and its repressive mechanisms. The idea of the 'creative subject' is seen by Adorno as in harmony with 'vulgar bourgeois consciousness' for two reasons:

"One, it glorifies pure creation by human beings without regard to purpose and thus feeds into the Bourgeois work ethic; and two, it relieves the viewer of the task of understanding the artistic object before him, giving him instead a surrogate - the personality of the artist, or worse, trashy biographies of him."(7)

- i.e. art objects being perceived in terms of the mind of their 'creator' rather than material objects in their own right. Not only are the social relations of production (and therefore questions of domination and social inequality) masked but the ability to criticise and reveal the nature of social reality - which Adorno believed Modernist art could show if properly apprehended - is also denied by way of the dominance of the romantic ideal.

Various commentators, including both Adorno and Williams, have pointed out that certain assumptions which can be traced directly

the romantic conception under discussion have significantly influenced psychoanalytic positions on the question of creativity. Lionel Trilling for example argues that psychoanalysis can be seen in terms of one of the culminations of the nineteenth century romantic movement in literature.(8) He identifies a shift in that movement away from what he terms a Hobbesian conception of an effective utilitarian ego towards the idea of the anarchic and self indulgent id. We begin to find conceptions of the mind as a divisible thing and also a profound interest in dreams. This, Trilling argues, is an indication of the intellectual context within which Freud developed his theories of the unconscious.

Freud introduced the idea of fantasy as an intrinsic component of creative thinking - a replacement of the Platonic divinity with the unconscious in that psychoanalysts tend to regard works of art as essentially projections of the unconscious mind or 'day dreams'. (The most self-conscious example being the works by the surrealists who produced their various paintings and writings in accordance with Freudian principles.) Fantasy, in the Freudian model is seen in terms of the emergence of repressed instincts - the product of a neurotic or psychotic mind - and it is this which compels the artist to produce his or her works. This is a common thesis in that proponents point to the various examples of creative 'geniuses' who suffered from madness from Mozart to Van Gogh.

Trilling argues that in regarding the artist as a neurotic Freud

was merely adopting a popular belief of his age - an expression of industrial rationalisation and bourgeois philistinism.(9) One only has to compare this notion of the artist with the earlier idea of the 'mad scientist' which had no place in a world dominated by technology where scientific knowledge was valued above all other doctrines.

In relating the creative powers of the artist to neurosis Freud is effectively providing what amounts to a medicalised expression of the romantic agony. The key concept in his discussions of psychoanalysis and artistic creativity is sublimation. In a major essay on Leonardo da Vinci, written in 1910, Freud argues that the sublimation of sexual instincts leads to a re-channelling of libidinal energy into one's professional activity. He argues that Leonardo represents a classic case of sublimation in that he had, at one and the same time, an over-powerful instinct for research coupled with a rather atrophied sexual life. As Freud writes:

"The core of his nature, and the secret of it would appear to be that after his curiosity had been activated in infancy in the service of sexual interests he succeeded in sublimating the greater part of his libido into an urge for research."(10)

Freud argues that the sublimation of libido in the case of Leonardo had two distinct stages: the first led to an early very productive artistic period, while the second marked a shift away from intense productivity towards investigation and deliberation which, in turn, led him away from art and towards science.

Regardless of any objections which could be made to Freud's notions of creativity and sublimation on a theoretical level,

there seem to be several examples (which immediately spring to mind) of highly creative individuals whose sex lives were anything but atrophied - if reputation has any correspondence to truth. Rodin, Gaugin, Picasso are just three examples plucked out of the air. Given the general 'bohemian' existences of many artists it is not surprising that they often had frequent and uninhibited sexual encounters.

Adorno notes what he sees as an essential similarity between the writings of Freud and the idealist philosophy of Kant. Like idealism, the problem with psychoanalytic accounts, for Adorno, is that they reduce art to:

"...an absolutely subjective system of signs denoting drive states of the subject."(11)

Adorno criticises both Kant and Freud for conceptualising art as existing only in relation to the individual who produced or contemplated a particular work. The objective role of social conditions and the process of production itself are practically ignored. In otherwords creativity in idealist philosophy and psychoanalysis alike is resigned to the realm of the subject and that realm only.

However, Freud's legacy was subsequently carried over into various streams of thought including the critical theory of the Frankfurt School. In his seminal book 'One Dimensional Man', a damning critique of modern 'mass' society, Herbert Marcuse employs a concept of 'repressive desublimation' in order to explain how apparent advances in personal liberties and prosperity in modern society actually involves a negation of

opposition and consequentlya reinforcement of domination. Marcuse and other Critical Theorists such as Adorno are highly concerned about the ways the 'culture industry' has appropriated and effectively neutralised the oppositional culture represented by artistic modernism. This process, Marcuse argues, involves a sweeping desublimation. As he writes:

"Artistic alienation is sublimation. It creates the images of conditions which are irreconcilable with the established Reality Principle but which, as cultural images, became tolerable, even edifying and useful. Now this imagery is invalidated. Its incorporation into the kitchen, the office, the shop; its commercial release for business and fun is, in a sense, desublimation - replacing mediated by immediate gratification. But it is desublimation practised from a 'position of strength' on the part of society, which can afford to grant more than before because its interests have become the inner-most drives of its citizens, and because the joys which it promote social cohesion and contentment."(12)

The oppositional culture so incorporated by contemporary mass culture is the culture which the Frankfurt School argued 'represented the last preserve of human yearning for that 'other' society beyond the present one' - ie. the possibility of an emancipated society. Mass culture on the other hand served a new political function in that it reconciled the mass audience to the status quo by way of creating, and subsequently appearing to satisfy, false wants and needs. Artistic endeavour no longer involved a struggle for truth which transcended the smoke screen of ideological representation but rather became part and parcel of the dominant ideology. It is in this way, within Marcuse's Marxian/Freudian framework that sublimation is transformed into repressive desublimation.

The idea of society being detrimental to creativity is echoed in

a range statements from various commentators, writing from very different perspectives to Herbert Marcuse, such as Rollo May(13), Robert Ginsberg(14) and Carl Rogers(15) who all call for greater social and cultural openess, or freedom, so as to promote the kind of environment best suited to the fostering of creative potential. The idea of freedom as an essential environment for the fostering of creativity is bound up with the romantic conception of the creative subject who, as I have pointed out, had broken free from the constraints of nature and exercised his own creative capacities.

I find that such explanations have little to offer in terms of my own study which is essentially interested in the relationship between a particular kind of creativity, or more precisely creative process: i.e. film-making, and the specific institutional and aesthetic structures which are external to the creative individuals involved but which do so much to structure and shape the creative process in hand by providing the all important 'context' in which creative activity takes place. Such a context is not necessarily negative as writers like May, Ginsberg and Rogers would maintain as it can provide opportunities and materials, pose certain questions, and inspire innovation. In addition, external factors are more tangible and amenable to explanation than subjective essences and their analysis, I am convinced, can provide the foundations of attempts construct more adequate understandings of the very elusive and mysterious concept we call creativity. To begin to construct theoretical explanations from concepts which are by definition

elusive seems to be self-defeating. This is why I am convinced that the problem can be more productively tackled by beginning with the material and social context.

As a preliminary step in this direction I shall now turn to a consideration of theories of creativity which do not treat it as an organic or natural essence but rather which are concerned with locating the the creative process within objective social conditions. The most interesting place to start this enquiry is within the Marxist tradition in social thought.

Bringing the Social Back In: A Consideration of Raymond Williams and Theodor Adorno on Creativity

Alongside the development of the romantic ideal which, as we have seen, fed into psychoanalytic traditions and still largely informs popular conceptions of creativity, there are potentially more productive approaches which can be identified. Ironically, but not altogether surprisingly, these productive developments have their origin in idealist philosophy, in particular the writings of Hegel. The idea of creativity was central to the Hegelian concept of the dialectic which involved a progressive development to what Hegel calls 'absolute spirit'. His philosophy had a profound influence on the young Karl Marx. Marx was favourably inclined towards Hegel's dialectical method but, and this is crucial, the thrust of his own work was to reverse the Hegelian concept of dialectic in the attempt to strain towards a materialist rather than an idealist conception of history. Marx's 'historical materialism' achieved an inversion of German idealist

philosophy in that rather than moving from the abstract to the concrete, from mind to matter, it moved from the concrete to the abstract. Life is no longer determined by consciousness as Hegel argued but rather consciousness is determined by life. Thus for Marx, creativity is no longer an independent concept, a movement of spirit or 'geist', but rather it becomes rooted in practical conditions and circumstances. As Marx explains in 'The German Ideology':

"The social structure and the state are continually evolving out of the life-process of definite individuals, not as they appear in their own or other people's imagination, but as they really are, ie. as they operate, produce materially and hence as they work under definite material limits, presuppositions, and conditions independent of their will."(16)

In this way Marx regarded creativity, in the general sense, as an essential human attribute (avoiding the elitism of Plato and the pathology of Freud) but also an attribute which is activated in response to external material and historical conditions and which in turn provides the necessary dynamic for the development and transformation of these conditions. Marx's ideas have had a profound influence on subsequent generations of writers who have attempted to make sense of creativity on both a general level and with regard to artistic creativity in particular. Raymond Williams and Theodor Adorno are two of these writers who, despite their common influence, pursue very different types of explanation. What unites them is a desire to generate essentially Marxist understandings of contemporary cultural process which are opposed to the 'vulgar marxist' conception of art and culture in general as mere aspects of a superstructure which is effectively

determined by the economic base. This, as I have noted above, represents a throwback to the Greek notion of art as imitation or reflection.

Williams' approach to creativity is to essentially democratise it, to locate it in the activity of every human mind by relating it to perception. Every individual learns how to perceive the world, to create it in a sense. Such learning must be in relation to existing cultural rules so in this way Williams is attempting to relate his idea of a subjective process to external referents. He goes on to develop his notion of perception: human beings learn to perceive a thing by describing it. Description involves interpretation in relation to general social rules which determine whether a description is novel or consistent with current understandings. Description and interpretation are, in turn, functions of communication. Williams argues that we learn to perceive something by describing it to others - by conveying a particular experience. The arts, for Williams, are examples of intense forms of communication and it is the shared communication which represents the social basis of artistic creativity. As he explains:

"The artist shares with other men what is usually called 'the creative imagination': that is to say, the capacity to find and organize new descriptions of experience. Other men share with the artist the capacity to transmit these descriptions which are only in the full sense descriptions when they are in a communicable form. The special nature of the artists work is his use of a learned skill in a particular kind of transmission of experience. His command of this skill is his art... But the purpose ofthe skill is similar to the purpose of all general human skills of communication: the transmission of valued experience."(17)

This argument has important implications for the nature of artistic creativity in that art relies on a working communication being reached between artist and audience in order to succeed. Communication is an activity in which both artist and spectator/reader/listener actively participate. the artist encodes an experience within the formal properties of his or her work and this experience or message is decoded (read) by the members of the audience. If this transmission breaks down then the art work has failed in Williams' book. He writes:

"To succeed in art is to convey an experience to others in such a form that the experience is actively recreated...all else is failure... The failure of art is the failure of communication."(18)

This implies that successful communication depends on the organisation of audiences as well as artists and this must be done in relation to certain criteria of competence which, for social and structural rather than organic reasons, is not uniformly distributed amongst all members of society. Most modern art can, following Williams' argument, therefore be seen as elitist because the members of society competent in the skills of reading or 'actively recreating' the experiences conveyed in the literary works of Kafka or Beckett, the paintings of Klee and Mondrian, the music of Schoenberg or Cage, or the modernist cinema of Antonioni, Bertolucci or Godard, are the minority who have been educated in such competence. Those who do not possess this skill will more likely than not regard such works in generally negative terms ranging from bewilderment and boredom to outrage and hostility. In this context the art has failed because communication has failed yet it is doubtful that even Williams would deny the importance and stature of the above mentioned

individuals. In his attempts to democratise the idea of artistic creativity Williams tends to neglect the structural inequalities which are so crucial to the patterning of artistic production and reception in society, or as the Critical Theorists would see it, he fails to perceive the truth content of modern art which is located precisely in its refusal to be the midwife of communication and, by implication, the inherently repressive nature of mass communication in contemporary society.

The idea of communication is useful because it is related to the issue of intentionality and of art as message or statement. By virtue of their formal properties some arts convey intention and message in a less ambiguous way than others - for example narrative cinema compared to abstract art - but, contrary to what some Critical Theorists might argue, I believe that all art contain some moment of intentionality and message, from the blatant propaganda of agit prop to the communication of ambiguous or abstract 'feelings' in conceptual and non figurative art. But all art forms are subject to interpretation, to a greater or lesser extent. This is in turn dependent on a variety of factors including the social and historical context of the production of the work vis-a-vis that of the reception of the work and the intentionality of the artist who may wish to make unequivocal statements or explore ambiguity and ambivalence in his or her work. In any case a certain importance or objective status is bestowed upon the work which is independent of its creator - despite the artist's intentions the object produced is somewhat more than mere 'message'.

The unproblematic way in which Williams relates artistic creativity to communication is radically challenged by a consideration of the ideas of Theodor Adorno. The major difference between the two can be illustrated by way of a consideration of how each conceptualises the dynamics of the creative process as it is realised in artistic production. Williams describes this process in the following manner:

"It is neither subject working on object, nor object on subject: it is, rather, a dynamic interaction, which is in fact a whole and continuous process. The man makes the shape and the shape makes the man, but these are merely alternative descriptions of one process, well known by artists and in fact central to man himself."(19)

The subject/object relationship at the heart of the creative dynamic is seen as a more or less harmonious one by Williams. The way he relates the specific instance of artistic creativity to the general principles of creative activity can be directly related to the ideas of Marx.

Adorno is rather less humanistic than Williams, a reflection of his rather pessimistic conception of the human subject.(20) He regards the subject/object relationship in terms of a 'precarious balance', rather than an 'identity of the two' as Williams does. Adorno tends to stress the importance of the object over the subject in that a subject is simultaneously always an object while an object need not also be a subject. He develops in some detail his notion of 'precarious balance'; of the dialectical relationship between subject and object in the process of artistic creation. The following passage dealing with the

specifics of this relationship is worth quoting in full:

"On its private side, the subjective process of creation is irrelevant. It is the objective side of the process that constitutes the precondition for the realisation of its internal logic of development. Subjectivity comes into its own not as communication or message but as labour. The work of art aims at the balance between subject and object without any assurance that it will succeed. This too is an aspect of the illusory quality of art. The individual artist functions as an executor of that balance. In the productive process he faces a task that has been posed for him, rather than one he poses for himself. In every block of marble and in every keyboard, a sculpture or a musical composition respectively, seems to be waiting to be set free. Artistic tasks tend to contain their objective solutions, not of course in any mathematically precise sense, not like univocal solutions to equations. The artist's absolute act is of minuscule importance. He mediates between the problem he confronts as given and the solution as it potentially inheres in his material. If a tool can be called an extension of the human hand, then the artist is an extension of a tool that is engaged in making possible the transition from potentiality to actuality."(21)

The implications of this statement fundamentally separates Adorno from Williams. The idea of art as communication is flatly rejected by the former. Adorno argues that the alleged creative freedom of the artist is illusory in that art works express objective social tendencies unintended by their creators. The so-called spontaneity of subjective creativity can only realise itself through objectification, which means working with materials already filtered through the existing social matrix. Intentionality is fundamentally non-identical to content for Adorno. Intentionality may fail to actualise itself in the structure of the work. As Adorno puts it:

"Objective forces beyond the control of mere intention determine whether a creative dynamic is set free in the work."(22)

At another point Adorno writes:

"Design is not an absolute constant... for it is almost always subject to change in the process of realisation and implementation. Indeed itis almost a mark of objectification for a work to have departed from its overall conception under the

pressure of its immanent logic."(23)

In spite of any question of intentionality the subject is seen by Adorno as 'under the sway' of his or her work in the course of artistic creation, the process being determined externally (vis-a-vis the subject) rather than internally, in a romantic sense, or in terms of a harmonious interaction between the external and the internal as Williams tends to see it. In order to explain this process Adorno utilizes the concept of 'immanence'. He argues that immanent analysis involves the use of categories intrinsic to the object in question rather than through notions imposed from without. In this way any moment or truth value within the object will be perceived undistorted by external social categories, preserving the germ of optimism and possible emancipation in the face of large scale incorporation and repression.

It is interesting to note that Adorno's ideas, at least those regarding the 'objectification' of the creative process are shared by several writers who have tackled the question of creativity including Larry Briskman(24), Monroe Beardsley(25) and the aesthetician F E Sparshott(26). What such a conception does, in effect, is to endow formal properties with a certain degree of autonomy distinct from their appropriation by any subject. The resulting work itself, rather than the creative process, becomes the privileged object in such accounts. This has both positive and negative consequences. On the positive side, the objective social forces which so decisively contribute to the creation of art objects can be directly addressed and are no longer concealed

by the idea of an autonomous subject-creator. On the negative side, by ignoring the process of creation altogether, be it subjectively or objectively informed, in favour of the art work (Adorno avoids doing this but some of the other writers mentioned do not), it can give rise to a new unbridled subjectivity - the reign of the the critic who is free to interpret the art object as he or she pleases, being exempted from any consideration of the context of the object's production. Thus the old regime of subjective autonomy is replaced by another: the creator by the critic. This is a trap that post-structuralist writings often end up in as I shall demonstrate later.

What can be drawn from this consideration of the ideas of Williams and Adorno ? Firstly, I think that the question of intentionality is an important one. There is a certain degree of intentionality in all artistic endeavour, but whether this is realised or not is another matter. However, I feel that Williams tends to overstress his idea of 'communication', as it is important to consider the objective forces at work in artistic production and reception. On the other hand Adorno tends to obliterate intentionality altogether. By doing, he renders artistic activity problematic since purpose becomes obscured and we are forced to ask the question why anyone should wish to be an artist in the first place in such circumstances ? The necessity to create must embrace intentionality to some degree: the perceived need to find a solution to a problem or to make a statement that needs to be made. Marx understood this yet it seems to be neglected in the writings of Adorno who, along with

his Frankfurt School colleagues is handicapped by his excessively pessimistic conception of society and his rather elitist notions of the incorporation of modernist culture into mass culture.

A critique of the over-emphasis on the object in philosophy and aesthetics is forwarded in separate writings by Joseph Margolis and Michael Mitias. Margolis argues that artworks cannot be fathomed independently of the complex processes linking the particular properties of art objects - genre features, representational, expressive, symbolic and related properties - and the artists craft. He writes:

"There is no manageable sense in which theorising about the properties of art works can be separated from theorising about the conceptual orientation of the artist responsible. To judge a work to be creative is, effectively to judge the artist to have worked in a creative way."(27)

Mitias reinforces the argument that the understanding of art objects requires a conception of their process of creation. The term 'work of art' infers the idea of production in the sense that the object is a work, something which has been produced. In this way, Mitias argues, the artistic identity of the work is something made or achieved. Therefore, he argues:

"If the artistic aspect of a work is intentional, ie. purposefully structured reality, if artistic creativity is, in other words, a necessary condition for an object being a work of art, it should follow that an understanding of creative activity or the conditions underwhich art works are produced is essential to our understanding of the concept of art and what it is to be an art work."(28)

In otherwords, an artwork's context of origin is an important consideration in subsequent interpretations and understandings of that work.

However, as Margolis points out, there is no reason to suppose that the explanation of the creative features of interpreted artefacts must be - or even can be - identical with what were the operative concepts with which an artist first produced that artefact. While the context of production is important, it cannot be recreated in its entirety by subsequent generations because interpretation, like production, is constrained and structured by social factors and processes. To recreate a particular context would require the interpreter to transcend his or her own social context which is impossible. But the recreation of context does not simply render a particular object a prisoner of that context. Certain artefacts may seem 'dated' and have little resonance in the current context. Others on the other hand may have more impact. For various reasons these can be said to have transcended their context or at least carried their context with them in such a way that they retain a certain vitality and contemporary resonance and cannot simply be pigeonholed as a 'dead' object, consigned to its 'correct' place in history.

Certain difficulties begin to appear in both Williams' and Adorno's arguments when we consider the problem of innovation versus repetition within the idea of creativity. The concept creativity embraces both categories. An object which can be said to have been generated by way of a creative process or act may, on the one hand, represent a tangible innovation: an expansion in human resources, formal properties or knowledge, and involving a moment of non-recognition, while on the other hand, the object may be a novel combination of identifiable techniques,

observations, ideas already in existence. The latter is the only type of creative activity to be found in the writings of the post-structuralist proponents of intertextuality - the currently fashionable school of thought in the field of cultural studies. As Roland Barthes would have it, the 'text' represents:

"...a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash."(29)

Thus recognition, on the audiences part,is not ultimately a problem in such accounts as innovation consists in a different mixture of existing elements.

In different ways both Williams and Adorno would seem to come close to endorsing this view of creativity. In Williams' case the stress placed on communication would seem to work against genuine innovation which would seriously run the risk of a breakdown in communication. While Williams acknowledges that art can and does serve on the frontiers of knowledge, particularly in disrupted and rapidly changing societies, it also serves at the very centre of society - the artist being regarded as 'the voice of the community' - and this is what he wishes to emphasise. This serves to downplay genuine innovation and change. The majority of artistic activity in Williams' model is therefore only creative in the restrictive sense, involving elements of recognition. While this may be an accurate reflection of actual conditions (it is certainly the case with regard to my own substantive study of current British cinema)it does not provide a sufficiently full theoretical explanation of creativity which at some point must involve, as I have said, a moment of non-recognition both on the part of the audience and the artist for genuine innovation to

have occurred.

Williams does not share Adorno's passion for modernism as the only progressive art since modernism by definition renders communication problematic. His approach to Modernism is to effectively contextualise it - to relate it to a specific set of social developments and conditions. In addition, and this is an important point, Williams points out that while Modernism can be seen in terms of a distinctive movement it is also characterised by:

"..an internal diversity of methods and emphases: a restless and often directly competitive sequence of innovations and experiments, always more immediately recognised by what they are breaking from than by what, in any simple way, they are breaking towards. Even the range of basic cultural positions, within Modernism, stretches from an eager embrace of Modernity, either in its new technical and mechanical forms or in the equally significant attachments to ideas of social and political revolution, to conscious options for past or exotic cultures as sources or at least as fragments against the modern world."(30)

This is a rather different understanding of Modernism than Adorno's sense of uniformly, at least by implication, oppositional culture.

However, Williams does attempt to accommodate some understanding of change, suggesting that experience is subject to change and this in turn affects received meanings and communicative resources. The relation between the novel and the familiar is seen by Williams in terms of the gap between personal meanings or experience and common meaning or experience. When the gap is small then novelty has a good chance of resolving itself into communication: new descriptions will become a new general way of

seeing. If the gap is large then communication may be unrealised. These processes lie at the heart of social organization. As Williams writes:

"the process of communication is...the process of community, the sharing of common meanings and thence common activities and purposes; the offering, reception and comparison of new meanings, leading to the tensions and achievements of growth and change."(31)

The treatment of the issue of change in Williams' account is problematic in that while we are told that change occurs, in the form of individual experience which is absorbed (or not) to common experience, we are never told why it occurs. In other words there is no attempt to develop a structural explanation of problem solving or the attempt to satisfy a perceived need which has arisen due to some structural or material transformation, in the way Marx suggested. So although Williams makes several interesting and useful points his argument is rather weak in terms of offering an explanation of the substance of the creative process itself over and above his idea of subject working on object/object working on subject discussed above. His is very much a how rather than a why explanation.

Adorno on the other hand, does concentrate on the dynamics of the process but is argument too has its difficulties. As I have pointed out, Adorno utilizes a concept of 'immanence', as a key element of his explanation of (socially critical) creativity. He builds what is essentially a problem-solving conception of the creative process with both the problems and the solutions located as external to the subject. This renders the artistic task as one

of finding the solution rather than creatively solving the problem in hand. By locating both problems and solutions in objective conditions, Adorno is, in a sense, arguing that the concepts which make the future are concepts belonging to the present, not to the future. A certain inevitability that solutions will be found is implied in Adorno's thesis and this would appear to preclude any genuine novelty. While this would seem to imply some connection between Adorno's position and the post structuralist notion of intertextuality: in terms of an apparent common strain towards the idea that 'nothing is new', we must be careful not to equate the two because Adorno, despite the problems generated by his dialectical approach, genuinely believes in novelty - 'the shock of the new' (to borrow Robert Hughes' term) being one of the strengths of modernist art. This is very different to the post-structuralist notions of intertextuality and the endless play of meaning.

In addition, proponents of intertextuality argue that the work or text has nothing to do with the intentions of the author but rather, connections are established by the play of language alone. This privileging of language implies an assertion of the autonomy of discourse from any natural or social context and a deconstruction of the subjective principle. However, this in turn undermines structures because floating signifiers by definition escape the constraints implied by the concept of social structure. Post Structuralism, Perry Anderson argues, generates what can be described as 'a radical subjectivity without a subject':

"The lesson is that structure and subject have....always been interdependent as categories. A wholesale attack on the latter was bound to subvert the former in due course as well. The terminus of the operation could only be a finally unbridled subjectivity. Adorno had foreseen this development, often remarking that any theory which sought completely to deny the illusory power of the subject would tend to reinstate that illusion even more than one which overestimated the power of the subject."(32)

Like all radical subjectivisms the indeterminacy which post structuralism generates tends to undercut the coherence of explanations, giving issues of explanation and prediction over to descriptions of the particular which are necessarily post hoc (33).

Towards a more adequate conceptualisation of the creative process

What conclusions can we draw from the above discussion ? I have attempted to show that any productive theory of the creative process must consider objective social factors: to look to the identifiable and the material rather than the transcendent and the elusive. However such approaches tend to generate their own problems, in particular the tensions created between intentionality and the objective structuring of the creative process, and between issues of innovation versus repetition ~~repetition~~ - genuine novelty or simply a variation on a theme.

In the attempt to suggest a more productive approach to the problem, it is useful to return to the questions raised by Williams' and Adorno's arguments. The former's concentration on questions of intentionality and communication is important as intentionality does generate the initial impetus for much

creative activity. But this intentionality is worked over during creative activity and is transformed to a greater or lesser degree. This transformation can be explained in terms of Adorno's conception of the objective nature of the creative process. However, this does not render the creative subject a redundant concept. In Adorno's account the subjective task seemed to amount to the search for objective solutions which were contained within artistic tasks. I suggested that this generated certain problems, in particular the implication, deriving from his use of the concept immanence as the dynamic of creativity, that problems would be inevitably solved as artistic tasks contained their objective solutions. This implies that any artist would eventually uncover the solution. But surely individual artists would solve artistic problems in different ways and no two subjects would come up with exactly the same solution, even in situations where the same general structural constraints apply. In spite of the social structures and processes which fundamentally shape people's lives the principle of individuality persists - personal experiences and consequently biographies are never identical. In this way a certain level of idiosyncratic individuality is applied to every creative task. The subject as conceived in romantic thought may have required a decentering to account for the operation of social structures and processes but the subjective principle cannot be neglected altogether.

If the subjective task were seen not as a search for an objective solution potentially adhering in the work but rather, as a creative solution to a particular objectively posed problem then

perhaps progress could be made. This makes creativity dependent on human effort in line with social constraints and material conditions which goes beyond Adorno's notion of work by preserving a notion of individuality: every individual subject bringing something unique to the artistic task in hand. However, what is useful about such an approach (and Adorno can be said to have achieved this to a certain extent) is that by relating the concept 'creativity' to the idea of effort - a practical endeavour - it can be demystified to a certain extent. Sparshott argues that what all artists and poets have in common is their sustained habit of attention: a steady application to their particular art. The subjective principle is therefore reconstructed in terms of individual effort and resilience. Such problem solving is truly creative because by preserving the individuality of the subject it involves an aspect of novelty in the solution which cannot be accounted for in terms of a wholly objective and deterministic process. This is not the inevitable outcome of a teleological system but the actual substance of a human process which is materially structured and constrained at every stage.

The reconstruction of the role of the subject in the creative process is important in drawing together the useful aspects of the work of Williams and Adorno and avoiding the major pitfalls of each: the over-emphasis on communication in the case of Williams, the neglect of individuality and intention by Adorno. Creation and reception are both constrained by social structures which themselves are subject to change in line with context. On

the other hand, intentionality cannot be rejected out of hand. Creative solutions embody an element of intentionality which cannot be suppressed, regardless of objective processes.

I shall now turn to the consideration of concepts of creativity in terms of their application in film theory and criticism in the attempt to identify problems similar to those encountered in the above discussion. I shall subsequently consider what the elements of a productive approach to the question of creativity, as it pertains to the film-making process, might be, in line with the conclusions I have already reached.

NOTES

(1) Raymond Williams: THE LONG REVOLUTION Pelican, (London) 1965.

(2) Albert Rothenberg & Carl Hausman (eds.): THE CREATIVITY QUESTION Duke University Press, 1976.

(3) M H Abrams: THE MIRROR AND THE LAMP Oxford University Press, (London) 1953.

(4) Williams p25.

(5) ibid. p44.

(6) Warren Steinkraus: 'Artistic Creativity and Pain' in M Mitias (ed.) CREATIVITY IN ART RELIGION AND CULTURE (Amsterdam) 1985.

(7) Theodor Adorno: AESTHETIC THEORY Routledge & Kegan Paul, (London) 1984, p245.

(8) Lionel Trilling: 'Freud and Literature' in THE LIBERAL IMAGINATION Mercury (London) 1961.

(9) Trilling: 'Art and Neurosis' in THE LIBERAL IMAGINATION.

(10) Sigmund Freud: 'Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood' in PELICAN FREUD LIBRARY VOL14: ART AND LITERATURE (London) 1985 p170-1.

(11) Adorno p12.

(12) Herbert Marcuse: ONE DIMENSIONAL MAN Sphere (London) 1968 p69.

(13) Rollo May: THE COURAGE TO CREATE Collins (Glasgow) 1976.

(14) Robert Ginsberg: 'Creativity and Culture' in Mitias (ed.)

(15) Carl Rogers: 'Towards a Theory of Creativity' in Rothenberg & Hausman (eds.)

(16) Karl Marx: 'The German Ideology' reproduced in Mclellan (ed.) KARL MARX: SELECTED WRITINGS Oxford University Press, 1977 p164.

(17) Williams p42.

(18) ibid. p51.

(19) ibid. p44.

(20) See Peter Dews: 'Adorno Post Structuralism and the Critique of Identity', NEW LEFT REVIEW No 157.

(21) Adorno p238-9.

(22) ibid. p475.

(23) ibid. p243.

(24) Larry Briskman: 'Creative Product and the Creative Process in Science and Art' in Dutton & Krausz (eds.) THE CONCEPT OF CREATIVITY IN SCIENCE AND ART (The Hague) 1981.

(25) Monroe Beardsley: 'On the Creation of Art' in Rothenberg & Hausman (eds.)

(26) F E Sparshott: 'Every Horse has a Mouth: A Personal Poetics' in Dutton & Krausz (eds.)

(27) Joseph Margolis: 'Emergence and Creativity' in Mitias (ed.) p19.

(28) Michael Mitias: 'Creativity and Aesthetics' in Mitias (ed.) p60.

(29) Roland Barthes: 'Death of the Author' in IMAGE MUSIC TEXT Fontana, (London) 1977.

(30) Raymond Williams: 'The Metropolis and the Emergence of Modernism' in E Timms and D Kelley (eds.) UNREAL CITY Manchester University Press 1985 p19.

(31) Williams p55.

(32) Perry Anderson: IN THE TRACKS OF HISTORICAL MATERIALISM Verso (London) 1983 p54.

(33) For an in-depth critique of the central arguments and the philosophical foundations of post structuralism see Perry Anderson: IN THE TRACKS OF HISTORICAL MATERIALISM and J.G. Merquior: FROM PRAGUE TO PARIS Verso (London) 1985.

CHAPTER TWO

CREATIVITY AND CINEMA

The Question of Authorship

The dominant approach to the issue of creativity adopted in most writings in film theory and criticism is one which tends to treat creativity as virtually synonymous with the idea of authorship. Here film is conceptualised in terms of a conscious communication; a statement directly attributable to the film-maker concerned. The general thrust in film studies with regard to the question of authorship/creativity can be seen in terms of a gravitation away from the notion of the film-maker as author, standing behind the film (or text) as a source, towards the idea of cinema as a process of reading or spectating in which the film-maker becomes merely one element. The original conception of conscious creativity being gradually shed along the way - firstly in terms of a shift towards the notion of authorship as an unconscious structure, and subsequently, in terms of a general valorisation of the spectator at the expense of the film-maker/author.

These shifts reflect the desire to ground film studies in a social scientific framework, and to locate film-makers (and subsequently audiences) within objective social structures and processes. While applauding such intentions, the result has been one which has increasingly marginalised the issue of creativity almost to the point of non-recognition. Yet film-making, like all spheres of human endeavour, is an on-going process in which

creativity plays an integral part: whether it is in terms of the creation of a novel cinematic fiction, or at the level of formal initiation - an expansion of filmic language or modes of communication, finding new ways to utilise the medium of film. In addition, the general thrust of theoretical development has tended to displace any critical debate further and further from the object in question - cinema, as it enters into the abstract realms of semiotics and psychoanalysis. As a result some of the articles which appear in theoretical journals such as SCREEN have contained little in the way of reference to actual film-making practices, preferring instead to concentrate on issues of linguistics, ideology, Lacanian psychoanalysis and general theories of representation.

This chapter shall document the developments in film studies alluded to above, in the attempt to show how the issue of creativity has become effectively negated, (with the accompanying shift away from the object in question) and the implications this negation has for current explanations, particularly those which are heavily influenced by the writings of various French 'structuralists' and 'post-structuralists': intellectuals such as Jaques Lacan, Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Jaques Derrida and Christian Metz. I shall conclude by attempting to draw out what I consider to be the productive strands of the debate - in particular the desire to place the study of film and film-making within a social context - while avoiding the pitfalls: namely the abandonment of the creative principle and the theoretical move into greater realms of abstraction.

Theories of Authorship

The first systematic commitment to the film-maker as author is generally attributable to the writers associated with the French journal CAHIERS DU CINÉMA during the fifties. While the spiritual guru of the CAHIERS group was the theorist Andre Bazin, the major voices, with reference to the development of 'La Politique Des Auteurs', belonged to people like François Truffaut, Eric Rohmer, Jean Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol and Jaques Rivette, who were subsequently to put theory into practice by becoming the film-makers of the highly innovative and influential 'Nouvelle Vague' in the late fifties and sixties. As Edward Buscome points out, the (loosely) collective CAHIERS position was never proposed in terms of a coherent theory as such:

"The Politique, as the choice of term indicates, was polemical in intent and was meant to define an attitude to the cinema and a course of action." (1)(My emphases)

The promotion of auteurism in terms of the 'auteur theory' was the responsibility of Andrew Sarris as shall be discussed below.

CAHIERS' achievement in inaugurating the 'politique' was to shift the locus of the authorial signature in cinema from the writer to the director. However, not all directors qualified as auteurs. An important distinction was drawn between the true 'auteur' - a film artist who works on material in such a way as to transform it into their own personal vision, and a 'metteur en scene' - a craftsman, no matter how skilled, who can only adapt the concepts of others. This distinction presupposes a writer/director

distinction, but then again the chief focus of interest for the CAHIERS group was the American cinema, dominated by a studio context in which directors were hired to tackle particular scripts, rather than the 'art cinema' of Renoir, Cocteau, Dreyer or Bergman, which gave an ostensibly freer rein to personal vision and control.

In lauding Hollywood film-makers like Hitchcock, Welles, Hawks and Ford, the CAHIERS critics were committing themselves to the general idea that all cinema, even the most blatantly routinized and commercial, contained a 'space' amenable to individual self expression. Such a conception has its roots in eighteenth and nineteenth century romantic thought which, as I have shown, tended to stress 'natural genius', 'creative imagination' and 'emotional spontaneity' as the unique preserve of the artist or poet, a figure often isolated from, or in conflict with, the rest of society.(2) It is to this mast that the concept of creativity has found itself nailed in film theory and criticism.

The ideas of CAHIERS DU CINÉMA were subsequently developed by Andrew Sarris in America, and the writers associated with the British publication MOVIE - including Robin Wood, Ian Cameron, David Thompson and Victor Perkins. The criteria and interests of the Movie group were broadly similar to that of Cahiers, as was their commitment to auteurism as a critical tool rather than a coherent theory. Sarris, on the other hand, emphasised the most theoretical application of auteurism, making some of the grandest and most outlandish claims for it in the process. He saw the

'auteur theory' as being grounded in three basic premises:

"...the technical competence of the director as a criterion of value...the distinguishable personality as a criterion of value...(and the concern with) interior meaning: extrapolated from the tension between a directors personality and his material."(3)

The central weakness of this scheme, according to Edward Buscombe, is that of the simultaneous use of the auteur theory as a method of classification and as a criterion of value (the second premise). This leaves no room for films which are distinctive as the work of a particular film-maker and bad at the same time. I would, for example, argue that the work of the British director Terence Fisher for Hammer Films between 1951 and 1973 displays (particularly from THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN, made in 1956, onwards) a coherent world view and a consistent use of 'mise en scene'. Yet I would also argue that Fisher's world is trite and reactionary and his style turgid and stagy. David Pirie for one would disagree with me in this instance (4) but my objection to Sarris holds. The use of individuality as a test of cultural value was something Bazin warned against as it amounted to pushing auteurism beyond its applicability. Sarris seems to have ignored such advice to his peril.

Sarris' major flaw however, lies in his conception of the subject of the auteur theory: the film artist. He uses the term 'talent' unreservedly and without clarification. He also questions what he identifies as Bazin's 'historical determinism', replacing it with what can only be described as the most naive form of vulgar idealism imaginable. He writes:

"I suspect somewhat greater reciprocity between an artist and his zeitgeist that Bazin would allow. He mentions, more than once, and in other contexts, Capitalism's influence on the cinema. Without denying this influence, I still find it impossible to attribute X directors and Y films to any particular system or culture. Why should the Italian cinema be superior to the German cinema after one war when the reverse was true after the previous one ?"(5)

This argument is absurd. The ascendancies of German Expressionist cinema and Italian Neo-Realism in their respective places at their respective times are fundamentally related to cultural conditions and social processes: the artistic and social climate of Weimar Germany and the dominance of a leftist aesthetic in Italy after the Second World War which could never be replicated in occupied West Germany. Clearly Sarris' rantings are untenable in terms of any theoretical framework forwarded as a serious guideline for the study of cinema. His notoriety tends to tarnish all other auteurist writings, yet both the CAHIERS and MOVIE groups were aware of the limitations of auteurism and its usefulness as primarily a critical, rather than a theoretical, device.

The sixties witnessed a desire to ground the study of cinema (including auteur analysis) within a more social-scientific framework. One of the pioneers of a more scientific approach was Christian Metz who attempted to apply the principles of structural linguistics to film in order to construct a semiology of the cinema; to demonstrate that it operated like a language. This can be seen in part as an attempt to transcend the essential subjectivity of analytical devices such as the auteur theory and to make objective statements regarding the medium of film. However, the application of structural linguistics to cinema study

also led to the development of 'auteur-structuralism', a combination of the auteur principle: the film-maker as centre, with the ideas of the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, in particular his writings on myth and meaning. Auteur-structuralism was developed by the writers associated with the British publication SCREEN in the sixties: Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, Peter Wollen, Jim Kitses, Alen Lovell and Ben Brewster, and was founded on the belief that the defining characteristics of an author's work are not always those most readily apparent - ie. in terms of a conscious communication. This is where structural analysis, courtesy of Lévi-Strauss and his interest in the structural relations of myth (which could only be revealed by the structuralist method) rather than their ostensible content,(6) comes into play. Auteur-structuralism can therefore be regarded as an attempt to transcend the problems generated by the romantic conception of auteurism. Nowell-Smith, the first to give a statement of the position, writes:

"The purpose of criticism becomes therefore to uncover behind the superficial contrasts of subject and treatment a structural hardcore of basic and often recondite motifs. The pattern formed by these motifs, which may be stylistic or thematic, is what gives an author's work its particular structure, both defining it internally and distinguishing one body of work from another."(7)

The most formidable, and best known, exponent of auteur structuralism is Peter Wollen, whose book SIGNS AND MEANING IN THE CINEMA is a standard text for most students of film. He gives a demonstration of the applicability of structural analysis with regard to the works of Howard Hawks and John Ford.(8) In each case extrapolating either a hard core of motifs, with regard to

Hawks, or in the case of Ford, a series of shifting antimonies, the major being that of the wilderness/garden. Wollen argues that Ford's work is structurally more 'rich' than Hawk's by virtue of the greater structural depth constituted by the series of shifting relations revealed by structural analysis, as opposed to the more straightforward set of common motifs identified in the films of Hawks. This, for Wollen, makes Ford the greater artist. It is important to note that Wollen's original (1967) position regards the structuring principle as that of the author: hence the reference to Ford as an 'artist'. Although he does recognise the 'noise' of camera style and acting, Wollen re-affirms the 'mind (conscious or unconscious) of the auteur'(9) as the source of coherence and unity within auteur-structuralist analysis.

Wollen subsequently shifted his position by way of his rethought conclusion to SIGNS AND MEANING, added to the main text in 1972. This shift, which Brian Henderson points out was not explicitly acknowledged by Wollen (10), was from the notion of the film-maker as a structuring presence, to the idea of the film-maker as merely one structure (or code) among many. Wollen writes:

"The film is not a communication but an artefact which is structured in a certain way. Auteur analysis does not consist of retracing a film to its origins, to its creative source. It consists of tracing a structure (not a message) within the work which can then post factum be assigned to an individual, the director, on empirical grounds."(11)

In this statement Wollen is moving towards a position similar to that of Adorno in the sense that the art work is now seen in primarily objective terms with the attendant relegation of the subject in the process. As the issue of conscious communication finds itself being pushed out of the picture, so is creativity as

a meaningful category abandoned with no attempt made to find a more adequate conception of the process of initiation and development to replace it. The problem is that creativity is seen as arising from a romantic conception of the mind of the artist and the idea of conscious communication, which in the structuralist model has, as we have seen, fallen from grace.

The failure to propose an alternative to romantic conceptions of initiation and change renders auteur-structuralism a rather static perspective: a charge anticipated and conceded to by Nowell-Smith very early on.(12) He concluded that the approach was prone to reductionism in that it neglected the possibility of structures being variable and non-constant - ie. the work of film-makers developing and changing over time. Indeed, Nowell-Smith could not find a simple and comprehensive structure in his study of Visconti precisely because of the film-makers constant development. This problem is rooted in the privileging, in structuralist method since Levi-Strauss, of the synchronic over the diachronic which renders the method blind to developmental processes. A related problem, suggested by Nowell-Smith and expanded by Caughie (13), is that auteur-structuralism massively privileges thematics to the detriment of style and mise-en-scène which, after all, are a demonstration of a particular film-maker's individual utilization of the medium. Such inadequacies are, Caughie suggests, a result of the approach's obsession with the search for and discovery of hidden patterns and meanings.

Auteur-structuralism is also charged with taking the film as a

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given object and regarding, without reservation, the relationship between the object and viewing subject as unproblematic. In this sense auteur-structuralism is not all that different from auteurism, merely more systematic. No questions are asked with respect to the relationship between film-maker and social structures or between the film and its audience. Even Wollen in his revised position, which does attempt to locate the film-maker in a social context, still retains the notion of the film-maker as a relatively unproblematic subject 'producing' a distinctive structure.

A third major criticism levelled at auteur-structuralism is that none of the writers associated with the position directly question the applicability of the ideas of Lévi-Strauss to film, let alone the adequacy of Lévi-Strauss' position itself. Brian Henderson attacks Wollen for avoiding crucial questions: whether films are like myths, whether modes of myth study are applicable to film study, and whether the auteur theory is compatible with Lévi-Straussian structuralism. Henderson suggests that Wollen's inability to dispense with the subject - the structures attributed as 'Hawks', 'Ford' or 'Hitchcock' - means that his claims cannot be grounded in Lévi-Strauss who deliberately and systematically omits any theory of the subject:

"...the ultimate goal of the human sciences is not to constitute man but to dissolve him." proclaimed Lévi-Strauss in his conclusion to THE SAVAGE MIND published in 1962. Structuralism was founded on the belief in human 'universals', synchronic

structures which underpinned the myriad of human practices and cultural forms. In his study of myth, Lévi-Strauss himself was attempting to show that myths were universal expressions of the human mind.

Most of these criticisms, in particular the second and third, originate from a post-structuralist perspective: the desire to develop theories pertaining to the relationship between the spectator and the film or 'text' and the decentering of the subject (particularly the authorial subject) being central projects of post-structuralist film theory. While it can be argued that auteur-structuralism is a flawed perspective it seems to me that, rather than building on the insights provided by auteur-structuralism: the revelation and analysis of structures which go beyond the notion of conscious communication (in a complementary rather than an oppositional sense) the post structuralist response was essentially to initiate a shift away from the traditional objects of film study and into the necessarily abstracted realms of post-structural linguistic theory and psychoanalysis. This in turn involved a concentration on the text and the spectator to the detriment of considerations of the film-maker and the process of production.

The structuralist technique had proved itself to be a useful tool of analysis in terms of uncovering thematics and consistencies in the work of film-makers, or in the study of a particular genre as Will Wright has shown with reference to the Hollywood

Western.(14). A positive development would have been the attempt to relate internal structures within the work to external social structures in order to resist charges that films were taken as given objects or closed systems, while at the same time allowing for a greater consideration of issues of individual style and mise-en-scene. I shall return to this extremely important question in due course but first of all I shall briefly examine the direction taken by theoretical debate in the light of post-structuralism.

Post-Structuralism and Film Theory

As I have pointed out, Auteur-structuralism represented a self-conscious attempt to ground film study within a social scientific framework, guided by the belief that the cinema was a serious topic for academic study. However, as auteur-structuralism became increasingly aware of its own theoretical inadequacies it was forced to modify itself. If Wollen's gravitation towards unconscious processes can be seen as a weakening of the original structural premise - the author is now only one code among many - then the next logical step would seem to involve the fragmentation or deconstruction of the original structures. This is precisely what happened.

The shift in film studies mirrored developments within the structuralist position in general. The apparent inability of structuralism to explain change, coupled with the intellectual reaction to the failure and aftermath of the wave of civil

unrest which occurred in France and elsewhere in 1968, led to a radical shift in ideas towards post-structuralism. Post-structuralism, in an attempt to identify new sources of opposition to domination in society, given the loss of faith in the Marxist dialectic in the aftermath of 1968, turned its concerns towards 'a celebration of difference', a radical indeterminacy in place of the rigid determinacy initially proposed by structuralism. Some structuralists, like Barthes and Foucault, moved with the general flow. Some, such as Lacan, remained influential while contributing nothing new, and new figures appeared on the scene: Jacques Derrida and Jean François Lyotard to name two. Significantly Lévi-Strauss remained committed to the approach he had effectively initiated. Christian Metz also changed his position moving from his earlier interests in building a semiology of the cinema to the more post-structuralist concerns of 'the Imaginary Signifier' and the psychoanalysis of the viewer. What is of interest to this present discussion is the way in which the post-structuralist influence came to dominate film theory and criticism. Both CAHIERS and SCREEN adopted the premises of post-structuralism, following the lead given by literary journals such as TEL QUEL. (With regard to SCREEN its relationship to French post structuralism reflected that of MOVIE to French auteurism as espoused in the pages of CAHIERS DU CINÉMA a decade previously.) Just what did post-structuralism offer that was apparently so compelling ?

Basically the intervention of post-structuralist thought in the domain of film studies manifested itself in terms of a shift in

focus from a concentration on the primacy of the author - as a conscious communicator, an unconscious structure or whatever - to a consideration of film as a textual process. This entailed a fundamental problematizing of the notion of authorship itself as it had been conventionally accepted, and a corresponding concentration on the position of the spectator with regard to the textual process. The most controversial of these new formulations is Roland Barthes' essay 'The Death of the Author', written specifically with literature in mind but having profound implications for cinema also. This essay is essentially an attempt to privilege the reader at the expense of the author which in some ways is mirrored by Metz's attempts to privilege the spectator in his later work. A text, for Barthes, is not a line of words releasing a single meaning: the message of the author, but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. Barthes writes:

> "...the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture....the writer can only imitate a gesture that is anterior, never original."(15)

In spite of the attempt to locate textual production in some kind of social context Barthes' position is ultimately a hopelessly static and conservative one, representing no real advance in light of the critique of auteur-structuralism's tendency towards stasis.

Nevertheless, this perspective is given a specific relation to film by Brian Henderson in his critique of cine-structuralism, which he concludes by suggesting elements of what he believes to be a more appropriate and fruitful line of enquiry. This is the

principle of 'intertextuality', which is basically the idea that no text is discrete, isolated, unique or self originating: ie. a contextualising of the text, its production and reception. The text is no longer regarded as an object but as a process, a production, a collation of mechanisms for the production of meaning, determined by material conditions. As Henderson puts it:

"Every text is a combination of other texts and discourses which it 'knots' in a certain way and from a certain ideological position."(16)

While this represents a genuine attempt to problematise the object and contextualise the processes at hand, the stress is always placed on categories such as discourse, the text and its relation to other texts rather than external social determinants such as politics and economics. This is a reflection the primacy of the linguistic model which dominates post structuralism in general and which ultimately isolates the text from the social world and social processes.

As I have indicated, closely related to the question of intertextuality is the understanding of film as discourse. Discourse theory is primarily associated with Michel Foucault and contends that the social world is essentially chaotic and meaningless and the necessary order is imposed upon this chaos by discourse which is a collection of related statements. Discourse, for Foucault, is bound up with the notion of power and human subjects are constituted in the operation of power.(17) Foucault consequently regards 'the author' as a function of discourse. This argument is taken and applied to film by Stephen Heath who argues that:

"The author is constituted only in language and a language is by definition social, beyond any particular individuality."(18)

Heath goes on to argue that the failure to understand this basic principle means that in auteur theory the author is constituted at the expense of language and the order of discourse with the result that the author is regarded as a function of unity, a conception which avoids any articulation of the film text in relation to ideology. Heath, following Althusser, invokes the concept of bourgeois ideology as a cultural universal which masks the true nature of social relationships. The concept of the author as utilized in auteur theory is therefore a bourgeois (and therefore necessarily false) understanding of the autonomous subject. The problem for Heath and others is how to construct a theory of the subject which avoids contamination from bourgeois ideology.

Heath argues that a theory of the subject represents an attempt to transcend the inadequacies of traditional notions of authorship by grasping the essential constructions of the subject in ideology: a recognition of the heterogeneity of structures, codes and languages at work in film and their implications for the 'authorial subject'. Such a strategy, according to Heath, would solve the dilemma, experienced by some theorists, of regarding the author in terms of a conscious creator and/or unconscious catalyst. The textual process which makes a theory of the subject necessary, is precisely the space of the breakdown of oppositions between conscious and unconscious, inside and outside, dependent and independent. In otherwords the concept of

the active process replaces any notion of fixed identities or given objects. However this renders the task of making meaningful statements regarding objects such as 'the film', 'the film-maker' or even 'the spectator' extremely difficult, if not impossible.

I would wish to argue that in spite of the rhetoric, Heath is unable to dispense with the figure of the author as easily as he would wish. In an attempt to demonstrate the textual system at work in the Hollywood film, Heath chooses to analyse in great length Orson Welles' TOUCH OF EVIL.(19) In spite of his claim that the author 'Orson Welles' is only of interest in the sense of being 'an effect of the text' I would argue that many of the codes which Heath articulates as components of the textual system of TOUCH OF EVIL: camera movement, lighting, dialogue, music, action, characters etc. are demonstrations of the (more or less) intentional creativity of Welles and his collaborators on the film. The narrative information these 'codes' or 'cinematic devices' convey to the audience represents a demonstration of a film-maker who understands the conventions of film production and (more importantly) reception. Such conventions are locatable within social and aesthetic structures.

Heath's analysis attempts to disperse Welles as author across the system of the film: 'Welles' being merely one code among others (shades of Peter Wollen's reconstructed approach to authorship). But his choice of film to demonstrate his ideas is rather unsuitable. There are many Hollywood films in which it could be argued that the director brings little to bear in the sense of

imposing cohesion on the text. TOUCH OF EVIL is a very different kettle of fish. Orson Welles dominates the film from start to finish, both stylistically and physically: in terms of his presence in the fiction as police chief Hank Quinlan. The 'textual system' of TOUCH OF EVIL is not a closed one, but a great deal of the external reference points which inform it share a common denominator: Orson Welles, the man and his work. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, arguing against the notion that in the textual process an author can return as a fiction (ie. one code amongst many), suggests that, with specific reference to John Ford,:

"...the 'fiction' of the author enables us to locate an 'author of the fiction' who is by no means dispersed but who in 'his' notional coherence provides the means for us to grasp the text in the moment of its production before us."(20)

Nowell-Smith is sensitive to the different ways a film-maker like Ford (or Welles, or Hitchcock) can inscribe himself in the text which goes beyond the notion of an author as sub-code. He argues that either we must say that there are several authorial subcodes - of expression, content etc - or we must see the author as criss-crossing the text and marking it at various levels, in which case it would be better to talk of the author, rather than the text, as system. Again this would only apply to certain film-makers whose presence, both internal and external, in relation to the film is strong enough to inscribe itself in the text and so provide the coherence enabling the audience to grasp the text in a certain way and recognise it as, in Nowell-Smith's term 'authored discourse'.

A final criticism of Heath's approach to TOUCH OF EVIL is articulated by Pam Cook.(21) She argues that Heath demonstrates a tendency to concentrate only on formal strategies at the expense of extra textual references to history, politics or economics which may in fact play some part in these textual strategies. In this way the textual system remains uncontextualised. This is a fundamental weakness of many 'textualist' writings where the text is seen as the be all and end all and any references to an extra textual reality are omitted. In this way the text becomes a 'given' in the way that auteur-structuralists were criticised for treating film.

Returning briefly to the question of the development of a more sophisticated theory of the subject in relation to film. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith shows, via Jaques Lacan's utilization of the linguistic principles of de Saussure, how an understanding of the subject constituted in language (Heath's point) requires a division of the the concept of 'parole' (speech) into énonciation (enunciation) and énoncé (statement) with the former being the act or utterance while the latter refers to what is uttered.(22) Now, as Christian Metz points out (23), film is discourse but it presents itself as 'history' which effaces all marks of enunciation, which is an active process, 'open' in the sense of it embodying constant shifts in meaning and appropriation by an audience, and disguises itself as a story: a given or 'closed' entity. Nowell-Smith in turn argues that discourse is always marked by the presence of a subject of the enunciation. This is

where the author re-emerges - as a shifting position or a 'trace' within the complex process of enunciation.

Nowell-Smith explains that Lacanian psychoanalysis (which is constantly alluded to in post structuralist writings) is concerned particularly with the 'intersubjectivity of the construction of meaning'. In the absence of a subject of enunciation in the context of film (disguised by film presenting itself as history) it is, he argues, hard to see what position is possible for a viewer given that the 'spectating subject' requires 'the relation to an other' in order to situate itself. Consequently, the film must somehow provide this 'other'. Sometimes the 'other' takes the shape of the 'author of the fiction': a distinctive film-maker like Hitchcock, Welles, Bergman or Antonioni. This requires an awareness or prior knowledge of the characteristics of a particular author's marks or traces on the part of the spectator. In the absence of such an awareness (and sometimes in conjunction with it) the 'other' is provided in terms of positional identifications with characters or the camera. These positional identifications will shift constantly throughout the film. This in turn raises questions of voyeurism and exhibitionism which psychoanalytic analyses of cinema relish. However, these are beyond the scope of this discussion and we must return to the central issue of the the question of creativity in the light of the theoretical developments touched upon above.

The orthodox conception of creativity has, as we have seen, been

forcefully rejected by commentators in the post structuralist camp. While recognising the need to regard film-makers (and audiences) as subjects constituted by social processes and constrained by structures, I would wish to argue that the outright rejection of creativity represents a fundamental flaw in post structuralist theory. The creative principle must be relocated within the process as an integral component, giving substance to the idea of cinema as an essentially creative undertaking.

While agreeing that film-making could be conceptualised in terms of the social context in which it is produced and consumed, and that much commercial production is highly derivative by definition, produced in strict accordance with rather limited genre conventions, heavily reliant on source material, this does not exclude genuine originality which goes beyond the notion of intertextuality. Clearly initiation is always in relation to current resources and social structures but the outcome always represents an expansion in resources. The film-makers of the French 'New Wave' may have 'mixed writings' in the sense of utilizing the codes of Hollywood cinema, but they did so in a way which produced a new king of self-reflexive film-making; new ways of using the camera, constructing narrative and engaging the audience. Similarly, Eisenstein was partly derivative in his borrowings from the revolutionary ideas of Marx and Lenin and the editing techniques of D W Griffith, but his resolution - the dialectical montage characterising films like THE BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN could not be described as anything else but original and

innovative: constituting a major expansion in the language of film, to say nothing of its political and intellectual potential. Furthermore, the radical indeterminacy suggested by the concept of 'intertextuality' cannot account for the structured (and explicable) development of film-making practices from the invention of cinema to the present day. This is a problem which affects post structuralism in general with its tendency towards classification and description of the particular rather than genuine explanation.(24)

The development and utilization of the theory of the enunciating subject in film theory reintroduces in an unacknowledged fashion, as I shall attempt to show, the idea of the film-maker as a creative manipulator of an audience's response to his or her film. While Metz and Nowell-Smith simply introduce the ideas of enonciation and énonce in relation to film as history/discourse, the application of their ideas to particular films has produced interesting results. Sandy Flitterman, in an article concerned primarily with the problematic 'look' of the male director vis-a-vis the filmic image of woman, concentrates on Hitchcock's film MARNIE by way of reference to Raymond Bellour's essay 'Hitchcock the Enunciator'.(25) Flitterman argues that a film-maker appropriates and then designates the 'look' in a specific way and it is this which:

"characterises a particular directors system of enunciation, the way the look is organised to create the filmic discourse."(26)

Bellour's article is used as an illustration of how the director uses his privileged position to represent his own desire through the image he constructs and, in Hitchcock's case, by delegating

the look to his fictitious subjects: male characters in the film.

A second example is provided by Nick Browne's analysis of the structures and strategies which give form to the action of the fiction and at the same time determine the locus of the spectator in his or her reading of the text.(27) Browne takes as his example John Ford's film STAGECOACH and attempts to show the spectator's relation to the fiction and the characters within it is subject to a constant shifting. Each camera set up, Browne argues, is a marker of the enunciation. Some set ups implicate the spectator in the action by closely identifying him or her with a character in the fiction, while other set ups involve a more detached identification with the (essentially voyeuristic) camera.

What is common to both Flitterman and Browne is the unacknowledged idea of the manipulation of the audience's gaze. Such manipulation is directly attributable to the film-maker but in concentrating on the psychological and political implications generated by a close consideration of the look or the gaze, Browne and Flitterman ignore the implications with regard to issues of creativity and intentionality which their analyses also uncover. The fact is that in both case studies indicated above - MARNIE and STAGECOACH - the viewer becomes involved in a complex process of manipulation and identification. This is a fundamentally creative process,attributable to a particular film-maker, an indication of that film-makers ability to control or direct an audiences emotional (and sometimes intellectual)

response by means of a constant positioning and repositioning of the very look or gaze - the essence of the process of enunciation as explored by writers such as Flitterman and Browne. It is interesting that a theoretical line of enquiry which began with such a radical de-centering of the author should end up reaffirming the idea of a conscious originator standing behind the text.

In this respect, cinematic creativity can be said to have a central core which is represented by the conscious utilization of materials in order to produce a desired response (which can range from the definite audience responses to a thriller by Hitchcock to the more open-ended ambiguous response generated in relation to a film by Resnais or Antonioni). This is consistent with Buscome's attack on Wollen's notion of the film-maker as a post factum structure. Buscome writes:

"It is possible to reveal structures in Hitchcock's work which are by no means unconscious, such as the use of certain camera angles to involve and implicate the audience in the action."(28)

This is exactly the 'creative manipulation' referred to critically, but unacknowledged in such terms, by Flitterman and other writers such as Laura Mulvey (29) when they examine the objectification of women in Hitchcock's films and its relation to the pleasures of the male gaze.

Hitchcock understood very early on in his long career the manipulative potential of cinema (as an article written by him in the thirties demonstrates (30)). He subsequently developed and

explored the potentials of the medium, reaching his own creative peak in the fifties and early sixties with such masterpieces of audience manipulation as REAR WINDOW, VERTIGO and PSYCHO. The essence of Hitchcock's cinematic creativity lay in his understanding of the functioning of the traditional melodramatic codes of Hollywood story telling and the audiences response to these codes: in particular the narrative conventions of identification, recognition and reassurance. This understanding enabled Hitchcock to subtly subvert these codes through his use of plot development, camera angles and positions, editing techniques, music and other cinematic devices,(31) enabling him to generate a feeling of compelling unease on the part of his audience which earned him the popular title of 'master of suspense'.

Other film-makers have made their own contributions to cinematic creativity in different ways. The various 'modernist' film-makers from Eisenstein, Lang and Murnau to post war figures such as Antonioni, Bergman, Bertolucci and the French 'New Wave' directors developed their art in terms of a rejection of the melodramatic codes and conventions of Hollywood cinema. In different ways these film-makers explored the potentials of cinema in a self reflexive, often revolutionary manner, broadening the scope of cinematic language in the process.(32) Innovative film-makers also emerged within the melodramatic tradition, either working against it like Hitchcock and Welles, or with it: Ford and Hawks in America, Powell, Reed and Lean in Britain, but in every case enriching it, developing it, expanding

its scope.

Thus creativity must be a central concept in any adequate analysis of the cinematic process. Furthermore the notion of the individual must also be retained despite the fundamentally social nature of that process. In this respect the recent contribution of Paul Coates to the auteur debate is useful.(33) While acknowledging the insights of the structuralist critique of the film author, Coates argues that any revised theory must insist on the presence of individuality. He writes:

"The various structuralisms maintain that individuality has been shattered. Shattered individuals, however, still remain individuals: a bullet has pierced the single pain and rayed it with splinters, but a frame - society - holds it in place, retaining it as a building block in its structure. Considered from without, the splintered pain remains a unit (within an overall structure)."(34)

All human subjects are constrained by social structures and such constraints are reflected in their endeavours. However, individual biographies remain unique, if consistent with the whole, and as such, individuals in their relation to the cinematic process cannot be rejected as fundamental categories in any analysis.

Coates insists on the utilization of the concept of individuality in film study as to deny individuality would be to deprive criticism of its object - the individual film - and institute an unchallenged reign of theory which would subsume all works into a collective identity of cinematic language. Arguably post structuralism is guilty of such a charge particularly in relation to its utilization of concepts like bourgeois ideology. Coates

goes on to develop a theoretical understanding of individuality in the context of film study which builds on the auteur structuralist perspective by allowing room for a consideration of style but which also alludes to a creative process. He suggests that an individual film-maker imposes his or her 'mark' on a film in terms of what he refers to as 'obsession, mannerism or style', which imposes a pseudo unity or coherence. However, and this is crucial, against this individuality there is opposing material, what Coates refers to as 'a fire to test the concepts of the director'. This opposing material includes the key collaborators on the film, the script, the source material (if any) etc: in other words the material context of the production. Coates argues:

"If either the directorial strength or the frictional opposition is absent, the film is without its individuality."(35)

Coates' argument demonstrates a real sense of a productive engagement between film-maker and context: posing questions, limiting possibilities, suggesting solutions. In doing so he integrates the subject and the objective process as interdependent categories within his conception of authorship. This is exactly the kind of integration I suggested in the previous chapter by drawing on the writings of Williams and Adorno. These are essential elements of a materially based understanding of the creative process in hand.

Coates' arguments also raises the very pertinent question of whether creativity in film-making should be regarded as an individual or a collective endeavour. It is interesting to consider that while we talk about films by Hitchcock, Welles,

Godard or whoever, these film-makers rely heavily on the skills and contributions of key collaborators. It is also worth considering that several 'auteurs' have consistently worked with the same creative personnel: Hitchcock, Bertolucci, Antonioni, Bergman and Michael Powell to name but a handful. The question that must be asked therefore is can cinematic creativity be justifiably assigned to a sole individual or should the process be seen more in terms of a collective endeavour ? This issue shall be tackled in some depth in chapter nine.

I shall also expand Coates' conception of 'opposing material' to consider a variety of contexts which combine to shape the creative process in hand, suggesting possibilities, providing resources and imposing constraints on the film-maker. Before turning to an examination of such contexts with regard to current British cinema I shall briefly consider one or two other pertinent theoretical questions beginning with the rather problematic issue of realism and the medium of cinema and what implications this has for an understanding of film-making as a creative process.

Creativity and Realism

One of the key theoretical debates in academic film study revolves around the question of realism and its relation to the medium of film. At the centre of the debate lies the assertion by some of the unique mimetic relationship cinema has to reality by virtue of the central principles of photographic reproduction. In an early essay entitled 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image', André Bazin appraises photography in terms of 'a process of mechanical reproduction from which man is excluded'.(1) Cinema is, if we follow this argument, essentially a transparent medium, a window opening out onto the world. In this way film enjoys a special affinity with the classical conception of art as mimesis which dates back to Aristotle.

Within the context of the present discussion the question which springs to mind is that if film can be seen as essentially a process of mechanical reproduction, does this not preclude any claims it may have to being a creative art form in the manner of other, more abstract or conceptual art forms ? Rudolph Arnheim, an early proponent of anti-realist film-making, argues that if cinema were simply the mechanical reproduction of reality then it could not also be an art form.(2) Consequently, Arnheim urges film-makers not simply to copy but 'to originate, to interpret and to mould; to exploit the possibilities of the medium in a

creative manner in order to keep alive the possibility of film art.

Much of the early debate on the question of film realism tended to be carried out on a rather idealist philosophical level involving statements pertaining to the 'true' essence of film, and consequently film practice: what kinds of films should be made and which aesthetic principles should be followed in the process. Such 'manifestoes' were written in the face of a heterogeneity of filmic practices from documentary to fantasy, a range dating back to the diverse experiments of the French pioneers from Lumière to Méliès. In an attempt to develop understandings of what was actually going on in cinema, rather than constructing idealistic frameworks, subsequent contributors to the realism debate began to attempt to create a synthesis of both realist and anti-realist insights; to preserve the 'scientific fact' of photography and consequently the cinema's privileged position vis-a-vis its representations of the real world, while creating space for the idea that film-making was indeed a creative art form.

It is interesting to consider that Bazin (who along with Siegfried Kracauer is regarded as the major champion of cinematic realism) should simultaneously attempt to hold to his belief in realism while considering film to be an art form. In one of his later essays he goes so far as to claim that film could be regarded as art in the sense that there was a need for film-makers to enlist artifice in order to create the illusion of

transparency which generated a creative tension crucial to the work of art. True mimesis would result only in a flat and unheightened naturalism.(3) Such a statement goes some way to justifying Bazin's enthusiasm for fictional realism as opposed to more direct forms of film-making such as documentary which would seem to be the most transparent form of film-making if transparent is an adequate description in the first place.

Bazin's notions of realism have influenced film-makers such as Eric Rohmer, who was a member of the CAHIERS DU CINEMA group presided over by Bazin. Subsequently his approach to film-making betrays this moral and intellectual orientation with the use of heavily naturalised locations, characters, actions and dialogue and rather minimalist plot lines concerning the every day problems and moral dilemmas of every day people. In other words, Rohmer is attempting to hold a mirror up to nature, to reflect the, usually metropolitan, lower middle class, world he observes around him.

One contemporary British film-maker who shares this view of film as an essentially mimetic form is Bill Douglas, writer/director of the autobiographical trilogy: MY CHILDHOOD, MY AIN FOLK, MY WAY HOME and COMRADES, the story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs.

Douglas explains his philosophy in the following manner:

"I'm very admiring of what the camera can do. The camera can reveal a great deal without words. It can reveal the inner soul of people. If you rush through words and rush images you don't get into the heart of human beings. In life I remember there were moments when I sat looking at people when they were in repose, and there was a beauty about them, and a stillness. And when I came round to look through a camera perhaps one was looking for

that moment I saw in life."(4)

This is the reason Douglas has tended to concentrate on working class subjects, placed in environments of great poverty and hardship, because, for Douglas, through the poverty and the misery the nobility of the human spirit survives and can be detected by the camera.

Returning to the theoretical debate, another interesting attempt to resolve the realism/creativity contradiction is provided by the American avant-garde film-maker Maya Deren.(5) Deren believes strongly in the transparent nature of the photographic medium while at the same time being concerned to identify ways in which film can be seen as a creative art form. Significant creative activity can occur at the 'pre-photographic' stage - Deren describes cinematography in terms of a 'controlled accident': the maintenance of a delicate balance between what is there spontaneously and what is deliberately introduced into a scene. As she puts it:

"Only in photography - by the delicate manipulation of what I call controlled accident - can natural phenomena be incorporated into our own creativity, to yield an image where the reality of a tree confers its truth upon the events we cause to transpire beneath it."(6)

Creativity refers in this context to actors and action and production design although Deren does not mention these specifically. What is problematic is that she does not consider environments which escape her categorisation as 'what is there spontaneously' or 'natural phenomena' such as studio sets.

While touching briefly on the capacity of photography to alter

reality by means of slow, fast and reverse motion and telescopic projection, Deren explicitly warns against overt manipulation of the image as this destroys the reality which remains 'the building block for the creative use of the medium'. Filmic creativity for Deren lies not in the image itself as an end but in the assemblage of such images - the editing or 'post photographic' stage. As she puts it:

"All invention and creation consists primarily of a new relationship between known parts."(7)

This renders Deren's argument very similar to that of Sergei Eisenstein the Soviet film-maker and theorist. Eisenstein saw individual shots as photographs of reality which were building blocks or 'cells' in a larger structure whose creative principle was that of montage. It was precisely this reliance on montage which led to Eisenstein being criticised by Bazin as an 'image director' dependent on unambiguous meaning, as opposed to the more favoured 'reality directors' who preserved the essential ambiguity of the real world by their use of deep focus cinematography and the long take.(8)

Deren's essay is interesting in the sense that it identifies a creative input at the pre and post photographic stages of the film-making process. I should like to extend this consideration of creative input to the actual photographic stage itself. Despite the basic mechanical nature of the photographic reproduction process, the technology of cinematography offers film-makers a great deal of scope for intervention; to creatively manipulate the image in order to create a desired effect. In her calls against image manipulation Deren ends up falling into the

trap of other idealist commentators defining some notion of the 'correct' way to proceed although some of the image manipulation I am about to describe hardly constitutes a destruction of reality.

The initial choice of framing and camera angle are the first examples of image manipulation. These do more than simply render an image in the camera viewfinder. They can generate particular emotional or intellectual responses on the part of the spectator depending on whether a subject dominates the frame or is dominated by other elements in the frame, whether the subject is in close-up or long shot, whether the shot is a low angle, high angle, slightly skewed or positioned at eye level. All of these techniques impart different meanings in line with codes of representation - e.g. tightly framed, low angle shots of a figure imply dominance while high angled shots of a figure dominated by the surrounding landscape imply a certain vulnerability. The shifting of camera positions as we have seen also implicates the spectator in the narrative in terms of the process of enunciation discussed above.

We then turn to the question of the choice of lenses, lighting, filters and film-stock. These all imply some manipulation of the image be it in terms of the focal plane (either deep or shallow), the lighting of a scene (hard or soft, low key or high key, natural or artificial), the colour of that light and the characteristics of the negative in terms of colour or black & white, light sensitivity, grain and contrast. Each of these

possibilities can be utilised to convey certain information and guide an audiences response: shallow focus concentrates the audience's attention on particular objects or characters, hard low key lighting is more mysterious than soft high key lighting.

Then there is the whole realm of trick photography and optical effects which involves making the audience see and believe certain events which have not actually taken place such as the destruction of a city or a man's ability to fly or transform himself into a wild animal. Finally there is the issue of film being an aural as well as a visual medium, which opens up a whole new area for creative manipulation. Film sound tracks bring together a variety of natural and artificial sounds including dialogue, ambient sound and music which can be used to underscore the images or, in some cases, to generate emotions which run counter to those created by the visual information; to introduce a vague sense of unease into a scene.

In conclusion then, it can be argued that creative intervention is implied at every stage of the film-making process, and that intervention relates directly to questions of how the final product will be 'read' by its audience. By acknowledging this process of active manipulation we can begin to question the idea of film as a simple recorder of objective reality. Reality is always refracted through some subjective intervention which involves applying selectivity to the object world, to look at objects in particular ways, conveying different emphases and meanings.

This in turn leads to a questioning of our concept of objective physical reality itself as our understanding of the world around us is largely shaped by representations both visual and written. However, such an insight need not necessarily lead us down the post structuralist path to absolute indeterminism or relativity; the freeing of the signifier from extra-discursive referents. Perhaps the duality of subject and object as distinct categories should be questioned. Objectivity may be subjective as relativists would argue but surely subjectivity must be objective - in terms of the existence of shared meanings and structured social existence - to a significant extent for communication to possible and for meanings to be shared ? If this were not the case then film-makers would be unable to operate in the manner I have attempted to describe. Rather than being able to creatively manipulate or direct an audiences reaction and emotional and intellectual involvement with a film they would be participants in a game of blind chance with the odds stacked against any kind of communication.

This discussion also raises the question of the importance of technology within the creative process under examination. The creative choices described above are all in relation to technical possibility. Technology represents the 'tools of the trade' which enable film-makers to creatively intervene at each stage of the process. Consequently, the whole question of technology as a resource deserves to be examined in depth, going far beyond a simple consideration of the utilization of

technology with regard to the substantive context - current British cinema - to embrace wider theoretical concerns such as the relationship between technological and aesthetic development. Therefore, it is towards such a consideration I shall now turn.

NOTES

The Question of Authorship

(1) Edward Buscombe: 'Ideas of Authorship', SCREEN Autumn 1973, reproduced in John Caughie (ed.) THEORIES OF AUTHORSHIP Routledge & Kegan Paul/B.F.I. (London) 1981, p22.

(2) See Raymond Williams: THE LONG REVOLUTION Pellican (London) 1965.

(3) Andrew Sarris: 'Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962' in Mast & Cohen (eds.) FILM THEORY AND CRITICISM 2nd Edition, Oxford University Press (New York) 1979.

(4) See David Pirie: A HERITAGE OF HORROR Gordon Fraser (London) 1973.

(5) Mast & Cohen (eds.) p658.

(6) Claude Levi-Strauss: STRUCTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY Vol 1 Allen Lane (London) 1969.

(7) Geoffrey Nowell-Smith: extract from VISCONTI in Caughie (ed.) p137.

(8) Peter Wollen: SIGNS AND MEANING Secker and Warburg (London) 1972.

(9) ibid. p113.

(10) Brian Henderson: 'Critique of Cine Structuralism' in Caughie (ed.)

(11) Wollen p146.

(12) Nowell-Smith in Caughie (ed.)

(13) John Caughie: 'Auteur Structuralism. Introduction' in Caughie (ed.)

(14) Will Wright: SIX GUNS AND SOCIETY Berkley (California) 1975.

(15) Roland Barthes: IMAGE TEXT MUSIC (Ed. Stephen Heath) Fontana (London) 1984 p146.

(16) Henderson in Caughie (ed.) p205.

(17) Peter Dews: 'Power and Subjectivity in Foucault' NEW LEFT REVIEW No 144.

(18) Stephen Heath: 'Comment on "The Idea of Authorship"'in Caughie (ed.) p215.

(19) Heath: 'Film and System: Terms of Analysis' SCREEN spring 1975 (part I), & Summer 1975 (part II).

(20) Geoffrey Nowell-Smith: 'Six Authors in pursuit of THE SEARCHERS' (extract) in Caughie (ed.) p223.

(21) Pam Cook: 'The auteur debate' in THE CINEMA BOOK, BFI (London) 1985.

(22) Geoffrey Nowell-Smith: 'A Note on History/Discourse' in Caughie (ed.).

(23) Christian Metz: 'History/Discourse' in Caughie (ed.).

(24) See Perry Anderson: IN THE TRACKS OF HISTORICAL MATERIALISM Verso (London) 1983.

(25) Sandy Flitterman: 'Woman, Desire and the Look: Feminism and the Enunciative Apparatus in Cinema' in Caughie (ed.)

(26) ibid. p243.

(27) Nick Browne: 'The Rhetoric of the Specular Text With Reference to STAGECOACH' in Caughie (ed.).

(28) Buscombe in Caughie (ed.) p31.

(29) For example Laura Mulvey: 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' SCREEN Autumn 1975.

(30) Charles Davy: FOOTNOTES TO THE FILM Lavat Dickson (London) 1938.

(31) Hitchcock benefited from close collaboration with screenwriter Ernest Lehman, cinematographer Robert Burks, graphic artist Saul Bass and composer Bernard Hermann among others.

(32) This is well documented by Robert Philip Kolker in THE ALTERING EYE Oxford University Press (New York) 1983.

(33) Paul Coates: THE STORY OF THE LOST REFLECTION Verso (London) 1985.

(34) ibid. p80.

(35) ibid. p82.

Creativity and Realism

(1) André Bazin: 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image' 1945, quoted in Pam Cook(ed.) THE CINEMA BOOK BFI (London) 1985 p224.

(2) Rudolph Arnheim from FILM AS ART in Mast & Cohen (3rd Ed.) 1985.

(3) Bazin: 'Cinematic Realism and the Italian School of the Liberation' quoted in Cook (ed.) p225.

(4) Interview with Bill Douglas 24/7/88

(5) Maya Deren: 'Cinematography: The creative use of Reality' in Mast & Cohen (3rd Ed.)

(6) ibid. p58.

(7) ibid p61.

(8) Bazin: 'The Evolution of Film Language' in Mast & Cohen (3rd Ed.).

CHAPTER THREE

THE QUESTION OF CINEMA TECHNOLOGY

If film-making can be seen in terms of a creative process structured and constrained by the availability of particular material resources, it follows that in order to attempt any explanation of that process we must consider, in some detail, these elements which set the parameters, effectively constituting the 'space', within which creative activity can occur. There are two major examples of a tangible material resource necessary for film-making: finance and technology. Films cost money, often quite substantial amounts of money to develop and produce. In addition, of all the arts, film is the most dependent on technology, or more precisely a whole range of technologies: mechanical, optical, chemical and electronic, for its existence and development.

At the level of cinema as an institution, both resources are equally important and much has been written about the economics and technology of film-making since its birth at the end of the nineteenth century. However in the case of any particular project the question of finance will generally tend to overshadow that of technology given the notorious difficulties associated with raising money for film production in the current climate characterising British cinema. In addition, the size of the production budget effectively determines what uses film-makers can make of available technology. Does the budget make provision for the hire of sophisticated remote-control camera systems or

special effects ? Even the type of film stock used will depend on the money available. The hire of equipment and processing facilities is very expensive and when budgets are limited, as they frequently are in Britain, certain economies may be necessary. It is not surprising that the most spectacular uses of cinema technology in Britain tend to be limited to American productions made in British studios or the odd ambitious big-budget project like Terry Gilliam's BRAZIL which will usually have North American backing. A two million pound British film will usually be modest in its utilization of technology with the odd crane shot or minor special effect.

The question of the financial structure, and by extension the resources made available to film-makers, of the British film industry will be tackled in depth in subsequent chapters. My primary interest here is the the issue of film technology on both a theoretical and a substantive level. Technology represents the 'tools of the trade' and therefore is a crucial consideration in any examination of film-making as a creative process. The first part of this chapter will examine theoretical approaches to the question of film technology: in particular the process of technological innovation and its possible determinants. I shall then look at the relationship between technology and aesthetics and how existing technology can be utilised in innovative ways, with particular regard to British cinema history - a national cinema not normally noted for its innovative uses of film technology. Finally the issue of film technology in relation to current production will be explored: the resources available and

expanding applications of video technology with once again the British context being brought to the fore.

The Critique of Technological determinism (as an explanation of change)

The historical process of technological invention and innovation and its relationship to issues of film practice and aesthetics has generated the greatest theoretical interest in recent years. Some writings dealing with the question of technological innovation and development are very much in the tradition of the 'romantic ideal' which I have discussed with particular reference to theories of creativity. Film historians Robert Allen and Douglas Gomery refer to such approaches as 'The Great Man Theory' where technological development is explained in terms of individual genius and inventiveness. Allen and Gomery note that several examples exist ranging from the 'rather simplistic hero worship of Grau' to the 'painstaking descriptions of the invention of early cinematic apparatus in Gordon Hendrick's work'.(1) This approach can be criticised in much the same way as exponents of the romantic theory of human creativity.

Allen and Gomery also, along with several other recent Commentators on film technology, set up a critique of technological determinism. This basically is the idea that technology is a self-generating autonomous process which, in turn, determines the nature of film practice and aesthetic preference. Raymond Williams argues that technological determinism represents the orthodox view of technological

development, not only with regard to a specific practice or institution such as Cinema or Television, but in the general context of technology and social change. Williams describes the position in the following way:

> New technologies are discovered by an essentially internal process of research and development which then sets the conditions for social change and progress.(2)

If we substitute the phrase 'aesthetic development' for 'social change and progress' we have a statement of the technological deterministic view of the relationship between technology and cinema.

Allen and Gomery give examples of writings which bear a technological deterministic stamp, including the work of Raymond Fielding, an historian of film technology. Fielding argues that any aesthetic innovation on the part of individual film-makers is already established by the technological parameters available to them. In addition, as Allen and Gomery point out, there are some writers who combine elements of the 'great man' and 'technological deterministic' theories. Lewis Jacobs does this in his major study 'The Rise of the American Film' by identifying two distinct types of significant individual: the inventors who contributed to the technological advancement of cinema, and those film-makers who saw the possibilities inherent in technological change and came closest to fulfilling the promise in that potential. In other words, 'the technological advancement itself determines the nature of that artistic fulfillment'. Once the promise of a particular technical device has been fulfilled, history awaits the emergence of another 'great man' to push film

technology one step higher on the evolutionary ladder.

Williams goes on to identify a distinct but similar general perspective of technological development and society which, like technological determinism, also regards technology as essentially self generating. In this case however, the significance of technology lies in its uses which are held to be symptomatic of wider society and processes of social change. Technology no longer determines social change but rather is absorbed to the process of change in a more marginal way. Williams is critical of both technological determinism and this alternative perspective which he calls <u>symptomatic technology</u> because both positions abstract technology from society. By giving it a self-generating status they effectively state its autonomy as a process. As a result, Williams argues. most histories of technology are written from these assumptions. This argument is supported by other writers such as Stephen Heath, who makes use of Williams' categories in order to demonstrate that most historical considerations of technology and technological development regard their object in terms of:

"an evident reality of functioning progress (invention, modification, improvement and so on) analysable in terms and with the factual guarantee of scientific development."(3)

Consequently technology becomes isolated as a 'self-generating instance'.

Williams extends his critique of technological determinism in a later article, published in 1983, concerned primarily with the

question of film history.(4) He argues that any historical consideration of issues of technology should make a firm distinction between the concepts 'technology' and 'technical invention'. The latter concept is described by Williams in terms of 'a specific device, developed from practical experience or scientific knowledge and their interaction'. But this does not adequately explain the significance of technology with respect to a specific institution such as cinema, as Williams goes on to indicate with reference to the former concept. Technical inventions are brought together by a process of 'exclusion, selection and improvement' into a 'systematic technology. This implies the operation of factors other than technology. Furthermore, Williams stresses that a history of cinema cannot simply be reduced to a history of technical inventions or even technologies. Even in the earliest years of cinema the basic technology was being used in radically different ways and for different purposes, within the same cultural context. On one hand the Lumière brothers were developing a highly realist approach to film, while on the other hand George Méliès experimented with the possibilities of using film to create illusion and fantasy.

Returning to Allen and Gomery, they, while conceding a kernel of truth in the determinist argument: ie. the notion of definite material limits set by technological resources at any given time, argue that technological determinism cannot explain why technology should be brought together in any 'systematic' way in the production of narrative fiction film, nor can it shed any light on why a particular form of commercial cinema or mode of

storytelling should arise in both America and Europe in such a dramatic way as it did in the early part of the twentieth century.

The whole question of the relationship between cinema technology and cinema practice is opened up further if we consider the arguments of film historian Barry Salt. Salt sums up his position with regard to that relationship in the following manner:

"Now that some interest has arisen in the history of the influence of film technology on the form of films there has been an unfortunate tendency to exaggerate its importance, whereas in truth it appears that , as far as the more interesting aspects of movies are concerned, technology acts more as a loose pressure on what is done rather than a rigid constraint."(5)

Salt tends to see technology as responding to the determination of aesthetic demands, rather than vice versa. For example, he identifies the stylistic trend towards longer shot lengths in 1940's Hollywood cinema which generated the requirement for increased camera manoeuvrability. This led to the introduction of the Houston crab dolly in 1946 and the Selznick crab dolly in 1948. The introduction of these specific pieces of equipment, Salt argues, represents "a clear cut case of film technology meeting purely aesthetic demands."(6) This argument is problematic in that the demands Salt identifies as 'aesthetic' could also be seen as 'commercial' in the sense that Hollywood tended to compete, both internally and in the international market, on a basis of technical quality and inventions such as the crab dolly further ideas of on screen quality by making the camera more mobile but, in keeping with the dominant Hollywood aesthetic, not more obtrusive. In this sense the economic can be seen as determining the aesthetic. In addition the idea of technology responding to aesthetic demands, if taken as a general

statement of the relationship between technology and film aesthetics, gives rise to a new form of idealism with the motor of change located in the imagination of the film artist. If technological determinism is guilty of abstracting technology from its social context then aesthetic determination is equally guilty with respect to abstracting either aesthetics or the mind of the artist.

Salt does not fall into the trap of aesthetic determination however, his pragmatic and highly empirical approach to research prevents this. In fact he also identifies instances where novel technological developments apparently have little or no direct relationship to aesthetic demand. (This is a major card which Allen and Gomery play against technological determinism.) Perhaps the classic case in point is that of the lightweight hand-holdable camera. The first portable Arriflex camera was introduced in Germany in 1937 but it was hardly used in fiction film-making until well after the second world war although its weight, portability and quick-change magazines made it an ideal combat camera. It also boasted a reflex viewfinder which enabled operators to, in effect, see through the lense and this represented a major breakthrough in camera optics. The Arriflex became part of the Allies' booty after the war had been won (along with other significant pieces of technology such as the magnetic tape recorder which was subsequently to revolutionise the sound recording process, and the first single-strip colour process developed by Agfa which led to the development of Eastman colour in America. This in turn superseded three strip

technicolour as the dominant system in Hollywood production) and was soon available in Hollywood. However its application was extremely limited, due in part to the American preference for synchronised sound. One early example of its use cited by Salt was the subjective sequences of Delmer Daves 1947 film DARK PASSAGE with Humphrey Bogart. In general Hollywood continued to use bulky Mitchell studio cameras which were much more in line with institutional practices at the time.

A similar situation existed in France (and indeed in Britain). The Eclair Cameflex had been introduced in France in 1948. This was a lightweight camera which, Salt suggests, was an improvement on the Arriflex in that its viewfinder design made for steadier hand holding. Once again the immediate effects of this piece of technology on film practice was virtually zero. The aesthetic possibilities inherent in such equipment remained largely unexplored in France for over a decade until the rise of the 'Nouvelle Vague': in particular the experiments of directors like Jean Luc Godard and François Truffaut and cinematographer Raoul Coutard.

We can therefore conclude that the existence of a particular technology does not necessarily guarantee its take up. This understanding works against both technological and aesthetic determination respectively. Other factors affect the initial technical innovation and the pattern of its take up and utilization in film-making practice. The economics of a an institutionalised studio system, in the case of Hollywood, can

have an enormous affect on technological development and utilization. Gomery and Allen develop an economic explanation of technological change in the context of Hollywood cinema with new technologies being developed in the drive for higher profits in a highly competitive market situation, with both internal competition between studios and external competition between cinema and other leisure pursuits such as radio and (later) television. They utilize a model of invention-innovation-diffusion to examine the introduction of sound technology, its initial association with Warner Brothers, one of the minor studios at the time, and its eventual adoption by all the studios.(7) A relatively stable economic environment also creates the conditions whereby the time and money required for technical innovation can be made available. It is not surprising that the majority of the major technical breakthroughs occurred in America (sound, three-strip technicolour etc.) and Germany during the domination of that industry by UFA, the only European studio which came close to matching the Hollywood majors in the pre war period. Economic factors, as well as providing the necessary impetus for innovation, can also delay the take-up of a particular new technology. Returning to the issue of sound technology, it is interesting to consider that although magnetic tape was available in Hollywood after the war and this represented a major advance in terms of sound technology, opening up the possibility of multi-track recordings, stereophonic sound and later Dolby the deployment of new sound systems was delayed for economic reasons: in particular the cost of converting theatres.(8)

The issue of technological advance in one area leading to retrenchment or retreat in another area is also interesting. The classic example in this context is that of the introduction of sound recording which had certain well documented knock-on effects, often with negative implications. The carbon lamps which were standard Hollywood lighting at the time were too noisy and had to be replaced by tungsten incandescent lights which produced much lower levels of illumination (they were also at the red end of the spectrum so the old orthochromatic film stock, which was blind to red, had to be replaced by panchromatic stock) and to compensate, cinematographers had to open up their lense apertures to very wide settings which reduced depth of field creating the 'soft look' which was the dominant visual aesthetic in Hollywood during the thirties. In this way a technical breakthrough in one area can have significant repercussions in other areas. This is something Peter Wollen is interested in: "the way in which innovations in one area may help to produce conservatism or even 'retreat' in another..."(9) Rick Altman gives other examples of sound technology effecting image technology: the introduction of sound forced film-makers indoors because the early microphones picked up wind and other unwanted sounds. This led to research on back projection techniques to simulate exteriors in the studio.(10)

The influence of non-cinema factors, particularly on the generation of technological innovations, is another interesting consideration. Raymond Williams argues that the necessary

conditions for technological development to occur include resource investment and official sanction. It is no surprise therefore that numerous technological developments have occurred in the contexts of industrial production or military technology.(11) As Gomery and Allen point out, some of the initial technical inventions which facilitated the birth of cinema occurred in an existing commercial context.(12) They also point out that:

"the invention and innovation of certain pieces of technology necessary for what was to become 'cinema verite' film-making resulted from certain military needs during and immediately following World War II".(13)

Peter Wollen gives several examples of technological innovations originally generated in a military context which were subsequently adapted for cinema. These include Panchromatic film stock, originally developed for reconnaissance fog photography, and projection systems such as Cinerama: derived from aerial gunnery simulation, and Cinemascope: from tank gun sighting periscopes.(14) Clearly the issue of the take-up of spin-off possibilities - technology being adapted for use in contexts outside that of its original development - is an interesting and important one.

So what preliminary conclusions can we draw with regard to the relationship between cinema and technology in an on-going developmental context ? In the attempt to avoid a technological determinist position the general tendency in recent theoretical work has been to stress heterogeneity of factors determining developments in cinema technology. Peter Wollen, for example,

stresses "the heterogeneity of the economic and cultural determinants of change".(15) Steve Neale writes:

"...just as the economic, psychological and aesthetic factors involved in the cinema cannot be reduced to the technology fundamental to them, so technology and its development cannot be simply reduced to the status of an effect produced by the economic, psychological or aesthetic factors or processes. The history and current state of the cinema rather involve an uneven and often complex interweaving of all these elements each conditioning but not fully determining, or explaining, the others."(16)

Stephen Heath talks about a cinema history in terms of "determinants which are not simple but multiple - interacting, in which the ideological is there from the start - without the latter emphasis reducing the technological to the ideological or making it uniquely the term of an ideological determination."(17)

Neale and Heath are strongly influenced by the ideas of French film theorists like Christian Metz and (with particular regard to issues of technology) Jean Louis Comolli. Comolli, himself strongly influenced by the structuralist Marxism of Louis Althusser, and the leading figure in the CAHIERS DU CINÉMA group since the late sixties, stresses the importance of economics and ideology in relating to issues of cinema technology. He makes the following introductory point in his seminal article 'Machines of the Visible':

"...the historical variation of cinematic techniques, their appearance-disappearance, their phases of convergence, their periods of dominance and decline, seem to me to depend not on a rational-linear order of technological perfectibility nor an autonomous instance of scientific 'progress' but much rather on the offsettings, adjustments, arrangements carried out by a social configuration in order to represent itself, that is at once to grasp itself, identify itself, and itself produce itself in its representation."(18)

In this way cinema, for Comolli, is not only socially determined but also helps society define itself through representation and identification.

Comolli, like Williams, makes a distinction between technical inventions and their being brought together in a systematic way to form what he calls the 'cinema machine': an economically and (particularly) ideologically determined configuration. The machine, Comolli stresses, is always social before it is technical. The immediate social context for the birth of cinema was generated in the late nineteenth century - a period characterised by an obsession with 'the visible' and representation. Hence cinema was constructed as a social machine in very particular ways.

The ideology of realism is also important according to Comolli, in terms of explaining patterns of innovation and development in cinema technology and technique: the initial predominance of deep focus, the introduction of sound and colour, these are all explicable in terms the cinema as an approximation towards the dominant codes of photographic realism. This may appear to have similarities with André Bazin's notions of an evolutionary process towards what he calls 'the myth of total cinema', but whereas Bazin had an idealistic belief in the 'truth' of reality, Comolli sees it in terms of an illusion created by an ideological process concerned with the suppression of difference and the desire for identity. Comolli's post-structuralist leanings begin to appear in this argument.

While theorists like Comolli have been correct in attempting to locate such issues in relation to social structures and to

criticise idealist notions of the natural evolution of technology, there is a tendency to subsume all analysis under a bludgeoning conception of ideology (or more specifically bourgeois ideology): an all embracing category which, as Gomery and Allen argue, is used to 'sweep all western civilisation into one concept'.(19) Such an abstracted category cannot provide the basis for a sufficient explanation of a phenomenon as tangible and materially constituted as technology. It is ironic that a materialist analysis should end up relying so heavily on highly abstract categories and concepts. The problem essentially lies with an adherence to Marxism which has to attempt to accommodate explanations of social changes which seem to contradict Marx's own predictions.

Perhaps a more productive point of departure would involve a consideration of the basic mechanism of innovation and change as it applies to technology. The development of new technology occurs, as we have seen , in a variety of contexts. However what is consistent to all is a notion of necessity: innovations occurring in relation to specific problems of a practical nature, be they in the field of commercial entertainment or military technology. The solutions to specific problems constitute themselves in terms of technical innovations and inventive applications of such innovations in terms of cinema practice: innovations at the level of technology and technique respectively. There is also the issue of novel applications of existing technology, the best examples being those of spin-offs from military and industrial technology. Existing technology, in

its broadest sense, also helps to constitute the context within which innovation occurs: representing resources upon which individuals can draw, presenting a series of possibilities. Hence the applications of broad technologies such as electronic technology or chemical technology to particular problems generated within the specific context of film-making.

It quickly becomes apparent that the process which I am attempting to define and make some sense of is similar to that which lies at the heart of my conception of artistic creativity: that the material context essentially determines the nature of problems and provides particular resources and particular constraints within which solutions may or may not be generated. Creativity in the field of technology is therefore similar to that in film-making itself, structured by constraints and possibilities. Such a conception of technological innovation provides a much more productive starting point to any attempt to theorize technological development in relation to film-practice as it provides a consistent base-line regardless of specific context. Furthermore it avoids the slide into seemingly limitless heterogeneity and indeterminism which characterises the current orthodox theoretical approach to the problem.

The Uses of Technology.

We have already touched upon questions of the generation of aesthetic possibilities facilitated by technological development and whether such possibilities are subject to delayed take-up.

The relationship between technology and the exploration of aesthetic possibility is an extremely interesting issue and is worth examining in greater detail. As I have already stated, the limits of current technological possibility circumscribes the area within which creativity can occur. While most film-makers adhere to orthodox practices in terms of technological possibility, some particularly innovative and ambitious individuals will attempt to set themselves technical problems which can only be solved in terms of novel applications of existing technologies. This may involve the discovery of new possibilities inherent in the technology or deliberate mis-use of technology. It is important at this stage to make a distinction between 'technology' and 'techniques'. The former facilitates and underpins the later which constitutes the creative domain of the film-maker. It is at the level of techniques that film-makers can be described as innovators.

A classic example of such an innovatory approach to film-making is described by Robert Carringer with regard to the remarkable creative collaboration by director Orson Welles and cinematographer Gregg Toland on the production of CITIZEN KANE. Carringer writes:

"Welles not only encouraged Toland to experiment and tinker, he positively insisted on it... Those involved say there was a kind of running game between the two with Welles coming up with one farfetched idea after another and challenging Toland to produce it and Toland delivering and then challenging Welles to ask for something he could not produce. Some of the devices Toland came up with he had already used in other films but others were new or used in significantly new ways in CITIZEN KANE."(20)

To examine the work of innovators like Welles and Toland is not

to perpetrate a romanticised notion of artistic genius as the major determinant or resurrect the ' great man' theory in a new guise. It is explicable within the paradoxical context of a studio environment which on one hand generated a profound conservatism but also, by virtue of the economic strength and security of the studios at the time, could provide film-makers with the 'space' and resources required for innovation to take place. Welles and Toland were able to use these advantages to the full. However Welles was never afforded the same freedoms by Hollywood again, being too much of a maverick for the studios to cope with.

Toland's technical achievements on CITIZEN KANE and other productions were facilitated by certain technological developments which are well documented by Carringer. My own interests in this section are to attempt to identify any interesting and innovative uses of technology in British cinema. First of all I must state that such examples are few and far between particularly when compared with American cinema. However there are some instances worth mentioning.

Like Hollywood, British production was dominated by the studio context until the late fifties. This implied certain standardised working practices but also occasionally provided the resources for innovative uses of technical facilities. The studio based technicolour productions of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger made for the Rank Organisation in the late forties and including A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH, BLACK NARCISSUS and THE RED SHOES

stand out as perhaps the zenith of that kind of film-making in this country with their elaborate sets, vivid colour schemes and optical trickery (particularly in the case of BLACK NARCISSUS with its effective and convincing use of glass shots disguising the fact that the Himalayan locations were actually a lot at Pinewood studios). At the same time one of the best examples of 'noir' lighting on location was produced by the British cinema: namely Carol Reed's THE THIRD MAN photographed by Robert Krasker.

As in America and France, the British studios and their practices effectively blocked the take up of certain technological possibilities. John Ellis comments on the fact that at Ealing studios, experimentation with lightweight cameras was non existent despite their being ideal for location shooting and complemented 'realist' notions of cinema - something Ealing tended to identify with, on economic and ideological grounds.(21) The studio had invested heavily in plant and machinery (including bulky studio cameras) during the thirties and forties and such investment had to be justified in terms of maximum utilisation. In addition, while film-makers at Ealing did shoot exteriors on location they tended to do so in a solid static camera style which complimented their studio aesthetic.

Experimentation with lightweight cameras such as the Arriflex and Cameflex occurred mainly in a post-studio environment as the old structures began to break up and film-makers became more and more interested in location filming. The British cinematographer

Walter Lassally, who worked closely with the film-makers of the 'Free Cinema' documentary movement and their subsequent 'graduation' to feature films, used Arriflex cameras on productions like A TASTE OF HONEY and TOM JONES both directed by Tony Richardson in the early sixties. The former film is important in that it was the first British feature to be shot entirely on location: the size, weight and portability of the Arriflex enabled Lassally to shoot in real locations including cramped interiors.(22) Richardson was particularly pleased with the production process of A TASTE OF HONEY in terms of the freedom the.shooting style afforded him.

Lassally also used three different kinds of film stock on the film including the high speed Ilford HPS (400 ASA) stock which, as he explains, was previously considered suitable only for newsreels and documentaries. This enabled Lassally to shoot at very low levels of light including one close up shot in a cave lit by one solitary candle - fifteen years before Stanley Kubrick's celebrated use of candlelight in BARRY LYNDON. Godard's A BOUT DE SOUFFLE was also shot on Ilford HPS.

Richardson and Lassally teamed up again on TOM JONES which was to be shot on colour but in a style similar to A TASTE OF HONEY. Despite being a period piece it was decided that the film could be shot in a thoroughly modern fashion on location using Arriflex cameras, often hand held to create a 'new wave' sense of excitement and movement. The hunt sequence in particular provides ample evidence of the success of the technique on a film which

remains one of the major achievements of the British cinema, evoking the true nature of the 'swinging sixties' more effectively than any of the contemporary dramas which were to follow.

There are numerous other examples of individual film-makers working in a variety of contexts using existing technology in interesting ways: Michelangelo Antonioni has experimented with colour on both film and video production, Bernardo Bertolucci and his cinematographer Vittorio Storaro with low key lighting and a highly mobile camera using the latest remote and floating camera systems and Robert Altman has experimented with multi-layered sound tracks. But the examples listed above are the most interesting I could find with specific regard to British cinema.

The Uses of Cinema Technology in Current British Production

As I noted earlier the question of technology as a resource is closely linked to financial resources and that most British productions, being low budget, were highly constrained in terms of what technological devices and processes were available at that level of production. However, even in the case of such modestly budgeted production, film-makers are presented with a set of basic choices with regard to technology. These include choice of camera, film stock, sound equipment and editing machines. With regard to cameras, one of the great standards in the industry is the Panavision Panaflex. The Panavision system is built around the Mitchell movement: a dual pin register system

which holds film stock very steady when it is exposed. An alternative to the Panaflex is provided by the Arriflex 35 BL camera. As cinematographer Michael Coulter (Director of Photography on NO SURRENDER, HEAVENLY PURSUITS, THE GOOD FATHER, HOUSEKEEPING, THE DRESSMAKER and DIAMOND SKULLS) explains, the Arriflex system is smaller, more flexible and incorporates a different system of registration to the Panaflex:

"... for me its the difference between a BMW and a Renault 4: the BMW is solid and very comfortable but the Renault 4 is a bit more adaptable, you can put down the back seat, shove ladders on the roof and things like that." (23)

In addition to camera systems cinematographers are also closely involved with Laboratory technology, particularly the developing and printing processes. Roger Deakins, the lighting cameraman on a host of recent British films including ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE, NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR, THE INNOCENT, DEFENCE OF THE REALM, SID & NANCY, PERSONAL SERVICES, SHADEY, WHITE MISCHIEF, THE KITCHEN TOTO, STORMY MONDAY and PASCALI'S ISLAND, explains that on the production of NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR a colour desaturation process was used to produce the desired 'look' of the film. As Deakins explains:

"Kays came up with this system a couple of weeks before we started shooting whereby they leave the developed silver on the print and this acts as a black & white layer so you get 50% colour. So we got the idea of semi black & white but we had to make it more brown and this was done mainly in the printing and a bit with filters on the camera. Also the colours of the sets in some instances - because the colour was drained by this process some of the sets were really brightly coloured so that in the final process they would still look as colourful as they normally would but other things would look semi black & white."(24)

The same de-saturation process was used on Terence Davis' film DISTANT VOICES STILL LIVES although while on NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR

the final result tended towards blue tones, this time the tonal emphasis was towards browns. In each case the technology contributed significantly to the visual impact and atmosphere of the film.

In terms of editing equipment the basic choice is between the upright Moviola, originally developed in Hollywood, and flat-bed editing tables such as the Steenbeck which was first introduced in Germany during the 1930's but did not become popular in America until the late sixties. While the flat-bed is argued to be more versatile and easier to use many established editors prefer the Moviola. Tom Priestley (an editor active in the British Industry for over thirty years) favours the Moviola because it runs at the same speed (35 f.p.s.) all the time both backwards and forwards:

> "... because it's running at the same speed you are actually learning the rhythms of the shot...On the table like the Steenbeck, it has variable speeds and often as not you go fast through the bits you don't want to look at so the rhythm gets lost. I think there's a tendency in Steenbeck editing for there to be more emphasis on the point of cutting and less on the overall rhythm.."(25)

In terms of technology being constituted as a resource upon which film-makers can draw, depending on the demands of the script and the budgetary resources available, it is interesting to consider that that as a resource it is subject to constant development and expansion. Cameras and camera systems are becoming increasingly mobile and versatile (e.g. 'floating' camera systems such as 'Steadicam' and 'Panaglide', the remote controlled camera systems mentioned above, snorkel lenses and fibre optic photography and

an increasingly versatile range of dollies and crane arms), film stocks are becoming faster without dramatic quality reduction in the image, sound recording and reproduction technology is improving in the wake of 'Dolby' systems, electronic video systems are becoming more available and in terms of image quality high-band video is fast approaching 35mm film without the problems of colour fading over time and dramatic quality reduction from master print to release prints, as I shall explain in some depth in the next section of this chapter. Such innovations and improvements are gradually absorbed to mainstream practices; becoming commercially available for hire from the major equipment suppliers and laboratories which serve the various film industries around the world. Film-makers are therefore constrained by the limits of currently available technology. This may seem an obvious or even facile point but it is an important consideration in the sense that the limits of current technology and technological possibility effectively constitute the parameters within which creative film-making can take place.

New Technology in the Video Age

Despite major advances in certain aspects of cinema technology, particularly in areas such as mobile camera systems and special effects, the basic apparatus remains largely unchanged. Cameras may be lighter, lenses and film-stocks faster, but the technological process is still dependent on the same basic principles as that which was brought together as a systematic technology during the first third of this century.

Perhaps the most exciting developments which have occurred in the general area of motion picture technology over the last two or three decades have been those in the field of electronic, as opposed to optical, systems of recording and playback: in popular terms 'the video revolution'. One must agree with Roy Armes' assertion that a full and adequate understanding of video:

"...demands that it be seen within the whole spectrum of nineteenth and twentieth century audio, visual and audio-visual media including radio and photography, the gramophone and the tape recorder."(26)

I shall not examine this spectrum in the very thorough manner Armes does, although I shall tough upon some aspects of the relationship video technology has to other media. What is important is that video should be seen neither as an isolated technology distinct from other media, nor as a stage in some audio-visual evolutionary process running from cinema-television-video. The relationships between the three are much more complex, indeed the roots of video technology are very closely connected to major developments in other media.

The initial context for the birth of video was generated by the development of magnetic sound tape in Germany during the thirties. As I have noted elsewhere, magnetic tape, which was invented by Fritz Pfleumer and manufactured by BASF, was part of the spoils of war appropriated by the Allies and quickly introduced into the United States. The first video tape was developed in America in the 1950's, with Ampex demonstrating the first broadcast standard video recorder in 1956. These early

developments in video technology must be seen very in relation to the new broadcast medium of television which at the time, if not in its infancy, was still very much in its early childhood. As Stuart Marshall explains, the development of video technology was largely supported by the broadcasting industry because it was complementary to the needs of that industry. Videotape technology would enable the broadcast industry to cut costs, to dispense with rigid schedules, to enable studio productions (which had previously been broadcast 'live') to be repeated without being recreated, and to build up an international market in studio productions as programmes on tape could be sold to foreign broadcasters. Marshall writes:

"The drive behind the research was therefore towards both increased efficiency in production and resources and the creation of more marketable products."(27)

The development of video technology therefore should not be seen in some technologically deterministic way: it did not occur in some autonomous sphere, but rather was developed at the time and in the manner it was because of wider social and economic factors. Marshall is always at pains to place his analysis in a context which stresses technological process as related to perceived needs on the part of those in society who have the power to sanction and encourage development and investment. This is very much the case with video technology.

The next major development in video occurred in 1965 with the introduction of the Sony Portapak system. (After the initial North American impetus the location of most of the major breakthroughs in video technology shifted to Japan.) This was a

black and white portable reel to reel video system using half inch tape. Broadcast systems at the time required two inch video tape and the cameras were very large and cumbersome. Consequently, the Portapak system effectively liberated video technology from being the sole preserve of the broadcaster in a similar way that the development of lightweight 16mm film cameras liberated film-makers from institutionalised studio-based film-making. However, the quality of the Portapak system came nowhere to meeting the broadcast format because it featured an inferior 'helical' scanning system as opposed to the 'quad' system of standard broadcast video. But the significance of the Portapak lies in its breaking of the broadcasters monopoly over video technology, which in turn set the agenda for further research and development.

Sony again broke new ground in 1970 with the introduction of the three quarter inch U-matic format which for a while represented the standard industrial (non-broadcast) format. However, since then the rapid pace of development in electronic systems have effectively brought industrial video up to broadcast standard: in particular the introduction of high-band U-matic and Sony's Betacam system, introduced in 1982, which has proved very popular in the field of documentary and news reporting. In an article on new video technology published in the February 1987 edition of TELEVISUAL magazine, Barry Fox remarked that 30,000 Betacam units had been sold since the system was introduced. Betacam is not only high quality it is also extremely portable, being based on the domestic betamax system and utilizing half inch tape. The

domestic sphere was initially served by the Philips system introduced in 1972. However, this was quickly eclipsed by both Betamax and VHS with the latter coming to dominate, in Britain at least, in the wake of the domestic video boom in the early eighties.

The importance of video to film-makers lies in its accessibility. Roy Armes sees video as part of a wider development which has occurred in the post-war period which he describes in terms of:

"...a democratization of the media akin to that allowed by celluloid in the 1890's with individual control, access, and even creative production available."(28)

While film-production, at least in the American context, remains, for Armes, dominated by multi-million dollar production, television created a demand for developments in 16mm film technology (for drama and documentary since, until recently, video cameras were too bulky and inflexible for location work other than outside broadcasts of sporting and ceremonial occasions), which in turn led to a massive upsurge in independent film-making. Similarly, the development of sound tape created the conditions for the birth of low cost independent record companies. Video, Armes argues, represents:

"...a key continuation of this democratizing tradition, as a system which allows personal recording and creative production as well as the consumption of pre-recorded, pre-packaged material."(29)

While it is true to say that video has made 'film-making' more accessible in that it is basically a low-cost recording medium, it is still structured in terms of a cost-related hierarchy which

effectively separates domestic video users from professionals in both the industrial and broadcast spheres. As Armes points out, costs rise enormously at the post production stage (vital to all video outside the basic domestic 'snapshot' sphere) due to the expense of post production hardware such as editing facilities, computer graphics etc. The range and quality of post production facilities, particularly in the light of recent advances in digital post production, has made video very attractive to the professional film-maker and although costs are high they are not as high as similar post-production processes for film.

While video remains almost exclusively a television medium as far as film-makers are concerned, a few experiments have been carried out by directors whose domain is very much the cinema. One of the first films shot on video with the intention of giving it some sort of theatrical release was Mich.elangelo Antonioni's THE OBERWALD MYSTERY, made in 1980. Since directing THE RED DESSERT in 1964, Antonioni had been interested in manipulating colours - to make 'a violent attack on reality' as he puts it.(30) In this film Antonioni physically painted the landscape. By the time of THE OBERWALD MYSTERY technology could enable him to be rather more sophisticated. Video facilitated colour correction at the post-production stage with the opening sequence being shot in a wood at night and subsequently 'corrected' to the colours of sunset. The ability to experiment with colour after principal photography had been completed also attracted British experimental film-makers Peter Wollen and Laura Mulvey to video. They shot THE BAD SISTER in the medium in 1982 for Channel 4 but

unlike Antonioni's film it was never shown in the cinema. (Incidentally, the post-production work on THE BAD SISTER was done by The Moving Picture Company who currently provide among the most up-to-date post production facilities in the UK.)

Next to Antonioni the other film-maker of international renown who has experimented with the possibilities of video is Francis Coppola. In his studio based production ONE FROM THE HEART, Coppola utilized a process called 'pre-visualisation' which involved recording the action, music and dialogue on video before actual photography (on celluloid) began. This process allows the director to make and see the completed work prior to shooting enabling the major creative decisions to be made without exposing thousands of feet of film. Many American film-makers tend to 'cover' a scene excessively leaving the creative decisions to the editing stage - a technique involving substantial waste. The aim of 'pre-visualisation' was therefore to cut production costs. As Lynda Myles explains in an article on the making of ONE FROM THE HEART, (31) it was estimated that the process led to savings of $2 million on the production. However, the decision to shoot the film on studio sets costing between $4 and $5 million effectively negated this economy and put an end to Coppola's experiments.

The first British feature length drama, made on video for both cinema and television is OUT OF ORDER, directed in 1988 by Jonnie Turpie for the Birmingham Film and Video Workshop on a budget of £380,000 (around a quarter of the cost of a typical low budget production shot on film) provided by Channel 4 and the BFI

Production Board. The film was shot using a Betacam CCD chip camera which was ideally suited to the film-makers needs. As Julian Petley explains:

"Such cameras are more robust, use less power and have greater light sensitivity than conventional video cameras, and are also free from magnetic and electrical interference."(32)

The only problem encountered was that the system produced an image not considered fully up to broadcast standards by the IBA. However, special dispensation was sought and given enabling OUT OF ORDER to be made. It is inevitable that more productions along these lines will be produced.

Experiments with video in the production of feature films have up to now been few and far between. I should make it clear that in spite of the generally positive tone of my discussion of video it remains very much a medium of the future. In terms of the production process itself, video incorporates a single camera system similar to film but with the added facility of instant playback and remote monitors. However, video monitors and playback facilities are now being used by film-makers shooting film in order to help certain decisions to be made: what takes to print etc. At the moment video is markedly inferior to film in terms of light sensitivity and image definition. As cinematographer Michael Coulter, who has worked in both media explains:

"With video you need more light. There's not the latitude, you can't let the shadows go the way you do in film. It also tends to be very flat... It's hard to get contrast into it because the minute you raise the the contrast level from highlight to shadow the shadow fills in so much that the video signal needs you to pump more light into the shadow... I've tried various things such as hard rim light to try and pull it apart because it's such a flat image."(33)

These problems tend to make cinematographers rather unenthusiastic about using video. Roger Deakins, for example, states that:

"Until video gives you the possibilities at the moment you have on film: the flexibility and the sharpness and the quality, until it does that I don't really want to know."(34)

Another problem with video technology as far as film-makers are concerned is the process for transferring video to 16 or 35mm film for projection purposes in cinemas. It is significant that Antonioni with respect to THE OBERWALD MYSTERY and Jonnie Turpie with OUT OF ORDER both argued that the least satisfactory aspect of making a feature on video was the tape to film transference technology. However, as Julian Petley notes in his article on Turpie's film, new technology is being developed in America which will enable video to be transferred to 35mm film by means of a laser system with significantly better results than previous transference technology. On a domestic television screen video and film can be practically indistinguishable as the BBC television series BOYS FROM THE BLACKSTUFF, written by Alan Bleasedale and directed by Philip Saville, demonstrates. One episode of the five was shot on film, the others on video with little difference in terms of image quality.(35) As Roy Armes notes:

"Video cannot rival film in respect of the powerful impact unique to the projected big screen theatrical film presentation, but it can match it perfectly if the outlet is television broadcasting and the domestic receiver."(36)

This is the state of affairs as the eighties draw to a close but, given the rate of advance in video technology, it is only a

matter of time before electronic technology gains the ascendancy in the image as well as sound, as Peter Wollen predicted more than a decade ago in his article on Cinema and Technology.(37)

As I have already pointed out, it is the benefits afforded by video at the post production stage which are the most attractive to the film-maker, although even here opinions are divided. Armes argues that video editing is less flexible than film in that it involves transferring shots to a new master tape, with subsequent editing decisions requiring the construction from scratch of a new master. Film does not present this problem as it is physically cut and spliced together and can be rearranged without replicating entire sequences. However even editors who prefer working in film argue that video has its benefits. Tony Lawson for one prefers the hands-on, tactile nature of film editing but he suggests that:

"What is good about video is that it's fast... particularly if there's a lot of footage. It's much easier to handle that kind of thing on video than in physical terms... You can also try out opticals instantly which you can't do on film."(38)

Despite his reservations about editing in video, Armes does concede that in terms of the entire post production process, the video director has much more personal control than the film director. Every aspect of the process takes place in the directors presence, unlike the lab situation in film which is noted for its 'opacity' by Peter Wollen for one.

Perhaps the most interesting and innovative production which has made use of video technology as a post production facility is Derek Jarman's THE LAST OF ENGLAND. What makes this film all the

more remarkable is that the images were generated on Super 8 film - until recently considered to be an amateur format. Jarman began his experiments in Super 8 during the long protracted process of raising finance for his biographical study of the Italian painter Caravaggio. His early works in Super 8 were transferred to U-matic video for editing purposes before being blown up to 16 or 35mm release prints. These included THE ANGELIC CONVERSATION and IMAGINING OCTOBER and cost a fraction of what a normal 16 or 35mm film would cost. They were also much looser in narrative terms, being more akin to poetry than prose as Jarman himself puts it. Technological advance combined with more generous funding enabled Jarman and producer James Mackay to embark upon more ambitious and visually inventive projects. The promo films they made for the rock ban 'The Smiths' - entitled THE QUEEN IS DEAD, featured a range of optical effects including the superimposition of black and white and colour images and in effect was a dry run for the first full length feature to be shot in Super 8 in this country: THE LAST OF ENGLAND, with its impressive combination of the poetic aesthetics of the Super 8 medium combined with sophisticated video post production techniques.

The promos made by Jarman for 'The Smiths' created a vogue for Super 8 pop promos with some film-makers going so far as to denigrate other formats to a achieve the grainy 'look' associated with Super 8. But this is to necessarily take a rather limited view of a format which is far more flexible and capable of producing a rich, heavily saturated colour image. So while others were copying the visual style of THE QUEEN IS DEAD and other

Jarman promos - grainy black & white image, shaky hand-held camera, rapid cutting, Jarman and his collaborators were aiming for a higher quality image approaching that of 35mm. This development is demonstrated in the back-projection footage shot for 'The Pet Shop Boys' 1989 tour. The 40 minute film which accompanies eight of the groups numbers was generated primarily on Super 8 and after video post-production, including very convincing blue screen superimpositions, blown up to a 70mm print for projection. Even more impressive is the footage for Jarman's next feature BORROWED TIME which is a follow up to THE LAST OF ENGLAND and which is being constructed in the same rather freewheeling fashion with no formal script.

James Mackay, the producer of all of Jarman's work in Super 8, is particularly enthusiastic about the benefits of video and its future potential. In addition to the post production possibilities opened up by video technology, he also cites the possibilities of electronic technology overcoming the problem of colour fading which still affects film negatives- the only solution at present being the manufacture of preservation masters which, as Mackay explains, is a phenomenally expensive process. He makes his case for an alternative:

"Video does not fade. Digital video can be copied onto punched tape if necessary. It can always be reconstructed. As a process, electronics is always in a state of progression as we have seen. So all those films will go orange while mine wont. The prints you see the first time round are the same you will see in the cinema. Each new transfer from tape to film will be better than the last. I can only see advantages."(39)

The future looks very exciting indeed as far as the extension of video technologies, and the possibilities this will create for

film-makers, is concerned. Hopefully, accessibility too will be extended, allowing more people who are interested in film and video making but who are devoid of production finance to acquire some 'hands-on' experience using high quality equipment.

What is interesting is that there are sources of finance who appear willing to back film-makers experimenting with new technology. Channel 4 and the BFI Production Board being the most notable examples. Alan Fountain, the Commissioning Editor, Independent Film and Video, at Channel 4, welcomes the uses of new technology:

"One of the things we've always been interested in is trying to work with people who don't want to work in a purely conventional way with the image, who want to think more in terms of what I'd call the cinema-aesthetics of film-making: people who want to experiment with different technologies and to try to push the limits of technology forward. I'm all in favour of that."(40)

As we have seen, Channel 4 have been involved in several of the innovative works mentioned in this chapter: THE BAD SISTER, OUT OF ORDER, THE LAST OF ENGLAND and the forthcoming BORROWED TIME - "I think what Derek (Jarman) does is extraordinary. I feel very supportive of it."(Alan Fountain) The Channel have also screened Super 8 and video work by film-makers from all over the world. This is exactly the kind of interest and encouragement that film-makers with ideas and the inclination to experiment with the new technology would appear to need.

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(24) Interview with Roger Deakins 18/7/88

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(30) Antonioni in interview with John Francis Lane, SIGHT & SOUND Winter 1979/80.

(31) Lynda Myles: article on ONE FROM THE HEART in SIGHT & SOUND Spring 1982.

(32) Julian Petley: review article on OUT OF ORDER in MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN August 1988.

(33) Interview 11/5/88

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(35) BFI Dossier on THE BOYS FROM THE BLACKSTUFF edited by Richard Paterson 1984.

(36) Armes p195.

(37) Wollen p174. Article was originally written in 1978.

(38) Interview with Tony Lawson 4/6/88

(39) Interview with James Mackay 9/4/88

(40) Interview with Alan Fountain 6/6/88

PART TWO: THE STRUCTURES OF THE BRITISH FILM INDUSTRY

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FINANCING & PRODUCTION OF BRITISH FILMS: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

"...all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice...the first time as tragedy, the second as farce."(Karl Marx, THE EIGHTEENTH BRUMAIRE OF LOUIS BONAPARTE).

Whatever positive statements I shall make in this section of my study regarding the vibrancy and commercial astuteness of certain production companies, sales agents and distributors currently active in British cinema, one over-riding fact must not be overlooked: namely that the financial structure of British film-making is inherently unstable and the amount of production finance made available to film-makers in this country in any one year is pitifully meagre given the popularity of film in general. As Steve Woolley of Palace puts it, compared to the American Film Industry Britain has no industry as such:

"...it's like comparing the space programme with people in the Hebridies knitting scarves... We are crofters over here. We have the technology and we have the brain but we don't have the money."(1)

Part of the problem lies in the fact that more people go to the cinema in North America, in Britain the population prefers to watch films on television or video cassette. But they do watch them; there is a tangible demand for film in this country. However, the resources generated from this popularity are not fed back into the domestic production industry to the extent they might be. Neither Video nor TV companies at present pay a fair price for the films they commercially exploit.

Given the general lack of resources, life for film-makers and companies alike is a constant struggle for survival. One major financial slip-up could spell disaster for even what is seen as an established and successful film company - Goldcrest being a classic example as I shall explain later. This is the major economic reality which characterises film production in Britain today.

Before launching myself into a major examination of the structures of finance, production, distribution and marketing which shape the film-making process in Britain I want to fill in some background detail in the attempt to show why things have turned out the way they have and why the British film industry is so small and unstable: i.e. why British film-making is frequently described as being in an almost permanent state of crisis by commentators. In order to provide this background I shall concentrate on two distinct but historically interlocking issues: the relationship between the British and American film industries and the question of state support for film-making in this country.

The British film industry has never been able to come to terms with the existence of its American counterpart. Hollywood has dominated the British market (indeed the world market) since the days of silent film due to its size, commercial strength, the quality of its product and the publicity and glamour generated by its star system. In a strictly economic sense Hollywood had an

advantage in that the American market was large enough to enable films to recoup their costs at home, enabling their producers to sell them abroad at very favourable rates, undercutting their competitors in foreign markets. American product also tended to be far superior in terms of quality.

Britain on the other hand was slow of the mark in terms of developing a film industry and despite the fact that by the end of the first world war demand for film was high, investment in the UK tended to be directed towards exhibition rather than production. As Michael Channan observes:

"profits were to be made from showing American films, which, as a result of the enforced curtailment of production in Europe during the war, were now a long way in the lead on British screens."(2)

In addition, the Americans had also become actively involved in distributing product in Britain: Vitagraph (subsequently Warners) had registered a British company in 1912, with Fox, in 1916, and Famous Lasky Film Service (Paramount), in 1919, following suit. Direct US involvement in the British film industry served to exacerbate the inequalities originally created by the Americans' structural advantages. The Hollywood subsidiaries in Britain employed tactics such as 'block' and 'blind' booking - the former forcing an exhibitor to accept a package of films in order to obtain the desired major features, while the latter was a similar practice but involving product which was still in the process of being made. Either way such tactics meant that British screens were booked up months in advance, making it difficult for British producers to acquire a 'window' for their films in what was after all their own home market. As a result many were forced out of

business. By 1926 only 4% of all the films shown in British cinemas were home produced while the american share stood at 92%.(3)

It was in response to this dire state of affairs that the British Government finally bowed to pressure and became involved in the film industry in a financial (as opposed to a restrictive or censorial) sense with the implementation in 1927 of minimum quotas for British films - initially set at 7.5% for renters and 5% for exhibitors with both figures planned to rise to 20% by 1938. This act amounted to a mild form of protectionism in a period when free trade was the norm in commercial enterprise - film-making being officially designated as such an undertaking by virtue of the decision to bestow the responsibility for administering the quota to the Board of Trade. A significant precedent had been set.

The 1927 Act which established the quota had two major consequences: the emergence of the 'quota quickie' - cheap, low quality films produced to satisfy the quota, which was unforeseen, and another which was implicit in the drafting of the Act and highly desirable in the eyes of the Board of Trade - the beginning of a form of vertical integration along the lines of the Hollywood studio system with production, distribution and exhibition brought together in large film-making combines. Simon Hartog argues that an implicit pact was made between the Board of Trade and the Federation of British Industries (FBI, a forerunner of the CBI) that in return for the implementation of the quota

the FBI would encourage the creation of at least one major British combine.(4) The emergence of such an organisation was regarded as the only way British films could possibly compete with Hollywood both at home and abroad: i.e. 'play them at their own game'. Arguably this ethos has guided British production ever since, giving rise as we shall see to cycles of expansion - assault on the American market - ultimate failure - heavy losses and retrenchment/bankruptcy. A context of recurring financial crises, infuriatingly similar in character yet seemingly insufficient to force would-be British moguls to exercise caution or consider alternative strategies.

The mid thirties witnessed the first premeditated assault on the American market by British film companies. This followed the unexpected international success of Alexander Korda's THE PRIVATE LIFE OF HENRY VIII in 1933, a film which cost £94,000 and earned over £500,000.(5) Korda's film was backed by United Artists, an important factor because this gave him access to American distribution. He subsequently attempted to emulate this success with a series of big budget historical epics, as did the Gaumont British Picture Corporation which along with the Associated British Picture Corporation had emerged as a major vertically integrated British film company. GB had an American connection through Fox who had a major stake in the company. The outcome for both Korda and Gaumont-British was disastrous: distribution proved to be a problem and even the prestige British productions tended to lag behind American product in terms of quality and as a result both suffered heavy losses and a subsequent weakening of

their position within the British industry. This inadvertently created the conditions for the rise to power of perhaps the most famous British film mogul: J. Arthur Rank.

Throughout the thirties Rank had been steadily building up his film empire and by 1941 the Rank Organisation was established as the most powerful vertically integrated film combine in Britain, owning two of the three major circuits: Gaumont British and the Odeon cinemas, controlling an assortment of established production companies including GB and Gainsborough and General Film Distributors (GFD), the biggest distribution company in Britain. Rank also had a stake in two major studios: Pinewood, which he had helped to build in 1935, and Denham, which he acquired from Korda. In addition, Rank had a close link with several key independent producers including Michael Powell & Emeric Pressburger, David Lean's company Cineguild, Frank Launder & Sidney Gilliat, Filipo del Guidice's Two Cities Films and Michael Balcon's Ealing studios. At its height, the Rank Organisation was as large and powerful as any of the American majors. By virtue of his substantial stake in British exhibition, Rank was in a position to bargain with the Americans, forcing them into giving him access to their home market. So began the second British attempt to conquer the American market but one, like Korda and Gaumont British before him, doomed to failure although this time the reasons were rather more complex.

Rank had rather more substantial US connections than his predecessors - he had inherited the Fox connection from Gaumont

British, he had a link with United Artists via Alexander Korda, and a substantial interest in Universal through the General Film Finance Corporation which he established along with other leading industrialists in 1936. In was Universal which was to become Rank's main distribution outlet in North America. The second largest British film combine Associated British had also acquired a major us connection with Warners buying a 25% stake in the company. These Anglo-American connections, plus the fact that the three major circuits in Britain were controlled by two companies (the establishment of the duopolistic situation which remains today), began to cause concern at home in that independent British producers had to maintain a favourable relationship with at least one of the 'big two' in order to ensure their films would be exhibited. In addition, the fact that both Rank and Associated British, by virtue of their US connections, had a standing commitment to show Hollywood product on their circuits suggested that such interests might be protected at the expense of the British independents. Such concerns resulted in the drafting of the Palache Report in 1944 entitled 'Tendencies to Monopoly in the Cinematograph Industry', which was to provide the basis for a vigorous campaign in favour of state intervention in the film industry. However, when the report was published the Board of Trade declined to act on its recommendations. Rank continued with his plans to take the American market by storm when suddenly a major crisis occurred.

In 1947 the Labour chancellor Hugh Dalton imposed a 75% ad valorem duty on imports, including films, and the Americans

immediately responded by placing an embargo on Hollywood films exported to Britain. The Government's decision damaged Rank's reputation because, as Robert Murphy points out (6), the Americans tended to think that Rank's position was synonymous with the British Government, whereas in reality the Labour administration were hostile towards staunch Tories like J. Arthur Rank. The US backlash materialised in terms of a fall off at the American box office for British films. At home production was increased to fill the gap created by the embargo but the rather embarrassed British Government quickly reached an agreement with the Americans over the repatriation of dollars earned in Britain resulting in the removal of the duty and the lifting of the embargo. This let in a flood of American films including the pick of the previous year's releases. This rush of unexpected competition caused many British productions to flop, creating a major crisis which, Dickinson & Street argue, nearly killed the British production industry, because in spite of significant increases in production standards in the home industry, American films were still more popular with British audiences. In any case Rank's films began to fail commercially both at home and, particularly so, in the American market. On top of this he lost money on ventures such as children's films, full length cartoons and experiments in cinema technology (the 'independent frame' process). The net result was a major retrenchment for the Rank Organisation, a cut back in production and a rationalisation plan. The bubble had burst and the British film industry was to feel the effects for years to come.

Not surprisingly, other producers suffered badly in the wake of the Dalton duty. Korda, who had attempted a comeback after buying British Lion in 1946, once again found himself in severe financial difficulties. However, in the wake of the Palache (and subsequently the Plant) report, there was substantial pressure on the Government to do something to help the Industry. The most direct response was the setting up of the National Film Finance Corporation (NFFC) in April 1949. The NFFC was masterminded by Harold Wilson who was president of the Board of Trade at the time. It was established as a kind of film bank, rather than a direct form of subsidy, with an initial revolving fund of £5 million, which was increased to £6 million the following year. Its brief was to supplement rather than replace private capital and it tended to spread it's resources rather thinly over a wide range by providing the 'end money' - the last 30% normally not covered by distribution guarantees of a film's budget.

It is important to stress that the NFFC was not intended as a major Government initiative to alter the structure of film financing in Britain. Film was still regarded as primarily a commercial undertaking, unlike broadcasting and the Arts in general which had both benefited from public assistance in the the form of the British Broadcasting Corporation funded by the license fee and the Arts Council respectively. Neither model was seen appropriate for the film industry however. While the NFFC did help to fund more than 750 films in 35 years including such notable productions as THE THIRD MAN, SATURDAY NIGHT AND SUNDAY MORNING, THE SERVANT, GREGORY'S GIRL and COMRADES, it did end up

losing a lot of money. This is not surprising as the NFFC's stake in films tended to be high risk and the last to be recouped. £3 million was initially lent to Alexander Korda who promptly lost the lot but this was mainly due to factors beyond his control such as the major decline of the cinema audience in the fifties.

In addition to the NFFC, the post war Labour Government further attempted to help the film industry by means of the introduction of the Eady Levy which was devised by Wilson and Sir Wilfred Eady and based on existing schemes in France and Italy. Julian Petley describes the levy in terms of:

"A voluntary arrangement... whereby, in return for a reduction in Entertainments Duty, exhibitors agreed to pay a levy on the price of each cinema ticket: this levy was paid into a fund which was subsequently shared out among producers of British films in proportion to their box office earnings."(7)

The scheme was made statutory in 1957 but unlike those in Italy and France, the levy was not used to encourage certain kinds of production, instead it tended to attract more American companies to set up production units in Britain in order to qualify for Eady money.

The decline of the cinema audience in the fifties enabled the major exhibitors to consolidate their domination as independent cinemas began to close. The gap created in production by the retrenchment of Rank and the second demise of Korda could only be filled by companies strong enough to survive the decline in the cinema's popularity. The only companies which fitted the bill were the American majors. Over a period of twenty years from the early fifties onwards, the American share of British distribution

increased from 10% to 60% while US financing of British films increased substantially, reaching a peak in the late sixties when between 80% and 90% of all British productions were backed by American studios. In a financial sense at least the British film industry had become what it had fought to avoid. As Dickinson & Street put it:

"after 1961 it became increasingly difficult to define any part of the industry as British rather than Anglo-American. There was too much working against the British independent companies: the monopolistic structure of the industry, the lack of alternative sources of finance, the weakness of the NFFC, and the willingness of producers to accept American backing."(8)

Important films were made during this period but ultimately it was the Hollywood executives and their ambassadors who pulled the strings and when the Americans withdrew on a major scale in the early seventies British film production collapsed. The US withdrawal was prompted by several factors including the fact that the majors had overspent and overstocked with films made in Britain at a time when US audiences were turning towards more modest American films like THE GRADUATE, BONNIE & CLYDE and EASY RIDER. In any case the American withdrawal left the British bereft of a major part of its production finance.

The financial crisis of the early seventies led to a strong call for an increase in state aid to the film industry (including some demands for nationalisation). These fell on the deaf ears of a new Conservative administration which had demonstrated its lack of interest in aiding film-making by allocating the NFFC only £1 million of the £5 million which had been promised by the previous Labour Government which had been ousted in 1970. The latter half of the decade saw the parties switch office again and Harold

Wilson appointed the Terry committee to look at the problems faced by the film industry. The major proposal which came out of this period was the idea to set up a British Film Authority which, like so many other recommendations made by committees in the past, did not materialise into anything concrete.

Surprisingly enough, this period witnessed yet another foolhardy attempt on the part of certain British production companies to take the American market by storm. The chief protagonists this time were Lew Grade's Associated Communications Corporation (ACC), an offshoot of his massive interests in commercial television, and EMI, which had began life in the music industry and since diversified, buying the Associated British Picture Corporation in 1969, and which was chaired by Grade's brother Bernard Delfont. In 1976 EMI acquired the British Lion Company and with it Barry Spikings and Michael Deeley - two particularly ambitious film producers. At British Lion they had produced Nicolas Roeg's film THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH, which was made entirely in America. This gave them the idea to make American films for American audiences, and with the financial muscle of the EMI corporation behind them this is what they attempted to do.

After a seemingly bright start with THE DEER HUNTER Deeley left the company and Spikings embarked on a series of expensive flops including THE JAZZ SINGER, CANT STOP THE MUSIC and HONKY TONK FREEWAY which alone lost £25 million. Spikings' policy, which involved rejecting British script ideas as well as concentrating

on American ones, was a total disaster and it was left to the giant Thorn company to take over EMI in order to keep it afloat.

Lew Grade's venture was somewhat similar. He was determined to conquer America on a massive scale and become the biggest film producer in the world but unfortunately his knowledge and expertise did not match his ambition regardless of how successful he had been in television. Grade was essentially a salesman and his technique was to pre-sell films around the world, using the advances or guarantees to make the film. For this strategy to work his reputation had to remain untarnished. Grade embarked upon a series of big budget films in the late seventies and into the eighties, using well known actors and choosing what appeared to be 'safe' subject matter: best selling novels and remakes of old classics. The result however was generally bland and unpopular with audiences and Grade began to lose money. His last spectacular loss-maker was also his biggest: RAISE THE TITANIC, which cost $35 million and failed spectacularly at the box office. Grade was forced to close down AFD, the American distribution company he had set up with his brother in 1978 and he was subsequently replaced as head of ACC after a fierce board room battle.

At the time of Grade and EMI's collapse, the British political situation had changed again with a new Conservative administration swept to power on a monetarist free-market philosophy mandate. In 1981 it was announced that the NFFC should be funded by Eady, linking its future to a levy which had greatly

diminished in significance in line with the general audience decline in Britain. Calls were made by the Association of Independent Producers, the ACTT and other industry bodies to supplement Eady with a levy on blank video cassettes and charging television companies substantially more for the right to broadcast films. These calls were rejected and in 1985 the Government announced that it was abolishing the levy and the NFFC with it, replacing the later with the British Screen Finance Corporation plus a commitment to fund the National Film Development Fund and the National Film School - which had both been supported by Eady.

One move by the Conservative Government which did help to stimulate production, albeit for a short period only, was the introduction of Capital Allowances in 1979.(9) This effectively meant that for tax and depreciation purposes films could be treated in the same way as plant and machinery. The asset resulting from expenditure - the master print of the film - was considered 'plant' and could therefore qualify for 100% Capital Allowance, enabling financiers to write off their entire investment in a film in the first year. This in turn opened up the way for the operation of leaseback deals structured around a seller - the production company, a lessee - a distribution company and a lessor - the investor. The role of the lessee was to guarantee the lessor a return on its investment over a fixed number of years, effectively taking on the risk. This system is a reflection of the traditional method of financing films in this country with a film being pre-sold to a major distributor

(usually North American) who will guarantee a major part of the budget, enabling the rest to be raised from commercial or, in the case of the NFFC when it was in existence, subsidised sources.

Unfortunately the Government decided to phase out Capital Allowances between 1984 and 86. While they were undoubtedly an encouragement to potential investors to put money into film-making and contributed in part to the 'revival' in British production in the early eighties, it is difficult to assess how much of a negative reaction their phasing out caused. Some producers who acknowledged the incentive provided by Capital Allowances were not too distraught at the removal of this enticement. As Al Clark of Virgin Vision put it in 1985:

"What was good about Capital Allowances was that it encouraged companies or provided extra incentives for companies, that had previously nothing to do with films, to give it a shot... What it created was a least a potential for a much wider range of investment in films... There's no question that Capital Allowances were at least a factor in encouraging us because they are of great value to any company with a large tax bill. But once you've been bitten you tend to stay with it, which is what we've done and will continue to do whether there are Capital Allowances or, as is the case, not."(10)

Despite Clark's assertions it is interesting to note that there have been relative few newcomers to the production scene since Capital Allowances were phased out, compared to the early eighties which saw the emergence of the likes of Virgin and Palace. However it is difficult at this stage to make any definite statements either way but the removal of any incentive in an industry as starved of resources as British film production is bound to have negative consequences.

In their major study of State intervention in the British film industry Margaret Dickinson and Sarah Street draw the following conclusions:

"The withdrawal of state support will leave the industry exposed to market forces almost as much as it was sixty years ago. This will not make for a fundamental change in direction. Finance and profit have always been the main factors in determining what films are made and shown in Britain. The system of state aid was not designed to replace or to compete with commercial finance and it failed to reverse the long standing trends towards monopoly and American control. Nevertheless, it represented a commitment to the maintenance of a production base in Britain, and this implied a need to modify some of the consequences of these trends. Aid has done this. It has influenced the opportunities open to film-makers and the product offered to the audience. Even the modest funds available to the NFFC and the BFI Production Board have enabled a few films to be made which would probably never have been scripted if the initiative had been left entirely with the dominant media groups. The change of policy will therefore almost certainly lead to a decline in all film activity not promoted by major commercial interests. It will also mean that in the future there will be nothing to prevent these commercial interests from choosing to supply their captive market entirely with imports. Against these odds British film production may finally lose its protracted but tenacious struggle for survival."(11)

This rather grim prophecy has not been borne out by events in the years following the 1985 film act. British Screen has contributed to a wider range of product than the NFFC ever did, including more experimental work, despite its more overtly commercial brief. Interesting work continues to be financed by the BFI Production Board and Channel 4. Despite the rhetoric the Government still contributes to film-production through British Screen and the BFI and it continues to support the National Film School, albeit in each case this aid is in partnership with private interests.

Significant state support would be most welcome but, given the current political and economic climate it is better to accept the

realities and direct one's energies into exploring ways of making 'free enterprise' work in favour of innovative film-making. This requires the industry to be extremely astute in preserving existing markets and developing new ones. The bulk of British production continues to be substantially financed by way of North American presales and distribution guarantees but this need not always involve the degree or order of compromise implied in Dickinson and Street's conclusion. It is significant that quintessentially 'British' films such as A ROOM WITH A VIEW have found an audience in the States in recent years. Having said this, it is still important that British producers do learn from the mistakes of the past and do not attempt to beat the Americans at a game which they effectively invented and have controlled ever since. In addition, there is the problem of over-reliance on American finance. The slump in production suffered by the British Industry in the summer of 1989 was the direct result of a drop in American investment with even successful British producers finding it difficult to secure North American funding.

On the other hand there would appear to be increasing opportunities for the development of strong ties between British producers and their European counterparts. The need to develop such links in the face of the Anglo-American problems outlined above was recently underlined by Simon Relph, the head of British Screen Finance, in an article in SCREEN INTERNATIONAL (12). There have been several recent British productions which have European backing including all of Peter Greenaway's films from A ZED & TWO NOUGHTS onwards, Derek Jarman's THE LAST OF ENGLAND, Ken

McMullen's ZINA, David Hare's PARIS BY NIGHT, Terence Davies' DISTANT VOICES STILL LIVES and Andi Engel's MELANCHOLIA. In addition, Channel 4 have invested in a range of European co-productions including foreign language films. European co-productions tend to be more formally innovative given the substantial interest in film as art in countries such as West Germany, Italy, Holland and France. This is certainly true of the 'British' projects which have attracted European investment. The prospect of 1992 may provide even greater opportunities for British film-makers working within a European, rather than a Trans-Atlantic context, encouraging the development of a greater variety of projects and aesthetic approaches to cinema.

NOTES

(1) Interview with Steve Woolley 7/11/88

(2) Michael Channan 'The Emergence of an Industry' in Curran & Porter (eds.) BRITISH CINEMA HISTORY Wiedenfeld and Nicholson, (London) 1983, p50.

(3) Percentages calculated from figures given in Margaret Dickinson & Sarah Street: CINEMA AND STATE, BFI, (London) 1985, p11.

(4) Simon Hartog: 'State Protection of a Beleaguered Industry' in Curran & Porter (eds.)

(5) Dickinson & Street p76.

(6) Robert Murphy: 'Rank's Attempt on the American Market, 1944-9', in Curran & Porter (eds.)

(7) Julian Petley: 'Cinema & State' in Barr (ed.) ALL OUR YESTERDAYS, BFI/RKP, (London) 1986, p37-8.

(8) Dickinson & Street p238.

(9) See Matthew Silverstone: 'Finding the Money' in Auty & Roddick (eds.) BRITISH CINEMA NOW, BFI, (London) 1985.

(10) Interview with Al Clark 30/5/85

(11) Dickinson & Street p248.

(12) Simon Relph: Article on Film Finance in the UK, SCREEN INTERNATIONAL May 13-16 1989.

CHAPTER FIVE

BRITISH FEATURE FILM PRODUCTION: THE U.K. MINI MAJORS.

If there is one point on which most 'independent' film-makers in this country tend to agree unanimously, it is that raising the money to make a film is the most difficult stage of the entire process. This seems to hold true regardless of topic, scale or size of budget. If film-making can be seen as a process structured by constraints then top of the list of constraints must be finance, or more precisely the lack of it. It is also interesting in this context to consider the description 'independent' as it is applied to film-making activities in this country. The term tends to be used rather vaguely and ambiguously in the literature dealing with British cinema. On one hand it is applied to small-scale non-commercial film-making carried out in the context of regional workshops. More frequently the term is used to describe the work of those producers and directors who do not have access to a regular source of finance; who are not under contract to a major studio. This effectively extends the description 'independent' to cover practically all indigenous film-making in this country. As one film journalist recently commented:

"The only independence British film-makers have regularly enjoyed is independence of a regular source of funds."(1)

Several reasons have been suggested for the continuation of this rather depressing state of affairs: the high risks involved in film financing coupled with the weakness of the home exhibition market, the refusal of successive governments to take cinema as

an institution seriously; to recognise its cultural significance and support it with public money, the parasitic relationship between cinema and the small screen media: television and video, which have traditionally relied on film-makers to supply them with popular product while refusing to recognise that importance by paying competitive rates for that product - hence the recent calls on the government by the Association of Independent Producers (A.I.P.) to introduce a levy on blank video tapes on one hand and force the television companies to pay rates for feature films which reflect their value and popularity within the schedules. These are all important issues and are worth examining closely. However the major concern of this chapter is the identification and examination of the handful of relatively stable sources of film-finance which exist for independent film makers in this country. This will involve a consideration of the constitution and working practices of the companies involved, what kinds of film project they are interested in and why, and a comparison between these relatively successful companies and others which have encountered severe financial problems in recent years, in the attempt to identify why some companies have failed while others have been more successful in their operations. This will hopefully enable me to make some tentative statements regarding the structuring of constraints affecting independent film-makers in terms of the kinds of projects which receive funding, what conditions are attached to funding agreements and what bearing these processes have on cinematic creativity in general.

One preliminary point which should be made when considering the question of film production in Britain is that the annual feature film output of this country is very small. In 1988 56 feature films were made, instigated or financed in Britain. Not all of these will formally be recognised as British films however because American producers still favour UK studios such as Pinewood and Elstree as a production base. Of the 56 features produced in 1988, 14 were fully funded by American sources. Examples of such features include INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE and BATMAN. In any case the figure of 56 films produced is actually the largest number for ten years although it is not spectacular in that the average for the past five years has been around 51 features a year.(2) So the industry we are dealing with is a relatively small one.

In May 1987, SCREEN INTERNATIONAL, the major trade paper of the British Film Industry, ran a series of articles on film finance. The current situation in the UK was covered by Simon Perry, a leading independent producer responsible for such films as ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE, LOOSE CONNECTIONS, NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR, NANOU, HOTEL DU PARADIS and WHITE MISCHIEF. Perry writes:

"The main issue for independent producers in 1987 is the lack of companies interested in financing independent feature film production in the UK." (3)

This was in spite of the hard work done by producers in recent years: the nurturing and development of projects, the close creative involvement at every stage in the process. It was this kind of effort which, in Perry's opinion, ensured the critical and commercial success of films like CHARIOTS OF FIRE, COMPANY OF

WOLVES and MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE among others. As he writes:

"Independent producers are the cornerstone of the new industry, yet many of them, with good projects, cannot raise finance."(4)

In the 1982 A.I.P. handbook thirty companies were listed as worth approaching for potential finance. The current situation is rather less favourable, as Perry points out, with only a handful of realistic possibilities. At the top of Perry's meagre list are British Screen, Channel 4, and Zenith. A further company which Perry declines to mention but which should be considered on a par with the others is Handmade Films. Together these companies comprised the financial backbone of indigenous British cinema in 1987, and by and large continue to do so with the addition of a handful of ITV companies making tentative forays into the world of feature films. Their collective importance, particularly in the light of the recent decline of Goldcrest, and less significantly Virgin Vision, cannot be overestimated.

The Funding Process

Basically there are two types of film finance: the presale to a distributor and/or broadcaster and the equity investment. Films can be wholly financed by either method or, and this is the most common procedure, by a combination of both. A presale takes the form of either a cash advance against specified distribution rights in the finished film or a distribution guarantee which can be discounted by a bank which provides funds, in the form of a loan, to the film-maker. A broadcaster participates in a similar

fashion: either advancing cash against broadcasting rights or providing a licensing agreement for broadcasting rights which can be discounted. The equity investor on the other hand is entitled to recover their investment plus interest, and to participate in the net profits of the film, usually in direct proportion to the scale of the original investment. The four companies listed above represent practically the only realistic sources of equity finance available to independent film-makers in this country.

In RAISING PRODUCTION FINANCE, an information pack aimed at independent producers and published by the A.I.P. in 1986, the following examples of what are described as "typical co-financing structures for a low budget British film" are set out:(5) (The average low budget British production costs in the region of £1-2 million.)

(1) Equity Investor A: 30%
Equity Investor B: 20%
Presale to UK TV: 15%
Presale to all foreign(excl. US, France and Germany): 35%
100%

Here the equity investors A and B recoup from revenues accrued in the USA, France and Germany (all media) and UK theatrical and video.

(2) Equity investment and right to sell foreign: 50%
Presale US rights: 30%
Presale to UK TV: 20%
100%

In this case the equity investor recoups investment from all foreign rights, excluding US distribution revenue.

(3) Presale all UK rights: 20%
Presale all US rights: 50%
Equity investor: 30%
100%

Here the equity investor recoups from all foreign sales, excluding US & UK territories.

Several issues are raised by the above examples. The importance of the North American market, even in the case of low budget British features, is obvious. Medium and high budget films rely even more on this source of finance: for example Terry Gilliam's BRAZIL, budgeted at £9 million, was financed via presales to Universal and Twentieth Century Fox for the North American and the rest of the world distribution rights respectively. Similarly, John Boorman's production HOPE AND GLORY was backed by Columbia and Nelson Entertainment to the tune of $7 million.

The importance of the presale to UK television is also indicated with 15% of example A's budget and 20% of example B's attributable to this source. Basically UK TV means Channel 4 in these examples. The channel pays in the region of £250,000 for the broadcasting rights to a British feature: a significant and often vital contribution to a low budget production (although it could be argued that the price is still very cheap in that 1.5 - 2 hours of quality drama would cost much more than £250,000 to produce). Not only does this represent an acknowledgement on the part of British television of the value of feature films in terms of ratings figures, it also marks the entrance of television into the field of feature film production: paying up front before the film is made, rather than after the event.

The overall importance of the presale vis a vis equity finance is worth considering in depth. Basically this is a reflection of the lack of equity finance in this country on one hand and the size

(and therefore importance) of respective markets on the other. Although in example (1) above, the equity investors will be entitled to recoup from North American revenues, the general preference in the industry is to presell projects to an American distributor for a sizeable % of the total budget. This reduces the risk factor for potential equity investors and makes such investments easier to secure. This is a reflection again of the size and importance in revenue terms of the US market. As Margaret Mathieson the Director of Productions at Zenith explains:

"In theory you could raise 100% of the money in the UK and earn 70% of it back from outside the UK... but in practice you are more likely to raise it in the market where the money is more likely to be earned back... In an ideal world we would like to raise 60% of a budget on a US distribution deal and put up the balance of 40% ourselves for the rest of the world."(6)

Ancillary markets - video and television - are also very important in terms of securing rights and once again the significance of the American market looms large. As Al Clark of Virgin Vision, a distribution and, until recently, production company, explains, video and television rights are so important now that in North America a theatrical release is virtually considered to be an ancillary market:

"it exists to create enough attention for a film for its video release to be profitable if the theatrical release is not, in its self... Generally when an American Independent company does its calculations it calculates at best break-even on theatrical with all profits coming from video and television."(7)

Gareth Jones, the Head of Business Affairs at Handmade Films, explains the importance of the ancillaries with respect to the European markets:

"...it used to be that video was sold separately from video and

television rights. Now companies are wanting all of it and the way this has moved is quite unusual in that video companies, for instance in Scandinavia and Germany, have actually grown to the extent that they've actually moved into theatrical distribution... What they want out of it is video and TV sales, but they will put it out in a decent theatrical exhibition because that showcases the movie for the secondary, but very lucrative, rights."(8)

However, the video boom has not benefited the British production sector as much as some would have hoped. Simon Relph of British Screen for example argues that the problem with video deals is that they were originally set up along the lines of book publishing with the producer earning a royalty (20-25%) on wholesale prices. At the time no one could predict how well the video companies would fare. But, as Relph points out, video distributors retail income in 1987 was more than £200 million:

"If only 10% of that had found its way back into UK production that would have been incredibly significant."(9)

Relph is particularly annoyed that he has to keep running to the Government for handouts when there is enough revenue being earned in the various media which depend on film product to support a healthy production programme in this country.

Basically the presale/equity split signifies the ownership of the film, or at least the rights relating to where and how it can be sold to the public and the right to recoup from these sales. However ownership also implies control, not only at the level of distribution and marketing but also at the production and even pre-production stage. Distribution companies and equity investors will only back projects they consider to be viable propositions. This involves notions of commercial viability as every distributor and every equity investor (with the possible

exception of the B.F.I. Production Board) must be commercially oriented to survive in what is a highly competitive market situation. And it is probably fair to argue that the larger the company, the more conservative its investment decisions tend to be. Part of the reason for this is that film-making is a high risk business and the larger the budgets involved the greater the risk. Consequently risk tends to be minimised by companies 'playing safe' with subject matter; by using tried and tested formulas, employing 'name' directors and stars. In other words, American distributors will only pre-buy rights to British films if they are reasonably confident that these films will make money in the American market. This strategy encourages repetition of successful formulas and works against experimentation and innovation. Formulas can vary from the medium to large budget 'prestige' film like THE KILLING FIELDS, GANDHI and A PASSAGE TO INDIA, popular with American audiences in the first half of the decade, to the recent vogue for the smaller scale, more parochial (but still able to attract an international audience) production like MY BEAUTIFUL LAUDRETTE A LETTER TO BREHZNEV and A ROOM WITH A VIEW. Due to the success of these films in the North American market, Channel 4 have been able to secure major distribution deals for films like WISH YOU WERE HERE, A MONTH IN THE COUNTRY and RITA SUE & BOB TOO, all modest in scale and very British in content. In the 1988 Screen International survey of British production referred to above, of the 56 films produced in Britain that year 31 were in the low budget category (up to £2 million), 17 were medium budget (£2-5 million) and 8 were classified as big budget (over £5 million).

But such a situation may change in the near future. There may be a series of low budget failures and the money might dry up as a consequence. Sarah Radclyffe of Working Title, the company responsible for MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE, PERSONAL SERVICES, SAMMY & ROSIE GET LAID, WISH YOU WERE HERE, A WORLD APART and other notable films, puts it this way:

"I think the thing we've got to be careful of is that all the Films on Four are getting a theatrical release... There is a definite danger of a lot of projects going out which are only right for television... If you have a year when all the films, or 50% of the films, you presell to America turn out to be things which should have been made for television, the following year when companies like ourselves go back to America to try and presell, we are going to get that much less... We are in distinct danger of what happened to the Australian Film Industry. Australian films were really 'in' in the States five or six years ago, they did really well. Then they had a couple of years producing films which weren't up to standard, not many came through as really working and the price of Australian films just plummeted. We've got to be careful that doesn't happen here."(10)

In a sense, the heart of the problem is the geographical and cultural divide which separates financial source from production context. This leaves independent film makers in this country at the mercy of the whims and short term decision making of American executives who have the power to decide whether or not British films are worth investing in that year (as indeed seems to have been the case in 1988 with 10 UK/US co-productions as opposed to 20 in 1987) or, even when investments have been made, to pull the plug at any moment. An example of the kind of situation that can arise is the Mike Radford/Simon Perry production WHITE MISCHIEF. This production was in danger of folding when Canadian distributors and cinema owners Cineplex Odeon pulled out along with half of the film's $7 million budget. It was fortunate that

Columbia and Nelson Entertainment were on hand to bail the production out. Columbia also rescued Bill Forsyth's film HOUSEKEEPING which Cannon had abandoned after the proposed star Dianne Keaton decided at the last minute she didn't want to do the film. Cannon were only interested in the production as a vehicle for Keaton, not as the latest project of one of Britain's most original and successful film-makers.

The implications of these observations serve to place a heavy burden of responsibility on British sources of finance, in particular equity investors, who are in a position closer to the independent film-maker than the American distributor and may be prepared to trust the judgement of producers and take risks on inexperienced film-makers with innovative ideas. British equity financiers share a common cultural context with the film-makers they are, in a sense, employing and this may encourage them to make rather bolder investment decisions than their American counterparts. However it must be remembered that the four equity participants mentioned all operate within a commercial context (even Channel 4, which is not in the same direct relation to box office receipts as the others but which must continue to satisfy its shareholders by maintaining reasonable ratings figures) and none can afford to take reckless decisions by abandoning commercial considerations altogether.

Although the above comments relate to the orthodox and highly predominant methods of financing films in this country there are occasional exceptions to the rule, circumstances where the

cultural importance of the project over-rides its commercial potential. In such rare circumstances financial packages may be cobbled together from a multitude of sources, including private individuals with a desire to see the particular project realised. One example from the past ten years is Ron Peck and Paul Hallam's film NIGHTHAWKS, a chronicle of the London gay scene in the late seventies. The project began under the auspices of Four Corners Films, a London based workshop and after failure to secure finance from the BFI and the NFFC the producers advertised for private sponsorship. A wide range of individuals assisted the project including film-makers such as John Schlesinger, Don Boyd, Lindsay Anderson and Tony Garnett plus some wealthy members of the rock industry. These investments amounted to around half of the final £60,000 budget, enabling the rest of the money to be raised from more conventional sources including the German television company ZDF. Such a funding process is probably less likely to occur today in that Channel 4 and/or the BFI Production Board, which now has a greater commitment to narrative feature films, most likely would have been interested in the project.

Before taking a closer look at the major companies currently involved in the funding of feature films in Britain, it is worth considering briefly the issues of development finance and the process of budgeting a production. The former is the money which gets any project off the ground in the first place and includes expenses such as commissioning a writer to produce a screenplay, securing an option on a book or a play and legal fees incurred at this stage. As Shelly Bancroft and Sally Davies explain in the

A.I.P. information pack on the subject: only a tiny proportion of screenplays that are developed each year are actually produced as films, therefore development finance is regarded as a particularly high risk investment and is consequently the hardest money to raise.(11) However the government's Business Expansion Scheme, which enables investors to claim tax relief on investments up to £40,000, has been utilised by, most notably, United British Artists to raise $1 million for the development of film and theatre projects.

The four major British equity investors are also important sources of development finance. Zenith (who have "a substantial development fund" according to Margaret Mathieson), Channel 4 and Handmade all provide in-house development - although Gareth Jones of Handmade stresses that the company didn't formally put money into developing projects until quite recently. British Screen on the other hand is linked to the National Film Development Fund (N.F.D.F.) which has annual resources of £500,000 a year, provided by the government. To qualify for an NFDF loan - maximum £24,000 - a project must satisfy the conditions of eligibility set out in the 1985 Films Act. For a film to qualify as British:

1) It should be made by a British producer and -

2) If a studio is used it should be in the UK or Commonwealth or the Republic of Ireland, and -

3) A substantial proportion (75% approx.) of total labour costs should be paid to British persons employed on the film.

Even if these requirements are satisfied the film will not qualify if 20% of the total playing time is shot outside the UK unless -

a) All the preparatory work was carried out in the UK, and -

b) The normal lab processing incidental to the making of the film was carried out in the UK, and -

c) At least 50% in terms of the value of the technical equipment used was provided from sources in the UK. (12)

Other sources of development finance in the British industry include the BFI Production Board, which has resources to develop and produce two or three full length features a year on a non-commercial basis, TV offshoots Granada International and Euston Films (wholly owned by Thames Television), who have recently moved into feature film making, and established production companies like Palace Productions who have developed projects like Neil Jordan's MONA LISA which was produced by Palace with finance from Handmade Films. Steve Woolley of Palace explains his company's position:

"Palace doesn't have resources to put up their own money to fund films. We are not a company that has millions of pounds tucked away somewhere that we can invest in movies. We are primarily a distribution company that grew from being initially a video company. Due to a string of successful theatrical releases and video releases we built up a good cash flow and were able to develop films a little bit...Palace don't have a development fund as such. We have money from the bank which we use across the board - acquisitions, development. We are an amorphous kind of company... so what we do if we want to develop something we find it from our own resources and sometimes that means going into partnership with somebody... But if we really believe in it we'll develop it ourselves."(13)

Working Title are another production house (as opposed to major financier) who have their own development fund and, as Graham Bradstreet of WT explains, their own credit line negotiated with a Dutch Merchant bank. (14) This gives the company at least some security, enabling them to maintain a suitable flow of projects. They are also determined to keep costs down whenever possible, as

Sarah Radclyffe explains:

"We don't waste money on development. In America development is such a big industry, there are so many people employed to develop films whose salaries have to come out of somewhere - they usually get tacked onto budgets..."(15)

Development, as has already been pointed out, doesn't automatically lead to production but the in-house development policies carried out at Zenith, Channel 4 and Handmade does produce much higher take-up rates than the NFDF funded projects for example which according to recent figures have at present a take-up rate of 1 in 8 projects going into production. (This itself represents an improvement from 1 in 17 in 1980).(16) For example David Rose, the Chief Commissioning Editor for Fiction at Channel 4, and his assistant Karin Bamborough receive 40 scripts and treatments a week. Approximately 20 of these are selected for development each year and all of these would be expected to go into production with producers seeking co-finance from other sources if necessary. Zenith and Handmade operate under similar conditions: expecting to take most of, if not all, of the projects they have developed into production. In such cases the decision to 'go with a film' is taken one stage earlier than in situations where the company is approached by a production outfit like Palace or Working Title with a developed project and a final draft screenplay.

In 1989 a new potential source of development finance for British film-makers appeared in the shape of the European Script Fund. The Fund, presided over by Secretary General Renee Goddard, has £1.3m to spend in its first year. Applicants must be nationals of

EEC member states and the maximum which can be granted to any individual writer or director/writer team is approximately £24,500.

The issue of realistic budgeting is understood by all the major players in the finance game. The size of any film's budget should be directly related to its estimated market value (i.e. estimated sales revenue).As Alan Stanbrook points out in an article on budgeting published in the 1986 MIFED edition of STILLS magazine, it is suicidal to do the opposite, that is, make a film for whatever it costs and then try to sell it to as many people as possible. This is something which all the major companies mentioned so far realise and are careful to put into practice at all times. Basically what it boils down to is knowing the appeal of a particular project; what its market value would appear to do and attempting to make it at a budgetary level which reflects its worth, within an overall strategy which attempts to keep costs down as much as possible. As Sarah Radclyffe claims:

"Our above the lines: what goes to director, producer, writer and stars - are always kept to the absolute minimum... very much in ratio to what everyone else is getting."(17)

Patrick Cassavetti, the producer of BRAZIL, MONA LISA and PARIS BY NIGHT, points out that the third of these films, written and directed by David Hare, was initially judged to be budgeted at a level which was more than the film was worth in market terms so consequently the project was adjusted accordingly.

As Stanbrook points out, film budgets fall into three parts:

1) Above the line items: fixed costs such as the director,

producer and leading players fees.

2) Below the line items: variable costs such as studio, labour, transport, hotels etc.

3) Indirect costs: the financial and legal fees incurred.

In America the above the line costs normally amount to 50% of the total budget while the comparative figure for a British production is 15-20%. A final important item is the involvement of a 'completion guarantor' in the project. The completion guarantor is effectively an insurance policy: guaranteeing, for a premium, the funds to complete a film should the production go over budget. Some financiers will only commit themselves to a project once a completion guarantee has been secured.

The importance then of the key decision makers at British Screen, Channel 4, Zenith and Handmade, in terms of which projects are developed and produced and which are not, is very considerable. Between them they largely determine what the British cinema comprises of from one year to the next. This state of affairs can be seen in terms of a set of constraints affecting the creativity of writers, directors and producers. Such constrains are located not only at the level of deciding to fund one project rather than another but also at the level of creativity during and even before production begins. Once a financial commitment is made, a complex process of consultation and the monitoring of production in creative and financial terms is set in motion. In this way the company involved has direct access to the decision making process at every stage, subtly affecting the final outcome. Over and above these direct and tangible forms of intervention the

prevailing relationships which characterise British film-making also serve to affect the creativity of those engaged in the generation of new ideas prior to the raising of production finance. Film-makers and script-writers may internalize notions of what a viable idea for a film may be by constructing these notions in line with existing funding practices as carried out by these companies at present under discussion. This process may not be fully conscious but it serves to preserve a continuity in terms of subject matter and style, and is, I would wish to argue, a fundamental element of the structuring of creativity in the film-making process.

This is very close to Raymond William's discussion of the organization of market processes in the field of cultural production and in particular, the shift from producer originated work to market originated work. Williams writes:

"In sophisticated market planning, a certain type of work can be selected at so early a stage, on the basis of a few examples or of some calculated or projected demand, that production, from that stage, no longer originates with the primary producer but is commissioned from him... On the other hand, the contrast between market originated and producer originated cannot be made absolute, once market conditions have been generalized. For producers often internalize known or possible market relationships, and this is a very complex process indeed, ranging from obvious production for the market which is still the work the producer 'always wanted to do', through all the possible compromises between the market demand and the producers intention, to those cases in which the practical determinations of the market are acknowledged but the original work is still substantially done."(18)

This comes very close to a description of the processes involved in British cinema. All of the companies I have mentioned, with the exception of British Screen, often initiate ideas by commissioning a screenplay from a writer. Also, film-makers will

not normally approach a particular company with a particular idea if that idea is radically different to the kind of project the company have, by virtue of their track record, already shown themselves to be interested in. This is not to suggest that these companies impose rigid 'house styles' upon film-makers they fund in the way certain Hollywood studios tended to do - e.g. Warner Brothers in the 1930's. However there are lines of similarity which can be traced through different companies outputs. Furthermore, in an age of increased co-financing it is perhaps more appropriate to talk about an overall British film-making style. While the questions of aesthetics this suggestion raises will not be tackled in this chapter, I shall attempt to identify the different ways financiers like Channel 4, British Screen, Zenith, Handmade, the BFI Production Board and one or two production houses like Palace and Working Title impinge upon the creative process by looking at the working practices of each and the rationale behind their investment decisions.

Channel 4

Undoubtedly the major player in the game of financing indigenous British production in the eighties has been Channel 4. In the first six years since commissioning operations began, the channel contributed to over 120 films. In 1987 David Rose had a budget of £9.5 million to invest in film production - a figure representing between 6 and 7% of the channel's total programme money. This high priority strategy, as has already been suggested, amounts to an acknowledgement by a British television company that feature

films are a highly significant and popular form of programming and should be paid for accordingly.

David Rose, in his capacity as Chief Commissioning Editor for Fiction, is able to make three different types of investment in feature films which will enjoy at least some form of theatrical release. (The channel has also produced films specifically for television like Stephen Frears' WALTER and most of the FIRST LOVE series produced for Channel 4 by David Puttnam's Enigma company.) Firstly Channel 4 can finance a film fully. Examples include MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE, THE GOOD FATHER and PING PONG. This gives the company sole rights and the option of distributing the film through Film Four International, their sales arm. However, as film making becomes more expensive and financial deals more complex, this type of total involvement in a cinema film has become more and more infrequent.

In the second instance, Channel 4 have co-produced feature films with other companies. For example Zenith approached David Rose with David Leland's project WISH YOU WERE HERE. The script had been developed by Zenith and the production budgeted around £1 million. Rose proposed that Channel 4 supply 75% of the budget with Zenith coming up with the other 25%. However the 75% included the British television license which, as has already been pointed out, amounts to around £250,000. This meant that Channel 4's equity stake in WISH YOU WERE HERE was £500,000 to Zenith's £250,000, a ratio of 2:1 rather than 3:1. In terms of recoupment this is very favourable to Zenith who only provided

one quarter of the budget. In this way Channel 4 is able to use its special position within the industry to the benefit of its partners. This type of involvement is also perhaps the most common given the current state of British production. It is also significant that Channel 4 has been involved in almost all of British Screen's projects since that company began operations in 1986.

A third option at the channel's disposal is the provision of a television license only, plus perhaps a little extra money when the rest of the budget is in place. This may amount to only a small % of the budget but given the general lack of resources, such small investments can be a vitally important link in the financial chain. A recent example of such a limited involvement is SAMMY & ROSIE GET LAID, written by Hanif Kureishi and directed by Stephen Frears. Purchasing the television rights to a film basically means that Channel 4 will screen the film perhaps three times over a 7-10 year period. The first screening should ideally be at the point when the film appears to be running out of steam at the box office. But, as Rose points out, this has to be negotiated in practice. Then there is the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association (C.E.A.) to confront and they operate a policy of barring films from being broadcasted for three years. However, Channel 4 negotiated a deal with the C.E.A. allowing any film costing less than £1.25 million to be exempted from the statutory three year holdback. This shift in policy has obviously been an important factor in attracting more television companies to become involved in film production. At present the average

hold back for features which escape the C.E.A.'s statutory requirements is between 12-18 months. The situation was opened up even further in September 1988 when it was announced that films costing under £4 million could now be televised at anytime after their theatrical release and that this figure would rise with inflation or £300,000 a year, whichever was lower. This move is highly beneficial to Channel 4 and other television companies who have become more and more involved in putting money 'up front' for film production.

As far as the selection of projects goes, David Rose claims that he is interested particularly in original screenplays because he feels audiences will recognise originality and respond to it.

"I tend to resist adaptations of novels, but then again there are exceptions. I think a recent exception would be A MONTH IN THE COUNTRY which was written by K.L. Carr and is a very slight novel which is one of the reasons it worked... It was adapted by Simon Gray and Pat O'Connor has made a very distinguished film... But my feeling is that with with almost any adaptation the writer starts with a burden really. It was written as a a novel and if it's a good novel then it's not a screenplay."(19)

This is an important point given the strong literary bias and the frequency of adaptation in British cinema throughout its history.

Rose is also interested in originality in a wider sense:

"If you pick up a script and you immediately feel you have been there before; that it's derivative, then I would rather find something else."(20)

The ability of the script to engage the reader is a further key consideration:

"I want a script where I'm compelled to turn the page and it holds me. That first reading is absolutely crucial. If it doesn't engage me, I'm thinking, however brilliantly it's cast or directed or whatever, there's something wrong here."(21)

This attitude may go some way towards accounting for why so many Channel 4 films have a literary feel, regardless if they are adaptations or not. If the written word on the page is so important to Rose this does seem to concede ground to those critics who claim that Film on Four projects are merely glorified television dramas. TV drama has traditionally relied on strong scripts rather than stunning visual technique and as Rose's background is in television drama his preferences are not altogether surprising.

Once a financial commitment has been made, Rose and his colleagues keep very close tabs on the production. The company has approval of all the key appointments: director, line producer, lighting cameraman, editor, designer, composer and leading players. In addition, the accountant working on the film has to be approved and while Rose and Karin Bamborough monitor the creative aspects of the production: viewing the rushes, particularly the first few days work, visiting the shoot once or twice, cost accountant Therese Pickard keeps an eye on the daily cost returns. Any alterations to the schedule have to be approved by Pickard as the schedule represents a meticulously prepared breakdown of the production budget and any changes are bound to alter costs.

Once shooting is completed Rose views the rough cuts and the fine cut and makes comments and observations which he would expect the film-maker to listen to and discuss with him. Although the channel do not have the right to determine the final cut - that is the director's privilege - it does have approval of the final

sound mix, something Rose considers to be 'absolutely crucial'. Finally the prints are graded to both Rose and the film-maker's satisfaction and a low contrast print is delivered to Channel 4 for future broadcasting. The input and influence of Rose and his team is very substantial at each and every stage of the process.

Although the company is protected from the harsh realities of commercial film-making - they invest in films to provide the channel with high quality drama programming, not to make money - their trading performance has improved markedly since they began in 1982. Although at present only a handful of Channel 4 backed films are into profit, the status of Film Four International is growing in the international market place. As Rose Comments:

"Five years ago at Cannes no one knew who Film Four International were. Now we have a high profile and therefore people are more attracted to Bill Stephens (F.F.I.'s sales manager for overseas sales outside America) when he's promoting our films... There is hardly a territory left which is not covered."(22)

As Georgina Henry points out in an article on Film Four International published in PRODUCER magazine, in the year to March 1987, the sales department at Channel 4, which was about to be merged with the acquisitions deptartment under the head of Colin Leventhal, earned £5 million in sales revenue. When one considers that £4 million was spent that year on acquiring the television broadcasting rights for Film on Four and David Rose's annual budget currently standing at around £9 million, then the channel's film budget has been effectively balanced for the first time. (23) The bulk of the £5 million sales figure was made up of the deals struck with distributors for the rights to WISH YOU

WERE HERE, A MONTH IN THE COUNTRY and RITA SUE & BOB TOO. Business has been particularly good in North America where F.F.I. are very ably represented by Joy Pereths.

What all of this amounts to is a realisation of the fact that as things presently stand, Channel 4 is the major bulwark of the low budget British film industry, having a stake in roughly half of all the feature films produced in Britain in any one year. The company have taken on a responsibility for ensuring the on-going health of independent film-making in this country. Rose is very much aware of the company's position in this context:

"I think it would be irresponsible of our board, who have been extremely supportative of putting quite large sums of money into Film on Four, were to, perhaps in the next couple of years, think that drama should be doing something different... So in a way I think we have brought upon ourselves a responsibility. But we didn't set out to".(24)

Nevertheless that responsibility is considerable by virtue of the amount of money they have been prepared to invest in film-making activities. On top of David Rose's budget the channel have an annual subvention to the B.F.I. Production Board of £500,000. In return they automatically get the UK TV license on all B.F.I. product. Channel 4 are also a major shareholder of British Screen, providing the consortium with £300,000 a year. The company also play a major role in the financing of independent British feature films through a department other than David Rose's. This is the 'Independent Film & Video' department which is run by commissioning editor Alan Fountain, assisted by Rod Stoneman and Caroline Spry. Fountains brief covers three main areas: the 'Eleventh Hour' slot which is a window for both

British and foreign experimental and non-commercial product, the access documentary slot 'People to People' and also the Channel's commitment to the franchised film and video workshops around the country. In 1988 Channel 4 planned to invest £1.5 - 2 million in 14 workshops.(25) Fountain describes his particular role within the Channel in the following way:

"In some ways my job initially was defined as much around a production sector as it was around a particular area of television. What that came down to ... was crystallised around certain slots. One was the 'Eleventh Hour', which had, and still has, a brief for complementing to some extent, what isn't on the rest of channel 4 or even on the rest of British Television.... in terms of experimental work, in terms of work from outside the UK, both documentary and fiction, political documentaries which don't necessarily observe the conventional codes of balance and so forth... So it's a very eclectic spot really. What we have taken for it is often defined by the fact that we think it's worth doing, but no-one else will take it for whatever reason."(26)

The 'Eleventh Hour' budget in 1988 stood at around £2-2.5 million and this went towards the odd commissioned piece of work, purchasing of completed programmes and presales enabling features, shorts and documentaries to get made in the first place. Fountain stresses that the amount he is able to put up as a presale is less than that offered by David Rose's department at between £10 to £50,000 per project.

Fountain is able to finance feature films through the 'Eleventh Hour' budget and the franchised workshops. As he explains:

"Some of the workshops have developed to do fiction and more and more of them want to. What we've tended to do there is to allocate them their basic money, which is normally on a sort of rolling contract, or a fixed contract over three to five years. Sometimes, where they are doing a more expensive production... whether its 'Frontroom' or 'Amber' or 'Black Audio' or whoever. What we've tended to do is boost their budget up against a

particular production which is normally fiction... We've also contributed to, or directly commissioned, other fictions from outside the workshops. Examples are ZINA, GHOST DANCE, EMPIRE STATE, BUSINESS AS USUAL - a number like that. Not as much as we'd really like to, but a number of that sort."(27)

Other notable features in which Fountain's department have been involved, include workshop productions like ACCEPTABLE LEVELS, THE LOVE CHILD and OUT OF ORDER, and independent features such as ASCENDANCY (Edward Bennett), BURNING AN ILLUSION (Melenik Shabazz), THE TERENCE DAVIS TRILOGY, THE GOLD DIGGERS (Sally Potter) and THE LAST OF ENGLAND (Derek Jarman).

In terms of the differences between Fountain and David Rose's department, apart from the obvious difference in the size of each department's annual budget, Fountain comments:

"Generally, I would say that we tend to be looking for projects which aren't straightforwardly conventional in formal terms - which are more risky aesthetically and relate to different sorts of traditions. We tend to support some film-makers who probably work in a much more European tradition.... whereas David has taken a bit of a distance from that sort of tradition. I think the other factor that comes in is that we've taken risks on people who haven't necessarily shown they can do it already. David has obviously done a bit of that, but his brief is to... he's the sort of flagship of fiction on Channel 4 and that means guaranteeing an audience. So David's tended to go with people who are known more, they've had more experience and are tending to work in, generally speaking, a more conventional area. So I think those are the sorts of demarcations... Generally there's a budget difference - EMPIRE STATE was as expensive as a lot of the projects David's doing but it's one of these one's which started out as being much lower budget and then as the thing was talked about and developed the budget went up and up."(28)

Ron Peck's film is unique in that it was eventually backed by money from both Fountain's and Rose's department: the latter responding to a plea from the Channel's head at the time Jeremy Isaacs who was keen for the film to be made. Fountain is also interested in film-makers who utilize new technology or existing technology in innovative ways. Productions like Derek Jarman's

THE LAST OF ENGLAND, shot on Super 8, and OUT OF ORDER, the first British feature intended for the cinema shot on video, testify to this.

As far as the production process is concerned, Fountain and his assistants will, if the channel is developing a particular project, work closely with the film-maker at this stage of the process. During production someone will pay a visit to the shoot, or be on hand if any problems arise. Rushes and assemblies are viewed whenever possible but the overall supervisory role is less intense than with David Rose's department for example. As Fountain explains:

"It depends on different projects; how it's going, what the film-makers want... For instance on ZINA I saw a lot of versions before it was completed. On some of the other productions I've only seen a couple of rough cuts... But the idea is to follow it along as closely as we can."(29)

Fountain has co-operated productively with other financing bodies like the BFI production board, British Screen and occasionally, a foreign investor such as ZDF - the German television company who invested in ZINA and THE LAST OF ENGLAND. However, Fountain is cautious about the possibility of more frequent European co-production as he argues that by and large most European companies don't want to get involved in work which they see as primarily 'British'. Film-makers like Derek Jarman and Ken McMullen are exceptions to the rule. In terms of features having a theatrical release before being screened, Fountain argues that while all the film-makers he has worked with are keen to have their work screened theatrically, even on a bad night the number of people

who see something on television is so much more than even a good cinema run. As he puts it:

"What I would be quite keen to do in this sort of area in the future, is seeing if we can work something better around some of the hold offs where we say: 'why don't you have a year to get it into a cinema and do some video work and then we'll have it ?' But whether that will be possible I don't know."(30)

Fountain is afraid that if such ideas don't work then he will be forced to commission projects for the small screen only which, he is obviously not keen to do.

David Rose's department has also experienced problems regarding the theatrical exposure of certain films, particularly in the early days when some Channel 4 films performed particularly badly at the box office and others did not even make it to the cinema screens at all. One of these films was Charlie Gormley's LIVING APART TOGETHER. As Gormley explains:

"Basically, what happened was that they (the Channel) were really short of product and the deal was struck. I was shooting super 16... and we'd agreed to make a theatrical product - it would get some kind of window and then it would go. But they had to close down the window because they ran out of road; they just had to stick the movies on television."(31)

In these ways then, Channel 4 make their, very considerable contribution to a whole range of low budget film-making in this country, from the (often) highly conventional drama of 'Film on Four', to the more experimental and off the wall production featured on the 'Eleventh Hour' slot. For many film-makers the Channel has been a godsend, enabling them to realise projects they probably would not have done otherwise. Ron Peck for example, explains that his first film NIGHTHAWKS was made prior

to the advent of Channel 4 and its very small budget of £60,000 was provided by donations from a variety of private individuals plus a top up from the West German television channel ZDF. His second feature, EMPIRE STATE could have ended up going the same way (although Peck admits it is doubtful if one could go through such an experience twice) had it not been for Channel 4's interest in the project.

Other film-makers have encountered certain problems in their dealings with the Channel. Charlie Gormley for example, was told privately that his follow up to LIVING APART TOGETHER, HEAVENLY PURSUITS almost ended up like its predecessor and missed a theatrical run. Gormley describes his relationship with the Channel in the following way:

"it is a slightly uncomfortable partnership but it's the only partnership available to you unless you can hack it with an American major and that's murder."(32)

Derek Jarman is another film-maker who feels that however well intentioned the people at Channel 4, the fact that they are now the dominant source of finance for 'independent' film-makers has created problems for himself and others. As he explains:

"Channel 4 came in with an idea that they were going to create a low budget cinema as part of their project and the problem with this is that the people who were actually in charge of it had no knowledge of cinema whatsoever - not the low budget British cinema in any case. They had knowledge of, presumably, European art cinema but they weren't prepared to see film-makers like myself in any way comparable to anything that might be done in Germany: Fassbinder or Herzog or anyone like that. At the same time they had a problem on their hands because they arrived at the moment Margaret Thatcher was about to launch herself into her second term and the world that they came from was under attack, or at least their liberal sixties views.... Channel 4 never funded the independent British film-makers who were around at the time they started, with the exception of Barney Platts-Mills who made a film in Gaelic. In my case they turned down CARAVAGGIO and I suddenly found myself in a new world which before, in the

seventies, it was the wild west so you went where you went. But now if you went to anyone they would say 'well we'd love to make a film with Channel 4'. Now this was great as long as Channel 4 wanted you. Channel 4 would say 'well we did want you because we bought your three films'. I just want to put something quite down the line here. Channel 4 bought my three films: THE TEMPEST for £12,000, JUBILEE and SEBASTIANE for eight grand each. So this is very cheap one and a half hours of television... They also discovered that they couldn't perhaps show them because 'good heavens ! help ! we have to establish ourselves and be seen to be fairly good before we show all this problematic stuff by film-makers like Derek'. So it wasn't as if they didn't like me, it was just I was a problem so they buried me for five years."(33)

Jarman's films were eventually shown on the Channel once the initial hysterical outcry from the tabloid press and certain sections of the Conservative party which greeted Channel 4's plans to screen them, along with Ron Peck's NIGHTHAWKS, had died down.

However, Channel 4's broadly successful operations in the area of fiction have helped to encourage other television companies to become involved in the financing of feature films, albeit rather tentatively as yet. Examples include Euston, an offshoot of Thames television who began making the odd cinema film in the seventies (usually spin-offs of popular television series produced by the company like THE SWEENEY) but became more substantially involved in films like A MONTH IN THE COUNTRY, BELLMAN AND TRUE, THE COURIER, CONSUMING PASSIONS and DEALERS, Granada International, who have put money into THE MAGIC TOYSHOP, THE FRUIT MACHINE, TREE OF HANDS, JOYRIDERS, and STRAPLESS, TVS who have backed THE INNOCENT, THE SIMON WIESENTHAL STORY and THE ENDLESS GAME, London Weekend who have a stake in Working Title's THE TALL GUY and A HANDFUL OF DUST, STV and Thames have recently invested in KILLING DAD and DANNY THE CHAMPION OF THE WORLD

respectively and Anglia and HTV have announced plans for development and production investment.

In addition to the ITV companies, the BBC have recently become involved in independent film production, partly as a result of Government pressure on the BBC to commission a certain amount of independent product. The new head of drama at the BBC is producer Mark Shivas who has made both television drama and features. Lynda Myles (co-producer of DEFENCE OF THE REALM) was appointed Commissioning Editor, Independent Drama Productions. The corporation has invested in several features including WHITE MISCHIEF, LOSER TAKES ALL, WAR REQUIEM, POISON CANDY and BLACK EYES.

These developments demonstrate a long overdue acceptance, on the part of the television companies, of the popularity of film on TV and an acknowledgement of the price that must be paid to maintain a steady flow of new and interesting film drama on our screens. In addition the securing of rights in a particular film, with the possibility of recoupment, is an added financial incentive for the television companies to become involved in the funding process. The one danger: that of compromise in line with what is deemed suitable for television compared to cinema does not worry film-makers like James Mackay who produced Derek Jarman's THE LAST OF ENGLAND, part funded by Channel 4. As Mackay explains:

"There is no reason that money from television should offer more of a compromise than money from merchant banks... I would have thought probably less of a compromise if anything. I don't think you can say a film like EMPIRE STATE is a hugely compromised film, slightly compromised perhaps. CARAVAGGIO is not a hugely compromised film. It's very difficult to get away from any kind

of compromise. I think we were lucky on THE LAST OF ENGLAND simply because we made it before they gave us the money... I think there is always compromise when someone else is giving you the money but it seems to me the important thing is these films are being made even if they do have an element of compromise. I don't think those films would have been funded a few years ago."(34)

However the threat of political censorship has raised its ugly head more than once in the last few years and this is something which worries the more progressive elements in British television. Further problems were created by the changes to the ITV levy system (a supertax on the ITV companies which amounts to a form of monopoly rent) in 1989 by the Government which resulted in the ITV companies having to pay more to the treasury. This development led to Euston Films suspending their investment in feature films although in general reactions to the changes have been mixed with most ITV film arms sticking to their original plans. It is difficult to predict future developments in this area given the present moves to radically change the shape of the broadcasting industry by means of deregulation. At the moment Channel 4 is safe until 1992, but what will happen after that is impossible to determine.

British Screen

If Channel 4 can be regarded as the brightest star in the sky then following closely behind are the British Screen Finance Consortium (British Screen), under the control of Chief Executive Simon Relph. Relph is an experienced Independent producer who understands the intricacies of the film-making process very well indeed. His production credits include THE RETURN OF THE SOLDIER,

PRIVATES ON PARADE, SECRET PLACES, THE PLOUGHMAN'S LUNCH, WETHERBY and COMRADES.

In spite of the initial pessimism which surrounded the setting up of British Screen as a replacement for the National Film Finance Corporation the achievements of the new organization have, to date, been very encouraging. Basically the consortium is a semi-privatised concern (the NFFC had been publicly funded): its income being made up of an annual government grant of £1.5 million a year, £300,000 from Channel 4, £300,000 from Cannon and £250,000 from Rank. The government and Channel 4 are committed for the first five years of the consortium's life while Cannon and Rank are entitled to withdraw after three years if they wish to do so. On top of this funding, British Screen also receives any income still being generated by past NFFC investments. This was originally estimated to be in the region of £500,000 but so far the assets have been worth closer to £1.2 million.

In its first year of operations, commencing January 1986, British Screen committed nearly £3.7 million to seven features. This involvement comprised equity investments in six films: PERSONAL SERVICES, BELLY OF AN ARCHITECT, HIGH SEASON, EMPIRE STATE, RITA SUE & BOB TOO and THE KITCHEN TOTO, and the provision of a distribution guarantee to complete the financing of a seventh: PRICK UP YOUR EARS.(35) In the second year the company were in a position to invest £5.6 million in thirteen films.(36) As Guy Phelps explains in his perceptive article on the progress of Simon Relph and British Screen, published in SIGHT & SOUND,

Relph's position at British Screen was different in some very important ways to that of Mamoun Hassan at the NFFC. First of all Relph assumes total responsibility for investment decisions, he is bound only to confer with his chairman if any single investment exceeds £500,000. Hassan on the other hand could only advise the NFFC's board which was made up of members with strong personalities and often major differences of opinion. This on occasion led to bitter disagreement and in-fighting. Relph can avoid such problems. As Phelps puts it:

"Decisions as a result can be made quickly and firmly according to consistent and identifiable criteria."(37)

More importantly, British Screen have a much more appropriate policy on the terms of their investments and right to recoup than the NFFC ever had. On one hand Relph's investment decisions are subject to producers having the bulk of their budget already in place. The NFFC often found themselves being the first to commit funds to a project and in many cases the rest of the budget was never found and consequently the films affected did not get made. As Phelps points out, the Corporation found itself in the position of asking the government for more money while having £5 million in the bank - all committed to projects which had not yet found their balance.

In terms of recoupment, British Screen insist on recouping their investment at least pari passu with other equity investors. The NFFC on the other hand traditionally supplied producers with 'end money', that is, they were the last in the queue to receive

payment, making their investment the most risky. Relph is determined to run British Screen along more broadly commercial lines than the NFFC. All investments are made with the likelihood of recoupment firmly in mind. As the company puts it in its guide to producers considering approaching the consortium for finance:

> "There must be a considered relationship between the cost of a film and its income potential. Unfortunately this means with most films that they must have commercial appeal outside this country."(38)

Relph has also explored other ways of maximising returns and minimising the time they take to reach British Screen. Along with Zenith and Palace he has set up 'The Sales Company' headed by Carole Myer formerly of Film Four International, to reduce the costs of recovering investments in the markets they are entitled to exploit. Instead of the usual 15-20%, British Screen and their partners only pay 5-7.5% to use their own sales facility. This policy has enabled British Screen to claw back half of the funds they committed in 1986 through presales and distribution guarantees. This in turn has enabled the company to invest more money in production in its second year of operations: between £4.5 and £5 million in 12 features and a number of short films.

In terms of investment decisions British Screen operate a set of loose criteria. As has been mentioned, projects must have a degree of commercial appeal in terms of the relationship between the proposed budget and potential audience. This need not discourage innovation in the way 'commercial considerations' are normally perceived as doing. For example, as Phelps points out: "British Screen's approach allows it to support projects as

experimental as Derek Jarman's 'The Last of England', a riskier prospect than anything the NFFC was in a position to back, but 'within the limits of its budget perfectly commercial'".(39)

British Screen expect submitted projects to be 'quality' films and to 'aspire to the highest standards'. They can be in any genre as the company is, in Relph's words "trying to support the whole spectrum of British film-making."(40) The current production slate seems to support this claim with projects as diverse as Jarman's experimental film, a Comic Strip film, a horror film and contemporary social drama. The only kind of film the company explicitly rejects is the exploitation production. If the director and producer are inexperienced British Screen may suggest that the film be made under the guidance of an experienced executive producer. The length of a film must also be carefully considered, as in British Screen's view, too many scripts are overlong. Finally, the more cinematic a project is considered to be, the more likely it is to receive support.

Once production begins, Relph, like his counterparts at Channel 4, has approval of the schedule and budget, the key personnel involved and the cast as well as the production cashflow and insurance arrangements. Relph pays close attention to the first few days 'rushes' until he is confident that the production team can be left to get on with it. He also tries to visit the shoot at least once. Relph describes his involvement in the following way:

"I have to keep in touch with the economic progress of the film so that they keep within the budget, and if they don't, that the completion guarantors are on top of it and things aren't damaging the film... The time I get most involved with films is at the

editing stage, which is the most exciting. In nearly every film I do there is a Zenith or a David Rose whose interest, if you like, is the editorship of the film; to be the studio effectively. I don't tend to do that. I tend to be there more or less for the producers to use as a councillor, but I don't get over involved. British Screen was set up not to become a major studio, but to be an organisation which exists to help in the fertilizing of the film-making spectrum in Britain - to help it and assist it but not to tell it what to do. I want to respond to what it wants to do."(41)

Relph is also busy in his attempts to attract more resources to British Screen. This demonstrates his awareness of what changes are affecting the industry and what practical possibilities for development exist. He was also only too aware that at the end of 1988 both Rank and Cannon could withdraw from the company if they wished to do so, which they in fact did. Consequently, Relph put a great deal of effort in attempting to attract new shareholders to for the company and in November 1987 it was announced that Granada Television had agreed to inject £250,000 a year for three years into British Screen, becoming a major shareholder in the process. Relph also plans a business expansion scheme at the company. As he explains:

"I see that as being a very important part of the job - to try and build up the resource we have to invest in British films and I hope that I can succeed in that. I've been waiting to do a years work and show them (current shareholders - particularly the government, and potential shareholders) how we are going to operate. It's much easier to get people to give you money if you say 'well, there's the record'".(42)

As it stands, Relph's record is impressive and already the company are involved in approximately 30% of all low budget British Production and this figure is increasing. After only two years of operation it seems safe to argue that British Screen are much more finely tuned to the economic realities of British film-

making in the eighties than their predecessor and as a result they are able to back not only more films but also a wider range of films, proving in that the process the company's cultural significance goes hand in hand with its commercial prudence. The major problem lies in whether or not the Government will continue to contribute its annual grant to British Screen. If this funding is withdrawn the company would probably fold as it is not yet in a position to become fully self-supporting. If this were to happen a vitally important source of production finance for British film-makers would disappear.

Zenith Productions

The third of the four major equity financiers currently active in the British cinema is Zenith Productions, until recently a wholly-owned subsidiary of Central Television. According to the company's production chief Margaret Mathieson, who had previously been the production controller at Central, Zenith was set up initially as a profit centre rather than Central being enticed into film production by the success of Channel 4. What was seen as the growing opportunities for international co-financing of prestigious drama: along the lines of Central's mini series KENNEDY which Mathieson produced and which was financed via a major presale to the NBC network in the United States. In 1984 Central also financed a low budget feature film: THE HIT, which was subsequently transferred to the Zenith catalogue. The availability of international co-finance opportunities could not be taken up by Central itself because such involvement required

operations on a much more flexible basis than the in-house production Central tended to concentrate on. So Central decided to organize the setting up of what Mathieson describes as:

"a low overhead, small staffed, fast thinking, flexible outfit that could respond to this international opportunity."(43)

As has already been pointed out, Zenith have a close interest in development (supervised by Scott Meek) as well as production. Mathieson explains that the company receive:

"...a phenomenal amount of submissions at various stages, from an idea over a drink, through to a treatment, through to a final script... Apart from the fact we are receiving an endless barrage of proposals in various forms we also do take up things ourselves..."(44)

The provision of equity finance for a project is linked to specific rights, in particular the right to allow the Sales Company to handle the film in the relevant territories. Mathieson claims to be interested in projects with a high profile and strong subject matter. Several have been loose 'biopics' on characters like Cynthia Payne, Sid Vicious and Joe Orton, which Mathieson claims, have some sort of contemporary resonance even if they are slightly period pieces. The company have made films with particularly idiosyncratic film-makers like Nicolas Roeg and Alex Cox along with more obviously 'British' directors like Stephen Frears, Alan Clark and David Leland whose films are closer in look and feel to those associated with Channel 4. Perhaps more significantly, projects must be capable of being made on a budget of $5 million or less for Zenith to be interested. This is a reflection of the company's awareness of the difficulties associated with recouping funds on large budget

productions vis-a-vis low budget films. A film must earn two and a half times its negative cost (the cost of production up to the printing of the final negative) in order to break even. The higher the budget therefore, the more difficult breaking even, let alone going into profit, becomes. Although productions are closely monitored throughout, in both creative and financial terms, by the company, it is the pre-production stage which Mathieson identifies as being the most crucial:

"I feel strongly that the most important creative work is in the preparation... of the script, in the casting, in the choice of director and in the director's choices... If you've got something wrong once you're turning over there's not a lot you can do about it."(45)

On the financial side, once a budget and a schedule have been prepared, the package is sent to a completion guarantor and The Sales Company for a forecast of the project's sales potential throughout the world. The next step is the organization of an American distribution deal which Mathieson would hope to be in the region of 60% of the budget. In November 1987 Zenith entered into a joint venture with the American company Atlantic, giving a limited number of Zenith productions guaranteed North American distribution. The sales forecast for these markets must be close to the proposed cost of production or Zenith would not go ahead with it. This is one of the reasons why the company operate a $5 million ceiling: it is easier to cover the costs of a low budget production in distribution guarantees and the energetic exploitation of all available ancillary markets. Mathieson herself is acutely aware of the importance of wise investment decisions and good marketing. As she puts it, the key to

successful operations lies in "knowing what you've got to sell" and "careful consideration of the best form of advertising depending on the particular audience you think will go for it."(46)

By and large Zenith's performance has been impressive in the production of both theatrical features and TV mini series. The features Zenith have been involved in include THE HIT, WETHERBY, INSIGNIFICANCE, BILLY THE KID AND THE GREEN BAIZE VAMPIRE (the only real disappointment according to Mathieson), SID & NANCY, PERSONAL SERVICES PRICK UP YOUR EARS, WISH YOU WERE HERE, SOUR SWEET, FOR QUEEN AND COUNTRY, THE WOLVES OF WILLOUGHBY CHASE, PARIS BY NIGHT, SLAM DANCE, THE DEAD and PATTY HEARST. The last three being ostensibly American films but similar in style and scale to the British projects. As Mathieson explains:

"...because of the size of the American market it's bound to be attractive to make American subjects. But I wouldn't want to make any old American subject. I'd like to think that with anything we do we bring some unique characteristic, unique point of view... So if it's an American subject I'd like to think it's something that we would treat differently than an American production company might. Better in other words."(47)

The solid critical and commercial success represented by this impressive output has earned the company a great deal of praise. Graham Wade for example writes:

"The healthiest of the new breed of company appear to be those like Zenith Productions... Zenith is confidently expected to earn considerable revenue for its parent company from a number of film and television projects which are mostly co-produced. Its successes depend on careful selection of property, backed by sophisticated marketing techniques which squeeze every penny from complicated patterns of release, covering the whole range of outlets from cinemas to video cassette. The key to successful production in the last part of this century lies in this new, complicated mix of media outlets."(48)

On October 1st 1987, Carlton Communications paid Central £6.3 million for Zenith and right away merged the company with their own production unit The Moving Picture Company, who, under producer Nigel Stafford-Clark, had been responsible for feature films such as PARKER, THE ASSAM GARDEN and STORMY MONDAY. Stafford-Clark moved over to Zenith to work as a producer under Mathieson. Carlton Communications are a £600 million listed concern. This should make it easier for Zenith to attract City investors. Zenith's current yearly output (film and television: with the latter as important a consideration for the company - perhaps more so if the recent tendency to concentrate on TV series and International Mini-Series is continued) stands around £25 million. In April 1989, after a period of concentrating production in the field of television, including a major commission from the BBC for the series THE PARADISE CLUB, Zenith announced three new feature projects, each budgeted between $5-8 million. This marks a break from their previous $5 million limit. These projects are deemed to be more 'transnational' in appeal compared to many previous Zenith productions and is an indication of a change of policy at the company after a period of consolidation and market assessment in the wake of the Carlton take over.

Handmade Films

The fourth member of this rather exclusive club is Handmade Films, set up in 1978 by ex-Beatle George Harrison and his business manager Dennis O'Brien to rescue the Monty Python film

THE LIFE OF BRIAN, which had been abandoned by EMI. Initially the company tended to concentrate on comedy subjects like TIME BANDITS (which grossed over $45million in North America), PRIVATES ON PARADE, THE MISSIONARY and A PRIVATE FUNCTION - all involving members of the Monty Python team - and two films from the Dick Clement/Ian Le Frenais partnership: BULLSHOT and WATER They have subsequently broadened their field to encompass a whole range of projects including Neil Jordan's MONA LISA and Nic Roeg's film TRACK 29. As Margot Gavan-Duffy, script editor at Handmade explains:

"It started very much with the 'Pythons' and that was the reason George Harrison and Dennis O'Brien moved into film-making. And for some years comedy was the guiding factor... slightly off-the-wall mainstream comedy, quirky, oddball films. I think probably the first one to break the mould was MONA LISA, which was a difficult decision because it was a different sort of territory... Since then we've made a number of films which are more serious.... I think people here feel easier with comedy, feel they have a surer touch - MONA LISA was obviously successful, some of our other straighter films seem less so... I guess really the guideline is work quality and anything that's unusual or interesting."(49)

Other recent productions include WITHNAIL AND I, THE LONELY PASSION OF JUDITH HEARNE and THE RAGGEDY RAWNEY.

Gareth Jones explains that Handmade tend to finance their films on a debt financing basis by borrowing money from a bank - usually an American bank which has a department specialising in film finance - against presale guarantees. As Jones puts it:

"We obtain pledges of advances. Those advances are in turn pledged to the bank... We borrow the money against the security of the film itself and the sales."(50)

Handmade attempt to presell their films 100%, through a network of sub-distributors. They operate output agreements with

distributors with the latter party agreeing to take a certain number of Handmade films over a specified period, thereby ensuring a continuity of finance. As Jones explains:

"We have guaranteed distributors who will take a number of our films and pay you a set level which is based on a percentage of the budget. This might only be between 2-6%... quite small amounts. Obviously the more output deals you have in different territories the more it contributes towards your budget."(51)

Most Handmade films are budgeted at £2-3 million, which, as Jones explains, tends to be the level at which there is a good chance of breaking even, even if the film doesn't perform spectacularly at the box office. As Jones argues:

"There's a certain level of income you can glean with our idiosyncratic films in Europe and the UK. In the US you can get a certain amount but you can't guarantee it.... With a MONA LISA you make money, but for certain other movies you might not..."(52)

Therefore, budgets are kept low whenever possible. As Jones explains, the company are not prepared to pay the kind of huge fees that mainstream directors can command. People have to be prepared to work within Handmade's budgets. However, the company is prepared to move into bigger budget film-making if the material was broad in its appeal and there was a star attached. The largest project Handmade have been involved in to date is perhaps their most unfortunate experience: SHANGHAI SURPRISE starring Madonna and Sean Penn which crashed at the box office. Despite the well publicised difficulties on set with Penn and the film's commercial failure, Handmade covered their own costs through presales, leaving the distributors to bear the loss.

Potential projects are discussed by a committee within the company, but final decisions to proceed are taken by Dennis

O'Brien in consultation with George Harrison. As far as monitoring production is concerned, Handmade appoint a line producer to the project to attempt to keep the production on budget and on schedule. Jones explains that most of the company's British productions tend to be based at Shepperton studios where Handmade have an office and a full-time production accountant who liases with the line producer on a day to day basis during the production process. Over and above this daily supervision, the company have weekly production meetings where problems can be aired. As Jones explains:

"It's really a case of: if things start to go astray people are alerted very quickly... Our main concern is when budgets start not to be adhered to and that's something you can see happening very quickly - even if you go half a day over. It's something that's stepped on and rectified as quickly as we can do it."(53)

In terms of issues of creativity and freedom, Handmade have lengthy conversations with the director before the project commences principal photography. As Jones explains, the shape and the feel of the project is discussed and once the script is in a form that the company finds acceptable production proper will begin. The film-maker is then more or less left to make the film on his or her own, providing prior agreements are adhered to regarding script, budget and schedule. However, what distinguishes Handmade from the other companies mentioned so far is there demand of final cut. Jones explains:

"We are a fairly tough company when it comes to creative controls... We want final cut, it's as simple as that."(54)

It is partly because of this that Handmade have seldom ventured into the realm of co-production in that they will always demand

the final creative say, which, Jones admits, can cause resentment at times.

Like one or two other British production companies, Handmade have recently begun to produce films in North America. Margot Gavan-Duffy explains that while British film sometimes work in America, the frequently don't and producers stand a better chance in that market with American films. The US productions to date include TRACK 29, FIVE CORNERS and THE POW WOW HIGHWAY.

Dennis O'Brien claims these projects to be:

"very similar in style to the things we do in the UK - So they are the kind of projects that would never be done by an American Company."(55)

By and large, Handmade will attempt to keep the budgets of such films low and the same supervisory and creative rules would apply as do in this country. As Jones puts it:

"The kind of films you would see coming out of a Handmade stable in the United States would be films like TRACK 29: unusual films, not with an immediately identifiable large audience but hopefully which would fit into a niche."(56)

This is a trend affecting more and more British film companies with Zenith and Palace also making low to medium budget films in America. This strategy is significantly different from previous attempts on the part of British companies to make films in the United States. In the past this involved big budgets and so-called 'commercial' subjects. It invariably resulted in disaster: the examples of Lew Grade and E.M.I. previously mentioned. The new breed of product is an American based equivalent of the typical low budget British model rather than an attempt by a British company to make a big budget American film, and as a

result, much less of a gamble for the companies involved.

The BFI Production Board

One final source of equity capital for British film-making which deserves a brief mention is the BFI Production Board, which has similar interests to Alan Fountain's department at Channel Four and is able to invest in two to three very low budget productions every year (courtesy of funding received from the Government, a subvention from Channel Four and money from the Independent Television Companies Association and the British Film Fund Agency). It is able to do this by way of the 'Code of Practice' and the 'Workshop Agreements', negotiated with the ACTT which enables films to be made more cheaply and under more flexible conditions than elsewhere in the industry (57). The origins of the Production Board lie in the Experimental Film Fund set up by Sir Michael Balcon in 1952. In 1969 the BFI assumed official administrative control of the fund. During the seventies the board's policy towards film underwent a pronounced transition, involving a shift away from supporting rather insular traditions of avant-garde film-making towards more accessible cinematic forms. The first feature to be produced under this new policy was Chris Petit's RADIO ON and since then several important productions have been funded by the Board including Peter Greenaway's THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S CONTRACT, Edward Bennett's ASCENDANCY, Derek Jarman's CARAVAGGIO and Terence Davis' DISTANT VOICES, STILL LIVES. Like Channel 4 the Board is also able to fund workshop productions on a one-off basis.

Colin MacCabe, until recently the production head at the Production Board describes his working practices thus:

"We made a policy decision which was taken as long ago as 1979, which I'm fully behind, that our major thrust goes into making low budget features... 1,2 or 3 major productions a year, rather than making between 10 and 20 short films... which would be possible on my budget. My own idea about a film is that it isn't finished until it reaches an audience and the patterns of distribution and exhibition in the 'commercial cinema' have changed radically and it's now much easier to get our kind of stuff shown. There are for example 20 cinemas in London which will accept work from outside the mainstream... I certainly don't feel a conscious pressure which says I've got to make commercial product... But I also think that I've got to make things which I think will reach an audience. I am really not under the tight commercial pressure that other people are.. Then there's the added advantage that if I succeed in getting an audience I also get money back which enables me to make more films."(58)

MacCabe is interested in scripts:

"which capture, in some original way, some aspect of contemporary social experience... Something that suddenly makes you see, or makes alive some part of the social and cultural reality of today."(59)

He is also particularly keen on initiating ideas with writers and then being involved in the process to find a suitable director for the project. In terms of the production process the film-maker is left to make the film he or she wants but that is not to say they are free from constraint or pressure from MacCabe who attempted to give the director all the 'aggro and hard input' associated with a commercial producer with the difference that ultimately the director always has the final say.

In terms of their financial stability, the BFI Production board relies heavily on Channel 4. As MacCabe explains, the Channel undertook to provide a subvention to the Board for three years of

approximately £500,000 a year, on the understanding that the Government would meet and equal that, which MacCabe is pleased to say, they have done. In return Channel 4 get the TV license on all BFI product, most of which is broadcast on the 'Eleventh Hour' slot with one or two features like THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S CONTRACT and CARAVAGGIO included in the more prestigious 'Film on Four' seasons. Occasionally the Channel will make an equity investment in a BFI film. While this is welcomed by MacCabe he is not overtly enthusiastic about Channel 4 as a window for BFI productions. As he puts it:

"My job is to make films for the cinema, the fact that they have a UK television license on them means I get some money for them, and the fact that they are going to get a TV audience means they are going to get some audience... But my attention, interest and energy is concentrated on getting the films into cinemas."(60)

If the innovative and experimental underbelly of British cinema is to be maintained, the BFI Production Board must be allowed to continue it's operations as a outlet for particularly off-the-wall film-makers and ambitious newcomers who will subsequently move into more commercial areas: in some cases like Peter Greenaway this is as much to do with the film-maker being accepted by the establishment rather than him or her becoming more mainstream as such.

Production Strategies: Successes and Failures

What seems to unite the four companies dealt with in some depth, (with the exception of the BFI which is not subject to the same conditions as the others) is on one hand, a determination to keep

budgets low and to maximise returns by way of skilful and energetic marketing techniques (discussed in chapter six) and on the other hand, by maintaining close involvement with film-makers at every stage of the process. In this way, individuals like David Rose, Simon Relph, Margaret Mathieson and Ray Cooper (Creative Director at Handmade) can be said to have a direct contribution to make at almost every stage of the film-making process. It is very interesting and informative to compare the strategies of these four companies, particularly Zenith and Handmade who are totally commercial enterprises with none of the protection afforded to Channel 4 or even British Screen, with other companies involved in production finance who have encountered severe problems in the course of their operations. Three companies who immediately spring to mind are Thorn-EMI, Goldcrest and Virgin Vision, all active in the equity financing of British production during the first half of the decade but now no longer so.

The problems began for Thorn-EMI Screen Entertainment (TESE) and Goldcrest in the summer of 1985. At TESE Chief Executive Gary Dartnall decided not to renew Verity Lambert's contract as head of production. The reason behind this decision was the poor showing at the box office of a number of Lambert's productions. These included MORONS FROM OUTER SPACE, DREAM CHILD, COMFORT AND JOY, SLAYGROUND and RESTLESS NATIVES. Although the performance of these films was pretty bad that was by no means the whole story. As James Park points out, TESE was a large conglomerate which required at least twenty films annually for its distribution

machinery. Lambert's department was only one source for this product. Others included the acquisitions department, responsible for such big budget flops as THE HOLCROFT COVENANT and WILD GEESE II, and Dartnall himself, who made deals with US companies for the regular provision of their films. Each department felt it should have a key role in approving and determining what got made. Over and above this, the sales department were interested in films which were tried and tested and therefore not particularly original. This caused problems for Lambert:

"Almost every single film that I put money into so far has come back from the distribution people with a very low assessment."(61)

Dartnall decided to set up a revolving fund of £1.5 million for the development of projects with TESE having first option on taking any scripts developed under the scheme into full production. The finance for this production would come from a £160 million revolving credit facility which Dartnall was attempting to negotiate with twelve leading merchant banks. This fund, it was planned, would provide whole or partial finance for 15-25 medium budget films a year. Initially, agreements were signed with various independent producers including Verity lambert, John Bradbourne & Richard Goodwin - responsible for A PASSAGE TO INDIA, which TESE had backed, Euan Lloyd of WILD GEESE II fame, United British Artists, Jeremy Thomas and Simon Perry.

However, TESE was subsequently sold in 1986, first to Australian tycoon Alan Bond for £125 million, who one week later passed on his acquisition to the Cannon Corporation for £175 million. The outcome was not a particularly fortunate one for British

independent production. As Julian Petley comments:

"Cannon have honoured the letter of the satellite producer deals, paying small development expenses where TESE had been contracted to do so, but certainly have not kept to the spirit of the thing. Not one project developed under the satellite scheme has been put into production, and all of the deals that have so far come up for renewal have been terminated on the first possible day - for example Euan Lloyd, United British Artists and Simon Perry."(62)

In fact Cannon have only really invested in two indigenous British productions: Harry Hook's THE KITCHEN TOTO and Lezli-An Barrett's BUSINESS AS USUAL, a total investment on Cannon's part of £1.8 million, hardly a significant contribution from what was at the time the largest film company in Britain.

While Gary Dartnall was deciding not to renew Verity Lambert's contract at TESE, Goldcrest, the flagship of the British film 'renaissance', were having problems of their own. At Goldcrest the problem was not the disastrous performance of a group of films (although this was to come) but rather the realization that the company, having embarked on an over-ambitious production programme, was going broke. The basic precepts of the company's founding father Jake Eberts, who had left and been replaced by James Lee, seemed to have been forgotten in the pursuit of profits and prestige. Eberts had shown a great deal of prudence in building the company up from a £100,000 development outfit in 1977 to a £35 million production and marketing enterprize by 1984.(63) The films he had been involved with had all been covered by minimum guarantees and no single production had overstepped the $15 million budgetary limit he had set.

James Lee began with a similar policy - his initial portfolio

seemed balanced and at least 60% of investments were covered by presales. However, two of the major productions he had initiated: Hugh Hudson's REVOLUTION and Julien Temple's ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS suffered from substantial cost over-runs. REVOLUTION was a particularly expensive film which finally cost around the £20 million mark. At the same time the company were involved in a third feature David Puttnam and Roland Joffe's THE MISSION which was budgeted at £17 million. The presale deals had been done on a basis of anticipated costs so any over-run bit heavily into the profit potential of any film concerned. On top of this Goldcrest had put up its own completion guarantees on all three films - a policy initiated by Eberts with THE KILLING FIELDS which cost £11 million. This put the company in a particularly bad position. In the event none of the films did well enough at the box office to justify the amount of money spent on them with REVOLUTION in particular losing the company £10 million.

Lee's style of management also upset many people at the company. He was both inexperienced and something of an autocrat whose reputed ego mania and controversial decision making led to the resignation of sales manager Bill Gavin, managing director Donald Cruickshank and finally production chief Sandy Lieberson. One of Lee's most notorious decisions was to move the Goldcrest offices from its inexpensive base in Holland Park to a glass emporium in Wardour Street, adding significantly to the company's already high overheads bill. The board were finally forced to remove him and call back Eberts in an attempt to rescue the company. Production was immediately suspended for an indefinite period.

Half the staff were dismissed and the company moved back to smaller and more affordable offices. By late 1986 Goldcrest had been forced into little more than a sales and distribution company, handling films like A ROOM WITH A VIEW, SID & NANCY and THE NAME OF THE ROSE.

James Park suggests that Goldcrest's problems were partly the result of departmental squabbling which meant that nobody could take an overall view on what was happening. Park writes:

"A failure of the institutional structure is the only explanation of how a company with some of the most talented executives around could make such crucial errors of judgement. The fact that two major films were allowed to go over budget, with no provisions made for overcosts was an example."(64)

Park then attempts to draw comparisons between the problems at Goldcrest and those at TESE. Both affairs demonstrate for Park the problems large companies have in the making of creative decisions. He also points to the apparent lack of people equipped to run a major production department. Potential candidates like Puttnam and Jeremy Thomas prefer to keep a hands-on relation to production, or at least Puttnam did until his recent short stay at Columbia.

Park subsequently argues that smaller companies like Virgin and Zenith have a more integrated and intimate approach to productions; where there is little chance of inter-departmental wrangling and executives loosing sight of what is going on. Also the risks are less in the low budget sector in the sense that good marketing can cover the costs of a £1-2 million budget film relatively easily. As Carole Myer of the Sales Company remarked a

two or three years ago (current figures would be slightly higher):

"Provided you keep your budget fairly low, £2 million or less, you can almost always get your money back in the long term."(65)

Returns can often be slow due to the differential and complex distribution and exhibition patterns around the world and so the smaller the investment the less added expenses like interest rates are incurred. The company overheads of Zenith, British Screen and others are also relatively low, therefore cash flow does not create the same problems it did at a larger company like Goldcrest which had to keep turning over to pay its bills.

However, small companies can also overstretch themselves as Virgin Vision have demonstrated. In October 1986 the company announced it was pulling out of the equity financing of feature films after only four years of producing films like SECRET PLACES, ELECTRIC DREAMS, NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR, LOOSE CONNECTIONS, ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS, CAPTIVE, ARIA and GOTHIC. Their confidence had been shaken quite early on by NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR going well over budget, finally coming in at £5.5 million. Despite being popular in the North American market the film has not yet broken even, mainly due to the problem of interest charges. As former production chief Al Clark explains:

"I'm sure if £5.5 million had just stayed at £5.5 million it would have been fine. But because we financed the whole thing, as you are waiting to get your money back from distributors all over the world the money that you borrowed is inflating day by day."(66)

The events surrounding ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS, which Virgin co-

financed with Goldcrest, shattered what confidence the company had left. As Clark puts it:

"We were dealing with something that nobody in this country had ever attempted, which was a studio musical pitched on the kind of scale of a Hollywood musical... We were all taking a rather big reckless plunge into the unknown and hoped that we were going to pull it off."(67)

They did not and Virgin paid the price, shifting focus from production to acquisition and distribution. In effect moving from being a major player in the financing game to a supporting role, like other distributors such as Curzon and occasionally Rank tend to play. They are no longer in a position to initiate new projects but rather can only provide what is in effect 'top-up' money for productions which already have the bulk of their budgets in place.

The importance then of Channel 4, British Screen, Zenith and Handmade in terms of the continuation and health of low budget British production is paramount. These are the only realistic sources of equity finance independent producers can turn to. They are augmented by a handful of production houses which, if not able them selves to fund a picture, are at least strong enough financially to develop a project and bring it to the attention of interested financiers. This group includes Palace and Working Title. As I have noted, Palace are primarily a distribution company, initially set up in 1980 as a video retail business by Nic Powell (a former partner of Richard Branson at Virgin) and Steve Woolley, who have been able to move into the field of production with films like COMPANY OF WOLVES, A LETTER TO BREHZNEV, MONA LISA, ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS,THE DREAM DEMON and THE

COURIER. They are constantly approached by people with new ideas, but as Steve Woolley explains, they are more likely to commission projects from writers the company know or have worked with in the past.

Woolley claims he is interested in:

"Things that have really bad taste...anything that's likely to upset someone - it's going to subvert their notion of what they think they are going to see... For instance COMPANY OF WOLVES was not really a horror film, it wasn't really a fantasy, it wasn't a film about an adolescent girl's coming of age - It was all of those things plus more... So anything that's got an element of... trying to make people think a bit... to sit up and take notice."(68)

Like Zenith and Handmade, Palace have started to make films in North America with productions like SIESTA and SHAG. The major reason given by Woolley is the desire to crack the American market, enabling the company to make a range of products geared to different markets. In late 1988 he announced plans to make one low budget film for the British, European and US 'Classics' markets - THE BIG MAN, and bigger budget international film with an American star but still ostensibly a British film - THE POPE MUST DIE, directed by Peter Richardson, and an American project - RAGE IN HARLEM. This mirrors the production programme for the previous year with SCANDAL, HIGH SPIRITS and SHAG roughly equivalent in size and projected market to the new slate. As Woolley explains:

"These three films... will cross the board in terms of markets and audiences and if one goes big - THE POPE MUST DIE and RAGE IN HARLEM stand a chance of being big in America - if you crack that market, it gives much more security to our company. We can't afford to make little low budget British films for a limited market because we'll die if we do that."(69)

Working Title on the other hand have developed from being a producer of pop-promos (under the banner Aldabra) to a major production house responsible for films like MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE, PERSONAL SERVICES, SAMMY & ROSIE GET LAID, WISH YOU WERE HERE, A WORLD APART, THE TALL GUY and PAPERHOUSE. Sarah Radclyffe claims to be interested in:

"...things that are totally original.. and about issues that concern people now. As a generalisation I'm not interested in anything that's period because I don't think the issues are relevant... After A WORLD APART I'm looking for things that are more than just a flippant comedy or something. For me it's got to be somethingthat I'm prepared to spend a minimum of a year of my life working on."(70)

Radclyffe seems to be true to her word in that 'LAUNDRETTE, SAMMY & ROSIE and A WORLD APART are probably three of the most politically oriented non subsidised features released in this country over the last few years.

Both Palace and Working title are very astute companies, alert to new possibilities and outlets. As a result both have recently set up television companies: Working Title have already produced a series ECHOES which was screened by Channel 4, while Palace's first TV project: LENNY LIVE AND UNLEASHED, featured comedian Lenny Henry and was produced with backing from a satellite television company BSB. Both Working Title and Palace are also successful producers of pop promos. Such a multi-media approach, already practised successfully by Zenith, is a response to the rapidly changing media entertainment industry and hopefully will give the companies the financial stability to continue producing innovative feature films.

It is companies like Channel 4, British Screen, Zenith, Handmade, Palace and Working Title, not the North American distributors who provide all-important distribution guarantees, who create the space for film-making talent to develop and for some innovation to take place. These companies are run by people who share an enthusiasm for film as well as an astute awareness of the economic realities of film-making in Britain in the eighties. By and large they have kept budgets to a minimum and while people are aware of the need to make a range of product, covering a range of markets, they also understand the dangers that over-budget productions can bring. David Rose, for one, is particularly enthusiastic about low budget production and he invokes the example of MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE:

"We all felt it was a modest film for television... made on 16mm. We all got it wrong, happily, in that respect, but I think the atmosphere and the enthusiasm on that shoot derived from the fact that it was a small film... Everyone believed in it... There is a feeling within a crew you can sense very readily on a shoot, that they are behind it... If it had gone to 35mm, people might have started to have greater aspirations and it might not have had that real tight team spirit about it... I am in a way constrained to low budget films and I'm very glad. If anyone offered me another £5 million to top up my budget I would still wish to make low budget films."(71)

The issue of budgets raises interesting questions with regard to ideas of film-making and creative freedom. Tom Priestley, a editor who has worked in the industry for many years makes the following observations:

"You think when you've got a bigger budget you can do more, but it's just as tight financially, often more so because there's an enormous pressure to get a certain something on the screen and then all these financiers have their ideas what it should look like. So actually I think you are more more often with a low budget film. There are a lot of other problems but I think you are freer to make the film you want to make."(72)

In a similar vein, a film-maker like Derek Jarman who has worked

in the extremely low budget sector argues that it is not financial resources which engender cinematic creativity but rather the felt necessity to make the film in the first place. On one hand Jarman finds no creativity in a big budget special effects film like BLADERUNNER:

"It's a set designer's job. It's Fortnum and Masons wrapping paper around a nothingness in the end."(73)

But on the other hand he does find a necessity in the work of certain film-makers like Peter Wollen, Ken Russell, Nicolas Roeg and others:

"Kenneth Anger created some of the most marvellous cinema on absolute peanuts.... SCORPIO RISING is probably better than any other American feature in the year it was made... So you don't need resources. It's an approach to life really."(74)

Other film-makers are more appreciative of what can be achieved with a substantial budget. As Julien Temple argues:

"On one level there is an extraordinary freedom... I saw 'ROGER RABBIT in America, which is formally a very important film, and I said to the guy who showed me some of the stuff 'wow it's amazing', and he said 'well you can do anything with $35 million', which in a sense is true. But then you do have the intense paranoia of the people who have put the money up and that's no joke. You feel a very heavy, almost mafia-like, pressure that if you fuck with their money your knees may be blown away - in a mental sense... I'm sure this would be less on a three million thing. I would like to do a small budget film but I do have respect for the freedom money can buy: with the ideas you have by making them real."(75)

Bigger budgets may give a film-maker greater technical scope in the field of special effects but such levels of investment necessarily requires a compromise in that the film must be seen to have potential mass appeal which can require certain modifications at the level of narrative and plot. As Gareth Jones of Handmade puts it:

"The bigger the budget is you've got to be able to say 'this has a mass appeal'. Therefore you cannot be so idiosyncratic in your taste, you have actually to get out there and say 'will this

appeal to the great unwashed American public ?' and by doing that you have to actually make compromises"(76)

In this sense lower budgets can actually give a film-maker greater freedom in terms of making the statements he or she wants to make. This is a fundamentally important consideration in terms of the issue of the structuring of creativity in the context of current British cinema.

In addition, these companies have the nerve to take chances with 'difficult' subject matter and inexperienced film-makers. They have been instrumental in the shaping of British cinema in the eighties. The close involvement these companies have at every stage of the production process has, I would wish to argue, a fundamental effect on the structuring of creativity in this context. The co-production strategies in which these companies have become increasingly involved, is resulting in a mixing of house-styles in interesting and complex ways. This question requires greater elaboration which is beyond the scope of the present discussion, but what this chapter has done is to demonstrate the immense collective influence a small number of key decision-makers within the industry have in the context of low budget indigenous production. Together, David Rose, Simon Relph, Margaret Mathieson, Dennis O'Brien, Steve Woolley, Sarah Radclyffe and their close associates represent the 'gate-keepers' of the industry, effectively determining what British cinema is; what subjects are worth producing and even what the the final product will look like. This state of affairs must, in turn, have some effect on the film-makers: the writers, directors

and producers directly responsible for the products which make up 'The British Cinema'. These individuals must initiate and develop their ideas in relation to existing patterns of funding and production. There is no point in approaching David Rose for example, if it is unlikely he will be interested in the idea in question. There is, I would contend, an underlying strain towards conformity in British film-making. This is probably more or less true for any national cinema at any time but I believe it is particularly marked in the British cinema in the mid to late eighties.

NOTES

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(5) Shelly Bancroft (ed.) RAISING PRODUCTION FINANCE, AIP Information Pack 1986.

(6) Interview with Margaret Mathieson 20/7/87

(7) Interview with Al Clark 17/7/87

(8) Interview with Gareth Jones 22/7/88

(9) Relph: 'Producing a New Deal' SCREEN INTERNATIONAL 14/5/88.

(10) Interview with Sarah Radclyffe 7/4/88

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(12) A. Harcourt et al.: THE INDEPENDENT PRODUCER: FILM AND TELEVISION Faber & Faber (London) 1986 p100-101.

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(14) Interview with Graham Bradstreet 7/4/88

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(16) Mary Davies: 'Seedy Business' AIP & CO December 1985.

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(18) Raymond Williams: CULTURE Fontana (London) 1981. p105-6

(19) Interview with David Rose 22/7/87

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(21) Interview 22/7/87

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(23) Georgina Henry: 'Sales of the Unexpected' PRODUCER May 1987.

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(27) interview 6/6/88

(28) Interview 6/6/88

(29) Interview 6/6/88

(30) Interview 6/6/88

(31) Interview with Charles Gormley 11/5/88

(32) Interview 11/5/88

(33) Interview Derek Jarman 17/8/87

(34) Interview with James Mackay 9/4/88

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(36) Article in PRODUCER Spring 1988.

(37) Phelps: 'A Degree of Freedom'

(38) British Screen: INFORMATION FOR PRODUCERS Company Information Handout 1987.

(39) Phelps: 'A Degree of Freedom'.

(40) Interview with Simon Relph 22/7/87

(41) Interview 22/7/87

(42) Interview 22/7/87

(43) Interview 20/7/87

(44) Interview 20/7/87

(45) Interview 20/7/87

(46) Interview 20/7/87

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(48) Graham Wade: FILM, VIDEO AND TELEVISION: MARKET FORCES, FRAGMENTATION AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCE (London) 1985 p11-12.

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(50) Interview 22/7/88

(51) Interview 22/7/88

(52) Interview 22/7/88

(53) Interview 22/7/88

(54) Interview 22/7/88

(55) Interview in SCREEN INTERNATIONAL June 13-20 1987.

(56) Interview 22/7/88

(57) See chapter seven on Industrial Relations.

(58) Interview with Colin MacCabe 15/7/87

(59) Interview 15/7/87

(60) Interview 15/7/87

(61) Quoted by James Park: 'The Nervous Summer of the British Film Industry SIGHT & SOUND Winter 1985/6.

(62) Julian Petley: 'All Blast and no Balls' PRODUCER May 1987.

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(65) Quoted in Sue Summers: 'Putting the Budget Before the Box Office'

(66) Interview 17/9/87

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(71) Interview 22/7/87

(72) Interview with Tom Priestley 11/4/88

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CHAPTER SIX

THE FILM-MAKING PROCESS: SALES, DISTRIBUTION AND MARKETING

"The Movie Business, for better or worse, has become primarily a marketing business." (Ned Tannen, ex-president of Universal, interviewed in 'Sight & Sound', Winter 1983/4.)

In spite of all its artistic and creative aspirations, practically all contemporary film-making, whatever the country or cultural climate, is subject to certain 'facts of life' which are primarily economic in nature. First of all, film production is an extremely expensive process: the average cost of a typical 'low-budget' British independent feature with domestic locations, no international stars or expensive post production techniques: films like WISH YOU WERE HERE, MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE or DISTANT VOICES, STILL LIVES, currently stands in the region of £1.5 - £2 million. More ambitious projects featuring special effects, large casts or international locations: films like BRAZIL, CRY FREEDOM or HIGH SPIRITS, cost substantially more. Therefore, potential investors will only consider putting money into films which in their judgement stand a reasonable chance of making a profit at the box office - their reasons for investing in film-making are, generally speaking, commercial rather than philanthropic. In order for a film to break even, let alone make a profit, in what is a highly competitive and volatile market place, it must be sold, distributed and marketed in a vigorous fashion, making full use of the most effective and up-to-date techniques. Considering that a feature must earn two and a half times its production costs at the box office before any profit is realised, effective

sales and marketing strategies are a crucial part of the film-making process.

At this point it is important to make some distinction between sales and marketing. As I have noted elsewhere (1), British feature films are generally financed by means of a combination of pre-sales and equity investments. Pre-sales are usually to a major foreign (i.e. North American) distributor and will, in most cases, amount to a substantial percentage of the budget, this being a reflection of a film's estimated market worth in a particular territory. This gives the distributor the rights to exploit that film as they see fit within their given territory and to appropriate any profits. Equity investors on the other hand will attempt to recoup their investment by way of sales to distributors in other territories (usually the rest of the world) which involves a fee for the rights, plus a share in the profits, if any. So basically films are sold or presold by the production company to various distributors (and broadcasters) around the world. It is then the task of these distributors to devise and implement marketing strategies. The primary interest distribution companies have in films is in their commercial viability: films are a commodity which must be commercially exploited to the full and brought to the attention of their potential audience in the most effective manner possible. The value of a film to its distributor lies entirely in its box-office appeal, being only a pile of cans of celluloid in material terms. It is therefore not unrealistic to argue that, in this context, the marketing strategy is more important than the film itself. As Marc

Samuelson, an independent British producer formerly with Umbrella Films observes:

"Nowadays people spend a hell of a lot more on the marketing and promotion of a film than they do on the actual production which is amazing, but, if you think about it, not surprising. There are a hell of a lot of products like 'coca cola' where the actual product costs next to nothing. It's all in the packaging, the promotion, the marketing: that's where all the cost is. And films to some extent are the same. I think that in the UK the distributors don't do enough marketing. It's chicken and egg: 'the audience doesn't warrant it' they say, but you could say 'the audience would increase if there was more marketing'. When a film gets a really good marketing push, like CROCODILE DUNDEE it can do fantastically well."(2)

Some would dispute Samuelson's criticism of British distributors. While it is interesting to consider how much more is spent on marketing in the United States compared to the UK we must be careful not to equate the British and American situations: the market places are very different, particularly in terms of size, and so too are the emphases of many marketing campaigns with American distributors tending to favour a less subtle, more overtly exploitative, approach than some of their British counterparts. (In some ways this is a reflection of the kind of film each industry tends to produce). While I wish to concentrate primarily on issues of sales, distribution and marketing as they apply to British film-production, most of the better articles available on these topics are American. Consequently I shall attempt to avoid confusion and distortion whenever possible: the basic mechanisms and structures are similar, it is only their application in terms of scale and emphasis which differ.

One other general introductory point which needs to be made is that while film is very much a commodity this does not

necessarily mean that it can be marketed as one would market any other commodity. The marketing of films involves the commercial exploitation of an 'expectation of a pleasurable experience', not a tangible object like toothpaste or a motor car. As Richard Kahn, the executive vice-president, motion picture distribution and marketing for MGM/UA argues:

"The marketing of movies is a unique phenomenon, as unique as the product it sells. It cannot be equated to selling homes, hardware or hairspray. Motion picture marketing deals with shadows on a screen, the merchandising of emotion."(3)

Kahn's point is an important one and must be borne in mind throughout the following discussion.

Before taking a closer look at the questions of selling, distributing and marketing feature films, from a primarily British point of view, I shall first of all examine the question of the relationship between issues of marketing and cultural production in a broad context in order to demonstrate that the culture/commerce division is a spurious one and that markets are actually an inseparable aspect of cultural production no matter how highbrow it may appear.

The Marketing Process and Cultural Production

Regardless of any commercial imperative, film remains a major cultural institution: at its most basic the mass production of narratives within narrow pre-set guidelines, at its most sophisticated a mature art form comparable to the best of modern drama, painting or literature. As such film must be located within a wider cultural context. This helps to provide a solid

grounding upon which more complex understandings of the nature of film production, sales, distribution and marketing can be built.

In his highly accessible and insightful book CULTURE, first published in 1981, Raymond Williams demonstrates the ways in which artists and other cultural producers have historically been tied in with wider social institutions by means of some kind of economic criteria. He considers pre-capitalistic issues of patronage and sponsorship before moving on to the question of cultural production and the development of markets. Given the close relationship he identifies between cultural production and markets, Williams argues that it is legitimate to view cultural production as simultaneously commodity production and cultural producers as a particular kind of commodity producer. He identifies a series of historically developmental stages of commodity production with respect to culture: artisanal, post-artisanal, market professional, corporate professional. The last stage is that which is currently dominant and involves the corporate organization of cultural production in institutions like Cinema, Radio and Television, and the rise of the salaried professional. As Williams explains:

"the effective... origin of cultural production is now centrally sited within the corporate market. The scale of capital involved, and the dependence on more complex and specialised means of production and distribution, have to an important extent blocked access to these media in older artisanal, post-artisanal and even market professional terms and imposed predominant conditions of corporate employment."(4)

Not only is access limited, but the dominance of planned marketing operations creates a situation where certain types of

cultural production are positively promoted. Williams argues that this is most relevant to the highly capitalised forms of cultural production such as the commercial cinema. The buyers choice, which is the original rationale of the market, is displaced to operate within a pre-determined range. (In the case of film this would relate to the conception, on the part of big production companies, of 'what the public wants' or 'what is currently popular', which in turn helps to pre-determine production strategies with certain types of film being promoted as 'commercially viable'.) This bestows a great deal of importance upon the role of the corporate agent with respect to the generation of cultural products. Williams describes this state of affairs in the following manner:

"In sophisticated market planning, a certain type of work can be selected at so early a stage, on the basis of a few examples or of some calculated or projected demand, that production, from that stage, no longer originates with the primary producer but is commissioned from him... This new form of innovation is at least primarily a marketing function, and this contrasts sharply with other kinds of innovation, which, governed by internal cultural purposes, often find themselves at the very margin of the market or outside it altogether."(5)

Williams goes on to suggest that even the contrast which he sets up between market originated and producer originated work is not absolute since cultural producers often internalise known or possible market relations in complex ways, involving different degrees of conscious and unconscious compromise. In other words they internalise market trends, current fashions etc. and tailor their work accordingly.

Williams ideas have a great deal of relevance in the context of

the present discussion of film-making. Most national film industries are highly capitalised, corporately constituted, commercial enterprises which tend to structure their products within sets of (in most cases) rather narrow guidelines. Issues of expectation and recognition, from the audience's or consumers point of view, are important whether the film is a mass-market American genre movie or a specialised 'arthouse' production aimed at a more minority audience. In this sense it could be argued that the effects of corporate planning referred to Williams are an identifiable feature of contemporary film industries. These may be particularly so in the American context but even British production, which tends to be less mass-market oriented than the bulk of US production, is still structured by generic conventions and consequently most British films are readily identifiable as such. This is a complex issue and one which I intend to explore in greater depth elsewhere but at the moment it will suffice to say that British films tend to deal with a particular range of subjects and to have a particular visual and narrative style.

It is important to note at this stage, that the organization of film-production in both Britain and the US has undergone certain important structural changes over the past forty years. In some respects Williams' corporate model would seem to relate more closely to the old Hollywood studio system (and its British equivalent) where film production took place literally in 'film factories' owned by vertically integrated companies who financed, produced, distributed and exhibited their own movies. These companies employed all personnel: creative, technical and

administrative, on a permanent salaried basis. Production programmes were decided on an annual basis and the studio heads retained the power to hire and fire, sanction projects and even to decide the final cut of a film. However, since the break-up of the studio system in the late forties/ early fifties, the situation has been somewhat different in that film-making now tends to be structured more on a one-off individual film basis. Rather than an annual studio production programme of, for the sake of argument, twenty five features, projects are now put together and funded as single'packages'. This often involves the setting up of a company for the sole purpose of making the film with that company being dissolved on the completion of the finished production. The film industry has become effectively 'casualised' in terms of employment with most personnel now operating on a freelance basis. Also, technical equipment and facilities (including studio space and post-production) are rented from hiring companies. This state of affairs has prompted some to argue that film-making has assumed the characteristics of 'craft production' (6).

It is interesting to note that in recent years television has been subjected to a similar process: firstly with the introduction of Channel 4, which was set up to operate on commissioning programmes from independent producers basis, rather than making its own programmes in its own studios with its own creative and technical staff. This has proved so successful that currently their are plans to force the BBC and the ITV companies to commission 25% of their programming from independent

producers.

In spite of these changes, Williams' model still applies in the sense that financial control, and with it the power to commission work, has remained in a small group of corporate hands. According to Ned Tannen, in the US only 5% of packages offered are actually realised as films.(7) More often than not these will be the packages which correspond with the financier's conceptions of a commercially viable product based on current trends and past experience. In Britain the percentage of successful 'deals' may be higher but there are so few sources of indigenous finance available that film-makers may be prepared to compromise significantly in order to get a project off the ground. In addition, companies like Channel 4, Zenith, Handmade and Palace will often commission work from writers in order to get the product they want.

Films Sales in the UK

As I have argued above, the major concern on the part of production companies is their ability to sell their product- particularly to the potentially highly profitable North American market. In most cases finance from an American distribution company will be in the form of a pre-sale or 'negative pick-up' (a pledge guaranteeing the payment of a specified sum on delivery of the final negative which a producer can lodge with a bank). Given the relative size and importance of markets the North American deal is a fact of life. As Steve Woolley of Palace

comments:

"No British film of almost any budget that I can think of can really go forward unless their is either a pre-sale in place or incredibly good signs of getting a presale... Your bank would have to be totally stupid to go ahead without an American pre-sale."(8)

Selling a film to a foreign distributor effectively gives that distributor the right to exploit the film as they see fit. While this seems only fair given that the distributor will have paid a great deal of money for the film in question, it can also mean that that the film-makers have effectively lost any say over how the film is to be distributed and marketed. In addition, certain distribution deals can create a situation whereby if a film proves to be highly profitable, little if any of this profit reaches the producers: it is all creamed of by the distributors. While the issue of the North American market is rather cut and dried, deals covering rights to the rest of the world can be more favourable from the producers point of view if the production company can retain the right to sell the picture to foreign territories. Steve Woolley for one, argues that his company Palace would rather:

"...take a bigger risk on the back end than on the front in terms of distribution because I would rather be distributing a film at the end of the day, that I'm making, in the UK and hopefully the world, than taking a big fee up-front. The future of the company is going to depend upon us having a flow of product.(9)

Gareth Jones of Handmade Films makes a similar point in commenting on the problems which may arise on a big budget production with an American major involved:

"...the studio for instance might want world-wide distribution in exchange for giving you a producers fee and we always want territories of our own to exploit because if you have a hit on your hands, that's where you are making the money."(10)

This is not always the case as sometimes American companies will totally finance a British production in return for world-wide rights. Recent examples include BRAZIL and CRY FREEDOM. In the hard-headed world of film-production in the eighties, several British companies realised that in order to survive, certain alterations to existing business practices needed to be made.

In 1985, James Park, writing in AIP & Co. magazine, announced that:

"most of Britain's major production finance companies have set up their own sales arms. It enables them to establish relationships with distributors for feedback about market conditions and discussions about future co-production deals. Self distribution also ensures that the production company has direct access to revenues occurring from distribution and can charge a commission on sales."(11)

At present there are three major sales agents handling British product: Film Four International, who sell much of the work funded by the channel, Gavin Film, headed by ex-Goldcrest sales manager Bill Gavin and The Sales Company, which was set up in 1986 by Zenith, British Screen and Palace and is arguably the most important sales agency currently in operation in the UK, handling all the product of the founding partners and since 1987, Working Title productions. The other major British company: Handmade Films, have always sold and distributed their product 'in-house', although recently they have used the services of Recorded Releasing to distribute their product in the UK. This is due to the fact that at present, Handmade's premises are too small and their is not enough room for a major distribution office. But the relationship between Handmade and Recorded Releasing is somewhat different from the normal

producer/distributor one as Gareth Jones, Head of Business Affairs at Handmade, explains:

"We are putting up the distribution monies ourselves to cover costs. So it's not a true arms-length distribution deal. We obviously do deals with sub-distributors throughout the world but those deals are done by our own people. We don't use sales agents so distribution is something we very much want to keep under our own control. In the US we'd like to put together a distribution deal whereby we have control over distribution using the offices and some of the personnel of a studio distribution company. We would actually put our own films out and cover the P & A costs ourselves and get a bigger share of returns at the end of the day. Because distribution is where the money is made."(12)

The Sales Company, which is headed by Carole Myer, formerly of Film Four International, was set up in order to give the companies involved a more direct say over the question of how their products were to be sold, distributed and marketed in foreign territories. They also make a substantial saving on sales commission, paying in the region of 5-7.5% to the Sales Company as opposed to the usual 15-20%: effectively reducing the cost of recovering investments.(13) As John Durie, Myer's associate at the Sales Company puts it:

"There's very little point in making a picture... if you cannot really try to control the eventual audience, i.e. who is actually going to have an opportunity to see your film.(14)

The partners themselves know only too well the benefits setting up The Sales Company has brought. Steve Woolley of Palace for example is very enthusiastic:

"Its been really important because its enabled us to keep the rights on pictures, raise money, hit targets in terms of foreign sales: which the banks are impressed by thereby forging a closer relationship for future productions... And it's also meant a good cementing of our on-going relationship with Zenith and British Screen which is very important."(15)

Production companies in Britain are acutely aware of the

importance of selling their product to distributors who will handle the distribution and marketing of a film intelligently and carefully. Given the importance of the American market place it is crucial that British producers are able to secure deals with American companies who can do this as it will give the films a greater chance of success and the production company a track record which will enable them to raise money for subsequent productions. The situation appears to be optimistic at present as Sarah Radclyffe of Working Title and producer of such films as MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE, SAMMY AND ROSIE GET LAID, WISH YOU WERE HERE and A WORLD APART explains:

"There has grown up in the States a whole collection of smaller distribution companies, or 'Mini-Majors' as they are known, like Cinecom, Atlantic, Orion Classics... who know how to handle and place our sorts of films and know how to distribute them. Whereas if we'd just been left dealing with the majors there is a very large risk that if they don't angle it right, if they open it too wide... they will pull it after a couple of weeks. Just like that ! Where as if they get more personal attention... Atlantic did a great job with WISH YOU WERE HERE and so far they are doing a great job with A WORLD APART which is very political.. They could have easily said 'this is too political' and opened it in one cinema in Detroit or whatever... If you are in with the big companies you don't have the personal relationship with people who are handling the the project and I can't think of anything worse than spending a couple of years of my life doing something for some business executive in a major studio to say 'that's not going to work, it's too political !' It would be awful. I can't think of anything worse."(16)

The importance of The Sales Company to production houses like Working Title, Zenith or Palace lies not only in terms of selling or placing films, but also in the context of sensible budgeting practices: setting budgetary levels on the basis of the film's estimated market value provided by Sales Company forecasts rather than making a film for whatever it costs and then attempting to

sell it as widely as possible. As Radclyffe explains:

"It's great having them as a sounding board when you are raising finance. Carole Myer's very good at being able to read a script and assess what it's worth, just in terms of foreign sales, which is quite a specialised job. We can work it out roughly: the problems of a first time director, unknown stars, the rest of it.. But she can work it out to a finite figure which is a great help."(17)

The Sales Company base forecasts on past selling experiences of similar features but, as John Durie explains, the most important elements in the process of forecasting are the script and the elements attached to the project: stars, director, writer, producer. From this information a calculated estimate of what the film is worth in foreign markets is made. Once a film has been sold to a particular territory the Sales Company offer the distributor advice regarding marketing by showing them examples of successful campaigns in other territories. But the final say lies with the distributor. As Durie puts it:

"You have to sell to distributors who actually want your picture and are going to be enthusiastic about it. And if they say 'that's a great campaign in Britain but it's just not going to work in Germany or Australia', then you have to trust what they are going to do. Also, they have paid a lot of money for the picture and they should have the right to market the picture as they see fit in their territory. That's why we independent sales agents are much different from the majors because what the majors do is... from Hammersmith UIP (United International Pictures, the largest film distributor registered in this country which handles, among other things, films made by Paramount, Universal and MGM/UA) say what the postering in South America or the Far East is going to be. It's a very different approach."(18)

Film sales agents tend to conduct their business at a series of annual international film markets. The three major 'must attend' markets, as Durie puts it, are the American Film Market, held in Los Angeles at the end of February, the Cannes Film Festival,

which takes place in May and MIFED, which is based in Milan during the last week of October/ first week in November. Durie explains that these three events are the main commercial forums for assisting and selling a film. The major difference between them is that the Cannes Film Festival tends to cross both the cultural and commercial sides of the industry: i.e. minority audience 'art house' films and mass-market commercial productions, while both the AFM and MIFED are purely commercial markets with very little cultural glamour attached. In addition to the 'big three' there are a handful of other important festivals: most notably Berlin and Venice which, like Cannes, are both guided by a cultural and critical imperative and again like Cannes are used to launch particular films: giving them a certain profile which will hopefully generate a favourable critical response. At MIFED and the AFM business is described by Durie as 'straight selling' with films being advertised, distributors discussing projects with agents, viewing the film and then deciding whether to buy it or not.

One consequence of the commerce/culture distinction drawn by Durie is that particular films are targeted at particular markets depending on their form and content. As Durie puts it, an 'avant garde' film like Derek Jarman's THE LAST OF ENGLAND, which the Sales Company handled, would play well at Berlin but would definitely not go down well at MIFED or the AFM which are only interested in mass-market commercial films. Cannes on the other hand, has the ability to span the whole spectrum. Durie explains that the appropriate placing of a film is vitally important. To

present an 'art' film at Milan would be to do it a disservice as the buyers who would be interested in it would not be in attendance and its all important 'profile' would be lost.

The idea of the 'profile' means that The Sales Company treats every film it handles as a discrete entity and is sold as such, within the parameters of the selling process: festivals, markets, trade publications etc. The company attempt to stress the particular individuality of a film by way of an artwork 'image' used in the form of a promotional poster or incorporated in a glossy sales brochure which includes a plot synopsis and biographical information on those involved with the project - director, producer, stars etc. More often than not, this work will be done at the pre-sale stage of the process. As Durie explains:

"Creating an image for the film before it is even made, or even the first frame is shot, is a very important ingredient because what it does is it plants in the mind of potential buyers some image about the picture... what we call 'track' in the industry. If they see an ad in January and with the AFM in February, if they see that, they see who's starring in it, they see who's directing it, or who's selling it, and they think 'we must keep an eye on that !'. Because although there is an eighteen month lead time from when a picture is actually given the go-ahead to when it's actually finished, everything happens in those eighteen months in terms of marketing it and selling it, getting it contracts and actually creating a marketing campaign. So when it goes out, people are very well aware of it. It's a very important ingredient in the whole film business because if you don't sell it, you don't get the money, and if you don't get the money, producers can't make their next picture."(19)

So far The Sales Company have been successful in their task. Their business acumen and enthusiasm for the products they are handling has ensured this and is a reflection of the will to survive on the part of the indigenous British film industry. These

attributes are shared by the more successful independent production and distribution companies currently active in the UK: the four companies I have mentioned as being associated with The Sales Company being prime examples.

Distribution and Marketing

In the UK the key marketing agents are the distribution companies. As Archie Tait points out in his article on distribution included in BRITISH CINEMA NOW published in 1985, there were 110 registered film distributors in Britain in 1983.(20) Of this figure 3 large companies handled the films made by the American majors: the staple product of the two major cinema circuits in this country- Rank's Odeon chain and Cannon cinemas. These 'big three' are UIP, Twentieth Century Fox and Columbia-Cannon-Warners (formerly Columbia-EMI-Warners). These companies have handled the distribution of the quite a few British productions in recent years including THE KILLING FIELDS, A PASSAGE TO INDIA, REVOLUTION, HIGHLANDER, THE MISSION, CASTAWAY, A MONTH IN THE COUNTRY (C-C-W, who handle less product than they formerly did when Thorn-EMI were a major producer), BRAZIL, DANCE WITH A STRANGER, (Fox) and PERSONAL SERVICES, CRY FREEDOM, A FISH CALLED WANDA and the JAMES BOND series (UIP).

Below the 'big three' there are Rank Distributors who have handled some British product like DEFENCE OF THE REALM, and a group of small independent British companies who have successfully handled much of the independently produced features

in the UK. Examples include Palace Pictures, who have distributed COMPANY OF WOLVES, MONA LISA, NO SURRENDER, THE HIT, INSIGNIFICANCE, SID & NANCY, ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS, WISH YOU WERE HERE, SAMMY AND ROSIE GET LAID and A WORLD APART; Recorded Releasing, an offshoot of producer Jeremy Thomas' Recorded Picture Company (HEAVENLY PURSUITS, EAT THE RICH, WITHNAIL AND I, TRACK 29 and DROWNING BY NUMBERS); Curzon (A ROOM WITH A VIEW, NANOU, COMRADES, LITTLE DORRIT, PRICK UP YOUR EARS); Virgin (GOTHIC, EMPIRE STATE, ARIA) and a few others like BFI distribution, Blue Dolphin, Mainline and Enterprise Pictures. Some of these companies rely on their own independent cinemas for releasing films and most of the British product handled by them tends to be exhibited in either in dependent cinemas or the BFI subsidised Regional Film Theatres.

The value of these companies is recognised by producers. Patrick Cassavetti, the producer of BRAZIL, MONA LISA and PARIS BY NIGHT argues that:

"Palace are brilliant because they will take a film and they will push it. They will invest a tremendous amount of enthusiasm into the marketing and selling. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. But I think, on the whole, the thing about Palace and others is that they are great film enthusiasts so they will enjoy the whole business of promoting a film. They believe in film in general and they will spend a lot of time encouraging people, encouraging exhibitors. And I think that's what you need to do. For so long people have just churned films out."(21)

The issue of marketing movies is a relatively recent phenomenon, catching on in the US, as B.J. Franklin suggests, in the sixties.(22) In the days of the studio system, the Hollywood majors tended to rely on their publicity departments to generate

interest in film productions. However, once the industry had undergone major structural change, competition became much fiercer in what was a shrinking market place. Finding the most effective way to sell your film to the public became a vital consideration. As Al Clark, former head of production at Virgin, puts it:

"Good marketing is absolutely indispensable... I would defy anyone to name a film that was a success without good marketing. Word of mouth has some effect obviously, once a film has opened, but the opening of a film is linked directly to the effectiveness of its marketing... To distinguish the film from anything else that's opening in that week, to give it an aura of 'must see', to create a sense of occasion around it without lapsing into empty hyperbole."(23)

Other producers currently active in British cinema agree with Clark. Margaret Mathieson of Zenith makes the following comments regarding the issue of marketing:

"I think it's very important, and I think it's something you need to learn coming out of television where you just make it and bang it on the box with promotion which follows very similar patterns. Learning how to promote cinema has been interesting. Knowing what you've got to sell... And then careful consideration of the best form of advertising depending on a particular audience you think will go for it."(24)

The unique nature of each film means that each must be marketed as a discrete commodity in much the same way as The Sales Company creates a 'profile' for film to attract potential buyers. This involves the creation of a 'narrative image' (again similar to the selling process) capturing the essence of the film which must be communicated to the cinema-going public. The idea of the 'narrative image' can be applied both in a literal sense: a poster design or logo, or in a broader sense encompassing the key marketable features of a project which will be concentrated on

during the campaign and hopefully implanted in the mind of the potential audience. In terms of the literal definition, the basic idea is to, in the words of Richard Kahn:

"...seize upon the factors (or preferably a single all-powerful one) that stand out as the dominant reasons people have for wanting to see the movie and to communicate the resulting theme via the words and images in the ad."(25)

Paul Webster, the Managing director of Palace Pictures is unequivocal about the importance of the poster design to those who made the film and those who will release it:

"It becomes for the movie the single image that attempts the impossible: to capture the essence of the film and transform it into an image of seduction."(26)

Palace made their name as a film distributor on the back of their phenomenal success with films like DIVA, THE EVIL DEAD and MERRY CHRISTMAS MR LAWRENCE. Steve Woolley, who along with Nic Powell is the driving force behind the company explains how he came up with the 'narrative image' for DIVA:

"I sat in front of a video screen and just kept watching images of the film thinking 'what can you take ?' and eventually came up with that helmet, which was a beautiful blue image and represented to me...the kid and the woman, the blue light behind. But then it didn't have everything so we thought 'lets rip the corner off and put that guy with the earphone coming through that'. So you get the murder/romance line that we came up with... And Jean Jaques Beineix (the director) thinks that is the best image he's seen for the film.... It takes a lot of work and a lot of time to get a campaign right... I think its really a case of not asking a director what he thinks of an image, but asking him why he made the film or understanding the notion of why it was worth doing it in the first place... getting under the skin of the person... and making that your campaign."(27)

The creation of a poster design can be a hit or miss situation and sometimes film-makers are not at all happy with the poster design created for their film by the distributors concerned. An

interesting example of this is EMPIRE STATE, whose director Ron Peck was far from happy about the poster produced by Virgin for the film:

"I don't think it was very interesting. It wasn't very arresting. It didn't give you any information. There were no credits on it. It just looked to me like something that was thrown out quickly."(28)

Peck contrasts this with the design created by stills photographer Mike Laye which was subsequently used by the sales agents Overview in selling the film overseas.

"They sold the film widely on the strength of it, which was interesting... it drew people's attention."(29)

As a consequence of his experiences with EMPIRE STATE, Peck is determined to have more control over the marketing of his subsequent films. This may prove a difficult thing to achieve given the rights of companies who have paid a lot of money for the film to market it as they see fit.

Turning now to the broader application of the idea of the 'narrative image', this can include information presented in the poster in the form of credits or a photograph of the leading actors etc. but it goes beyond the poster design in that the idea behind it is to create an impression in the audiences mind as to why the film is worth paying money to see. The naming of stars is a popular device and dates back to the earliest days of the Hollywood studio system. The importance of stars may have diminished slightly from the days of Humphrey Bogart, James Cagney, Bette Davis and Joan Crawford but the inclusion of a big star like Clint Eastwood, Sylvester Stallone or Meryl Streep in a film can give it quite a boost at the box office. The British

cinema boasts few international stars so production companies will often hire an American actor or actress to give them a better chance of attracting US finance. Recent examples include the casting of Barbara Hershey in A WORLD APART, Denzil Washington and Kevin Kline in CRY FREEDOM and Steve Guttenberg and Daryl Hannah in HIGH SPIRITS.

A film can also be marketed on the basis of its subject matter or genre. In this way it can be identified with the success of other productions which are similar in some way: the phenomenon of spin-offs and sequels, or simply being categorised as belonging to a genre which is currently fashionable, be it horror, action adventure, comedy or whatever. While spin-offs and sequels tend to be more a feature of American cinema: ROCKY, POLICE ACADEMY, NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET have all generated several sequels, British cinema in the past has also relied on series such as the BOND films, Hammer Horrors and the CARRY ON films, although, with the exception of the James Bond series, this is unusual in the current context. However, the question of genre is still important on both sides of the Atlantic. In the US several sub-genres have been created, reflecting the youthful composition of the audience: gung-ho adventure films, adolescent sex comedies, the 'Brat Pack' movies etc. British cinema, while by and large tending not to use genre as a major marketing device, is broadly structured on generic lines. The major popular British genres include 'quirky' comedies (often with serious social themes like LETTER TO BREHZNEV, MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE and others), thrillers (DEFENCE OF THE REALM, MONA LISA), biopics (SID &

NANCY, PERSONAL SERVICES, PRICK UP YOUR EARS) and the odd big budget 'liberal epic' like A PASSAGE TO INDIA, THE KILLING FIELDS or CRY FREEDOM. The question of genre in current British cinema will be explored in some depth in chapter eight which deals with the question of aesthetics and British cinema.

Staying with the question of subject matter, a film can also be marketed on the basis of its association with other popular forms; the classic example being an adaptation of a best selling novel or a popular play. Such literary adaptations have been particularly significant in terms of British cinema which has constantly looked to this country's strong literary tradition for ideas, often to the detriment of cinematic innovation and experiment. Recent examples include A ROOM WITH A VIEW, MAURICE, LITTLE DORRIT, A MONTH IN THE COUNTRY and A HANDFUL OF DUST.

A third category which can be manipulated as a marketing device is the the reputation of the director of the film, or in a few cases its producer: e.g. David Puttnam. Directors are arguably more marketable than they once were given the general rise in interest in directors as 'authors' of the films they make. This idea originated with the critics writing for the French journal CAHIERS DU CINEMA in the fifties and is reflected in the bulk of film reviews in the 'quality' press and on television. In the US the latest film by Stephen Spielberg, George Lucas, Martin Scorcese or Francis Coppola are marketed on the strength of their directors reputation, while in Britain productions by John Boorman, Richard Attenborough, Bill Forsyth, Nicolas Roeg, and

one or two others can be given a similar push.

However, as John Ellis notes,(30) the utilization of the idea of an individual creative genius as a major marketing device has its pitfalls for those concerned. The set of expectations which the marketing campaign utilizes can serve to constrain a film-maker by locking him or her in a particular image which they may be unable to break. Like actors and actresses they can become 'typecast' as a maker of comedies or action adventure movies and investors will only back projects which relate closely to their previous successes. The creativity to which they owe their reputations can become progressively stifled in the drive to retain their popularity with audiences and backers alike.

In this way we can begin to see how the categories explored above can inter-relate: particular directors and stars can become strongly associated with particular kinds of film. The task of the executives assigned to devise and implement a marketing campaign for a film must attempt to combine these elements in the most effective way possible, highlighting the strengths and downplaying any weaknesses: e.g. concentrating on star performers to cover up what may be a mediocre plot. In addition while there is a tendency to standardise, to cash in on past successes by employing similar techniques,some innovation is required if formulas are not to become too overworked and repetitive, leading to a drop in box office popularity. In addition, there is no such thing as a dead certainty in the film business: the inclusion of stars, a name director, or a popular subject may give a

production a greater chance of commercial success but this success will certainly not be ensured. The marketable elements of a project must be combined and packaged in particular ways using a range of marketing techniques which are sensitive to the complexities and characteristics of what is a volatile and highly illusive market.

The Marketing Strategy

As I have indicated above, marketing campaigns are as individual and idiosyncratic as the films they are designed to promote. However, there are a common set of parameters and techniques within which campaigns must operate and make use of in the most effective manner possible. Richard Kahn identifies four distinct categories within the concept of 'movie marketing': market research, advertising, publicity and promotion. He describes the first of these - 'market research' in terms of a currently evolving phenomenon which is designed to increase the effectiveness of decision-making with regard, not only to questions of sales and advertising, but also to:

"the very judgements that determine what movies will be made."(31)

This appears to bear out the observations made by Raymond Williams regarding market originated cultural production. However, Kahn preaches some caution on the issue in that market research does not, in his opinion, provide some set of objective guidelines for commercial success, however important it may be:

"Trained judgements, intuitive leaps, good guesses and common sense must remain the hallmarks of motion picture marketing; if

we veer away from these criteria, we're going to be in a great deal of trouble."(32)

Market research has three different applications in terms of the film-making process. Firstly, it can be used to target an audience: who will be interested in your film and is this market substantial enough to justify the amount of money you intend to spend on the production. In Britain decisions regarding target audience tends to be based on past experience; knowing what it is you've got to sell and looking at how similar products have sold in the past. This is something that The Sales Company are particularly good at according to clients like Sarah Radclyffe and Margaret Mathieson.

Secondly, market research can be used to test a finished film by way of organising previews screened to an invited audience whose reactions are observed throughout the screening and who are subsequently asked to comment and make suggestions as to how the film could be improved. This can result in changes to the final cut of the film; sequences which played well can be highlighted, those which didn't can be shortened, the whole film can be tightened up. Decisions can also be made regarding target audience at this stage, on the basis of who the film seemed to appeal to the most on a basis of age, sex and social class. From this information the most effective ways of marketing the film to its target audience can be worked out.

A third and final application of market research is to use it to

construct a 'formula picture': bringing together certain elements which research has shown to be popular with the public. This would seem to be an application of market research which ignores Kahn's warning in that it sets out to make the ultimate audience oriented picture regardless of other issues of form and content. As a result it has never been used in Britain and only occasionally in America. However, as John Durie points out, a company called Pacific International which made the Sun Classic films like THE WILDERNESS FAMILY in the seventies used this form of market research:

"It was almost like making a picture out of multiple choice elements: taking on the right elements and making the picture. And they were actually very good at that."(33)

Widespread use of such techniques could only lead to creative paralysis in the long run as it gives up the whole question of initiation in favour of some vague and dubious notion of 'what the public want'.

Kahn describes advertising as the marketing tool with the highest profile. It is also the most expensive: in 1978 $500,000,000 was spent on movie advertising in North America.(34) Advertising is conducted through the channels of newspapers ('the bulwark of the motion picture ad campaign'), magazines, radio, television and outdoor posting. The all important print ad 'image' represents the major foundation of a successful advertising campaign for all the reasons discussed above. In addition, the placing of ads in appropriate (in relation to target audience) publications and at appropriate times in broadcast schedules is vital. The advertising campaign carried out by Palace, through

their publicists, PSA for Nicolas Roeg's film INSIGNIFICANCE is described by Shelly Bancroft in an issue of AIP & Co. magazine.(35) The film was aimed at a young (mid 20's), fashion conscious, educated audience and consequently particular attention was paid to coverage in magazines identified as having this kind of readership: THE FACE, BLITZ and I.D. These ads put a strong emphasis on Roeg's directorial style (a reflection of his popularity among 'hip' cineastes) and also stressed the strong 50's glamour image of the film (reflecting the current vogue for fifties icons and fashions). A more mainstream release would have been advertised rather differently, probably making more use of popular newspapers and prime time television advertising.

Relating it back to the idea of market research, an advertising campaign may be subject to testing in much the same way as the completed film is at a preview. The is justified by John Durie on grounds of cost:

"The film industry is terribly expensive. It's very costly to make prints and take advertising and to sustain a campaign, let alone just the making of the picture. So it's an investment of... are you actually doing the right campaign for the right picture ?, releasing it at the right time to the right audiences in the right cities ?"(36)

The issue of publicity in Kahn's model refers to all direct public attention brought to a product by means of the same media used by advertising but in this instance using time and space that has not been directly purchased. This is the crucial difference between the two. On-going publicity is an important aspect of a marketing strategy from the moment the project is approved to when it reaches the cinemas. It embraces things like

news and feature stories concerning the project and those involved in it, interviews with such individuals and documentaries on the making of the film. Continuing with the example of INSIGNIFICANCE, publicity for this project included a TIME OUT feature on actor Tony Curtis, chat-show appearances by him on 'Wogan' and 'Breakfast Time', and a fashion spread in a major woman's magazine featuring Theresa Russell who also stars in the film. In addition, a documentary on the making of INSIGNIFICANCE was shot by Nicolas Roeg's son Luke.

Kahn points out that a qualified unit publicist is usually assigned to a production at very early stage and it is his, or her, job to generate a flow of press material that will continue to call attention to the film throughout the course of its production. The unit publicist is responsible for organising and supervising visits to the set by media representatives and also has the task of assembling the final 'press-kit' which will be handed out at press screenings for review purposes and at festivals. The kit is made up of notes on the production and those involved with it, feature stories and production stills. Glinwood, the sales agents for INSIGNIFICANCE produced an electronic press kit - a video consisting of clips from the film and soundtrack and sections of Luke Roeg's documentary - which was handed out at the Cannes film festival. Kahn also includes the making of a trailer to be shown at the cinema where the film is due to be exhibited at the promotional stage.

The final stage of the marketing process according to Kahn is

promotion. This involves the use of a variety of subsidiary devices to call attention to the film. These devices include paperback novelisations of the screenplay or, if the film is an adaptation, a re-edition of the original novel featuring artwork from the film on the cover - usually the poster design. Sound-track records are also common promotional devices. Steve Woolley of Palace is particularly emphatic about the importance of a soundtrack album as a promotional device:

"On SCANDAL we have an original score by Carl Davis, we have 20 different songs from Peter Sellars to the Shadows to Nat King Cole and Frank Sinatra... And The Pet Shop Boys have done a track with Dusty Springfield which they are releasing in February and that will be at least a top ten hit. We release our film in March... People say you are bastardising the film because you've got the Pet Shop Boys on the credits at the end. To me if I can get the Pet Shop Boys audience - especially the older ones, to take the picture semi-seriously then I've got an enormous market there."(37)

It is interesting to note that stars from the pop music world often appear in films: Mick Jagger, David Bowie and Sting for example, and this in itself is a marketing function to a certain extent. In the case of big blockbuster films like STAR WARS or ET the promotional net is thrown much wider to include toys, games, mugs, T shirts and other novelties.

A final promotional device which is not mentioned by Kahn but which B.J. Franklin picks up on, is 'word of mouth'. This can be a very effective, and cheap, way of drawing attention to a film. As Franklin suggests:

"If a film catches on by word of mouth the only thing that people need to know is where it's playing."(36)

All the hard work done at the marketing stage can be thrown away

if a film's distribution is botched. In fact, in some cases a film's ultimate success or failure can rest on how and when it is released into cinemas. Franklin points out that in North America there are two peak releasing periods during the year: Summer and Christmas. While these are popular periods this also means that competition is at its highest and selling a particular film to the public will be all the more difficult. The onus is on the distributor to handle the film carefully and intelligently in order to ensure the most favourable outcome. There are two typical release patterns - fast, where the market is saturated quickly and a film is screened simultaneously in cinemas all over the country, and slow, where a film is opened in one or two cinemas in selected areas and interest in the form of reviews and word of mouth is allowed to build up before it is released any wider. Franklin gives a detailed account of the releasing strategy employed by Columbia on Robert Benton's film KRAMER VS KRAMER. The movie was originally targeted at an 'adult' (meaning sophisticated not soft porn) audience as it was to be released during the christmas period and therefore would be in direct competition with a host of 'family' oriented blockbusters. When it came round to actual release, KRAMER VS KRAMER was given limited as opposed to blanket exposure: a slow rather than a fast release. This was to give the impression of the film being available, but not too available and was probably a self-conscious decision by Columbia to avoid any overt feeling of the film being in competition with the more high profile blockbusters. In any case the film proved to be both a commercial and a critical success.

While good placing can help a film's success, a releasing strategy which is inappropriate, or badly thought out, can wreck a film. This is exactly what Ron Peck claims happened to his film EMPIRE STATE which, as is pointed out above, was distributed in this country by Virgin. As Peck puts it:

"Virgin ended up doing a deal with Cannon, therefore it went into Cannon cinemas and it seems to me it shouldn't have played in those cinemas. it was the wrong place. I went up to Newcastle to see it. It opened there and played for one week, which was interesting because even the cinema manager said the film would do much better at the local regional film theatre... Virgin opened the film in something like thirty cinemas on the first day which again was a big mistake. It should have opened in one cinema and allowed to hopefully generate interest, which is a tried and tested way of opening films like MONA LISA and MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE. These films opened in a place where there was a focus."(39)

In addition to the insensitive release pattern, thirty prints of the film must have been struck. At £1,000 a print this seems an unnecessary expense for a film which could have earned more at the box office with a slower releasing pattern using 6-10 prints. The larger companies, who are used to dealing with mass-market American product, seem to be unable at times to treat more 'difficult' products with the care they require. As Steve Woolley observes:

"I see all the time companies like Rank and Cannon, who have so much on their plate they don't know what their doing; they don't know when they've got a good film or a bad film, so they throw them all out.. And they throw the baby out with the bath water every time."(40)

There is occasionally a problem of access to particular cinemas which can hinder the distribution process. Simon Ralph explains that in the case of COMRADES the plan was to release the film into the Curzon cinema as its pre general release showcase

(Curzon being the film's UK distributors). However, the film was delayed slightly due to problems with the editing process and as a result it missed its turn in the queue at the Curzon, losing out to PRICK UP YOUR EARS.

These then are the major components of the marketing process. To conclude this discussion, I shall describe in some depth the marketing campaigns which were designed for the release of two British films into UK cinemas in the mid eighties.

The Marketing of THE KILLING FIELDS and COMPANY OF WOLVES

Most home produced films are marketed in this country by British distribution companies. There are some which have been substantially funded from North America and as a consequence the right to distribute these films, even in the home market, remains with the American distributor. This is the case with Roland Joffe and David Puttnam's film THE KILLING FIELDS which was marketed in this country by Warner Brothers European Advertising and Publicity department and distributed through Columbia-EMI-Warner.(41) The film was initially previewed at selected venues, enabling the makers to assess feedback and make any alterations if necessary. The response at these previews was generally positive, particularly from females and young males. The advertising strategy was to 'play-safe' by aligning the film with both CHARIOTS OF FIRE (by virtue of David Puttnam being the producer of both) and GANDHI (by virtue of the production company Goldcrest), both multiple Oscar winners, serving to boost THE

KILLING FIELDS by association and give it a particular profile as a 'quality' film.

The decision was made to open the film exclusively in one cinema. This was the pre-christmas period and if the film had been given a general release at this stage it would have found itself in direct competition with American blockbusters like GHOSTBUSTERS and GREMLINS and probably would have suffered accordingly. The strategy generated much interest: both word of mouth, and critical in the form of published reviews. Favourable quotes from critics were used in subsequent poster and ad campaigns. THE KILLING FIELDS was then released into three other London cinemas in order to build up the momentum gradually. Finally, a general release was planned for February 1985. This was good timing as the Christmas films had come to the end of their runs and THE KILLING FIELDS was tipped to clean uip at the BAFTA ceremonies (the British Oscars). Around 60 prints were made for maximum nationwide exhibition. (In the US an equivalent general release would involve over 1,000 prints: a stark indication of the difference in market size.)

THE KILLING FIELDS enjoyed the benefits of having a powerful and established marketing organisation. COMPANY OF WOLVES, on the other hand, was the first film produced by Palace, only two years after they had begun to distribute films.(42) COMPANY OF WOLVES was perceived as an 'art' film and consequently posed certain problems as to the most effective way to market it. It had no direct structure and did not fit into any existing generic

category, there were no big stars appearing in the film, and the director Neil Jordan was, at that point, virtually unknown. Therefore, the decision was made to market the film as an 'enigma', as Paul Webster, the man responsible for the campaign, puts it. The marketing campaign was to be limited by financial considerations: only £200,000 was available (minus the cost of prints), which is extremely modest compared to the average $5-6 million spent on an American film at home. So the initial steps were to make selective placements of ads in certain 'quality' publications including THE GUARDIAN, THE SUNDAY TIMES and TIME OUT and on local London radio. Palace found that the 'tabloid' press were of little help given the lack of popular personalities attached to the project.

The advertising campaign utilized five key sentences, each beginning 'once upon a time'. These were designed to puzzle and fascinate, but not to inform as such: to give the impression of 'something stirring in the undergrowth' as Paul Webster puts it. The film was previewed at the 1984 Edinburgh Film Festival, "to a very confused audience", as Neil Jordan remembers (43), and subsequently was given its London premier at the prestigious Odeon Leicester Square. As Webster points out, the Rank circuit had a great deal of faith in the film, making wide distribution relatively painless. The premier was followed by a party held in a marquee by the Thames, which was appropriate given that the film features a grotesque banquet in a marquee where all the guests are turned into wolves ! The film was then given a general release and it proved to be popular, particularly with

metropolitan audiences.

Palace expressed some disappointment at the film being designated an '18' certificate by the British Board of Film Censors as it had been particularly enjoyed by children at a special showing in Dublin. A American distribution deal was arranged with Cannon who marketed the film in a similar fashion stateside, although the delicate balance between exploitation/intelligent film which had been achieved in the UK campaign tended to be upset with a gravitation towards the exploitative elements. Steve Woolley wasn't particularly happy with the job done by Cannon, feeling the film had been 'thrown away'.(44)

Both COMPANY OF WOLVES and THE KILLING FIELDS were subsequently released on video cassette. Paul Webster argues that a video release is absolutely vital to a film of limited appeal like COMPANY OF WOLVES. The theatrical release is used to set the tone and video is a primary follow up. 17,000 video cassettes of the film were released by Palace compared to 60 prints for theatrical distribution. This is very much a reflection of the pattern of film consumption in the UK today and it makes simple economic sense to treat the film in such a way. The same justification is given for the high concentration on the London area as far as the advertising campaign for COMPANY OF WOLVES was concerned. Cinema-going being much higher in the capital compared to the provinces, justifying the considerably higher profile. This is all part of effective targeting and utilzation of resources within the marketing campaign.

These are only two examples of thoughtful and successful marketing campaigns, demonstrating an awareness of product, of potential audience, and of the most effective means to bring the film to the attention of that audience. At the end of the day this is vital, for the simple reason that unless films can reach an audience of a sufficient size to justify the amount of money spent on them , production companies would go out of business and film makers would be unable to work. Therefore in practically all cases potential projects will only secure funding if the investors are convinced the film can perform in the market place. These are the economic imperatives informing the industrial structures within which the creative process of film production necessarily takes place.

NOTES

(1) See chapter Four: 'British Feature Film Production: The U.K. Mini-Majors.

(2) Interview 20/7/87

(3) Richard Kahn: 'Motion Picture Marketing' in J. Squire (ed.) THE MOVIE BUSINESS BOOK, Columbus, (London), 1986 p264.

(4) Raymond Williams: CULTURE, Fontana, (London), 1981 p53.

(5) ibid. p105.

(6) John Ellis: VISIBLE FICTIONS, Routledge and Kegan Paul, (London), 1982.

(7) SIGHT & SOUND, Winter 1983/4.

(8) Interview with Steve Woolley 7/11/88

(9) Interview 7/11/88

(10) Interview with Gareth Jones 22/7/88

(11) James Park: 'Film Sales Agents: Floggers or Financiers', AIP & CO. November 1985.

(12) Interview 22/7/88

(13) Interview with Simon Relph in SIGHT & SOUND, Autumn 1987.

(14) Interview with John Durie 7/4/88

(15) Interview 7/11/88

(16) Interview with Sarah Radclyffe 7/4/88

(17) Interview 7/4/88

(18) Interview 7/4/88

(19) Interview 7/4/88

(20) Archie Tait: 'Distributing the Product' in Auty & Roddick (eds.) BRITISH CINEMA NOW, BFI, (London), 1985.

(21) Interview with Patrick Cassavetti 21/7/87

(22) B.J. Franklin in Pirie (ed.): ANATOMY OF THE MOVIES, Windward, (London), 1981.

(23) Interview with Al Clark 17/7/87

(24) Interview with Margaret Mathieson 20/7/87

(25) Kahn in Squire (ed.) p265.

(26) Paul Webster: 'Pictures of Pictures', PRODUCER, May 1987.

(27) Interview 7/11/88

(28) Interview with Ron Peck 8/4/88

(29) Interview 8/4/88

(30) Ellis: VISIBLE FICTIONS.

(31) Kahn in Squire (ed.) p271.

(32) ibid.

(33) Interview 7/4/88

(34) Figure quoted by Kahn in Squire (ed.).

(35) Shelley Bancroft: 'Hard Hype, Hard Sell, Hard Cash', AIP & CO, Summer 1985.

(36) Interview 7/4/88

(37) Interview 7/11/88

(38) Franklin in Pirie (ed.)

(39) Interview 8/4/88

(40) Interview 7/11/88

(41) Information from Julian Senior, Vice President, European Advertising and Publicity, Warner Brothers, lecturing at an A.I.P. Seminar: 'Marketing the Movie' at BAFTA, Picadilly, London on 28/5/85.

(42) Information from Paul Webster, lecturing at the above seminar.

(43) Interview with Neil Jordan 2/6/88

(44) Interview 7/11/88

CHAPTER SEVEN

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND TRAINING INITIATIVES IN BRITISH CINEMA

As I have attempted to show elsewhere, film-making is essentially constituted as a capital intensive industrial process geared towards a particular kind of market-oriented cultural production. Like all industries, the British film industry is stratified along employer/employee lines, albeit in a somewhat different way than in a typical factory situation. This is because the direct employer is often an independent producer (rather than a large production company) who belongs to the same Trade Union as his or her employees. In any case, the issue of industrial relations is an extremely important question in any consideration of the structure of the British film industry, especially so given the present nature of employment patterns in that industry.

Unlike the days of the Hollywood studio system, and its British equivalent which embraced permanent production operations at Pinewood (Rank), Elstree (Associated British), Ealing and Bray (Hammer Films) studios among others, the film-industry is currently structured on a freelance basis. That is to say film projects are funded on a one-off principle with the hiring of labour, or 'crewing-up' as it is called, conducted along similar lines. Contracts are temporary, for most employees probably in the region of six months or less. In addition, when one considers that only 40-50 feature films are produced in this country in any one year, the question of employment protection becomes a very pertinent one. By virtue of the particularly unstable nature of

the production industry, film workers require effective representation in order to protect their livelihood against the uncertainties such an employment situation creates. The body which has evolved to meet this need is the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT): the major trade union in the film and television industries. (There are other unions involved such as Equity and the Musicians Union but the ACTT is the single most important organisation and it is on issues relating to this union that I wish to examine.)

As Vincent Porter points out (1), unionisation in the British film studios began in the 1930's. The initial impetus was generated at the Gaumont British studios in Shepherds Bush, West London, where the head of production at the time was Michael Balcon. Balcon operated a policy of recruiting university educated people to the major creative and administrative posts at the studio. Many of these individuals were politically progressive (Balcon himself was to be a supporter of Atlee's post-war Labour Administration unlike other prominent producers in the industry like the arch-conservative J. Arthur Rank.) and were appalled at the working conditions they found in the industry at the time, with studio workers being expected to put in up to sixteen hours a day, seven days a week, churning out 'quota quickies'.

This state of affairs led to the formation of the Association of Cine Technicians (ACT) in 1933, which subsequently became the ACTT in the mid-fifties after the development of television. The

basic strategy of the ACT was to organise all grades from the director down to the clapper loader. Significantly, as Porter points out, it also decided to organise the laboratory workers who essentially represented the working class base of what was largely a middle class union. I say significantly because all the studios, with the honourable exception of Gaumont British, refused to negotiate with the new union and it took the threat of strike action by the laboratory workers to bring them to the negotiating table.

Since then the union has attempted to maintain rates of pay and conditions for its members plus actively lobbying in relation to certain issues and in favour of certain reforms. These include, as George Perry notes (2), the setting up of the National Film Finance Corporation in the immediate post-war period, the calls for a nationalised third exhibition circuit in both the late forties and early sixties, the demands to nationalise the film industry during the financial crisis of the early seventies, and a strong lobby against the 1985 films bill which included the drafting of detailed alternative proposals.

The ACTT has also had to come to terms with the casualisation of film production, both in relation to cinema and television. Film productions are usually made under the terms of agreements reached with the British Film and Television Producers Association (BFTPA) and the Independent Programme Producers Association (IPPA). In terms of television production, as Manuel Alvarado and John Stewart point out in their study of Euston

Films (3), the BFTPA agreements are different from the Independent Television Companies Association (ITCA) agreement which covers work generated on video tape, in that they allow for more flexible working practices as befits the nature of film production, as opposed to studio based TV work. Some television films such as THE NAKED CIVIL SERVANT and SAIGON: YEAR OF THE CAT were made under the ITCA agreement but the production company involved - Thames Television - found the conditions a problem with less flexible rosters and huge overtime costs. In order to keep costs down the BFTPA agreement is much more viable for such production practices which include location shooting and variable working hours.

Alvarado and Stewart also point out that in 1973 Euston Films were blacked by the ACTT who were anxious about the casualisation of working practices and the slump in film production. This dispute was resolved quickly and lead to a major upheaval in the union, including the removal of hard-left political activists within the film production branch, and an acceptance of casualised employment structures and 'four-waller' type studio production (studios as a rentable facility not a permanent production base) as being the only ways to maintain and expand British film production.

In the last few years the union has been subject to a series of attacks from the Conservative Government and their supporters in the press. The major charge levelled against the ACTT is that it represents 'the last bastion of restrictive practices' in a

society where the power of the unions has been effectively restricted. The immediate context in which these criticisms have arisen is the dispute at TV-AM where the Breakfast television company locked out 229 ACTT members who had staged a one-day stoppage in protest at the company's attempts to force through changes in working practices. After three months the 229 were summarily dismissed. During the dispute the ACTT were attacked in the press, led by Rupert Murdoch's News International titles, and by the Prime Minister. These attacks were very much related to Government plans to deregulate the broadcast industry where a strong union committed to the closed-shop would be intolerable.

In an article in the Spring 1988 edition of PRODUCER magazine, Roy Lockett, the depute secretary of the ACTT defends his union against such attacks, arguing that an examination of the union's track record would not reveal an organisation "dedicated to brute force and a confrontation theory of industrial relations". Lockett himself sees the antagonism as part of wider plans for the broadcast industry. As he puts it:

"Unions are currently unfashionable. In the drive massively to enhance the power of private capital which is the central trajectory of Government policy, those who earn their living in our industry will come under increasing pressure. There has always been a fight for economic survival, often savage, in the freelance sector where the cyclical unemployment which has characterised its history has resulted directly from the operation of the same market forces now being lauded as beneficial in the broadcasting industry."(4)

Lockett concludes by arguing that the need for a strong union and the justification for the use of its collective strength to protect and enhance the interests of those who work in the industry will increase in relation to those new developments.

But criticisms of the ACTT have not just come from individuals and political parties ideologically committed to destroying what they see as the last vestiges of socialism in the new enterprise culture of the nineteen eighties. Someone as radically anti-establishment as Derek Jarman, who himself has suffered at the hands of the same forces of reaction which are presently attacking the ACTT, is rather scathing about the union and its policies. Jarman describes the ACTT as:

"...a sort of boys club which is run by extreme conservatives who consider themselves to be socialists."(5)

Jarman's complaints about the union are largely in relation to the the issue of the introduction of new technology in the industry. As he argues:

"...the patterns under which we work in the ACTT are incredibly geriatric because all forms of new technology, which are inevitable, are fought. So it's always a fight against change instead of people with vision realising we are going to move into the video age and preparing for it and working it out. It's as if they are always surprised and they are always on the defensive. They represent the element of large areas of the Left in this country."(6)

Jarman himself has been working at the forefront of new technology: in particular, the possibilities of making visually sophisticated films generated on Super 8 made possible by advances in the area of telecine transfer systems and digital video post-production facilities.

It is interesting that producer James Mackay, the person who has worked most closely with Jarman on his Super 8 films: IMAGINING OCTOBER, THE ANGELIC CONVERSATION and THE LAST OF ENGLAND, should

strongly disagree on the question of unions. According to Mackay the ACTT:

"...are there to stop you exploiting labour. Now obviously, some people in the film business are only paid for what they do and they use the rule book as a wedge to achieve this. Quite simply you don't employ these people. On the other hand, I've seen people working on productions, on a cash in hand basis, for wages I wouldn't even consider working for in a shop. I find the exploitation that goes on is really terrible - producers who do deals for 10% on people's wages for unlimited overtime. I wouldn't abide that on one of my productions."(7)

On THE LAST OF ENGLAND, which was unusual in that it was shot before any budget came through, Mackay went to the unions very early on and told them openly about the nature of the film. The policy appeared to work as Mackay did not encounter any hostility from the ACTT:

"I think that if you are open and honest and you are obviously not hiding anything. They are only there to, as well as protect their members, promote a film industry in this country. And, as they often say, if the industry is going to go forward it has to embrace new technology."(8)

We now have to resolve whether the ACTT are more of a progressive or a reactionary force in the British film industry. As far as creativity and film-making are concerned it is in the interests of film-makers for the union to be flexible and not to impose compromise in the shape of confrontation or intransigence. Therefore, I shall now consider the policies and strategies of the union, particularly in relation to low budget and experimental production - the area in which both Jarman and Mackay work.

As I have already indicated, the British film industry is

characterised by the lack of a stable on-going financial base and consequently employment can be very erratic, with the cyclical booms and slumps in production. Consequently, the ACTT must try to ensure the best possible working conditions and rates of remuneration for their members when work is available. In order to achieve these objectives the union has organised film workers into various grades or job titles which, in the case of feature film production, are in turn organised into ten salary groupings which range from group one - which includes assistant grades and clapper loaders, up to group ten - including production supervisors, supervising editors and lighting cameramen/women. Rates of pay are specified for each group, broken down into freelance and permanently employed weekly and daily rates. There are slightly different arrangements for shorts, documentary and music promo production with generally lower rates specified by the union.(9)

Rates are not specified for directors, producers and screenwriters as in most cases their fees are negotiated on a fixed basis, with perhaps a possibility of participation in any subsequent profits, regardless of how many weeks the production takes. These fees are included in the 'above the line' costs in the budget, while the salaries for the crew are 'below the line' items along with studio, equipment and facility hire. In addition to rates of pay, the ACTT also insists on certain minimum crewing levels to further protect their members from possible exploitation, and prevent producers from hiring non-union labour.

While such policies seem fair in the context of normal commercial film production, in terms of the low budget independent sector such strong regulations would appear to create certain problems. Given the general lack of resources available to independent film-makers, some may find it incredibly difficult to set up productions and meet the requirements of the union in terms of wages and crewing levels. In addition, there is the question of non-union labour - independents may not be able to hire established technicians or they may want to do the job themselves. In any case a chicken and egg situation is created: in order to work one requires a union ticket but in order to acquire such a ticket one must have some experience and have acquired certain skills.

With regard to the question of non-union labour, James Mackay had to deal with this problem on the production of THE LAST OF ENGLAND. Once again he found the ACTT attentive and helpful:

"You have to ask for exemptions if you have somebody who you want to work with who hasn't got a ticket. Now, if you are doing a project like THE LAST OF ENGLAND then to some extent you are dealing with people who are experienced in that area of film-making or who are young. Given that I wouldn't employ anyone who wasn't technically competent on principle, then obviously one day these people are going to belong to the union. So it's not a problem getting them exemptions on the technical side. It's easy to show the union their work if they are doubtful - you can see they are up and coming members of the film industry. On the production side it's more difficult because they obviously get a lot of requests for production assistant tickets, researcher tickets, things like that. But on the technical side they are very understanding if they see people's work is good."(10)

On the more general level of the problems associated with low budget production, the ACTT has acknowledged these problems and their response is formalised in two documents: the 'Code of

Practice for Grant Aided Production' drawn up in 1979, and the 'Grant Aided Workshops Production Declaration' which appeared three years later. These initiatives reflect a recognition on the part of the ACTT of the importance, in cultural terms, of a particular sector of production: a sector which experienced an upsurge during the period of implementation of both the Code of Practice and the Workshop Agreement. This upsurge was due to, on one hand, the shift in policy at the BFI Production Board towards a concentration on feature films and, on the other, the appearance of Channel 4 and with it a commitment to fund innovative and experimental low budget film-making. The ACTT is particularly proud of these agreements, arguing that 'together they represent a far-sighted and crucial intervention into cultural production'.(11)

The Code of Practice was drawn up initially in consultation with the Regional Arts Associations, the Welsh Arts Council and the Distribution Division of the British Film Institute and recognises three types of independent film production: experimental productions involving one or two people, non-commercial short documentary films and 'grant-aided feature films where only non-commercial distribution is intended'. For such productions the ACTT state that they are prepared to consider the use of some non-union labour, to negotiate over crewing levels and to impose minimum rates of pay on a lower basis than would apply to a normal commercial production. Such productions are subsequently monitored by the union and top-up payments to crews may be required should the film be commercially exploited at some

future point.

The type of feature film which has most benefited from the Code of Practice have been those funded by the BFI Production Board and certain independent productions commissioned by Channel 4. In fact the Code of Practice, in its revised form, states that 'all films made under the Code of Practice shall be eligible for purchase by Channel 4 under the appropriate quota arrangement.' This is a recognition of the cultural, as opposed to commercial, importance of the channel as a 'window' for independent and experimental product.

Colin MacCabe, former Head of Production at the BFI Production Board, is very enthusiastic about the Code of Practice which has enabled the BFI to fund films at a level they can afford whilst guaranteeing certain technical standards. As MacCabe explains:

"It makes a considerable difference. CARAVAGGIO for example, cost about £470,000. My guess is if we'd had to make it completely commercially it would have cost between eight and nine hundred thousand."(12)

Without the Code it is conceivable that certain BFI backed productions such as Derek Jarman's CARAVAGGIO and Peter Greenaway's THE DRAUGHTSMANS CONTRACT may not have been realised, or at least not as successfully as they were.

The second of the two agreements - the Workshop Declaration - was drawn up in conjunction with the same bodies as the Code of Practice, plus Channel 4 and the Independent Film and Video Association and it basically 'ensures ACTT approval for properly

funded and staffed production units who want to engage in non-commercial and grant-aided film and tape work.' Workshops which qualify are enfranchised by the union. All surpluses generated must be reinvested in the workshop and its activities and all rights in workshop productions should be held collectively by all members of the workshop. While the co-operative and non-commercial aspects of the arrangements are expressed in the declaration, workshop productions are eligible for screening by Channel 4 subject to a quota agreement which sets out the number of hours of workshop material which can be screened annually.

In terms of pay and conditions, the Declaration sets out an annually revised salary scale and the terms and conditions of employment of workshop members covering items such as sick pay, holidays and maternity leave. Workshops currently operating under the Declaration include Frontroom, Amber and Black Audio Video Collective. In addition to the Workshop Declaration, the BFI and Channel 4 have also negotiated agreements with the ACTT whereby workshops can be funded on a one-off basis for a particular project over and above the usual revenue funding they receive each year.

Some commentators have however expressed certain reservations as to the long term impact of ACTT involvement in the workshop sector. While praising the initiative, Sheila Whitaker for one urges caution:

"The ACTT is a highly structured organisation, geared to protectionism in a media industry whose film section is diminishing in importance. Independent film-makers may be forgiven for sometimes wondering to what extent the ideological

and cultural implications of the Declaration have permeated the union as a whole."(13)

While this may well be a justifiable fear on the part of independent film-makers, the major funding bodies responsible for most of the 'independent' and workshop production which takes place in Britain are very positive about the ACTT and its initiatives in this particular sector of film-making. Colin MacCabe describes his relationship with the union as 'excellent', while Alan Fountain, the Commissioning Editor for Independent Film and Video at Channel 4, recognises the input of the ACTT early on in the life of the Channel. As he explains:

"I've known a lot of people like Roy Lockett and Jenny Wood in the ACTT for years and they've sort of identified themselves over the years as personally committed to the cultural/political project of Channel 4. So they have always understood and been sympathetic to most of the work that we've been doing. And we've always been very straight with them whenever we've been going to do something unusual. We have always gone to them and said: 'this is what we want to do. Are you happy about it ?' Before the beginning of the Channel we spent a lot of time together with the ACTT working out the Workshop Declaration. We also negotiated with them, at the same time, an agreement whereby we could do community type productions and avant garde work where one person was basically doing it all themselves in a bedroom or whatever. I can't think of any occasion on which the ACTT has said 'You can't do it'. They've been incredibly helpful."(14)

Fountain contrasts the flexibility of the ACTT with his experiences of the other unions he has had to negotiate with, such as Equity and the Musicians Union. He argues that in dealings with these bodies there has been no identification on their part of Channel 4 having a particular cultural project warranting special considerations or flexibility. As Fountain puts it:

"In my experience dealing with the ACTT has been one thing, while dealing with the other unions is just a conventional relationship."(15)

So in this instance, far from being the 'last bastion of restrictive practices, the ACTT have actually shown themselves to be more willing to negotiate than their counterparts in the audio-visual industries. This would confirm the union's own claim that they have been willing to listen and work with employers, with the well-being of the whole industry in mind, rather than displaying intransigence and pursuing confrontational policies.

Training

Formal training structures are an important aspect of any industry and the film industry is no exception. However, given the major changes which have occurred in the employment structure since the break-up of permanent, studio-based production, formal training patterns have been radically altered to replace the old studio apprentice system. I have already discussed the significance of the development of film schools as an attempt to create new structures of formal training. Training is obviously of critical importance within the field of industrial relations. Colin Young the director of the National Film School argues that the ACTT have been enthusiastic supporters of the school, enabling school films to be made very cheaply (as indeed they must be given the resources available) and to ensure that graduates have little difficulty in obtaining ACTT membership.

While film schools like the NFS and the London International Film School are the major channel for the training of the major

creative personnel within the film industry (16), there is also a need for some kind of organised training structure encompassing lower technical grades. This need provided the context for the introduction of the Joint Board for Film Industry Training (JOBFIT) in 1985 by the ACTT, the BFTPA and the IPPA. The Advertising Film and Video Producers Association (AFVPA) and Channel 4 subsequently became co-sponsors of the scheme in 1986.

As the ACTT's press release on the scheme puts it, JOBFIT is effectively -

"..the first systematic industry wide training scheme in the freelance film-making sector and trains new entrants up to junior film technician grades. The style is like that of an apprenticeship where trainees are attached to various film productions over a two week period. Support for technical training is also provided in the form of 12 weeks college based courses a year."(17)

Twelve JOBFIT trainees are taken on at a time at intervals compatible with production cycles in the industry. After two years, if trainees have satisfactorily completed the programme, they will be eligible for ACTT membership in a junior grade of their chosen specialist area. (Trainees specialise in their second year after having gained some experience in a range of departments - similar to their counterparts at the NFS.)

These are basically the major training structures within the British film industry. They have evolved to meet new demands created by the various structural changes which have effected the industry over the past twenty years. It is highly significant that the ACTT should be actively involved in, or at least highly supportive of, these developments. This above all apparently

demonstrates a willingness to seek practical solutions to the very concrete issues of change in an industry where resources are often scarce. By all accounts we must therefore conclude that the ACTT represents a progressive rather than a reactionary force within the industry, at least on a formal level, and should be acknowledged as such.

What is particularly significant is the ACTT's apparent willingness to face the realities of change within what is a very volatile industry. In the past the union could afford to be aggressive in the sense that cinema audiences were large therefore work was plentiful and studios were very profitable. It was the union's duty in such a situation to do all it could to ensure its members were in some way beneficiaries of that profitability. However, when permanent production ended and the employment structure of film-making began to change in the direction of freelance working, the union had to modify its approach to accommodate such change. Despite some conflict and confrontation - the Euston Films dispute of the early seventies and its outcome being one example, and the prickly issue of demarcation within the industry where a member who has a ticket for one job cannot do another without Union approval, it can be argued that the ACTT has adapted to the casualisation of employment within the industry. They have also responded positively to the emergence of workshop production and the ostensibly non-commercial low budget cultural project of the BFI Production board and Channel Four. This response has been crucial for the continuation of such production strategies and practices.

NOTES

(1) Vincent Porter: ON CINEMA Pluto Press (London) 1985.

(2) George Perry: THE GREAT BRITISH PICTURE SHOW Pavillion (London) 1985.

(3) Manuel Alvarado and John Stewart: MADE FOR TELEVISION: EUSTON FILMS, BFI (London) 1985.

(4) Roy Locket: 'Opinion'in PRODUCER, Cannes Edition, Spring 1988 p30.

(5) Interview with Derek Jarman 17/8/87

(6) ibid.

(7) Interview with James Mackay 9/4/88

(8) ibid.

(9) Information on Grades from Film and Television Technician Magazine published by the ACTT.

(10) Interview 9/4/88

(11) ACTT 'Code of Practice' Press Release.

(12) Interview with Colin MacCabe 15/7/87

(13) Sheila Whitaker: 'Declarations of Independence' in Auty & Roddick (eds.) BRITISH CINEMA NOW, BFI (London) 1985 p88.

(14) Interview with Alan Fountain 6/6/88

(15) ibid.

(16) The role of Film Schools is discussed in chapter ten.

(17) ACTT 'JOBFIT' Press Release.

PART THREE: AESTHETICS AND THE PRODUCTION PROCESS

CHAPTER EIGHT

ISSUES OF CREATIVITY AND CONSTRAINT IN BRITISH CINEMA: GENRE, AESTHETICS AND CRITICISM

In order to develop an adequate understanding of the nature of film-making as a creative process, it is vitally important that the ways in which creativity is effectively structured - with respect to the particular cultural and historical content in question - be carefully considered. It can be argued that every creative process, be it artistic, scientific, technological or whatever, occurs in the material world and is consequently subject to the material and structural constraints which are intrinsic to that world. Creative activity always occurs in relation to practical problems, and the availability of resources, utilised in the solution of such problems, is constrained by material circumstances.

As I have argued, 'Creativity' as a concept is treated in a rather vague and ambiguous way by many writers - a reflection of the long lasting influence of conception of the Romantic artist: the autonomous creative individual, described by Raymond Williams in THE LONG REVOLUTION (1). This conception of the autonomous individual provides the basis for popular and 'common sense' conceptions of creativity - and consequently it almost always retains a sense of mystery: an inaccessible component which insulates it against anything other than partial explanation. I would wish to argue that a more productive insight into the nature of creativity can be gained by looking in the direction of the context in which a particular instance of creative activity

occurs. The material constitution of this context is amenable to explanation and consequently it is from such a starting point that one can begin to investigate the nature of creative activity which occurs within, and is therefore constrained by, the structures of that context. These structures suggest creative possibility, generate problems and provide resources. They also impose limits which determine the range of choices individuals are able to make with respect to practical problems and creative solutions. Through the identification and examination of the material context we can begin to shed some light on the problem of creativity, dispelling some of the mystique associated with 'idealist' or 'romantic' accounts of creative process.

In the context of my own substantive area of study, it is the material structures and resources of cinema, both in the general sense and in terms of their particular configuration in the context of British Cinema in the nineteen eighties, which beg consideration. In this chapter I shall concentrate on the aesthetic and critical factors which help to determine the nature and direction of cinematic creativity in contemporary British film-making.

The aesthetic and cultural factors which contribute to the structuring of creativity are perhaps less tangible than issues of finance and technology but they are just as important in terms of the present discussion. The aesthetic domain embraces these resources constituted by the language of cinema - modes of narration, mise en scene, montage etc. - which any film-maker can

draw upon in the course of their work. These aesthetic resources are related to technological resources such as cameras, lenses, film stock, lighting, editing & dubbing facilities. Consequently, the individual film-maker is afforded a wide range of aesthetic and technical possibilities from which to draw upon.

While subjective elements do play a part in this process: personal aesthetic preferences and techniques betraying particular influences, choices are always made in accordance with external considerations and determinants ranging from the readily identifiable - size of budget, demands of investors, to the less tangible - the social and cultural context within which creative activity occurs. Factors such as normative and value systems, social stratification, history and politics also contribute to the social context within which film-making, as well as writing, theatre and painting (all of which in turn have influenced the development of cinema), take place. Contrary to the claims of idealist philosophy, aesthetics cannot transcend the material and social world of which they are a part. With these remarks in mind I shall now turn towards a consideration of the cultural context of British cinema, in both an historical and a contemporary sense, in the attempt to identify the nature and parameters of the 'aesthetic space' within which film-making occurs.

Genre and British Cinema

All national cinemas can be described as more or less heterogeneous with regard to the range of films they produce. The

British cinema is no exception to this in that each film possesses its own unique characteristics and narrative. In addition, unlike in American cinema, there are very few sequels - which often contain all the elements of the original plot in a slightly different order or combination - produced in British cinema. However, such a conception renders the task of saying anything meaningful about 'the British cinema', as opposed to the particular film, extremely difficult. For this reason we must impose some system of classification, however inadequate, on to the heterogeneity of product in order to identify underlying patterns and possible categories into which individual films can be placed.

The most commonly utilized system of film classification is that of genre, developed in relation to American cinema from the earliest days of Hollywood and persisting in a modified form to the present day. The usefulness of the concept of genre with regard to film-makers and audiences alike is described by Christine Gledhill in the following manner:

"In cinema...generic forms were one of the earliest means used by the industry to organise the production and marketing of films, and by reviewers and the popular audience to guide their viewing. In this respect genres...emerged from the studio system's dual need for standardisation and product differentiation. The genres, each with its recognisable repertoire of conventions running across visual imagery, plot, character, setting, modes of narrative development, music and stars, enabled the industry to predict audience expectation. Differences between genres meant different audiences could be catered to. All this made it easier to standardise and stabilise production."(2)

Generic forms therefore developed in relation to the commercial imperative which has underpinned Hollywood film-making since the

days of the pioneers. The major Hollywood genres are comedy, westerns, crime & gangster films, horror films, musicals, war films, epics, science fiction and disaster films. In addition, certain genres were the construction of critics as opposed to being consciously developed marketing devices by studios. Film noir is perhaps the classic example, the term being coined by French critics to refer to a range of Private Detective films and other thrillers made in Hollywood during the forties and fifties characterised by their innovative use of particular thematic and stylistic devices.(3) Genres tend to possess a distinctive iconography and stock characterisations and narratives which are readily recognisable to an audience.

But genre is also subject to historical determination and change. The original generic forms adopted by Hollywood often originated in popular literature: the hard-boiled detective, the western, the horror film are all examples. Other genres have emerged subsequently as responses to particular social and political events - war movies and science fiction films which, although baring some relation to sci-fi literature, emerged in Hollywood as a response to the existence of nuclear weapons and the possibility of space travel (in conjunction with the development of sophisticated special effects techniques). Other genres have been popularised by certain technological developments within the institution of cinema itself. For example the epic, despite several early examples, really came into its own with the introduction of cinemascope, the first film to be shot in this wide screen format being THE ROBE in the early fifties. In recent

years we have witnessed the emergence of certain sub genres aimed at the youth market which forms a substantial part of the current cinema audience. Examples include 'slasher' horror films: the NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET, HALLOWEEN and FRIDAY THE THIRTEENTH series, and the BRAT PACK movies (numerous sequels and spin-offs being a particularly strong feature of this kind of film-making).

Generic forms have provided film-makers with an aesthetic 'context' within which they could develop their own cinematic vision by self consciously relating it to marketable conventions and iconography. Leo Braudy describes genre film-making as:

"...the equivalent of conscious reference to tradition in the other arts - the invocation of past works that has been so important a part of the history of literature, drama and painting."(4)

However, working within a set of generic constraints need not be at the expense of self-expression: a film-maker can use the conventions in a creative manner to explore particular social, political or psychological issues within an ostensibly commercial and recognisable format.

Edward Buscombe, in an article which attempts to demonstrate that genre and auteur analysis are not necessary mutually exclusive frameworks, argues that working within the convention of genre can allow good film makers to be better in that it equips them better to deal with popular art and forms of expression, and what is film if not a popular art ? As Buscombe explains:

"The artist brings to the genre his own concerns, techniques and capacities - in the widest sense, his style - but receives from the genre a formal pattern which directs and disciplines his work. In a sense this imposes limitations... certain themes and treatments are, if not ruled out, unlikely to be successful if

they work too hard against the genre. But the benefits are considerable. Constant exposure to a previous succession of films has led the audience to recognise certain formal elements as charged with an accretion of meaning"(5)

These formal elements comprise the iconography of the genre. Familiarity with such elements enables an individual film-maker to make personal films by working within the structures of the genre in original ways. An example given by Buscombe is Sam Peckinpah's western GUNS IN THE AFTERNOON which constantly works against the conventions of the genre. Such originality is also detectable by audiences who are similarly aware of generic conventions and construct their expectations of films in accordance with this awareness. The internal subversion of conventions can be argued to constitute a process of generic transformation.

In recent years generic transformation has also embraced a combination of genre in one film, the classic example being burlesque or parody - the introduction of self-reflexive comic elements into an established 'serious' genre. Examples include the films of Mel Brooks including BLAZING SADDLES, YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN and HIGH ANXIETY. Much of the film and television work associated with THE COMIC STRIP, and to a lesser extent MONTY PYTHON, is structured in terms of generic parody. Other examples of genre combination include two films directed by Ridley Scott: the combination of the suspense thriller and science fiction in ALIEN and the futuristic film noir format of BLADE RUNNER. Genre film-making need not therefore be characterised by bland repetition and formula. It can allow film-makers to be creative and to self-consciously relate their own

cinematic concerns to convention and established forms.

The British cinema, like its American counterpart has traditionally relied on generic forms throughout its history although generally these have not been so strongly defined. There is no ideological British equivalent of the myth of the American dream which in different ways informed the classic American genres including the Western. Britain does not have such a pervasive cultural myth to build upon and British cinema has tended to fall back on a cultivation of nostalgia, which I shall explore below. Tom Ryall argues that while the prevailing industrial conditions in the twenties and thirties (size of the industry, quality and popularity of output, competition with American product in home and international markets etc.) tended to work against the development of a sharply defined and varied generic profile of the kind that developed in Hollywood during the same period the British film industry did produce:

"...a small number of broadly defined genres with a certain degree of internal diversity"(6).

Ryall points out that the three major genres which emerged during the thirties were the crime film, the comedy and the musical. In addition to these big three there were minor genres such as romantic dramas, adventure films and the historical costume picture, as exemplified by the productions of Alexander Korda.

Generic forms have been historically specific in the sense that certain genres have emerged at certain periods, have enjoyed commercial appeal and then have declined only to be replaced by

others. For example films about the Second World War were popular from the war years through to the sixties and in some cases beyond. However there are very few War films made in Britain today. In addition, certain studios or production companies became identified with particular genres in much the same way as some of the Hollywood studios did during the thirties and forties: Warners with gangster films, Universal with Horror, MGM with musicals. In Britain the major examples are Ealing studios with comedy, Hammer Films with horror, Gainsborough with historical romance and Woodfall films with naturalistic social drama: the 'kitchen sink' or new wave films of the early sixties.

Such close correlations between companies and genre is not so significant in the present context due partly to the different organisation of production on a one-off rather than a continual basis. However until recently, Handmade films tended to concentrate on comedy, partly because of their close connection with the various members of the MONTY PYTHON team. Goldcrest films, until their severe financial problems in the mid-eighties, produced a series of low budget 'rites of passage' films under the FIRST LOVE banner, which was made primarily for television although some did have theatrical releases. This particular genre remains popular in British television as the SCREEN TWO season broadcast in 1988 on BBC2 demonstrates.

The major genres which have contributed to the structuring of the British film industry's output in recent years include the ever popular comedy, which is actually more encompassing and flexible

than a genre and is not tied to iconography in the same way. Comedy can more usefully be thought of as a mode, which in British cinema permeates a broad range of films and embraces a range of attendant categories such as the grotesque and the eccentric. I shall consider the significance of the comic mode in British cinema in some depth below.

Concentrating on the identification of more definable genres in British cinema, the thriller has been the prominent generic form with regard to recent production. British thrillers often revolve around the criminal activities of an urban underworld (often based in the East End of London). But some have attempted to be more cosmopolitan in location and current political issues, such as Northern Ireland, the abuse of state power and corruption, are often integrated into the narrative. Manipulation and revenge are often key themes in British thrillers. Recent examples of the thriller betray a diversity of subject matter and stylistic influence with some productions such as THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY, THE HIT, PARKER, SOUR SWEET and BELLMAN AND TRUE coming out of the naturalist TV drama tradition of Z CARS and THE SWEENEY, some betraying European roots: ANGEL, CAPTIVE, and MELANCHOLIA, and others being more American in style: DEFENCE OF THE REALM, EMPIRE STATE, MONA LISA, A PRAYER FOR THE DYING and STORMY MONDAY.

The thriller can be seen as a highly structured (in line with genre conventions) variant of the social drama which dominates British cinema and which can be traced from the 'social problem' films of the fifties (which were concerned with issues such as

juvenile delinquency, prostitution, homosexuality and race), the 'Kitchen Sink' dramas of the early sixties (7), and subsequently the PLAY FOR TODAY tradition in television drama. The backdrop to the thriller is foregrounded in the social drama. In both cases it is the nature of British society and problems this creates for individuals living in the nineteen eighties. In this way important issues such as unemployment, racial and gender inequality, and questions of state repression can be examined. The social drama, like the thriller is marked by a heterogeneity of style and subject matter. The following examples examine a broad range of social issues and problems: GIRO CITY, LOOKS AND SMILES, THE PLOUGHMAN'S LUNCH, WETHERBY, MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE, THE GOOD FATHER, BLOOD RED ROSES, BOY SOLDIER, BUSINESS AS USUAL, HIDDEN CITY, DISTANT VOICES STILL LIVES, FOR QUEEN AND COUNTRY, SAMMY AND ROSIE GET LAID and HIGH HOPES.

Significantly, many of these films were backed by David Rose at Channel 4. Rose had previously been Head of Drama at BBC Pebble Mill where he commissioned several notable TV plays during the seventies. This is exactly the tradition of small screen social drama which feeds directly into much of the current output of British cinema. It is also interesting to consider that in general these films are less cinematic than some of the thrillers mentioned which draw more heavily on particular stylistic conventions such as DEFENCE OF THE REALM, EMPIRE STATE and STORMY MONDAY.

The historical costume drama is still a popular genre with a

current emphasis on the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. Unlike earlier examples of British costume drama, in particular Gainsborough melodrama, recent films have stressed social issues (in line with the contemporary social drama) and in stylistic terms have placed a great emphasis on accuracy of naturalistic detail. Current costume dramas are frequently adaptations of writers such as E.M. Forster and Evelyn Waugh and tend to deal with upper and middle class subjects, occasionally critically. The Merchant/Ivory production company have been responsible for several of these films. The cycle was sparked off in part by the huge success of television's BRIDESHEAD REVISITED. Examples include THE SHOOTING PARTY, HEAT AND DUST, A ROOM WITH A VIEW, MAURICE, A MONTH IN THE COUNTRY, A HANDFUL OF DUST and THE RAINBOW.

Despite the attempt to explore important issues such as colonialism and repressed homosexuality, this cycle of films can ultimately be related to an evocation of nostalgia which has been a feature of much British cinema in the eighties. This nostalgia is very class specific, it could be described in terms of a 'country house' nostalgia, which deals only with the upper classes and is ultimately a version of 'the good life'. For all its critique of the aristocracy a film like A HANDFUL OF DUST appears to lament the passing of an older order when the upper class were more secure and less prone to deceit and pathetic gesture.

The evocation of nostalgia is important in relation to the idea

of renaissance which was espoused in the early part of the decade following the Oscar success of CHARIOTS OF FIRE and GANDHI in successive years. These particular films can be seen as part of the International (both in locations and commercial appeal) liberal epic tradition in British cinema which dates back to the films of David Lean from BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI through LAWRENCE OF ARABIA and DR ZHIVAGO to the recent PASSAGE TO INDIA, adapted from the novel by E M Forster. The two film-makers most associated with this kind of film-making in the current context are producer David Puttnam (CHARIOTS OF FIRE, THE KILLING FIELDS, THE MISSION) and Richard Attenborough (GANDHI, CRY FREEDOM).

Politically, these films tend to demonstrate broadly liberal sentiments, some are concerned with a reassessment of Britain and the Empire while others deal with international issues both historical and contemporary. While some films - Attenborough's CRY FREEDOM can be seen as mildly progressive, others such as CHARIOTS OF FIRE are open to question for their uncritical patriotic sentiment. Lean's A PASSAGE TO INDIA attempts to criticise the Raj but cannot resist portraying India in terms of an 'exotic other' which at times borders on the patronising. Lean's adaptation does not have the ambiguity of Forster's novel regarding the relationships between the Indians and the Colonials. The casting of Alec Guinness as an Indian is also extremely clumsy given the ideological intentions of the film. In any case the terms of such film-making - big budget, usually provided by an American backer keen to see a return - dictate that commercial viability must not be compromised by political

sentiments. Even with the best intentions these films will never be too challenging or radical in approach. These kind of films are also trumpeted as the standard bearers of the British film industry and are the most likely to receive American Academy Award nominations.

One new genre which has enjoyed a high profile in recent years is the 'biopic' : an examination of rather more controversial episodes of recent British history by focusing on the lives of particular 'deviant' characters who represent a challenge to prevailing social mores and standards, often still with some resonance today. These films all contains some, often rather mild, social critique worked out through the relationship of the central characters to the wider society. The 'deviance' of the characters is often rather eccentric, giving many of the films a comic twist in that the exploits and actions of the major protagonists are often highly amusing. The commercial potential of such films is apparently great as they can be marketed in relation to newspaper gossip columns and the British obsession with sexual scandal. Examples of this kind of film include WISH YOU WERE HERE and PERSONAL SERVICES, both based on the life of Streatham madam Cynthia Payne, DANCE WITH A STRANGER, the story of Ruth Ellis, the last woman to be hanged for murder in Britain, SID & NANCY, the tale of Sex Pistol, Sid Vicious and Nancy Spungen, PRICK UP YOUR EARS, the story of Joe Orton, BUSTER, the life of Great Train Robber Buster Edwards, WHITE MISCHIEF, concentrating on the mystery surrounding the the murder of Josslyn Hay the Earl of Errol, the leader of the Happy Valley set

in Kenya during the Second World War, and SCANDAL, an examination of the Profumo affair of 1963 which focuses on the relationship between Stephen Ward and Christine Keeler.

The fantasy/horror film, particularly prevalent in the sixties and early seventies, is still strongly represented in British cinema although in style and content these films are very different from the rather narrow tradition of Hammer Horror. Once again we are dealing with a rather diverse bunch of films, some of which are essentially comic book fantasy relying heavily on special effects technology and substantial budgets: BRAZIL, HIGH SPIRITS and BARON MUNCHHAUSEN, others betraying various influences including the gothic literary tradition, modern horror writers such as Stephen King and cult films such as NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET. Examples of recent British fantasy/horror films include COMPANY OF WOLVES, GOTHIC, HELLRAISER, THE MAGIC TOYSHOP, THE LAIR OF THE WHITE WORM, DREAM DEMON and PAPERHOUSE.

Basically, these are the major broad generic categories which operate in relation to contemporary British cinema. (There has been the occasional musical - ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS, BILLY THE KID AND THE GREEN BAIZE VAMPIRE and IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE featuring The Pet Shop Boys - but these films were all box office flops and unlikely to instigate a revival in this genre.) While unable to accommodate the work of such individualistic film-makers as Derek Jarman and Peter Greenaway, never the less these identifiable patterns help one to impose some sort of structure on British film-making at least with regard to subject matter. I shall now

extend this discussion to consider broader aesthetic and critical concepts which help to make up the cultural context within which British cinema is produced.

The Wider Aesthetic and Cultural Context

Within the current British context I wish to identify certain factors which have contributed to the determination of the particular cultural and aesthetic configuration which has shaped the development of British cinema in aesthetic terms and which exerts a strong influence on current production. These factors, which can be seen in terms of 'modes' or aesthetic tendencies, transcend the barriers of genre and contribute to the determination of a cinema which can be appropriately, if rather tentatively, identified as 'British' as opposed to 'German', 'French' or 'American'.

Obviously any 'national cinema' is open to influence from abroad: American cinema was influenced by German Expressionism and British cinema has always borne the mark of its close relationship with Hollywood. But at the same time, internal traditions are very robust and strongly determine the ways in which external influences are absorbed to conventional practices. For example, Hollywood absorbed expressionist techniques, which were developed in relation to modernist narrative forms in Weimar Germany, to its dominant melodramatic tradition. In Britain's case there was, during and immediately after the second world war, an appropriation of the strong tradition of documentary

realism by feature film-makers, instigating a dominant aesthetic trend which can be traced through the history of British cinema to the present day. This was lauded by critics who called for determined effort to build a national cinema distinct from that of Hollywood in terms of style and ethos.

In addition to a consideration of the realist mode in British cinema, I shall also examine two other aesthetic developments which have contributed to the structuring of formal tendencies in British cinema from the days of the pioneers to the present. Firstly, there is predominance of the comic mode in British cinema, noted above, which can be related to a tradition rooted in British popular culture and identifiable in other forms - in particular the novels of Dickens and the music hall tradition which, as Andy Medhurst points out, was as much of an influence on the development of cinema in Britain as the rich literary and theatrical traditions (8). This tendency is still extremely relevant in the current context. Secondly, the influence of these other forms (and later on of television) contributed to the development of a cinema noted for its verbal primacy: the over-reliance on words, as opposed to images, to convey information and narrative development. This aesthetic tendency has been the focus of much criticism of British cinema in general over the years and I shall consider its implications in relation to current film-making.

Realism/Quality

British Cinema has been historically dominated, in critical terms, by a 'realist' ethic favouring the depiction of 'real' or recognisable people in 'real' or recognisable situations. The dominance of realism as the favoured mode of cinematic representation can be traced back to the prestigious documentary tradition, referred to by one commentator as 'Britain's outstanding contribution to the film'(9), and associated with the work produced by John Grierson, the GPO, Crown and Group 3 documentary units during the thirties and forties. It was during the war years that documentary and fiction began to fuse. On one hand, documentaries, such as Humphrey Jennings' FIRES WERE STARTED, began to appropriate narrative techniques, while on the other, feature film-makers strove to make films as realistic as possible by utilising the aesthetics of documentary and shooting on location if possible (early examples include Powell and Pressburger's 49th PARALLEL, which was financed by the Ministry of Information and shot on location in Canada.). In addition, several notable documentarists - including Harry Watt and Alberto Cavalcanti - began to move into feature production.

The fusion of documentary realism and fictional narrative, which was derived both from the British theatre and Hollywood cinema, was extremely important in the formation and development of a national cinema distinct from the Hollywood product which continued to dominate the British exhibition circuits. As Andrew Higson points out, the documentary idea involved a cinematic-political discourse which made a powerful differentiation between

'realism' and 'escapism' (or 'tinsel' as Michael Balcon put it), the latter being particularly associated with Hollywood cinema and particular traits within British cinema. Realism was seen as the true vocation of a socially responsible national cinema and was the guiding ethos behind, among others, the output of Ealing studios, under the guidance of Michael Balcon, in the post war period. (10)

The moral desirability of the development of a national cinema guided by the realist imperative was reinforced by the construction of a critical discourse which posited realist cinema as essentially quality cinema. John Ellis demonstrates the pervasiveness of the ethos of realism/quality by way of a close and detailed examination of the writings of film critics published in the 'quality' press and film journals of the period: the work of C.A. Lejeune, Richard Winnington, Roger Manvell and others.(11) He summarises the principles of the common discourse which informed such criticism. With regard to the desirability of a realist aesthetic, the critics tended to regard good film-making technique as synonymous with unobtrusive service: i.e. the use of narrative devices which did not draw attention to themselves such as invisible editing and relatively static camera-work.

Once these criteria were established films tended to be judged in terms of how closely they matched up to the inter-related ideals of realism and quality. There are numerous instances of sustained critical attacks directed at films and film-makers who somehow

defied the categories of realism and consequently those of 'quality' and 'good taste'. Ian Christie examines the critical savaging of Michael Powell's film PEEPING TOM in the context of the tension between, what he refers to as:

"Powell's 'deviant' cinema and the prevailing norms of British 'quality' cinema.."(12)

The result of this almost unanimous condemnation was the effective demise of Powell's British career. Which is interesting in that earlier critical attacks did not affect production strategies, Powell is something of an exception. For example, the output of Gainsborough during the forties and Hammer Films from the late fifties to the early seventies attracted similar critical flak, or were simply ignored. Alexander Walker for example, makes no reference to Hammer Films in his survey of British cinema in the sixties (13). Never the less they remained immensely popular with domestic audiences. Care must be taken not to equate British cinema in terms of actual production with the critical construction 'British cinema'.

Running alongside the development of documentary realism which tended to concern itself with contemporary subjects, is a tradition of historical cinema which has adopted a broadly realist approach to its subject matter. This tradition includes big budget 'prestige' productions, praised by the critics as 'quality' British cinema aimed at the international market. This tradition includes historical epics like BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI, LAWRENCE OF ARABIA, THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN, and more recently, GANDHI and A PASSAGE TO INDIA, and the Edwardian

costume dramas discussed above. The realist emphasis is generally placed on accurate recreation of period detail: a broadly realistic portrayal of time and place.

But what exactly were the strengths and weaknesses of the realist project in British cinema ? Andrew Higson sums up the social project of the realist tradition in the following way:

"each successive realist movement in British cinema and television has been celebrated both for its commitment to the exploration of contemporary social problems and for its working out of these problems in relation to 'realist' landscapes and characters. In particular, since the 1930's, these films and television programmes have consistently been proclaimed as politically progressive because they extend the conventional social discourse, because they deal with working people."(14)

The thrust of this process of cinematic enfranchisement first of all embraced a broadly realistic, albeit whimsical portrayal of the lower middle class community in the films produced by Michael Balcon at Ealing studios. A more significant development was the shift of focus to the lives of ordinary working class people by 'free cinema' documentary movement of the fifties and the subsequent 'kitchen sink' dramas of the early sixties: films like SATURDAY NIGHT AND SUNDAY MORNING, A KIND OF LOVING and THIS SPORTING LIFE. The question of class generated particular problems in the British cinema, particularly during the forties and fifties with middle class actors unconvincing in their efforts to portray working class characters. This began to change with the arrival on the scene of actors from lower class environments like Albert Finney and Tom Courtenay. A comparison between Finney in SATURDAY NIGHT AND SUNDAY MORNING and a more classical actor like Richard Burton in LOOK BACK IN ANGER

effectively illustrates the point I am trying to make. Alexander Walker writes:

"Had it been filmed eighteen months later, much about LOOK BACK IN ANGER might have been different and probably better. The new wave of working-class or lower-middle-class actors might have conferred a more class conscious sharpness on Jimmy Porter..."(15)

In comparison, Walker describes Albert Finney's success in the part of Arthur Seaton in SATURDAY NIGHT AND SUNDAY MORNING as 'total'. It certainly represented a move towards a greater realism of character portrayal in British cinema at the time.

These developments continued in the television and cinema work of film-makers such as Ken Loach and Tony Garnett (CATHY COME HOME, KES, THE BIG FLAME, LOOKS AND SMILES), Barney Platts Mills (BRONCO BULLFROG, PRIVATE ROAD) and Peter Watkins (THE WAR GAME), and the PLAY FOR TODAY tradition of TV drama which has embraced the work of politically progressive playwrights such as Trevor Griffiths, Jim Allen, Dennis Potter, John McGrath, GF Newman and David Leland. Raymond Williams praises British TV drama for its portrayal of working class in that it represented:

"..a conscious extension of dramatic material to areas of life which had evidently been excluded even from majority drama."(16)

In other words, a logical extension of the process begun by Ealing in the forties.

This tradition feeds directly into the kind of TV/cinema hybrid associated particularly with Channel 4 and which forms the backbone of current British production. Martyn Auty explains that television drama has an ability to specifically address domestic social and political issues because a TV producer does not have

to have one eye on the international market place and can afford to tackle subjects which might be criticised as too parochial for an international audience.(17) Given the close relationship between large and small screen product since the emergence of Channel 4 this is a criticism which is frequently directed at British cinema. Tony Lawson for one suggests that British cinema is 'fairly inward looking':

"Parochial is perhaps not the right word. It explores things of an intellectual and national nature that certainly American films, although they do concern themselves with national issues, they're not quite so concerned that they let it take over the entire film. They tend to take a wider view."(18)

Lawson's criticisms are specifically addressed to the vision and ambition of a type of film-making which is closely related to television - the typical cinema/TV hybrid. But the general thrust of British realist cinema has also been criticised as limited, unadventurous and conservative.

John Ellis describes in detail the elements of the realist aesthetic utilized by Ealing studios: the use of locations and realistic settings, flat natural lighting, the depiction of lower middle class characters and social environments, which was innovatory to a certain extent, particularly with regard to the use of locations and the attempt to show social groups as opposed to heroic and exceptional individuals.(19) However, the Ealing approach to film-making was ultimately compromised partly due to ideological reasons - the quaint 'little England' view of the world adopted by the majority of the Ealing film-makers (Sandy Mackendrick and Robert Hamer being the exceptions), and partly to economic reasons - low budgets and tight schedules which worked

against aesthetic innovation. Ellis explains that film-makers at Ealing never used expressionistic lighting, camera effects or subjective inserts such as dream sequences. Editing tended to be strictly functional and music was used to heighten the linear progress of images by denoting discontinuities of time and place. While such aesthetic techniques are not directly translatable to all instances of realist film making in British cinema, they do provide the basic elements of what is effectively the general orthodoxy to which most realist film-makers have complied.

Therefore it can be argued that British cinema has failed to be in the vanguard of more 'objective' developments in realism, particularly during the post war years, in spite of the strength of the documentary tradition. As Roy Armes explains, films which were praised for the realistic approach to contemporary social problems: for example Robert Hamer's IT ALWAYS RAINS ON SUNDAY and Carol Reed's ODD MAN OUT:

"...relate far more closely to the prewar French cinema of Carne and Duvivier than to contemporary developments in Italy or the U.S.A."(20)

There is therefore, no British equivalent of Italian 'Neo Realism', of the deep focus experiments of Gregg Toland, Orson Welles and William Wyler, or even, in a more recent context, of the kind of low budget improvised cinema associated with film-makers like Eric Rohmer. In comparison the British cinema seems formally and stylistically unadventurous, caught between an essentially neo-realist impulse on one hand and the pervasive influence of theatricality on the other. In many British films - Ealing, some of the 'Kitchen Sink' films - there is noticeable

stylistic discontinuity between the naturalistic treatment of exterior locations and rather stagy interior studio sets.

The heart of the problem revolves around the question of realism and what it actually means. Realism is not an unproblematic reflection of an unproblematic 'reality' but rather a mode of constructing reality. There have been several 'realisms' in the history of cinema, and indeed other forms, including Italian neo-realism, the 'deep-focus' realism of Wyler and Welles, documentary realism, psychic realism, epic realism, magic realism etc. John Hill explains that the plurality of uses of realism relates to the problem of defining 'reality' itself. As he puts it:

"What has counted as a valid or satisfactory approximation to reality has depended on the epistemology of the real which has been assumed in the first place."(21)

Hill then refers to Raymond Williams' assertion that there are two types of 'revolt' against previous conventions constituting a 'break towards realism' in the arts. On one hand there is an injection of new content: new people, new problems, new ideas. While on the other there is the invention of new forms which undermine habitual versions of dramatic reality and thus communicate new and more fundamental underlying realities.

Hill argues that the realist project in British cinema, with particular reference to the social problem and kitchen sink films, was of the first type identified by Williams. These films did inject new content in the shape of new characters (the working class, juvenile delinquents), new settings (the factory,

the housing estate) and new problems (race, homosexuality). As he explains:

"Although this was accompanied by a certain degree of stylistic novelty (location shooting for example), it did not, in any major sense, entail the 'invention of new dramatic forms'."(22)

In this way it can be argued that the British cinema was informed by a 'naturalist' rather than a 'realist' aesthetic. Williams makes a rather tentative distinction between the two arguing that in a twentieth century context 'naturalism' has come to be regarded in terms of a representation of surface, while 'realism' is concerned with depth and the hidden dynamics of reality.(23)

Consequently, British cinema never really produced any modernist experiments in the manner of the French, Italian or German cinemas in the sixties and seventies. In many ways modernism represented a vigorous examination of questions of realism and cinema. Some modernist film-makers can be said to have extended the domain of realism from the objective world to the subjective domain: the psychic realism of Antonioni and Bergman. Others such as Godard profoundly called into question the idea of realism by drawing attention to the artifice of the medium of cinema and its codes of representation. This contrasts strongly with British 'naturalism' which tended to remain broadly functional in approach with an emphasis on the objective and rather one-dimensional 'reality' of characters, motivations, situations and locations. There were no attempts to question reality or to view it as ambiguous and shifting. In this way both contemporary and historical realism in British cinema can be seen as limiting forms of realism, concerned with the versilimitude of surface

detail rather than with the complex and often contradictory realities of the world.

British cinema has also relied heavily on melodrama (largely derived from the theatrical tradition) as a narrative form. Robert Philip Kolker contrasts melodrama and modernism describing the former in the following manner:

"Melodrama demands a great emotional response from its audience, an identification with the central characters of a film (whose personal problems are foregrounded without being linked to a defined social context that may determine them), and insists that conventional attitudes and gestures be accepted as unique components of a character's psychology. Melodrama is a form of assurance and security;...it all but guarantees that what is experienced in one film will not be very different from what has been experienced in most others. Just such forms of repetition, emotional safety and reinforcement are what the modernists oppose with forms of question and surprise."(24)

Kolker discusses melodrama as the dominant narrative form in American cinema but given the close relationship between Hollywood and British cinema it is unsurprising that that the latter should adopt a similar mode. Even the films of the British new wave, which represented a determined effort to construct a new cinema dealing with the realities of contemporary working class existence, are ultimately, in Kolker's view, undermined by melodramatic elements: the foregrounding of 'exceptional' characters with whom the audience is expected to identify and conventional narrative patterns of resistance and defiance ultimately culminating in resignation and defeat.

But the question of melodrama and its relationship to British cinema is rather more complex and ambiguous than Kolker suggests. Christine Gledhill notes that melodrama was generally a

pejorative evaluation until the sixties when it was revalued in a more positive light: for example, the Hollywood melodramas of Douglas Sirk being re-read as a critique of the American bourgeoisie.(25) Most of the cinema attacked by the champions of realism and quality was extremely melodramatic: the films of Powell and Pressburger, Gainsborough costume melodramas, Hammer horror etc. This 'repressed underlife' of British cinema has similarly undergone something of a reappraisal in recent years and recast in a positive light. Julian Petley argues that the melodramatic mode worked against the 'stiff upper lip' conception of the British character and explored taboo areas such as sexuality and exoticism. Many of these films are also distinguished by their stylistic flamboyance (in strong contrast to the flat naturalism of Ealing and Woodfall). In this way such films have come to be seen as a subversive, and therefore progressive, tendency within British cinema.

The obsession with authenticity and accuracy has also been stylistically detrimental to historical projects. This can be demonstrated by way of an example which stands out as an exception to the rule. Derek Jarman's CARAVAGGIO is deliberately non-realist in design, being shot entirely in a warehouse and featuring anachronistic 'modern' props like a typewriter and a pocket calculator. The effect is initially quite shocking: an indication of how strong realist expectations are. Christopher Hobbs, Jarman's production designer on CARAVAGGIO, is particularly critical of the naturalistic tradition he is deliberately attempting to avoid:

"There's a great fashion at the moment for what I call archaeological designing. It can be very good like A ROOM WITH A VIEW where the design was immaculate, it was done with such a light touch that you were actually not aware of it being a period movie in many ways. But then you get other movies like LITTLE DORRITT, it was such a bore, everything was right. You could see they had reams of researchers checking up on how to roll up cigars in the 19th century. And it's unnecessary because in the first place such little details are only what we know from records and you can be pretty certain that there are dozens of other ways of rolling cigars which we don't happen to know about because no one's remembered or nobody's made a note of it. So when I'm doing a period film I invent the past half the time because nobody knows what it is really."(26)

The approach Hobbs is criticising necessarily works against stylisation which is often what makes cinema interesting. It also mitigates against experiment in the area of design which mirrors the disinclination of British cinema in general to experiment with formal strategies.

Despite the continuing dominance of the realist tradition in British cinema through much of 'Film on Four', it is interesting to consider that film-makers currently working within the British industry tend to be aware of the strengths, and more importantly the weaknesses of that tradition. James Park tends to overstate the case when he argues that 'British film-makers have finally learned to dream'(27), but it is interesting that directors in this country are frequently alluding to film-making traditions other than social realism. Related to this is the current critical re-appraisal of British cinema history by writers such as Ellis, Barr, Gledhill, Ian Christie, David Pirie and Julian Petley (28). This represents an attempt to resurrect certain anti-naturalistic traditions such as the work of Michael Powell (who has referred to as an important influence by Julien Temple,

Neil Jordan and Derek Jarman) and the output of Gainsborough and Hammer films. To a certain extent these writers have successfully displaced the dominant discourse of realism/quality in favour of new interpretations and critical concepts.

It is interesting to consider that there are there are several film-makers currently active in British cinema who defy the narrowness of the realist tradition and demonstrate the breadth and possibilities of the cinema medium. This is partly because the current generation of film-makers have benefited from the internationalisation of modernist techniques, beginning with the appropriation of such techniques by American film-makers like Arthur Penn in the late sixties, which have broken down old forms of cinema narration. The influence of the Italian modernists and French New Wave is now extremely widespread. This aesthetic shift is related to more general cultural trends: the growth of consumer capitalism, the relaxation of censorship and moral constraints, amounting to a general process of liberalisation. Expansion in educational opportunities helped to create a more sophisticated audience which could cope with the modernist infringement on traditional cinema narrative.

Amongst the beneficiaries of this general process of cultural and aesthetic liberalisation are experienced film-makers such as Nicolas Roeg and Ken Russell (who both made their debut features in the sixties) and a variety of 'newcomers' including Neil Jordan, Derek Jarman, Terry Gilliam, Peter Greenaway and Terence Davies. This is not to construct a new auteurist 'pantheon' - the

above mentioned are just as open to criticism as those who are more traditionally 'British' in approach. What is important is that their work demonstrates, in different ways, that British cinema can be something more than naturalistic in intent and execution and can draw upon diverse traditions and aesthetic influences. I would argue that a healthy national cinema is nourished by and thrives on stylistic and formal diversity and experimentation.

The question of quality is still pertinent to any discussion of British cinema although its meaning has shifted somewhat. Current definitions of quality cinema utilize the concept not as a critical evaluation but rather as appraisal of technical skill and standards of practical competence, particularly within low to medium budget film-making. Film-makers are expected to aspire to the highest possible standards in their work: to produce the best results possible with the resources available. Producer Patrick Cassavetti argues that creativity in film-making:

"lies in making the best of what you've got. That is the art. It's about having a small amount of money or a large amount of money and doing the best you can while wasting as little as possible."(29)

Quality becomes related to issues of resource utilization in an industry characterised by its relative lack of resources. As Marc Samuelson puts it:

"the thing to try and do is to make a film that looks and feels like it's a much bigger budget than it actually is. WHITE MISCHIEF looks and feels like a $25 million picture when it actually cost $7 million."(30)

There is a strong sense of a self-conscious promotion of British cinema as aspiring to particularly high standards of technique

and performance and 'value for money', and this is where the idea of quality has been relocated.

British technicians have become accustomed to working with very tight budgets and have consequently become very resourceful as Christopher Hobbs points out with specific reference to production design:

"I think we have an advantage over the Americans for two reasons. One, we are used to working with very small budgets and therefore have learned to make things look good without having to spend vast amounts of money. The other thing is the theatrical background of a lot of designers. If you've had a theatrical background where there is usually no budget at all, then you have to be able to make anything out of anything, with no money and in no time. It's a very good training and it's certainly the training I had. On something like CARAVAGGIO, where there really was no money, we just had to invent and be crafty."(31)

The resourcefulness of Hobbs and the rest of the production team, a demonstration of the importance of creative collaboration in British cinema, on CARAVAGGIO combined to produce a visually imaginative quality (in the new sense) film. This notion of quality as high production value is a characteristic of current British cinema in general and something which the industry has attempted to build a reputation on both to sell British films abroad and to encourage American producers to continue making films in British studios with British technicians.

The Comic Mode

Another identifiable aesthetic tradition or tendency in British cinema is the predominance of a comic mode which embraces straight forward comedy - films whose project is primarily to

make audiences laugh - to the rich assortment of oddball, grotesque, eccentric and quirky elements which crop up in predominantly serious films. This phenomenon is partly a reflection of the considerable influence the music hall tradition has had on British cinema, but it is also an aspect of a tradition identifiable in other 'popular' forms: a classic example being the novels of Charles Dickens.

George Orwell argues that Dickens developed the notion of eccentricity, with regard to the development of character in his work, which he took from earlier novelists. Eccentric characterisation also looms large in British cinema history. Eccentricities also help to foreground and 'individualise' characters, rendering predicaments personal rather than social and conforming to the requirements of melodrama. However, what makes Dickens unique, according to Orwell, is his fertility of invention with regard to turns of phrase and details. As Orwell puts it:

"The outstanding, unmistakable mark of Dickens' writing is the unnecessary detail."(32)

In other words, touches which do not advance the story but which create that special Dickens atmosphere and the idiosyncrasies of his characters.

A variant of the unnecessary detail is identifiable in British cinema. Screen comedy is often heavily dialogue based: the exchanges between the characters, superfluous 'gags' and catchphrases, which were also trademarks of music hall comedy, give many British films, and comic actors, their eccentric

character. But occasionally the effect can also be visual. Much of the humour generated in the MONTY PYTHON films for example comes from the incongruous juxtaposition of ridiculous characters and situations within 'realistic' historical landscapes such as the filth and squalor of medieval England in MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL and JABBERWOCKY.

Orwell also argued that Dickens' popularity stemmed from his ability:

"...to express in a comic, simplified and therefore memorable form the native decency of the common man".(33)

This informs much of the British comic traditions discussed below including the music hall and slapstick strain, Ealing comedy and much current British comedy including the work of Bill Forsyth. Eccentricity is also a method of dealing with the tension between naturalism and theatricality. In British cinema it can be argued that the cult of the eccentric is what makes naturalism acceptable and popular, by foregrounding character and humour against a naturalistic, often highly depressing, background. The same could be said of Dickens' novels which on one level dealt with the horrors of urban squalor in Victorian London.

Turning to a brief historical sketch of British cinema comedy, the thirties was a major comic period in British cinema with several stars of the Music Hall including Gracie Fields, George Formby and Will Hay moving into feature films. The late forties saw the development of the Ealing comedy which began with PASSPORT TO PIMLICO, WHISKEY GALORE and KIND HEARTS AND CORONETS

all released in 1949. In general terms Ealing comedy concerned itself with the idea of community, a nostalgia for the war years in a period of austerity. This quickly solidified into a 'little England' obsession with oldness, a reaction to post war change and progress, although there are some exceptions including the rather black humour of THE LADYKILLERS. Ealing spawned many imitators both and its influence can still be detected today in films such as LOCAL HERO.

The fifties witnessed a series of cycles ranging from the big budget prestige post Ealing humour of the DOCTOR films to the slapstick of Norman Wisdom and the anarchy of the ST TRINIANS films. Then came the inauguration of the CARRY ON cycle (27 films in all) with CARRY ON SERGEANT, released in 1958. In the case of each of these series the first film was the most interesting with very little development taking place in subsequent productions, merely repetition of successful elements.

The 'swinging sixties' gave rise to the zaniness of TOM JONES and the increasingly surreal films of Richard Lester including A HARD DAYS NIGHT, HELP (both featuring the Beatles), THE KNACK, HOW I WON THE WAR and THE BED SITTING ROOM, while the seventies witnessed the production of various features based on popular television comedy series such as ON THE BUSES, THE ALF GARNETT SAGA and STEPTOE AND SON. Television comedy was a major influence on British cinema from the sixties onwards, as Andy Medhurst points out.(34) TV comedians such as Tony Hancock relied heavily on language, rich characterisation and the humour of the

unnecessary detail (relating back to my points about Dickens) and this has fed directly into cinema comedy. The seventies also saw the emergence of the grotesque humour of MONTY PYTHON which is still very much part of present day British cinema comedy as I shall demonstrate below.

Examples of ostensibly 'straight' films with quirky elements include the numerous adaptations of Dickens which, like the Hammer Horror films, constantly feature a range of lower class 'grotesques' and eccentrics. This type of caricatured portrayal of working class people by middle class film-makers can also be found in films like IT ALWAYS RAINS ON SUNDAY (an example of a 'serious' Ealing production) with its slightly ridiculous petty East End criminals. It is interesting to note that the most ridiculous characters in many British films, particularly in the thirties and forties, tended to be either working class or upper class - ie. social strata other than that from which most of the creative personnel working in the industry were drawn from. This began to change as class boundaries became less rigid in British society in the fifties and sixties. The humour of lower class characters was subsequently generated in relation to their fantasies to escape their humdrum existence in films like BILLY LIAR, which avoided being patronising, or in terms of their 'sharp' talk and sexual conquests in ALFIE.

There are numerous other examples of comic and off-beat film-making in the present context, including some of the most commercially successful British films of recent years. One reason

for the persistent high profile of comedies is that humour is international and as consequently it may be easier to sell such films around the world. This was as true in the past as it is today. As director Ken Annakin noted in 1958:

"...it is safer to make comedies, because they are the only pictures which, in Britain bring back any profit at all to the people who put up the money."(35)

Recent examples of commercially successful British comedies include GREGORY'S GIRL, TIME BANDITS, EDUCATING RITA, A LETTER TO BREHZNEV, BRAZIL, PERSONAL SERVICES, WISH YOU WERE HERE, A FISH CALLED WANDA, THE TALL GUY and WITHNAIL AND I. Two of these films - TIME BANDITS and WITHNAIL AND I were financed by Handmade Films, a company closely associated with comedy since becoming involved in film-making with Monty Python's THE LIFE OF BRIAN. They subsequently made a series of films involving various members of Python in a range of capacities from directing and writing to acting. These include TIME BANDITS, THE MISSIONARY, PRIVATES ON PARADE and A PRIVATE FUNCTION. The Pythons have since set up their own production company 'Prominent Features' but Handmade continue to make comedies, although not exclusively so, believing they have a 'surer touch'(and an all-important track record) in this area of film-making.

If Handmade are the company most associated with comedy in the context of current British cinema then the film-maker who has achieved a similar association is Bill Forsyth. Forsyth has been responsible for five features to date: THAT SINKING FEELING, GREGORY'S GIRL, LOCAL HERO, COMFORT AND JOY and HOUSEKEEPING, all of which use humour as a way of exploring the predicaments in

which the protagonists find themselves. Forsyth's films are a celebration of the human spirit with all its foibles and are therefore very much in the British tradition of gentle comedy although his wry wit and attention to detail, both visual and verbal, gives his work an edge lacking in much British cinema comedy. The last film mentioned, HOUSEKEEPING, represents Forsyth's least comic production but it retains elements of his very characteristic style nevertheless.

Forsyth explains that the reason why he chose comedy as his medium of expression in the first place had to do with a severe lack of financial resources (both THAT SINKING FEELING and GREGORY'S GIRL were made on shoestring budgets). Comedy was considered to be the most appropriate approach in the circumstances, particularly in the case of THAT SINKING FEELING which relied on actors giving their services for no payment. To ensure their interest Forsyth had to make the process as much fun as possible: he regarded comedy as the most appropriate approach. Forsyth's former partner Charlie Gormley, who has written and directed two, broadly comic, films to date: LIVING APART TOGETHER and HEAVENLY PURSUITS, explains the philosophy:

"Bill and I decided on comedy for a very simple reason - because it was cheap. People always say 'don't do comedy, its too dangerous, you can't make them laugh, it's too hard.' But it's a cheaper way of getting production value than any other. Also if you can think up a good gag then the audience will forgive you a multitude of sins. And I think you can always make them laugh in any circumstance."(36)

It this way comedy is perhaps an apt mode for a cinema characterised by low budget production and a general lack of production finance.

Particular comic elements - the eccentric and the grotesque - continue to be found in a broad range of British films. The eccentric mannerisms of the various characters in A ROOM WITH A VIEW, the bizarre and unlikely circumstances in which the protagonists of MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE find themselves, the range of social caricatures in HIGH HOPES etc. In the work of a film-maker like Peter Greenaway we find the marks of an English eccentric with his interest in intellectual game playing, the ridiculous obsessions of his characters and the situations they create for themselves. Yet no one would refer to Greenaway as a director of comedies. A good example of the eruption of quirkiness into a non-comic form is provided by the appearance of actor Robbie Coltrane in a range of character roles which has served to lighten many a serious film by virtue of his physical appearance: Derek Jarman's CARAVAGGIO, Neil Jordan's MONA LISA and Chris Petit's CHINESE BOXES are three such examples. Coltrane is closely associated with the 'Comic Strip' team, whose anarchic and satirical approach to humour is very much in the Monty Python tradition and who have recently ventured into the world of feature films with THE SUPERGRASS and EAT THE RICH. Subsequently his appearance in more serious films is experienced as a disruption or parody even when his portray of a character is more or less straight. In this way prior association can generate particular expectations and condition audience response.

Verbal Primacy in British Cinema

The factor I wish to consider can be seen more in terms of an aesthetic tendency than a mode, a largely unintended consequence of the particular cultural influences on British cinema rather than the conscious appropriation of a highly valued or popular aesthetic tradition. What I want to turn my attention to is the issue of the relationship between words and images in the context of British cinema. Several arguments have been made to the effect that throughout the history of British cinema the strength of the writing has tended to be detrimental to visual experimentation. Film-makers have often solved narrative problems with the use of dialogue rather than images. Some arguments have been made which relate this to aspects of Britain's cultural heritage. Tom Priestly for example argues that "traditionally we are not a very visual country."(37) Derek Jarman contrasts this with the Italians who he regards as a supremely visual culture. On the production of CARAVAGGIO he noted the difference between Italian and British extras in terms of their body language:

"When the extras who were Italian relaxed they relaxed into classic poses. They never relax into the formlessness of the British. The visual language is absolutely in the body of the Italians so it is natural for it to come out in the film."(38)

Roger Deakins recalls the condescending attitude he experienced at art college when he expressed an interest in photography as a form of expression. The prevailing attitude was one which regarded photography as primarily a recording medium. Charlie Gormley also comments on the prevailing attitude to cinema in British society, with an emphasis on education:

"This is a country which is by and large literate and almost supremely proud that it's not cine-literate. You just couldn't say to your English teacher - 'I went to the movies last night.' You could say - 'I read a bad book', that would be fine. But if

you went to the cinema it was regarded as too easy or silly."(39)

This state of affairs is directly related to the literary and theatrical influences on British cinema. Tony Lawson explains that a British film-maker would handle a dialogue scene in a very different way to an American French or Italian director would and this, he explains, is partly because: "the English love language and they like to use it".(40) It is therefore not surprising that film-makers have consistently turned to this country's literary and theatrical heritage for ideas and inspiration. This tendency also places special emphasis on the role of the writer in the film-making process. As Julian Petley explains:

"...the British Cinema, even in its early days, became increasingly dominated by literary and theatrical conceptions. The writer, though badly paid by Hollywood standards, tended to be regarded as the major creative force in film-making and most screenplay writers tended to be men of theatre or literature."(41)

This created particular problems: as Petley explains, original screenplays and adaptations alike tended to be conceived not in specifically cinematic terms but rather as translations from theatrical and literary conventions.

On the question of the literary influence the problem isn't so much one of adaptation <u>per se</u> - the American cinema has been similarly indebted to the novel in particular as Brian McFarlane points out.(42) It is the manner of adaptation particular to British cinema which is the issue. McFarlane explains that while there is no a priori reason why adaptations should not be original and innovative as cinema, this has tended to be the

exception in the case of British cinema:

"More often, British adaptations have exhibited a decorous, dogged fidelity to their sources, content to render through careful attention to their mise en scène the social values and emotional insight of those sources rather than subjecting them to critical scrutiny or, indeed, to robust exploitation."(43)

Petley argues that most British adaptations fail to reworking the material from within; 'to create cinema', as Hitchcock's put it. In other words nothing is added to the original source resulting more often than not in a pale imitation. The desire to adapt dense literary texts is questioned by Roger Deakins, one of the top cinematographers currently working in Britain and a supporter of visually -oriented cinema. As Deakins puts it:

"The independent producers in this country slave away for years to make the film they always wanted to make. In America that would be the Coen brothers making BLOOD SIMPLE. But in this country when that sort of thing happens it's LITTLE DORRITT. I'm sure it's wonderful but it's not cinema, whereas BLOOD SIMPLE is."(44)

Deakins' argument rests on the fact that BLOOD SIMPLE is a genre piece - a modern 'B' Movie which relies totally on visual style and narrative tension associated with Hitchcockian thrillers, while LITTLE DORRITT's reference is the literary world of Charles Dickens.

Even the British 'New Wave' films of the early sixties which were highly innovative in some respects were almost exclusively adaptations and many failed to transcend their original source material. Roy Armes regards the 'New Wave' as representing a slight improvement within the literary tradition in British cinema in that these adaptations were contemporary rather than historical and the original authors including John Osborne, Alan Sillitoe, Shelagh Delaney, David Storey, Keith Waterhouse and

Willis Hall were involved in translating their own material into screenplays. However, it is significant, Armes argues, that only one of these writers: Shelagh Delaney, ever made the transition to writing an original screenplay with CHARLIE BUBBLES, directed in 1966 by Albert Finney.(45)

As I suggested, the theatrical influence on British cinema has also contributed to the talkiness of British cinema because much British theatre has similarly relied on dialogue rather than physical action. This point was made as early as 1931 by Norman Marshall in a article examining contemporary British cinema. Marshall writes:

"The weakness of English directors for the pedestrian reproduction of stage plays on the screen is a symptom of their inability to realise that the film, even with the addition of sound, is essentially a visual art and must express itself in movement. Here again there is the temperamental handicap, reflected in the methods of the English theatre. English stage producers, players and playwrights are at their happiest when they can settle down for the whole three acts in the same set (a typical English drawing room for preference), confining movement to a few steps from one piece of furniture to another. English actors, devoting themselves to the faithful reproduction of English character, rely almost entirely on the voice, using the bare minimum of movement and gesture as a means of expression."(46)

As Julian Petley points out, in the formative years of the British cinema many producers and directors came out of the theatre with the result that many films were little more than 'celluloid records, of very varying adequacy, of whole stage productions, with stage directions very little changed by the director.'(47)

The British cinema continued to look to the theatre for both

source material (adaptations of Shakespeare, Coward, Osborne, Pinter and others), actors and directors.(48) And while it is true to say that contemporary British theatre has improved since the days of Norman Marshall, adaptations such as LOOK BACK IN ANGER and more recently THE DRESSER, certainly owe more to the theatre than the cinema in terms of formal construction, still relying predominantly on dialogue and characterisation to the detriment of purely cinematic devices such as mise-en-scene and montage.

The influence of television on cinema in Britain has also played its part, and this is tied in many ways to the theatrical tradition with early TV drama being staged as plays, performed as such without breaks and covered by several cameras. Television drama has always been informed by words rather than images as John Ellis explains:

"Broadcast TV offers a small image of low definition, to which sound is crucial in holding the spectators attention. (While Cinema on the other hand)...offers a large-scale highly detailed and photographic image to a spectator who is engaged in an activity of intense and relatively sustained attention."(49)

As a result, the words are more important in the case of television drama, with the images tending to add little in themselves to narrative development. The close ties which have developed between television and cinema in Britain - Television companies like Channel 4 financing films, film-makers moving over to cinema from mostly television work - has helped to reinforce the problem of the importance of the word in British cinema. Charles Barr comments:

"the average up-market British film/TV hybrid comes across as straight forwardly functional in style, serving the script, which

is both its strength and its weakness... There are sources of cinematic and cultural energy which the standard TV/movie hybrid does not tap, partly because of the tendency of its production strategies to put it 'in the script'."(50)

Barr's argument is supported by individuals active in film production. Al Clark contends that British television has enjoyed great international distinction while there has been little in British cinema to attain that accolade. In television the writer became the dominant figure (following on from the theatrical tradition) and the emphasis was placed on filming a good script rather than having a great idea and writing a script around that. This in turn influenced cinema with similar priorities being adopted. Writer/director Mike Radford, whose debut feature ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE ranks among the most 'cinematic' of the early Channel 4 backed films, argues that the strong influence of Television and its attendant techniques has resulted in the production of films which amount to little more than the "photographing of dialogue". Cinema, he argues, should rely on 'mise-en-scene', as opposed to 'close ups of people talking', in order to communicate to an audience. This in turn can affect the commercial viability of a film in the world market. As producer Sarah Radclyffe puts it:

"If you solve things entirely by words they tend to be smaller in a way".(51)

Many of the films made for Channel 4 are criticised for being too small in Radclyffe's sense. Even film-makers involved in such productions will acknowledge the problem. Cinematographer Michael Coulter for example refers to THE GOOD FATHER, directed by Mike Newell as:

"...a modern story, an important story. But yet it was also a bit wordy in that it was what the characters were saying to each other which told the story. It wasn't really the images."(52)

This then is the detrimental side of television's considerable influence on British cinema over the last two decades. However, as Ron Peck argues, it needn't have taken the form it did. Television drama needn't have clung to the naturalistic aesthetic I have described in this chapter. As he puts it:

"I don't think television has to be that way. It's just got stuck in certain conventions which should be challenged, especially in terms of drama."(53)

These conventions have been challenged recently by productions like Dennis Potter's THE SINGING DETECTIVE which was extremely innovatory for a television drama serial adapting editing and narrative techniques from cinema, creating a non naturalistic narrative which examined memory, sexuality and the inter-mingling of fact and fiction. Something very different from the usual linear social drama.

British cinema is usually contrasted, rather unfavourably with American film-making. Ron Peck argues that what is exciting for him about American cinema is that the script is of no more importance than the lighting, the soundtrack, the camera and the movements of the characters within the frame. This is something he rarely sees in British cinema:

"I'm not interested in a film in which it's all in the script, then it becomes pointless going to the cinema for me. I found SAMMY AND ROSIE a very unrewarding film as I found MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE to be. Whereas I will see a Minnelli film - THE COBWEB hundreds of times because I think it's astonishing visually."(54)

Like Peck, Julien Temple is a great enthusiast of American

cinema, particularly musicals which for him:

"...get closer to the idea of total cinema, with the music and the movement and the colour, which are, in an almost abstract sense, as important as the dialogue."(55)

Peck's argument is further supported by producer Patrick Cassavetti who suggests that a lot of British films are characterised by scenes in which people sit around talking to each other while American film-makers tend to rely far more on visual innuendo. However, it must be pointed out that classic Hollywood was also very talky. The kinds of films Cassavetti is alluding to are probably those made in the late sixties and early seventies. Cassavetti has also received several scripts which are very literate and articulate in terms of words but rather lacking in terms of visual ideas: the very predicament I have been describing.

Bill Forsyth makes some very interesting comments regarding the dominance of the writing in British cinema. He regards this state of affairs as having bred a certain kind of 'lazy film director', as he puts it:

"someone who came upon a film when it was finished... when the script was written. Because in large measure, it is the most creative period when you are script writing: it's then you are actually making the film. You're not just putting words on a page, you are actually creating the feelings, the pace, the images almost. All you are doing is transcribing these onto paper so you don't forget them... And I think that just by getting the procedure wrong the British cinema got the whole thing wrong: by having this compartmentalised thing where someone wrote or adapted something or created a script and then handed it on to another technician called a director. The actual creative process was lost somewhere in the middle. I don't think writers actually knew they were supposed to be film-makers. I think they thought they were just writers. So no one thought they were a film-maker: there was no such thing as a film-maker in the whole

organisation. I think that's why British cinema suffered."(56)
Obviously Forsyth believes strongly in the importance of an integrated sense of purpose - with regard to writing and directing - and this is consequently identifiable in his own work.

The predominance of the word over the image in British cinema which I have been describing primarily in an aesthetic context also relates to the industrial and economic structures of the British film-industry. Part of the problem is the lack of finance available. As Julien Temple explains, when budgets are meagre, words are easier to film than spectacular images. James Mackay, who has worked for many years in the ultra-low budget sector, making films with directors such as Derek Jarman and Ron Peck on Super 8 and video explains the rationale behind this kind of production and sheds some light on the predicament of the industry in general:

"The alternative to working in Super 8 or video seems to be writing a script and spending an awful long time peddling it around trying to get money. I've seen this happen to a few people who haven't made films before and have spent a lot of time trying to get those scripts produced but have rarely got beyond the development stage. I think it's important to make films continually, otherwise you never develop as a film-maker, you just become a writer."(57)

This is an extremely important point and may help to explain the apparent lack of visual imagination or ambition on the part of many film-makers working in this country.

However, not everyone working in the British film industry takes a pessimistic viewpoint. Neil Jordan believes that in the past five years things have began to change with the emergence of

'visual' film-makers like Peter Greenaway. Tom Priestley and Julien Temple argue that exposure to television and pop promos, respectively, have helped create a generation who are extremely visually literate. There has also been a reappraisal of British cinema history (noted above) which has attempted to identify a vibrant 'submerged' tradition of non-naturalistic and primarily visually oriented British cinema on which contemporary film-makers can draw. Julien Temple describes Michael Powell as 'one of the most visually oriented directors there ever was'. Such developments may help to change the situation and provide film-makers with more fruitful indigenous aesthetic reference points which can benefit their own work.

Taken together, the various factors I have been discussing: the various trans-generic modes of realism, melodrama and comedy, and the aesthetic tendency characterised by verbal primacy, serve to constitute the dominant aesthetic context within which most British film-making has, and still does take place. A film like WISH YOU WERE HERE incorporates aspects of all of these tendencies being 'realistic' in surface detail, melodramatic, humorous and talky. Rarely does a film avoid all of the dominant tendencies - an argument could be made for a profoundly visual, non-realist film like THE COMPANY OF WOLVES, but such exceptions are rare. Obviously the dominant aesthetic/cultural context contributes significantly to the structuring of creativity in British cinema. It provides guidance to film-makers in the form of a 'tradition'. The 'recognition' this implies is particularly important to a creative process in which issues of commercial

viability and expense are vital considerations. Consequently, any innovation within this context tends to assume the form of 'variation on a theme' and generic transformation rather than radical breaks as these may represent too much of a risk in commercial terms. The most vulgar form of this process is the phenomenon of the 'sequel', which, as I explained above, is more a characteristic of American film-making than British cinema.

The strain towards tradition is not simply bound by economic considerations however: film-makers being forced to comply with the wishes of their financial backers in terms of 'playing safe' with form and content. Writers and directors themselves often look to the substance of tradition for ideas and possible solutions to problems. They effectively absorb elements of that tradition and their work can consequently be located in relation to the general constitution of the cultural tradition in which they operate. This process may be largely unconscious or alternatively, film-makers may be very self-conscious of the ways in which their work relates to that which has gone before. All are subject to the context in which they work and that context can be seen in terms of of the cultural space generated by the aesthetic concepts I have been discussing. This cultural space provides certain aesthetic resources - as important as financial and technological resources - which film-makers draw upon in the process of their work. The creative activity implied in this process is therefore fundamentally structured in terms of the availability of these resources: they effectively set the parameters within which the activity can take place and creative

decisions can be made.

NOTES

(1) Raymond Williams: THE LONG REVOLUTION PeLican (London) 1965, Chapter 1: 'The Creative Mind'.

(2) Christine Gledhill: 'History of Genre Criticism' in Pam Cook (ed.) THE CINEMA BOOK, BFI (London) 1985 p58.

(3) The first critical study to use the term Film Noir was Raymond Bord & Etienne Chaumerton's PANORAME DU FILM NOIR AMERICAIN (Paris) 1955.

(4) Leo Braudy: 'Genre. The Conventions of Connection' in Gerald Mast & Marshall Cohen (eds.) FILM THEORY & CRITICISM 3rd Ed. Oxford University Press (New York) 1985 p415.

(5) Edward Buscombe: 'The Idea of Genre in American Cinema' in Barry K. Grant (ed) FILM GENRE: THEORY AND CRITICISM The Scarecrow Press (Metuchen N.J.) 1977 p34.

(6) Tom Ryall: ALFRED HITCHCOCK & THE BRITISH CINEMA Croom Helm (London) 1986 p73.

(7) See John Hill: SEX, CLASS AND REALISM, BFI (London) 1986.

(8) Andy Medhurst: ' Music Hall and British Cinema' in Charles Barr (ed.) ALL OUR YESTERDAYS, BFI (London) 1986.

(9) Andrew Higson: 'Britain's Outstanding Contribution to the Film' in Barr (ed.) ALL OUR YESTERDAYS.

(10) See Charles Barr: EALING STUDIOS Cameron & Tayleur (London) 1977.

(11) John Ellis: 'Art, Culture and Quality: Terms for a Cinema in the Forties and Seventies' SCREEN Autumn 1978.

(12) Ian Christie: 'The Scandal of PEEPING TOM' in POWELL, PRESSBURGER AND OTHERS, BFI (London) 1978.

(13) Alexander Walker: HOLLYWOOD ENGLAND Harrap (London) 1986.

(14) Andrew Higson: 'Britain's Outstanding Contribution to the Film' in ALL OUR YESTERDAYS p95.

(15) Alexander Walker: HOLLYWOOD ENGLAND p60.

(16) Raymond Williams: 'A Lecture on Realism' SCREEN Spring 1977 p67.

(17) Martyn Auty: 'But is it Cinema ?' in Auty & Nick Roddick (eds.) BRITISH CINEMA NOW, BFI (London) 1985.

(18) Interview with Tony Lawson 4/6/88

(19) John Ellis: 'Made in Ealing' SCREEN Summer 1975.

(20) Roy Armes: A CRITICAL HISTORY OF BRITISH CINEMA Secker & Warburg (London) 1978 p333.

(21) John Hill: SEX, CLASS AND REALISM p57.

(22) ibid. p59.

(23) Raymond Williams: 'A Lecture on Realism'.

(24) Robert Philip Kolker: THE ALTERING EYE Oxford University Press (New York) 1983 p6.

(25) Christine Gledhill: 'The Melodramatic Field: An Investigation' in Gledhill (ed.) HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS: STUDIES IN MELODRAMA AND THE WOMAN'S FILM, BFI (London) 1987.

(26) Interview with Christopher Hobbs 7/4/88

(27) James Park: LEARNING TO DREAM: THE NEW BRITISH CINEMA Faber & Faber (London) 1984.

(28) Important texts include -

Sue Aspinall & Robert Murphy (eds.) GAINSBOROUGH MELODRAMA, BFI Dossier 1983.

Several of the essays in Barr (ed.) ALL OUR YESTERDAYS, particularly Charles Barr: 'Schizophrenia and Amnesia' and Julien Petley: 'The Lost Continent'.

Ian Christie: POWELL, PRESSBURGER AND OTHERS, BFI (London) 1978.

David Pirie: A HERITAGE OF HORROR Gordon Fraser (London) 1973.

(29) Interview with Patrick Cassavetti 21/7/87

(30) Interview with Marc Samuelson 20/7/87

(31) Interview 7/4/88

(32) George Orwell: 'Charles Dickens' in COLLECTED ESSAYS Secker & Warburg (London) 1961 p75.

(33) ibid. p86.

(34) Andy Medhurst: Presentation on British Comedy, BFI Summer School, Stirling University 26/7/89.

(35) Ken Annakin: Article in FILM 15 Jan-Feb 1958.

(36) Interview with Charles Gormley 11/5/88

(37) Interview with Tom Priestley 11/4/88

(38) Interview with Derek Jarman 12/8/87

(39) Interview 11/5/88

(40) Interview 4/6/88

(41) Julian Petley: 'The Lost Continent' in Barr (ed.) ALL OUR YESTERDAYS p102.

(42) Brian McFarlane: 'A Literary Cinema' in Barr (ed.) ALL OUR YESTERDAYS.

(43) ibid. p120.

(44) Interview with Roger Deakins 18/7/88

(45) Armes: A CRITICAL HISTORY OF BRITISH CINEMA.

(46) Norman Marshall: 'Reflections on the English Film' THE BOOKMAN October 1931 p71.

(47) Julian Petley: 'The Lost Continent' p102.

(48) See Geoff Brown: ''Sister of the Stage': British Film and British Theatre' in Barr (ed.) ALL OUR YESTERDAYS.

(49) John Ellis: VISIBLE FICTIONS Routledge & Kegan Paul (London) 1982 p24.

(50) Charles Barr: 'A Conundrum for England' MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN August 1984.

(51) Interview with Sarah Radclyffe 7/4/88

(52) Interview with Michael Coulter 11/5/88

(53) Interview with Ron Peck 8/4/88

(54) ibid.

(55) Interview with Julien Temple 20/7/88

(56) Interview with Bill Forsyth 21/7/87

(57) Interview with James Mackay 9/4/88

CHAPTER NINE

THE PRODUCTION PROCESS: CREATIVE COLLABORATION IN BRITISH CINEMA

In addition to the financial and technological contexts already discussed, the structuring of creativity is also affected by the nature of interpersonal relationships within the process of film-making itself. As I have already pointed out, Paul Coates makes some interesting remarks regarding what he sees as the necessary conflict between a film director's individuality on one hand and 'opposing material', including key collaborators, on the other. (1) This raises the question of whether film-making should be considered in terms of an essentially collaborative undertaking. Certainly the logistics of making a film requires the involvement of a considerable number of people from start to finish and these people must be able to work together towards the same end - the production of the best possible film given the resources available. As producer Steve Woolley remarks:

"Films are an absolute collaboration right from the word go. You are collaborating all the time: with writers, with agents, with financiers."(2)

Collaborative relationships are crucial in such a context and are therefore not entered into lightly.

While the general question of the organisation and co-ordination of the contributions of the various people who are involved with any particular project at different stages in the process is an interesting one, the primary focus of this chapter will be collaboration in relation to creativity. Therefore the relationships between film-makers and their key 'creative

collaborators' shall be explored in some depth in the attempt to shed some light on the creative dynamic which lies at the heart of the film-making process. This shall be done with an emphasis on three specific areas of collaboration: the working relationship between directors and screenwriters, between directors and producers and a consideration of the contributions of the key technical personnel - cinematographers, editors and designers - and actors to the creative process. This discussion will be supplemented by a subsequent chapter where I shall also consider to what extent the notion of the 'auteur' persists with regard to current British cinema and how meaningful the idea of the individual film artist is given the fundamentally collaborative nature of film production.

Creative Collaboration

All film-making, beyond the most basic 'home movie' production, is essentially a highly collaborative process, regardless of period or cultural climate. The production of feature films involves the integration of various specialised skills: screenwriting, acting, design, cinematography, editing, direction etc., and this necessarily involves a group of such 'specialists' working closely together. It is therefore small wonder that the history of cinema is marked by enduring working relationships between teams of creative personnel collaborating over a range of different projects.

The British cinema is no exception. Several of the most

outstanding films made in this country have been produced in circumstances where creative collaboration has been explicitly acknowledged. Examples include the films of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger ('The Archers') with both men sharing the writer, director and producer credit on more than fifteen features during the forties and fifties. These included such films as THE LIFE AND DEATH OF COLONEL BLIMP, A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH, BLACK NARCISSUS and THE RED SHOES. Powell and Pressburger also tended to work with the same creative collaborators whenever possible. Obviously there were a few changes in Archers 'regulars' over the years but at their critical height Powell and Pressburger benefited enormously from the contributions of key individuals including cinematographer Jack Cardiff, designer Hein Heckroth, editor Reginald Mills and composer Brian Easdale. It is also worth noting that working alongside The Archers as an independent production unit under the umbrella of the Rank Organisation were the Cineguild team of David Lean, Ronald Neame and Anthony Havelock-Allan and the enduring partnership of Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat.

Moving into the 1960's, the films made by the Woodfall Company including THE LONELINESS OF THE LONG DISTANCE RUNNER, A TASTE OF HONEY (classic examples of the British 'New Wave' or 'Kitchen Sink' drama) and TOM JONES, involved the same creative 'core' of director Tony Richardson, writer John Osborne (both partners in the company) and cinematographer Walter Lassally. This team developed an innovative realist aesthetic borrowing the techniques of the French 'nouvelle vague' and applying them to

contemporary working class subjects.

But perhaps the most critically acclaimed creative collaboration in the history of British cinema is that between director Joseph Losey and the dramatist Harold Pinter which resulted in three features produced between 1963 and 1970: THE SERVANT, ACCIDENT and THE GO-BETWEEN. The collaboration proved to be a fruitful one for both, especially Losey. As Alexander Walker explains, with particular reference to THE SERVANT:

"Losey had never before had to work so tightly within the disciplining limits of another man's 'frame'. Yet instead of confinement THE SERVANT signals his breakthrough to a freedom of expression that, just because it is controlled by underlying rhythms, as a sea is by its tides, never lets the unity of vision slip out of focus."(3)

Walker suggests that Pinter curbed Losey's tendencies to baroque Romanticism while Losey amplified Pinter's economy with visual suggestiveness. Certainly it is arguable that neither man was able to match the quality of the collaborations in their other productions. Pinter and Losey provide a classic example of a working relationship where the constraints placed on one by the other serve to focus and direct their creative energies (particularly Losey's) in a more productive fashion than may have otherwise been the case.

These then are some of the more significant examples of collaborative film-making in British cinema history embracing film-makers and films which have been subject to much critical acclaim. Collaboration is therefore as important a concept in the context of the highly personal cinema of Powell & Pressburger and

Losey & Pinter as it is with reference to the commercially oriented permanent operations at Ealing and Hammer films which involved small groups of creative teams making one film then moving immediately on to the next - the cinema equivalent of the production line.

Creative Collaboration and Current British Cinema

Part I: Writers and Directors

Perhaps the most obvious place to begin in a consideration of the issue of creative collaboration in the context of film-making is the relationship between writers and directors. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, British cinema has traditionally been characterised by the strength of its writing vis-a-vis visual realisation. While cinema is usually regarded by critics and theorists (in the wake of the 'auteur theory') as a director's medium, the British cinema, due largely to its close relationship since the late sixties with television drama, has frequently privileged writers over directors. Hence it is Alan Bennett's A PRIVATE FUNCTION rather than Malcolm Mowbray's which we here about. Similarly films such as NO SURRENDER and LETTER TO BREZHNEV are more often attributed to Alan Bleasedale and Frank Clark respectively than directors Peter Smith and Chris Bernard. In each case the writer is popularly held to be the creative force behind the film, as is the norm in television. This serves to neglect an appreciation of what is often notable directing.

The tendency to privilege writers in British cinema and

television drama is partly justified. The screenplay always constrains film-makers to the telling of a particular story with particular characters, locations and events, and unfortunately many British film-makers do little to build upon the concepts and ideas contained in the screenplay. They tend to translate words into images in a broadly functional manner, relying on dialogue to convey much of the narrative information in the process, rather than reworking the basic structures of the script in fundamentally cinematic ways, as a film-maker like Hitchcock was able to do. The issue of the predominance of the word over the image in British cinema will be discussed in some length elsewhere as it is a fundamental one which has contributed greatly to current debates about the strengths and weaknesses of film-making in this country.

There is however, a great awareness of this problem within the film-making community at large and consequently, many film-makers have attempted to combine the arts of writing and directing in the effort to create screenplays which are a mere blueprint for profoundly visual ideas rather than great literate works full of dialogue. The strain has been towards a more integrated process rather than what Bill Forsyth describes as 'the compartmentalisation of scriptwriting and directing. (4) Mike Radford for example, argues that film, in the sense of writing and directing, "is an unseparated out totality".(5) Ron Peck is enthusiastic about the benefits of a director writing his or her own scripts, from a cinematic point of view:

"I think that as you are writing the dialogue you are to some extent imagining the camera movements, and movement may replace a

line of dialogue, or a shock of colour may indicate something you are aiming at - all the dramaturgy of the film is related to how you're orchestrating everything."(6)

Bill Forsyth on the other hand has a different point of view of the process:

"What really happens when you are writing is the movie unwinds in your head. If you had to stop and see every shot you would forget what you are feeling or what the sense of it was. It's the spirit of the film that unwinds in your head as you are writing and that's the most important thing. How that's realised visually either in one shot or how the design works or whatever, is part of the conversations that come afterwards."(7)

One major transition in British cinema from the seventies to the eighties has been the emergence of the writer/director. This phenomenon is partly the result of the training programmes carried out at the major British film schools, in particular the National Film School at Beaconsfield and the London International Film School. These establishments teach students a broad range of skills and most of these who train ultimately to be directors are also interested in writing their own screenplays. As Tom Priestley, an experienced editor who has worked in the British film industry for more than thirty years, comments:

"I think we now have a new generation of film-makers rather on the European line: people who want to make films to express their ideas and feelings about life today."(8)

Consequently British cinema currently abounds with writer/directors, some primarily interested in original material, others favouring adaptations. Their numbers include Forsyth, Radford, Peck, Neil Jordan, Bill Douglas, Derek Jarman, Terry Gilliam, David Hare, Terence Davies, Peter Greenaway, Karl Francis, Ken McMullen, Alex Cox, Lezli-An Barrett, Harry Hook, Connie Templeman, Mike Leigh, Charley Gormley. Mike Figgis and

Peter Wollen. There are also recent examples of screen-writers directing their own scripts: Paul Mayersberg, Martin Stellman, David Leland, Stephen Poliakoff and Bruce Robinson. Whether this signifies an integration of the creative elements of writing and directing or whether it is an affirmation of the ascendancy of the writer in British cinema: an 'if the strength of a film lies in the writing why not direct it yourself' type of attitude, remains to be seen. In any case it would appear to provide the justification for taking an essentially auteurist approach to British cinema. This is something I wish to avoid for reasons I shall attempt to elaborate below.

Not everyone in the Film industry however, necessarily believes in the idea that combining writing and direction is a recipe for success. Colin MacCabe, the former head of the B.F.I. Production Board, which has funded the work of several of the writer/directors referred to above, makes the following comments:

"as a result, largely I think, of the auteur theory...there has been a great emphasis on the writer/director. And without in any way trying to suggest that there should be no such beasts, many good directors can't write. And I am concerned with trying to get more writers involved who are not directors".(9)

James Brabazon, in an article published in A.I.P. & Co. magazine, champions the cause of the writer in British cinema. He argues that without a script you can't make a schedule or a budget and without a good script you can't attract finance in the first place. Brabazon makes the case for the importance of good story-telling, citing MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE as a perfect example of a film whose popularity lies in the story rather than production values or visual imagery. However, he does accept that there is a

problem with British screenwriting which he attributes to an apparent disinclination on the part of writers who have been trained in television (or the theatre) to learn the discipline of film. Brabazon writes:

"unfortunately many writers in Britain are not keen to admit that they have anything much to learn. A vague impression has grown up amongst them (fostered originally at the Royal Court Theatre) that their lightest word is good enough for production and should never be altered. This is the writers' counterpart to the directors' auteur theory, and is equally fallacious and damaging. But this attitude is often reinforced by the crass way writers are treated by producers, directors and story editors - people who ought to know how to get the best out of them. What should be fertile co-operation becomes a dog-fight.(10)

Although many would argue that film is, in the last analysis, a director's medium, there is a general consensus which admits to the crucial importance of scripts, and by extension screenwriters. As Brabazon points out it is scripts which attract finance. A good script is also often an important incentive for collaborators to get involved - particularly such important figures as the director of photography, the production designer, the editor and the actors. Sometimes an experienced technician will be attracted to a new-comers project on the basis of the script, an example being cinematographer Roger Deakins' decision to work on Harry Hook's debut film THE KITCHEN TOTO.

Brabazon's idea of a fertile co-operation is an important one. However, as he indicates, conflict and tension may arise between the writer, who is the originator of ideas in a sense, and others who's task it is to translate these ideas into images. Writer Hanif Kureishi makes some interesting comments in his diary of the making of the film SAMMY AND ROSIE GET LAID. He displays a

certain ambivalence towards the necessity of collaboration. At first he felt a great sense of relief when director Stephen Frears and producer Tim Bevan became involved with the project. As Kureishi puts it:

"Getting a film going is like pushing a huge rock up the side of a mountain and, until now, writing the script I've been doing this alone. Now other people can take the weight."(11)

However, Kureishi found the moment he had to relinquish control: to let go of the script and allow Frears to make the film, a particularly difficult one. This is hardly surprising given that a writer may have worked on a script for a long time only to watch it being changed beyond recognition by the director. This may be the reason why more and more screenwriters are starting to direct their own scripts. As Kureishi puts it:

"...the film-writer always has to give way to the director, who is the controlling intelligence of the film, the invisible tyrant behind everything. The only way for a writer to influence a film is through his relationship with the director. If this is good then the film will be a successful collaboration; if not, the writer has had it. And most writers are lucky if directors even allow them on the set."(12)

Kureishi, who had collaborated successfully with Frears on MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE prior to the production of SAMMY AND ROSIE, was fortunate in that he was able to make a considerable contribution throughout the production.

There are numerous other examples of fruitful collaborations between directors and screenwriters in British cinema. Neil Jordan, who has written his own scripts, enjoyed the benefits of such a collaboration with novelist Angela Carter on THE COMPANY OF WOLVES. As Jordan explains:

"Angela's got a vision all of her own. It's wonderful to work

with her because I want to share her vision and I want to explore it. She's got so much to contribute because she's created such a unique world. There's a certain normal level of what people call a scriptwriter; in other words somebody who moulds material for the screen, who makes it suitable for the screen. I wouldn't be interested in working with somebody like that at all."(13)

Jordan is much more interested in imagination that technique when it comes to scriptwriting. He found Carter's approach to writing particularly cinematic:

"There were very strong visual metaphors running through the whole thing. It wasn't only that she'd described it in visual terms, it was that things like the colour red, the wolf with the silver bullet in its foot and all that sort of stuff, which propels the story from beginning to end."(14)

The end result was an imaginative and visually inventive film, something rare in a cinema not often noted for its visual qualities. Jordan shared the writing credit on THE COMPANY OF WOLVES with Carter and his next project MONA LISA was also co-scripted, this time with David Leland.

Mike Radford is another film-maker who has written his own scipts alone: adaptations of Jessie Kesson's novels THE WHITE BIRD PASSES for the BBC, and ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE which was his first theatrical feature film, and with others such as Jonathan Gems who contributed to the NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR and WHITE MISCHIEF screenplays. On adapting Kesson for the screen Radford found that she tended to write in a very visual way that he was able to imagine how he would shoot the film and subsequently found the writing process rather easy. With regard to his working relationship with Gems, Radford comments:

"He is a theatre writer and he's very used to solving his problems in dialogue. But he writes wonderful dialogue and he's influenced me in the way I think about dialogue. He is also very good at the basic structure of human motivations. In terms of actually refining how the film could use the language of cinema,

that I do almost entirely. But he's probably much better than I am at constructing a dramatic scene, he has that training."(15)

Other directors who obviously are heavily involved with the project at the scripting stage are less inclined to take a credit. Julien Temple makes some interesting comments in this context. He explains that he was quite heavily involved in the writing of ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS but wasn't credited as such in this department. The reason for this according to Temple is that directors are closely involved at every stage of the process from the writing through photography to editing and no director would ask for an editing credit for example. Therefore, he concludes, unless a director has actually written the screenplay he or she should not take a credit for it.

There is apparently no single formula which is demonstrably the most productive approach to writing and directing feature films. What is important is that writers, directors or writer/directors understand cinema as a medium distinct from television, theatre and literature and consequently make greater use of the unique language of cinema rather than relying on narrative techniques borrowed from other forms.

The writing stage is also in many respects the least constrained part of the process where a writer is free from the various problems of budgets, schedules, technology and working relationships and can let his or her imagination take over. However, even the screenwriting stage is highly structured in certain ways. Most screenplays tend to conform to the received

idea of what a screenplay should be: in terms of narrative development featuring an identifiable beginning, middle and end and incorporating an initial rupture of a pre existing state of affairs and an ultimate resolution. The screenplay will also feature particular a small group of well drawn characters - the leading roles - and a host of rather two dimensional supplementary characters. Finally it will tend to be a particular length: between one hundred and one hundred and twenty pages, with one page roughly corresponding to one minute of screen time. This is in turn related to the expectations of financiers who are notoriously conservative given the high-risk nature of the film business. It is interesting to consider that Ron Peck had problems raising the finance for EMPIRE STATE partly because of the multi-character nature of the script which did not conform to the - two or three major characters - norm. Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of screenplays conform to the structural norm. The major exceptions to the rule in British cinema are a handful of maverick film-makers such as Derek Jarman, who didn't write a screenplay for his experimental feature THE LAST OF ENGLAND, Peter Greenaway and Terence Davies.

Part II: Producers and Directors

Colin MacCabe's comments above were part of an account of his developing role as an initiator of projects. Initiation is obviously a very important part of any creative process and in terms of current British cinema it has been argued that producers have become more and more involved in the creative aspects of

film-making in general and during the pre-production stage in particular. As James Park argues:

"Most of the producers associated with the new directors do much more than just raise money for projects. To a greater or less degree they all play a role in steering films through the development and production process to their marketable form. Throughout they both represent the interests of financiers and assist the director to ensure that the best film is made with the resources available."(16)

The latter part of Park's argument is supported by producer Patrick Cassavetti, who suggests that:

"the role of the producer is really to create a financial structure that allows the director as much freedom as possible with as little interference as possible, provided they abide by the rules as well. There is a moral obligation to try to bring the film in as close to budget as possible."(17)

Cassavetti himself had a difficult job keeping director Terry Gilliam within budget on the production of BRAZIL. Many of Gilliam's ideas simply had to be rejected on the grounds of cost and Cassavetti had to be on hand to keep him in check. It is in such a way that the relationship between producer and director serves to constrain creativity: the operation at an inter-personal level of the constraints imposed upon a film-maker by the financial structure of the production.

The importance of the producer in British cinema is reflected in Alexander Walker's book NATIONAL HEROES: BRITISH CINEMA IN THE SEVENTIES AND EIGHTIES. Walker dedicates two entire chapters (out of a total of ten) to one man: David Puttnam, perhaps the one name synonymous with 'British cinema', at least in the popular mind, in the eighties.(18) Puttnam is cited by James Park as a classic example of a 'creative producer': being active at every stage of the film-making process from initiating projects,

developing screenplays, and casting, through the production stage to the editing, dubbing and final distribution of the finished film.(19) In fact Puttnam is so involved with the creative aspects of the process that there are strong thematic and aesthetic continuities running through his work regardless of the different directors and writers involved. In this sense a case could be made for Puttnam as a producer-auteur, given the classical formulation of the auteur theory.

There are other producers currently active in British cinema who like to get creatively involved in every stage of the project but who do not seem to dominate the proceedings in the manner of David Puttnam. As Sarah Radclyffe of Working Title, and producer of CARAVAGGIO, MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE, WISH YOU WERE HERE, SAMMY AND ROSIE GET LAID and A WORLD APART, puts it:

"I'm more interested in the creative side than the financial side...I can only work on one film at a time and get totally involved in it. I get involved from the script, all the way through pre-production. I'm there every single day at the shoot and all the way through post production."(20)

Steve Woolley of Palace, whose production credits include THE COMPANY OF WOLVES, ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS, MONA LISA, SHAG, HIGH SPIRITS and SCANDAL talks lucidly about his creative involvement in these projects at some length. Regarding SCANDAL the project was initially conceived as a mini series for television but no TV company was interested in commissioning the project so Woolley and director Michael Caton-Jones together stripped down the script to make it into a feature film. As Woolley explains:

"I always find I have a very strong creative influence over the

screenplay. I also have a very strong hand on casting and I feel I need to have a strong hand for me to be there and follow it through to the end. It's really on the shooting that there's very little a producer can actually do and I think that's really when you've got to get your director straight, or be straight with him, and have a relationship that allows a lot of trust to pass between you. Because on the shooting of a film you can't walk off the set. You can on the script or casting: you can go off and have a screaming match. But on the day, the shoot, if you've scheduled the film properly then the director should simply go out there and direct the film. All you can say is 'you are going too slow' or 'you've gone so slow you've lost a day so you've got to cut this'."(21)

Woolley explains that he also tends to get heavily involved a the post production stage, helping to choose the soundtrack music and spending a lot of time with the editor, particularly during the shooting period when the rushes are being assembled but the director's concentration is still on the actual filming. However, Woolley points out that he would never recut a film without a director as it is up to the director, in conjunction with the editor, to make the final decisions regarding all aspects of post production. That, for Woolley, is very much the director's job however close the involvement of a producer has been.

Mark Shivas, presently the Head of Drama at the BBC and a producer of great experience both in television and cinema where his credits include MOONLIGHTING, A PRIVATE FUNCTION and THE WITCHES, explains that producers working in television don't have the same hassles regarding money in the sense that the finance is either there or it isn't. So the producer automatically is involved in choosing the director, as generally the script is completed before a director is appointed to a project, casting shooting and post production. When such a producer moves into

theatrical film-making he or she expects to have the same level of involvement.

Obviously the working relationship between director and producer is a crucial one, as Steve Woolley's remarks above suggest. The producer must be able to assist the director without imposing upon him or her in such a way as to restrict their vision. As Woolley acknowledges, the director is ultimately the person standing behind the project: it is the director's film first and foremost. James Mackay, who has produced several of Derek Jarman's projects, explains the relationship between producer and director in the following manner:

"The director looks after the inner content of the film, the direction in fact. So they are aptly named. The producer looks after the production, looks after the contributors, making sure they are all in time with each other and they are all doing it right. And having an overview to the production: to see it's ending up where it's supposed to end up and it's not getting side-tracked. When directors are very close to a production they can get side-tracked very easily, so you have to have someone who isn't there looking at it every minute of the day but who can step in for a short time and say 'well you know that wasn't quite where it was going. Why has it gone that way ?', and that usually works alright. I think the producer is more distant from the minutiae of the production while the director deals specifically in that."(22)

This view is supported by Steve Woolley. He suggests that it is a producer's job to have an overview of the production, to have some clear sense of what the overall effect should be, and not to be swamped by every minute detail:

"...you've got to help him or her with what you can see that they can't. You can see behind the kerbs, they can't do that because they are on the bend all the time."(23)

This idea of closeness and distance from a project, either being totally involved in the minute details of a project or having an overview, is a crucially important aspect of successful

collaboration as a good film must have both an attention to detail and strong direction.

It is not surprising that some film-makers, having found a producer they can work well with, prefer to maintain that relationship on subsequent projects. A good example of this is the Mike Radford/Simon Perry team responsible for ANOTHER TIME ANOTHER PLACE, NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR and WHITE MISCHIEF. They also have plans to make at least another two films together. Marc Samuelson, Perry's former assistant at Umbrella Films, argues that the collaboration between Perry and Radford goes 'right across the board' with Perry involved heavily at every stage:

"Ultimately Mike's the director, so he's in charge, but he consults and works very closely with Simon."(24)

Radford himself describes Perry's contribution in terms of much needed 'support':

"...he can stand back and take a critical eye at what I'm doing. He's not a 'director manque': he's already directed a feature film so he hasn't got that urge and desire to take you over. So he stands back very much, trusts me, and keeps the flak of my shoulders. But he also acts as a critic."(25)

Similarly, Steve Woolley has produced all of Neil Jordan's films to date with the exception of his debut feature ANGEL. Woolley is very positive about their working relationship describing it as the strongest collaboration he has experienced as a producer:

"We've always developed things from a story, an idea (usually Neil's) found in a newspaper - like MONA LISA. I tend to be able to get in quite closely with him on that early stage."(26)

In each case the films produced reflect very much the vision of the director in question rather than the producer as is arguably the case with David Puttnam.

Al Clark, who agrees very much with the argument that producers have taken a very active roll on productions, is also cautious with regard to the possibility of over-involvement. He describes his own involvement in projects as:

"considerable, but not smothering in the sense that I know there's a point at which films do not benefit from interference. You have to be able to judge when what you are contributing is really a contribution and when its just an attempt to impose yourself on circumstances that just don't need you."(27)

This is apparently something that producers such as Perry and Woolley understand and put into practice with regard to their collaborations with film-makers like Radford and Jordan.

The term 'producer' is rather ambiguous in that it covers a range of very different tasks and responsibilities. The three most common formulations of the title 'producer' which appear in film credits are Producer, Associate Producer and Executive Producer. In general terms, the Producer is the person who has been responsible for developing a project and approaching potential investors for a financial commitment. This is the kind of person we have been discussing so far. An Associate Producer (or Line Producer) is essentially, a glorified production manager, hired to supervise the day to day running of the production. Finally the Executive Producer is usually someone connected with the company which has put up the money - for example most films backed by Handmade Films give George Harrison and Denis O'Brien Executive Producer credit, Colin MacCabe enjoys a similar accreditation with regard to B.F.I. backed films. Some Executive Producers do little more than keep tabs on the production from

afar. Others are much more involved, often in creative decision making. Sometimes production credits can be misleading. On Terry Gilliam's BRAZIL Arnon Milchan and Patrick Cassavetti were both credited as producers. Cassavetti explains that Milchan was actually the executive producer, having been instrumental in setting up the deal with Universal and Twentieth Century Fox but subsequently spending very little time on the project. Cassavetti on the other hand was involved in the day to day running of the production, communicating with Milchan by phone (the latter remained in America while the film was shot in London) every couple of days.

Al Clark, former Head of Production at Virgin Vision, encountered a broad range of experiences in his (usual) capacity as Executive Producer. In the case of SECRET PLACES, the only one of the films not distributed by Virgin, Clark was involved in setting the film up from a financial point of view by raising money from the National Film Finance Corporation, Rediffusion and Rank. With SECRET PLACES Clark also went through each draft of the script and suggested ways of re-doing particular scenes. On NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR, because Virgin were bankrolling the whole thing, it was much more intense and on the spot. Regarding CAPTIVE, Paul Mayersberg approached Clark with an idea and the two discussed ways in which it could be turned into a screenplay. In addition, Clark monitored the project and made suggestions at every stage of the process. ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS involved a process of keeping the project buoyant for a year until it could be financed and produced. Finally on GOTHIC, the project arrived as a final

screenplay and Clark appointed director Ken Russell, helped with casting and supervised the project from Virgin's side. As Clark puts it:

"Really, the term 'Executive Producer' covers everything from, in America, sometimes an honorary title just for staying with something during a long period of time... to a very active involvement which is sometimes more considerable than that of producer."(28)

It has been suggested by one writer that the role of producer has always been particularly significant in the context of a national cinema which has never enjoyed the luxury of a stable, financially secure environment within which film-making, and perhaps more importantly, film-making careers, could flourish. John Caughie suggests that the idea of independence has been central to British film-making since the days of John Grierson. (29) The desire for independence should be seen in the context of the British cinema's relationship with Hollywood and it is also related to the notions of realism and quality discussed earlier. What film-makers wanted was to develop a cinema distinct from the American product which dominated British screens. The aesthetic and critical standards to which an indigenous British cinema could aspire were those of realism and quality. But such a cinema required its own funding structure distinct from the Hollywood model which informed the British duopoly of Rank and the Associated British Picture Corporation. The result was the pitifully inadequate National Film Finance Corporation.

Caughie writes:

"The desire for independence seems to have been formative for

British cinema in the same way that public service has been for television. Grierson's insistence that if that if the art of the cinema is to survive 'it will be wise for the artist to organise his independence' points to a relationship between art and organisation which may be one of the characteristics of British film production. The need for the artist to organise an independence which was never given to him or her as a stable institutional form may explain why, if we were to follow Andrew Sarris and claim that the history of American cinema is the history of directors, we would also have to say that the history of British cinema is one of producers. Grierson himself, Balcon, Dean, Korda, Powell and Pressburger, Lean, Richardson, Reisz, Anderson, Attenborough, Puttnam: none of them are purely directors, many of them are not directors at all. Outside of a studio system or a national corporation, art is too precious a business to be left to artists: it needs organisers. The importance of the producer-artist seems to be a specific feature of British cinema, an effect of the need continually to start again in the organisation of independence."(30)

In terms of current British cinema, the extreme difficulties associated with raising production finance places a great deal of importance on the contribution of producers whose role in most cases includes getting the project off the ground in the first place. It is little wonder that many subsequently wish to get involved in creative decision making. As Mark Shivas, the producer of A PRIVATE FUNCTION and MOONLIGHTING, puts it:

"the least interesting part for the producer is the deal and finding the money. Making the film is much more fun".(31)

Simon Relph, a producer whose experience of film-making has been vital in the realisation of projects by first time directors, in particular Richard Eyre and David Hare with regard to the production of THE PLOUGHMAN'S LUNCH and WETHERBY respectively, argues that he wouldn't do the job if it wasn't a creative roll. There must be some kind of compensation for doing what is often a rather thankless task.

British cinema is arguably still dominated by the producer in the

sense that both David Puttnam, since returning from his ill-fated spell at Columbia, and Jeremy Thomas (producer of EUREKA, MERRY CHRISTMAS MR LAWRENCE, INSIGNIFICANCE, THE HIT and THE LAST EMPEROR) have recently each secured substantial deals to finance a portfolio of films to be directed by major international film-makers. These films will be produced under the banner of each producers company: Puttnam's Enigma company and Thomas' The Recorded Picture Company. Given the difficulties of raising finance for even a low budget production, this is a major achievement for both men. Although it must be stressed that the films will be very much 'international' rather than indigenous productions, perhaps based in British studios using British technical expertise in very much the same way as many American productions, including the recent 'Blockbusters' INDIANA JONES: THE LAST CRUSADE and BATMAN, continue to do.

Part III: The Contributions of Key Technicians

The relationship between a director and his or her key technical collaborators - director of photography, editor, production designer and so on - is extremely important. It is only through discussion and the mutual suggestion of ideas, within the parameters set by budget, schedule, location etc., that creative decisions can be made. In terms of pre-production planning, a director will often get together with his or her cinematographer and perhaps the production designer to hammer out a shooting plan or storyboard from the information contained in the screenplay. For example, during the pre-production of CARAVAGGIO Derek Jarman

along with cinematographer Gabriel Beristain and designer Christopher Hobbs spent three months prior to the shoot constructing a shooting plan for every sequence of the film. The sets had already been designed so they knew the dimensions of the spaces they would be working in. As Jarman explains:

"There was a lot of freedom within this tight structure. By the time we actually got onto the set we really had a clear knowledge of it, we'd worked it out so precisely it was actually possible to jettison it."(32)

The time spent on constructing the shooting plan helped to cement the relationships between the key creative collaborators ensuring that all were working towards the same objective.

Shooting plans are vitally important in heavily art directed or special effects films. Neil Jordan for example used storyboards extensively on his two studio-based films COMPANY OF WOLVES and HIGH SPIRITS in order to work out the action in relation to the sets and special effects. Bill Forsyth encountered a similar necessity with his film HOUSEKEEPING:

"Storyboarding for me is a technical tool. For instance when we were doing the floods, I would have preferred it if we had been able to flood the whole town and then wander 'round with a camera filming things. But we couldn't flood any of it so we had to create flooded images one by one and I was forced into storyboarding that because we only had money for say six flood shots. I was forced into actually trying to imagine each single shot."(33)

Storyboarding or shooting plans also give a film-maker an anchor which, as Julien Temple points out, allows him or her to take risks that they otherwise wouldn't be able, or have the confidence, to do:

"It forces you to think things through. If you end up with one

scene from the storyboards you've done, you've also thought through five or six others and the storyboards refresh your memory of those other ways so when you shoot you have other options."(34)

Ron Peck agrees entirely with Temple:

"I think storyboarding is a very good way of evaluating the entire film and trying to foresee problems. I've storyboarded everything. It's a kind of security as well to go into your first day's filming knowing that you have thought through the entire thing - every moment of the film as an image or possible camera movement. And then possibly to jettison it when you are actually doing it for something better."(35)

The major benefits of this thorough planning to the collaborative relationships on set is that the director has a clear view of his or her objectives enabling the collaborators to direct their energies into finding the most suitable and effective ways of realising these objectives.

Not all directors work with storyboards however. Mike Radford for one argues that he works out of the atmosphere and feel of the locations in which he is working. He likes to have the freedom to change things on the day. However this is not to suggest he walks onto a set not knowing what he will do, but as he explains it is only within very broad parameters that he knows what he wants to do. The compensation, from a planning point of view, is that Radford spend a long time on his scripts so he is confident that they will work and it is the confidence of knowing he has a good script behind him, of 'feeling the structure of the screenplay' as he puts it, that enables him to improvise on the set.

The specialised technical knowledge of key collaborators is a vital resource for many film-makers. Derek Jarman, for example,

relies heavily on the knowledge of his directors of photography during the production of his films:

"I don't know anything about lenses, I wouldn't even know how they are calibrated... It never seemed to me to be the main concern because there's always people like Chris Hughes or Gabriel Beristain who are absolute experts in this field. If you can describe to them more or less the sort of atmosphere you want to generate they are really good at doing it. What it does, if you work that way, is it gives these people confidence to join in: so they are not simply being dictated to."(36)

Experienced technicians can also prove invaluable to neophyte directors either beginning their career or moving into larger scale production as was the case with Ron Peck on EMPIRE STATE, his previous experience having been in the workshop sector. The lighting cameraman on the film was replaced, at the insistence of the investors, after shooting had commenced because he was too slow and the production was falling behind schedule. He was replaced by Tony Imi, a cinematographer whom Peck did not know:

"Our first day together was pretty tough because it was a certain testing out of each other and each others authority. He was a much more experienced industry cameraman and he came in with a problem because the crew had to respond to him too. But in the end he worked very fast so we were able to do a lot of things we wouldn't otherwise have been able to do. And I think that had the investors not imposed the change the film might well have run into incredible trouble."(37)

Cinematographers are particularly important collaborators as they can do much to determine the 'look' of a film. It has been suggested by some that the visual style of a particular director of photography can be traced through a body of work involving several different directors. The distinguished cinematographer Nestor Almendros argues that the house-styles of the Hollywood studios owed much to their resident cameramen and gives numerous examples of a consistency of visual style attributable to

cinematographers like Gregg Toland, William Daniels and Rudolph Mate, regardless of directors involved. (38)

The role of the cinematographer is defined in some length by Dennis Schaefer and Larry Salvato in the introduction to their series of interviews with contemporary cameramen:

"A successful cinematographer...is just as familiar with the history of the visual arts as he is with the light sensitivity of film emulsion or the electrical intricacies of rigging a huge sound stage for a big production number. He takes orders from the director but he is also his collaborator and confidant; he must help and support the director in getting exactly what he wants even when the director is not fully able to articulate it himself. He must deal on a daily basis with art, set property and costume departments to ensure that their contributions are consistent with the overall tone and style of the film. In addition he is the personnel manager and chief motivational force of the film production crew. Their response to his direction can determine whether the film stays on schedule and on budget; more importantly, it determines the quality of what finally ends up on screen....outside of the director he is normally the single most important force on the set."(39)

A tall order indeed. But how do working cinematographers define their role ?

Michael Coulter, whose credits include NO SURRENDER, THE GOOD FATHER, HEAVENLY PURSUITS, HOUSEKEEPING, THE DRESSMAKER and DIAMOND SKULLS, describes the role of the director of photography in the following manner:

"People say you are the head technician. One of the most, if not the most, important technician because you are responsible for the 'look' of the film. But basically it's to interpret what the director wants and try to give him: get out of him what's in his head and between you put that on the screen."(40)

Coulter makes a distinction between 'the role' and 'the job' done by a cinematographer, the job being the technical side of things and involving collaboration with a series of technicians:

"Your job is working between the director and the operator, who also works very closely with the director. Hopefully what you get is a little triangle. You are also working with the rest of your camera crew - you also have a pretty important relationship with your focus puller because if the image is soft it's useless. On the other side you've got your sparks and gaffer, if you have a good understanding with a gaffer then you're on to a winner and you'll find that most guys work with one gaffer if they can, because you are already up and running if you are working with a guy you already know and understands your style - you don't have to explain everything. Then you can go on to start talking about working with the art department and all that stuff. Then you are getting back to talking about the 'look' of the film."(41)

A cinematographer must be able to work with his crew as well as collaborate with the director. He had some problems on the production of Bill Forsyth's HOUSEKEEPING shot on location in Canada. Coulter used incredibly low lighting in some of the sequences while his crew on the production were used to working in American television where everything is very brightly lit.

Roger Deakins, one of the top cinematographers working in the industry with credits such as ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE, NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR, SID AND NANCY, DEFENCE OF THE REALM, WHITE MISCHIEF and STORMY MONDAY to his name, concentrates on the actual construction of the film and his contribution to this process.

"On one picture it could be totally how a film is shot: everything from the lighting to the angles, to the way you break down a sequence. You can find yourself doing all of that. On something else it can be very much just the light, and discussing the shots with the director, but less the breakdown of scenes. An experienced director will know exactly how he wants a scene covered. I always operate so I like to have considerable control and involvement in the way a scene is shot, not only the framing and the lighting but also in the way something is broken down - the overall style of the picture. Whether you play scenes in fairly static compositions - shots that take long sections - or in lots of little cuts with lots of little cuts. I like to be involved as much as possible on that whole side of things."(42)

However, despite this desire for a high level of involvement in a

production, Deakins likes to have direction, a solid set of guidelines within which to work, claiming that there is nothing more frustrating when a director just leaves the cinematographer to 'carry on':

"Hopefully the ideal relationship is where you know what the director wants, you've discussed it enough, you know the style, you know what he wants and it's also what you want, and you don't really have to communicate much while you're shooting. Discussion then comes down on the set to quite often performance or how to cover a scene, depending on what the actors want to do."(43)

This relates back to the previous discussion of storyboarding and shooting plans and the need for a director to have a strong idea of his or her objectives.

Of all the films Deakins has worked on he is particularly pleased with his contribution to SID AND NANCY which was directed by Alex Cox. Deakins explains that he did not always get along with Cox during the production but this tension ended up being fruitful rather than destructive:

"I find conflict is a good thing. I have strong ideas and hopefully they have and you kind of rub up against each other."(44)

This sounds very much like a specific practical example of the process theorised by Coates when he talks about authorship being a clash between a director's individuality and counteracting forces including the contributions of the key collaborators.

The cinematographer is also the link between the creative 'core' of a production (director and immediate collaborators) and the laboratory which is an important stage of the process although a rather ignored one. The final 'look' of the film depends on the skill of the laboratory technicians and carefully planned and

executed lighting designs can be totally destroyed if the lab is not fully in tune with the production. Roger Deakins explains that he will visit the labs frequently to ensure that they are developing and printing the film in accordance with his and the director's wishes. For Deakins the lab work is crucial and it is his responsibility to oversee this particular contribution to the overall process.

There are several notable cinematographers working in the British film industry at the present time. Among the best are Deakins and Coulter, Chris Menges, who is arguably the top cinematographer in Britain today with over twenty years experience and credits such as ANGEL, LOCAL HERO, COMFORT AND JOY, THE KILLING FIELDS, THE MISSION and FATHERLAND to his name, Oliver Stapleton Peter Hannan, Gabriel Beristain and Roger Pratt. Stapleton was lighting cameraman on ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS, MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE, SAMMY AND ROSIE GET LAID, and PRICK UP YOUR EARS, Hannan was responsible for DANCE WITH A STRANGER, INSIGNIFICANCE, WITHNAIL AND I, A HANDFUL OF DUST and HOW TO GET AHEAD IN ADVERTISING, Beristain shot CARAVAGGIO, THE COURIER, JOYRIDERS and VENUS PETER, while Pratt's credits include BRAZIL, MONA LISA, PARIS BY NIGHT and BATMAN.

Next to the director of photography the production designer is also a key figure with regard to the 'look' of a film. This role is described by Rita McGurn, who designed Charlie Gormley's two feature films to date: LIVING APART TOGETHER and HEAVENLY PURSUITS, in the following way:

"The role of the production designer is to design and be responsible for everything that appears visually in front of the camera. In theory you should have design decisions about the lighting but in actual fact that's pretty much the lighting cameraman's problem. But very often you decide on the practical lights to be used on a set. They certainly oversee the wardrobe, make sure that the colours they have chosen for the sets are going to be seen in conjunction with the costumes the actors are wearing."(45)

McGurn's area of design has been largely naturalistic and contemporary. On the other hand there are production designers who have specialised in projects where imagination coupled with a strong sense of period detail is called for. One such designer is Christopher Hobbs who has worked on THE COMPANY OF WOLVES, CARAVAGGIO, GOTHIC, THE WOLVES OF WILLOUGHBY CHASE, and LOSER TAKES ALL. Hobbs likes to get involved on a project at an early stage and to spend a lot of time talking to the director in order to decide what approach to design would best suit the script. The film he is most proud of is CARAVAGGIO which he worked on for a very long time and was given a considerable degree of autonomy by the director Derek Jarman. The film was also made in a studio setting which Hobbs, like most production designers, prefers:

"It was a studio but as a studio it was a scruffy old warehouse. It meant that there were no studio constraints either because a proper big studio has all sorts of built-in constraints, partly to do with unit set-ups and the way studios work in rather quite rigid ways. Literally in that empty warehouse we could have done anything. There was almost nothing to stop us apart from money and time."(46)

Like everyone else involved on a film the production designer must be able to work with a range of people, particularly the director and the cinematographer. With regard to the latter, Rita McGurn explains that you have to work closely with him because a

cinematographer can make a designer's work look terrible if he can't tell what the designer is getting at or if things have not been planned properly. Christopher Hobbs has had a range of different experiences working with cinematographers as he explains with reference to three specific productions:

"On CARAVAGGIO it was wonderful because Gabriel Beristain was there reasonably early and in any case was someone who wanted to talk a lot about designs and how they should work with the lighting. Because you can't separate them really. On GOTHIC it wasn't so easy because Mike Southon and Ken Russell didn't agree on the way it should be lit, and also, because of the lenses, all of the lighting had to be behind the camera because there was nowhere to hide lights. It made it very difficult for Mike. And so I hardly spoke to him at all throughout the film. On THE WOLVES OF WILLOUGHBY CHASE we had Paul Beeson who's old and very experienced. I was a little worried. I didn't know how he was going to light it. There certainly wasn't much time to talk about it because he arrived the day before we started shooting. However, after I saw the first rushes I realised he knew precisely what he was doing and wherever possible I talked to him about it. He gave it a sort of big classical look, it was good quality, solid, well founded lighting with lots of atmosphere, rather gloomy and dark, which I liked. I was very worried we'd get some bright young spark who would light it up like a television set. He didn't do that, and he understood about big sets."(47)

Rita McGurn makes some interesting observaticns regarding the relationship between a designer and actors:

"In a location I always think it's important to speak to the person who's going to be living in it. A friend of mine did WETHERBY and on the first day of shooting Vanessa Redgrave came onto the set and said - 'I couldn't possibly live here, this is the house of a 90 years old blind person'. She just didn't feel her character..But I think it's crazy she hadn't gone to the set or been asked to visit the set, because she has got to feel comfortable in those surroundings. This is where she's supposed to be living."(48)

Finally there is the collaboration between the production designer and the art director. Christopher Hobbs explains that the latter is the designers assistant. While the production

designer does the actual designs and concentrates on the visual aspects in relation to the budget available, the art director's job is to organise the construction managers and such people to make sure that what is on paper actually ends up on the set in the manner intended. In otherwords the art director takes care of the nuts and bolts and helps with working out the details of the financing. Hobbs' regular art director is Mike Buchanan who he describes as: "incredibly practical which I'm not always".

Included within the design concept of a film is costume design. While this is generally not as important as production design to the overall effect of the film, occasionally costumes can be crucial: such as in period pieces or in the case of a film like HOUSEKEEPING where the costumes, designed by Mary Jane Reyner, a Bill Forsyth regular, helped to signify aspects of the characters in the film and ultimately to chart the growing differences between the two girls in the film and their relationship to the wider society of Fingerbone, the town in which the drama is set.

Another key technical collaborator in the process is the editor. Along with photography, editing represents the creative essence of film-making in the sense that cinema relies on two processes: the construction and recording of images and the assembly of these images. It is through editing that narrative tension can be built and paced. Bad editing can ruin a film no matter how well the production is directed, photographed, designed and acted. Tony Lawson, an experienced British editor whose credits include BAD TIMING, EUREKA, INSIGNIFICANCE, CASTAWAY and TRACK 29,

explains the editor's role in the following manner:

"He should bring what the piece demands in a sense. If it's a slow-paced, lyrical subject then you have to think in those terms. Baring in mind that you can alter things drastically and change story lines and everything, you really have to try to understand what the director's after or what the director's style is and work within that and hopefully build upon it to increase the particulars of the script."(49)

Lawson stresses the importance of an editor having a sense of the rhythm of the piece, whether to extend the tension or suspense of a sequence by drawing things out, or whether to force the pace along to generate excitement. He explains that more subtle things such as dialogue scenes are less obvious and he tends to rely on intuition in such circumstances in working the sequence up to some dramatic point.

Tom Priestley, a vastly experienced editor, concentrates on the relationship between the editor and the director in his elucidation of the editor's role. First of all he stresses that:

"in order for an editor to work creatively, the material has to be shot in a way that allows him a certain flexibility."(50)

Priestley goes on to explain how the film 'emerges' from the collaborative efforts of editor and director:

"All work in films is a kind of experiment because you are never remaking the same film, so that you are having to guess how it's going to work. What people don't really understand about editing is that it is very much a process so, just as a film doesn't emerge fully made out of the camera, neither is it the first cut that the editor makes. The first cut is a very strange sort of personal moment between the editor and the director because in fact it's neither of their versions of the film. It isn't the director's version because the director, up to that time, has merely looked at the rushes and made some choices if he's had room to do so. But how it goes together for the first cut is really totally up to the editor. But equally, because he's dealing with a mass of material, the editor is not saying 'this is how the finished film should look'. Because it isn't the finished film, it's a stage in the process. The equivalent would be a painting where you block in where the shapes are going to be

and maybe indicate a bit of colour. But it's not a finished picture."(51)

The crucial difference between this first cut (or rough cut) and the finished film is explained by Priestley in terms of the distinction he makes between 'cutting' and 'editing':

"Cutting to me is putting it all together, and editing is then the process of refinement. It's where the editor is the first member of the public because generally speaking he's not party to the shooting of it. And equally then he and the director have to be the first two critics." (52)

Staying with the rough cut for a moment, sometimes editors may be faced with a tremendous amount of material, given that some directors have a tendency to shoot as much footage as they can, covering scenes from a multitude of angles. Cinematographer Nestor Almendros, in his interview with Schaefer and Salvato argues that Americans tend to shoot far more material, and consequently rely on fragmented editing techniques, than their European counterparts and often this is because they lack a clarity of vision and purpose with the end result being a film which is devoid of personality and style. Tony Lawson suggests that this may not always be the case:

"I think that if there's a lot of film because the director likes a scene or likes what is going on then it's easy to handle. If there's a lot of film because he didn't know what to do so he just shot a lot of film in order to sort it out later then it's not so easy."(53)

Lawson has worked on several films with director Nicolas Roeg and he explains that sometimes Roeg has shot a lot of footage while other times he has been more sparing but in each case he had a clear vision of what he was trying to do.

The relationship between editor and director has some affinities with that between producer and director as explored above. This is particularly true with regard to the sense of closeness to and distance from the minutiae of a film and how this relates to the general sense of 'direction'. In the case of director and producer it was the latter's role to be able to 'stand back'.

With regard to director and editor the process is reversed as Tom Priestley explains:

"In shooting the director is obviously very close to his material. The editor starts at a distance and as he gets closer ideally the director moves further away. So that is why I don't like directors who insist on sitting in the cutting room day after day. looking over your shoulder. Because then I think you become totally obsessed with detail and no-one has a proper overview."(54)

He cites an example of this with reference to NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR directed by Mike Radford:

"What was interesting about NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR was because of the circumstances it had to be done in a rush. We really had a tight schedule and we tried to cut corners. One of the corners we tried to cut was to start editing - to actually start moving things about - before we'd got the whole film together. And what Mike (Radford) wasn't able to do was to stand back, so that for the first few weeks of post-production we were marking time because we soon realised that until he could get some objectivity we couldn't advance with the editing."(55)

The situation was eventually remedied and Radford did get some distance from the film but it is a good example of how the process of closeness and distance is crucial if a film is to develop and grow.

A film-maker must also be able to work successfully with actors. Some directors are particularly dictatorial in their relationship with actors, as Hitchcock was, or they may attempt to use them as ciphers or plot devices rather than people as such. The obvious

example in the current British context being Peter Greenaway. While others, such as Mike Leigh, may take the opposite approach and allow characters to emerge through a process of improvisation, giving the actors a very substantial input. However, in most cases the relationship will be more one of mutual co-operation but with the director ultimately in the driving seat, in other words supplying 'direction'.

Current British cinema does not have a 'star system' as such, there are no British equivalents of big American stars such as Redford, Newman, Eastwood, Streep or Stallone. British films are seldom sold on the strength of who the leading performers are. As John Ellis points out, the star system was essentially developed in Hollywood as a marketing strategy with stars performing a similar function as the creation of a 'narrative image', that is to say they 'provide a foreknowledge of the fiction, an invitation to cinema'.(56) There are some performers such as Michael Caine and Sean Connery who come close to serving this function in the British context but both are coming to the end of their acting careers. Arguably the biggest indigenous stars in British cinema are borrowed from the world of rock music: Sting, David Bowie, Phil Collins and Bob Geldoff have all appeared in British films over the past few years.

British cinema is much more characterised by solid performers rather than stars. Individuals such as Ray McAnally, John Hurt, Vanessa Redgrave, Gary Oldman, Miranda Richardson, Daniel Day Lewis, Tilda Swinton and others. These actors, some of whom are

extremely experienced and could arguably be regarded as minor stars (eg. Redgrave), are also heavily involved in television and theatre which tends to work against star-status in the sense that neither form has the 'larger than life' status, and effect, of cinema. In the theatre stars are demystified to an extent, they are witnessed 'in the flesh' as living, breathing, sweating individuals rather than screen 'idols'. Television on the other hand, as John Ellis points out, tends to foster 'personalities' rather than stars. Television does not produce the same kinetic effects as cinema and consequently ones emotional attachment (which includes the recognition and idolisation of star personas within the fiction) is generally less intense. The lack of home grown stars has helped create a situation where, in order to make a project commercially viable in North America, British film-makers are importing American stars (usually minor as major league performers demand huge fees which effectively prices them out of a typical low budget British film) such as Kevin Kline (CRY FREEDOM, A FISH CALLED WANDA), Denziel Washington (CRY FREEDOM, FOR QUEEN AND COUNTRY), Jeff Goldblum (THE TALL GUY), Darryl Hannah (HIGH SPIRITS), Melanie Daniels (STORMY MONDAY) and Brigit Fonda (SCANDAL) among others.

But as I pointed out, despite the absence of stars, much British cinema is characterised by strong acting. There are numerous examples of recent British films which, in spite of any technical merits they might have, are carried by the performances of the leading players. This often relates to the rather limited scope of the such films. A classic example is WITHNAIL AND I, the

directorial debut of screenwriter Bruce Robinson. This film is basically a chamber piece set in two locations and although the cinematography is excellent (courtesy of Peter Hannan) it is the performances of the three major actors: Richard E. Grant, Paul McGann and Richard Griffiths which gives the film its character. Similarly WISH YOU WERE HERE is driven along almost single handedly by actress Emilly Lloyd The strong theatrical influence on British cinema probably accounts to some extent for such a state of affairs.

Actors are often cast according to type so that their physical characteristics determine what kind of roles they will be asked to play. In this respect the casting director is an important member of the production team. Steve Woolley has worked on several occasions with casting director Suzy Figgis and is full of praise for her ability to help a producer and a director with precise advice over casting. Charlie Gormley also acknowledges the benefits of a good casting director. Being secure in the knowledge that casting is done by someone with effective expertise gives the director confidence in much the same way as a good script represents a solid foundation on which a director can build.

The casting of Bill Douglas' film COMRADES was interesting in that he deliberately chose relatively unknown actors to play the roles of the Tolpuddle Martyrs and their families, while the actors chosen to play the establishment figures were by and large more familiar faces. As Douglas explains:

"I chose unknowns for the Tolpuddle men because I was interested in George Lovelace and his men and I didn't want anything to interfere too much with that. So I didn't want a Robert Redford standing for George Lovelace because the audience will see Robert Redford and they wont see the glory of this man, and I think he is worth remembering. When I came to the aristocrats it wasn't a terribly difficult decision because I decided it didn't really matter too much if the audience felt a kind of division between the character and the actor."(57)

However, sometimes in the process of casting particular actors who do not correspond to the director's original conceptions of the part can make such an impression that the character is subsequently modified to fit the particular actor. Mike Radford explains that this happened on both ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE - with one of the three Italian POW's, and on WHITE MISCHIEF when seventy-five year old Trevor Howard was cast in a part originally created for a fifty year old man. In each case the actor cast was able to bring something fresh to the part.

Another problem that can arise in relation to actors is the different approach of British and American actors to their craft in a film industry where, as I pointed out, Americans are often cast to help the project's commercial potential in the United States. Patrick Cassavetti recalls that on the production of Brazil there were great differences between the way Robert De Niro and Jonathan Pryce would approach a scene. De Niro, being a method actor, required several 'takes' to warm up and get into the part while Pryce requires only two or three attempts. Such a state-of-affairs could create problems in that the actor who is used to a minimal amount of takes could possibly burn out if the scene had to be played over and over again.

There are other creative collaborators who deserve a mention, particularly in the often neglected sound department. The soundtrack composer is important and the British cinema has relied heavily on the input of two composers: George Fenton and Michael Kamen, along with a variety of rock musicians, over the past few years. The sound editor is also an important contributor, particularly on an experimental film like Derek Jarman's THE LAST OF ENGLAND which was shot silently with the sound, including a full footsteps track, added later. Ron Peck is one film-maker who is particularly aware of the importance of a strong soundtrack to supplement the images and both his features NIGHTHAWKS and EMPIRE STATE are distinguished by their use of strong driving dance music.

In these ways then, the contribution of such experts is crucial to the film-making process. At the end of the day however, the director is usually still in the position of final arbitrator. As Bill Forsyth suggests:

"everyone is free to make suggestions but the director is in the luxurious position of being able to say yes or no."(58)

Similarly, Bill Douglas argues:

"If I have a strong idea that something is going to work there's no point in diverting me over to another way of thinking. I've really worked it out and convinced myself."(59)

It is the director who must preserve some overall sense of purpose and vision or the result will probably be chaos. In this way there is a two way process in operation: the director can crystallise his or her ideas by drawing upon the technical knowledge and suggestions made by the cinematographer, the

editor, production designer or actors, but on the other hand, such ideas and suggestions must be considered in relation to the requirements of the production in hand.

The importance of good working relationships is reflected in the many instances where one finds film-makers collaborating with the same people on several projects. Bill Forsyth with cinematographer Michael Coulter, editor Michael Ellis and production designer Adrienne Atkinson, Mike Radford with cameraman Roger Deakins, editor Tom Priestley and assistant director Chris Rose and Derek Jarman with production designer Christopher Hobbs and composer Simon Turner, to give just three examples. Film-making is a team effort and a good team spirit is extremely important.

Forsyth believes he has found a very satisfactory way of working with his collaborators on a production. He describes the process in the following manner:

"When you crew up - when you're in pre-production for two or three months before you start filming - that period is just one long conversation between the director and the five or six creative people he is working with. That conversation goes on for the whole of the pre-production and right through the movie and for me it's very important. I've tended to work with the same people maybe because I find it easier to have that conversation with them".(60)

Michael Coulter has worked on all of Forsyth's films as lighting cameraman on THAT SINKING FEELING and GREGORY'S GIRL (which were so low budget that there weren't many lights available), as operator to Chris Menges on LOCAL HERO and COMFORT AND JOY, an experience which was to prove invaluable to Coulter given Menges

own experience and skill as a lighting cameraman, before moving up the latter to fully fledged director of photography (with a relatively substantial budget and a sophisticated lighting design) on HOUSEKEEPING. Coulter explains his relationship with Forsyth in the following manner:

"Bill is a guy who knows what he wants and doesn't make a fuss about it until he's not getting what he wants. Bill and I have quite a good understanding and one idea out of ten gets accepted because I'm happy to suggest things all the time. HOUSEKEEPING was important to me. That film was very much a team effort. I'm not discounting Bill's leadership, without him nothing would have been done. But it was very much a collaboration."(61)

Mike Radford enjoys collaborating with the same people on different productions because it makes things easier in that:

"You use short-hand in the way you talk about things to one another."(62)

He makes the following remarks regarding his collaboration with cinematographer Roger Deakins and editor Tom Priestley:

"Roger I have a close creative collaboration with because he's such an amazing cameraman. He operates as well as lights and you always have a creative connection with your camera operator. Because he shoots more films than I do he's just got technically better and better. Although I'm quite capable of shooting a picture myself - I know how to operate and light a picture - I wouldn't even dream of approaching Roger in that. What it means is that, more and more, if I need an angle or something like that, he can actually improve on it... He can also imagine things, like what a louma crane will do for this shot, which I find rather hard to imagine....

I have absolute faith in Tom when he cuts a dramatic scene. I've chosen the takes which I think are best, but I've yet to catch him out: selecting an angle or making a cut which doesn't utilize the best and most subtle of what the actors are giving. And so I leave that to him... We shot the trial scene in WHITE MISCHIEF, which lasts about ten minutes. I had to sit down and cut it... So what happens is that Tom makes an assembly - you come to the end of a picture and the editor makes an assembly which is just every shot you have put end to end and cut about a bit. I looked at the way Tom had assembled the trial and I couldn't better it, I just couldn't better it. I obviously make suggestions, and the final thing is mine, but it's like having two directors: one who is actually manipulating the film and the other is standing back

slightly who's got all the rest under him."(63)

Priestley is also very comfortable with the relationship because Radford allows him the flexibility to work with the material and to have a considerable creative input into the process. The necessary trust between director and editor has also been built up over the three films the pair have collaborated on. Radford has also been the beneficiary of Priestley's vast experience. On ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE, for example, as Priestley explains:

"I felt that my role was to structure the narrative a bit more. Mike wrote a lot of unnecessary material. The case in point was when the Italians first arrive at the farm. There was a whole scene in which all the farm people were standing around and the Italians arrive, get off the truck, the farm manager makes a speech, you see everybody and it's a general introduction. And it was very slow and almost stodgy and not particularly well set. So in the end we used one shot of the Italians standing and the truck driving off. Then you fade out. It's just saying - 'they've arrived at the farm', which is all you need to say."(64)

Tony Lawson has also worked closely with Nicolas Roeg, editing all his films since BAD TIMING. Like Priestley with Radford, Lawson enjoys considerable flexibility and freedom in his working relationship with Roeg. As Lawson explains:

"For a start he doesn't like to dictate anything. He wants somebody to do something so that he can make comments. Then he'll respond. So far as working with Nic is concerned, I more or less work on my own to begin with and produce a version of the film. I then show it to him and, depending upon how he feels about various parts of the film, either it becomes a close working relationship or a fairly loose one. He's very uncommunicative in that he doesn't explain what he wants. He relies on the fact that he knows basically we are sympathetic towards each other and relies entirely upon at least my initial concept of how the film, or a sequence, should go, and then, based on how successful he feels that is, he will make comments. But basically he really doesn't want to know about it until he's finished shooting, that's when he starts to take an interest."(65)

Roeg is a director noted for the dramatic editing in his films so the contribution of Lawson to Roeg's cinema is considerable.

However, Roeg has worked with other editors and his style has remained consistent and as Lawson acknowledges, he does have a good understanding of the power of editing and tends to get highly involved in the more complex sequences which are part of his stylistic trademark.

Lawson's remarks support many of Priestley's comments regarding the editors role. It also demonstrates how, by suggesting what the film should look like, the editor can help the director to direct his creative energies by providing something tangible on which to work.

There are numerous other examples of collaborations which have been sustained over several films. Julien Temple has collaborated with cinematographer Oliver Stapleton on several pop promos and the feature ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS, a relationship which goes back to film school. Temple has also worked for a long time with editor Richard Bedford. Oliver Stapleton has also collaborated with Stephen Frears on three films: MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE, PRICK UP YOUR EARS and SAMMY AND ROSIE GET LAID. Editor Mick Audsley has worked on all of Frears' films since THE HIT, including the three films mentioned above and the more recent DANGEROUS LIASONS.

Most directors look for a cinematographer with whom they can work closely on the visual design of a film. As we have seen in British cinema, there are numerous examples: Radford and Deakins, Forsyth and Coulter, Frears and Stapleton, Peter Greenaway and Sacha Vierny. One notable omission from this group is Neil

Jordan. For someone who has demonstrated a strong coherent visual sense in his films it is surprising to find that on his four features to date Jordan has never worked with the same director of photography. As he explains:

"It's difficult when you change cinematographers all the time because you have to have the same conversation again, and it's always a very inarticulate conversation, about lighting and things. But I've worked with the same camera crew. I happen to have worked with the same operator on the last three films."(66)

Given Mike Radford's evaluation of the importance of the director/operator relationship perhaps this continuity has proved beneficial for Jordan.

Where Jordan has enjoyed continuity is on the design front, working with production designer Anton Furst on THE COMPANY OF WOLVES and HIGH SPIRITS his two studio based films:

"I've had a great relationship with Anton Furst. He's the guy who I find is adventurous enough, and he's got enough reference, to push things to their extreme. So I find with Anton I can talk about the whole visual context of the film. I love to do that: talk about the thing as a whole and create something that is new and resonant. All the films I've done have been heavily designed, even ANGEL because even when we were shooting on locations we changed the locations quite radically. In ANGEL I didn't want any emerald green in the film at all. Everywhere there was green we killed it, throwing sand over large stretches of fields. So it was a designed film as well: the whole thing with the fairy lights, the colour of the suits, and all that sort of stuff. I think to me these are the most important aspects of the film."(67)

Creative collaboration can be equally important in examples of lower-budget, more personal film-making. A classic example being Derek Jarman's THE LAST OF ENGLAND: an intensely personal film shot mainly in Super 8 - the gauge of most home movies and therefore relatively inexpensive. Despite the highly autobiographical nature of the film, THE LAST OF ENGLAND is

described by Jarman as:

"more collaborative than a film done in the normal way."(68)

The creative contributions of cast and crew are almost as important in this case as the film-makers overall vision and objectives. The lack of a formal script and the 'open documentary' philosophy of the film meant that the collection of material was often freer than is usually the case on a production tightly controlled by the strictures of schedule and budget. For example, some of the footage was shot was shot in Liverpool by cameraman Chris Hughes under the direction of actor Spencer Leigh. As Jarman explains:

"I wanted to film Liverpool but I've only been up there three times in my life. Spencer comes from Liverpool, so the best thing is for him to go up and to actually direct the camera on what he wants to show us of Liverpool. So it doesn't matter who takes the footage. Some of the other footage in the film was things other people were doing in and around the week we were filming in the warehouse. Chris came to me one morning and said: 'I am going to set up a time-lapse shot on the dock here', so I shouted at everyone: 'keep out of the way, Chris is doing a time lapse'".(69)

The absence of a formal script on THE LAST OF ENGLAND placed particular demands on the cast, many of whom were non-professional actors. No one was given a 'part' to play in the conventional sense and directions were, by and large, minimal.

As Jarman explains:

"In a way it's quite difficult for the actors if they are formally trained. They are not going to be given directions beyond the context: 'you are at a wedding. That's it. Go !'. They've not even got a rehearsal. It's difficult when an actor just has to be themself".(70)

This stress on improvisation meant that in certain sequences the

onus was placed not only on the actors but also the crew to 'seize the moment'. The nature of filming in Super 8, which enabled Jarman to use multi-camera set ups to record the same action from different angles, was particularly appropriate in this context.

Not all experiences of collaboration are necessarily productive. There can be a clash of ideas between film-maker and chief collaborators which cannot be effectively resolved. This may result when a director who has become accustomed to a particular set of working practices and production methods encounters a different working situation. This was partly Ron Peck's experience with EMPIRE STATE (although ultimately his major collaborative relationships were satisfactory and, in the case of cinematographer Tony Imi extremely fruitful). Peck had previously made his films, such as NIGHTHAWKS in a workshop situation involving an approach to film-making which was both more collective and more self-consciously referential. He attempted to bring the same things to EMPIRE STATE, which initially was to have been a lower budget more experimental 'workshop type' of film than it eventually ended up, with less success than he might have wished. Peck had problems in attempting to get certain ideas across by way of references to paintings and other films:

"I asked most of the Art Department to watch 20 minutes of WRITTEN ON THE WIND, the Douglas Sirk film, to try to get something across about not cluttering up the decor with detail. And I juxtaposed it with as film called NUMBER ONE, an archetypal sort of British realist film, full of detail and nothing highlighted. And I had quite a struggle. They didn't know what on earth I was talking about, why on earth I was making them watch this old Hollywood Movie that none of them had seen or was very interested in."(72)

Peck argues that this tends to be less of a problem in America where directors will often use references to other films when planning a production and crews will understand and appreciate such a strategy. Julien Temple agrees to the extent that working in America he found that American crews from the grips and the sparks upwards were more involved in the idea of making a movie than their British counterparts. Consequently they are much more willing to make suggestions and enter into a dialogue with the director.

Part of Peck's problem was his unfamiliarity with working practices in the commercial, as opposed to workshop, production sector. There were also problems in that he was working closely in conjunction with Mark Ayres, his partner at Team Pictures and credited Executive Producer on EMPIRE STATE, and Carl Ross who was credited as Creative Consultant on the film. The crew however, would only take order from the director and resented the others, particularly Ross, suggesting to them what they should do. Peck concedes that the the intensely collaborative relationship between the three of them should have ended sooner than it did in recognition of the different working practices entailing at this higher level of production.

But in general the process of collaboration is a fruitful and productive experience. Given the nature and scale of, even low budget, film-production collaboration is a necessity in both logistical terms and also with regard to the practicalities of

day-to-day production. A successful production requires a range of specialist skills be brought to bear under the guidance and leadership of the director. But directors rely heavily on the contributions of their collaborators. On a purely technical level most technicians have much more experience than a director who has been working for an equivalent time. A cinematographer can perhaps work on two films a year while, on average a director is involved with a single project for a period of between one to two years. But collaborators, by talking to directors and suggesting things, help a director to clarify his or her intentions, to assess options and make choices in line with practical possibility. This is part of the essence of the structuring of creativity in the context of the film-making process.

NOTES

(1) Paul Coates: THE STORY OF THE LOST REFLECTION Routledge & Kegan Paul (London) 1985. Chapter 2.

(2) Interview with Steve Woolley 7/11/88

(3) Alexander Walker: HOLLYWOOD ENGLAND Harrap (London) 1986 p215.

(4) Interview with Bill Forsyth 21/7/87

(5) Interview with Mike Radford 21/7/87

(6) Interview with Ron Peck 8/4/88

(7) Interview 21/7/87

(8) Interview with Tom Priestley 11/4/88

(9) Interview Colin MacCabe 15/7/87

(10) James Brabazon: 'Writers Block' in A.I.P. & CO, June 1986 p26.

(11) Hanif Kureishi: 'The Diary. "Some Time With Stephen" in SAMMY AND ROSIE GET LAID Faber and Faber (London) 1988 p62.

(12) ibid. p95.

(13) Interview with Neil Jordan 2/6/88

(14) ibid.

(15) Interview 21/7/87

(16) James Park: LEARNING TO DREAM: THE NEW BRITISH CINEMA Faber & Faber (London) 1984 p118.

(17) Interview with Patrick Cassavetti 21/7/87

(18) Alexander Walker: NATIONAL HEROES Harrap (London) 1985.

(19) Park: LEARNING TO DREAM

(20) Interview with Sarah Radclyffe 7/4/88

(21) Interview 7/11/88

(22) Interview with James Mackay 9/4/88

(23) Interview 7/11/88

(24) Interview with Marc Samuelson 20/7/87

(25) Interview 21/7/87

(26) Interview 7/11/88

(27) Interview with Al Clark 17/7/87

(28) Interview 17/7/87

(29) John Caughie: 'Television and Cinema: Converging Histories' in Barr (ed.) ALL OUR YESTERDAYS, BFI (London) 1986.

(30) ibid. p200.

(31) Interview with Mark Shivas 16/7/87

(32) Interview with Derek Jarman 17/8/87

(33) interview 21/7/87

(34) Interview with Julien Temple 20/7/88

(35) Interview 8/4/88

(36) Interview 17/8/87

(37) Interview 8/4/88

(38) Nestor Almendros: 'Some Thoughts On My Profession' in Mast & Cohen (eds.) FILM THEORY AND CRITICISM Third Ed. (New York) 1985.

(39) Dennis Schaeffer and Larry Salvato: MASTERS OF LIGHT: CONVERSATIONS WITH CONTEMPORARY CINEMATOGRAPHERS University of California Press (London) 1984 p1.

(40) Interview with Michael Coulter 11/5/88

(41) ibid.

(42) Interview with Roger Deakins 18/7/88

(43) ibid.

(44) ibid.

(45) Interview with Rita McGurn 20/6/88

(46) Interview with Christopher Hobbs 7/4/88

(47) ibid.

(48) Interview 20/6/88

(49) Interview 4/6/88

(50) Interview with Tom Priestley 11/4/88

(51) ibid.

(52) ibid.

(53) Interview 4/6/88

(54) Interview 11/4/88

(55) ibid.

(56) John Ellis: VISIBLE FICTIONS Routledge & Kegan Paul (London) 1982 p91.

(57) Interview with Bill Douglas 24/7/88

(58) Interview 21/7/87

(59) Interview 24/7/88

(60) Interview 21/7/87

(61) Interview 11/5/88

(62) Interview 21/7/87

(63) Interview 21/7/87

(64) Interview 11/4/88

(65) Interview 4/6/88

(66) Interview 2/6/88

(67) ibid.

(68) Interview 17/8/87

(69) ibid.

(70) ibid.

(71) Interview 8/4/88

CHAPTER TEN

THE AUTEUR IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE AUTEUR: THE CONTINUING IMPORTANCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE FILM-MAKING PROCESS

Despite being a fundamentally collaborative process film-making is still regarded by many commentators in terms of the auteurist perspective. British cinema is no exception to this general trend. Of the three major publications addressing themselves to the British film revival of the early eighties two adopt an auteurist approach to the subject: James Park's LEARNING TO DREAM: THE NEW BRITISH CINEMA (1) and Nick Roddick's essay 'The British Revival' which forms a major part of the British Film Year publication A NIGHT AT THE PICTURES (2). Only BRITISH CINEMA NOW (3), a series of essays on various aspects of British cinema including finance, distribution, criticism and acting, edited by Roddick and Martyn Auty, refused to treat the 'New British Cinema' as synonymous with its directors. It is also worth noting that Alexander Walker's survey of the British Cinema during the seventies and first half of the eighties should also concentrate on the activities of individual directors (and producers), hence the title of his book NATIONAL HEROES (4). His previous examination of the sixties HOLLYWOOD ENGLAND (5), while similar in many respects tended to focus more on the activities of production companies and the investment strategies in British production by the American majors during the period.

In a more academic sense it can be argued, as indeed Paul Coates does in THE STORY OF THE LOST REFLECTION (6), that despite the

numerous claims by Structuralist and post-structuralist writers to have successfully de-centred the subject, the idea of individuality remains a justifiable, indeed necessary, construct in film theory. Indeed the acknowledgement of the unique contribution made by a range of individuals to the film-making process underpins this study. While the stress has been placed on the processes of interaction and collaboration, the director maintains a position of creative dominance within this process. However, this is always in relation to the contributions of collaborators and does not exclude them as classical auteur theory arguably does.

What is important to consider is that the director is involved in the process at every stage while the various contributions from 'experts' considered in the previous chapter are much more specific in nature. Indeed only the producer has a similar relationship to the project as the director, following it through and having some sort of input at every stage of the process. But this tends to be more of a supervisory than a creative role. The director has the privileged position of being able to accept or reject the advice of the various collaborators on a project. A director therefore can be said to have ultimate creative control over every stage of the process, although in practice this may be mitigated by certain factors including the controversial issue of the 'final cut' of the film. As I pointed out in a previous chapter, financiers, who ultimately own the film by virtue of their investment, occasionally demand the right to final cut and this can bring them into conflict with the director - eg. the

dispute between Mike Hodges and the Goldwyn company over the final cut of A PRAYER FOR THE DYING.

What is interesting, with regard to a consideration of film-makers currently working within the British film industry, is the number of directors who write their own scripts, as I pointed out in the previous chapter. This obviously produces a degree of thematic and stylistic consistency in the work of film-makers like Bill Forsyth, Neil Jordan, Mike Radford, Derek Jarman, Peter Greenaway and others which is not so readily recognisable in the work of directors who have worked with different writers. The Stephen Frears of MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE and SAMMY AND ROSIE GET LAID, both written by Hanif Kureishi, is arguably very different to the Stephen Frears of DANGEROUS LIASONS or even THE HIT. Obviously there are exceptions, some directors have particularly strong styles which are evident regardless of the writer involved - Nicolas Roeg being a classic example. But generally the younger British film-makers with a distinctive 'signature', to use an auteurist term, do tend to be writer/directors who apparently have a desire to make distinctive cinematic statements and who, as a result, stand out from the general mass of efficient and functional contract directors most of whom have (unsurprisingly) learned their trade in television.

What then can we say about the creativity of individual film-makers ? Basically, what a film-maker brings to a project is ideas (often including the basic original idea from which the treatment and screenplay grew), influences and experience. Ideas

relate to the desire to make films in the first place which in turn may be the desire to communicate particular ideas to an audience through the popular medium of film, or on the other hand it may be a case of film for film's sake prompted by a fascination for the medium and its workings. As I have argued, there are several film-makers working in Britain today who possess a strong personal identity in terms of a continuity of thematic preoccupation and stylistic treatment in their work. Therefore, the cinema of Jordan, Radford, Forsyth, Jarman, Greenaway, Terence Davies and Bill Douglas can, by and large, be described in terms of an auteurist cinema distinct from the work of Stephen Frears, Pat O'Connor and David Drury. This is not to argue that the work of the first group of directors is necessarily better than that of the second because to argue that the work of a film-maker with an identifiable style is more accomplished than that of a more impersonal director is to be guilty of the worst excesses of auteurism. However it is interesting to note that both Jordan and Radford have both made films, HIGH SPIRITS and WHITE MISCHIEF respectively, which appeared to be less committed and more processed affairs compared to their previous efforts. In the case of Jordan the move was to a big budget special effects comedy which lacked the thematic preoccupations and stylistic approach which made his first three films so interesting.

Ideas are formed within a context which is both personal and social at the same time. Work can be inspired by events in an individual's life (the films of Terence Davies, the Bill Douglas

TRILOGY), by philosophical and academic ideas, by current or past political struggle, by aspects of contemporary social life etc. This brings us to the question of influences: the context within which ideas and strategies are formed, helping to place the cinematic preoccupations of individual film-makers within some sort of cultural and intellectual context. As well as drawing inspiration from various personal, intellectual, social and political sources, a film-maker can also be influenced by other art forms such as the novel (which has provided readily adaptable source material for film-makers since the invention of cinema), painting, poetry or music, or by the history and nature of film-making itself.

While film-makers may have particular cultural influences and reference points, all work in relation to the institution of cinema and consequently all must have some knowledge and understanding of cinematic technique. Given the current organisation of feature film production in this country most film-makers have to develop their technique by learning from others rather than serving an apprenticeship within the industry and learning by way of 'on the job'experience. Most of the directors mentioned in this study have only made a handful of films, and what is striking when one surveys British production over the last few years is the number of film-makers who seem to make a film and then disappear: a testimony to the problems not so much of making a debut feature but following it up. Therefore film-makers have to rely both on the experience of their collaborators and by studying the work of others. As

writer/director Charlie Gormley explains:

"You can't learn your trade unless you steal from other people, by going to the cinema and thinking: 'that's a nice elegant solution to the clumsy business of getting someone out of a car etc."(7)

It is important that a budding film-maker learns the language of cinema by analysing how others perform their craft and having a sound knowledge of different techniques and approaches to the medium. The advent of film school has helped to produce graduates who possess a degree of cine-literacy and who are consciously aware of their own dispositions and stylistic preferences. Some of the film-makers I interviewed for this study are heavily influenced by the American cinema, particularly of the fifties. Ron Peck and Julien Temple share an admiration of the visual language, the colour and the design displayed in the work of Sirk, Minnelli, Ray and others. Peck in particular is fascinated by American culture. His first feature NIGHTHAWKS was inspired (in a visual sense) by the Edward Hopper painting of the same name. Similarly his intention behind Empire State was to give the film the look and feel of an American thriller despite its thoroughly British subject matter. Temple is particularly influenced by the studio-based American musical, the model on which he based his feature ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS.

Charlie Gormley is another film-maker who professes an admiration for classical American cinema. Indeed he used an American model for the design of his second feature HEAVENLY PURSUITS. Much of the action takes place in a Scottish comprehensive school and the desire was to get away from the modern comprehensive design of

GRANGE HILL with its multitude of corridors and instead to use a classical double volume space with an open floor and galleries: much like the layout of the insurance office in Billy Wilder's classic film noir DOUBLE INDEMNITY. Gormley argues that both he and Bill Forsyth, who were partners in the late seventies, continually looked to the American cinema for references. As he puts it:

"I think in Scotland people are much more predisposed towards an American cinema, or even, in Bill's case an American cinema through a French filter."(8)

Forsyth is more reticent than Gormley, denying any strong influences although GREGORY'S GIRL would appear to have more than a passing reference in tone and style to Olmi's IL POSTO and LOCAL HERO to Sandy Mackendrick's WHISKEY GALORE.

Other film-makers I talked to acknowledged various European points of reference. Mike Radford for example is very conscious of his Italian and French influences, particularly Italian Neo-realism. As cinematographer Roger Deakins, who has shot all Radford's features to date, explains, Radford's debut film ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE was made with a conscious reference to Ermanno Olmi's THE TREE OF THE WOODEN CLOGS. In general, Radford's European sensibility is demonstrated in the way in which he relates his characters to their environment which is very different to the stylistic panache and pace of American cinema. As Radford himself puts it:

"In each of my films the environment is a player in the drama."(9)

Bill Douglas is also very much a European oriented director in terms of his visual style and approach to narrative. Among his influences he cites Dovzhenko, Visconti, De Sica, Truffaut and British Free Cinema. His visual approach involves a notion of dwelling: holding the camera on a subject for an extended period of time. This, Douglas explains, is an expression of the desire to show the nobility of ordinary people, a Bazinian belief in the transparent nature of the film medium in its relation to reality - the notion that the camera can reveal the complexities and ambiguities of reality. This philosophical approach to film-making was developed by Douglas during the making of his autobiographical Trilogy: MY CHILDHOOD, MY AIN FOLK, MY WAY HOME and was a major factor in his approach to the production of COMRADES, the story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs.

Derek Jarman and Neil Jordan also cite European influences in their cinema. Jarman claims a spiritual affinity with other gay film artists such as Passolini and Murnau, although he denies that he is a cinephile as such. Jordan on the other hand has a great admiration for Bunuel, which may explain his own preoccupation with the ambiguous nature of reality and what he refers to as 'the breakdown of realistic explanations of behaviour'(10), and the expressionism of Fritz Lang. Both Jarman and Jordan have strong external cultural referents: both claim to be heavily influenced by painting (Jarman was an artist before becoming involved in film and he continues to paint). Jarman also has a particular interest in poetry which tends to be a greater structuring influence on his sense of narrative than prose.

The third factor contributing to the 'individuality' of particular film-makers is that of relevant experience. Given the major changes which have occurred in the structure of the industry since the break up of permanent, studio-based production, formal training patterns have been radically altered to replace the old studio apprentice system. Rather than following the classic career structure from clapper loader to director, most budding film-makers receive their formal training at film school. Indeed, the development of film schools such as the National Film School at Beaconsfield and the London International Film School represents the contemporary equivalent of institutionalised training.

The NFS at Beaconsfield, the school with the highest profile in Britain, was set up in the early seventies as a direct response to the changes which had taken place in the industry and the disruption of previous routes into career structures. The director of the NFS is Colin Young who had previously been director at highly successful UCLA film school in Los Angeles. Examples of graduates from the NFS since the first intake of students in 1971 include directors Mike Radford, Julien Temple, Nic Broomfield, Terence Davies, Malcolm Mowbray, Jim O'Brien, Michael Caton-Jones, Connie Templeman, Gillies Mackinnon and cinematographers Roger Deakins, Oliver Stapleton and Gabriel Beristain. Graduates of the London International Film School include Bill Douglas, Mike Leigh, Ron Peck, all writer directors,

and cinematographers Gale Tattersall and Curtis Clark.

Most of these individuals began to establish themselves in the film industry in the late seventies and early eighties. It took the best part of a decade for the first intake of NFS students to complete their training and garner some experience in related fields: documentary, TV drama, before being given the chance to make their first feature film. The emergence of this 'educated' generation of film-makers co-incided with the birth of Channel 4 and the emergence of various production companies in the early eighties, affording them opportunities to make theatrical features which they would not otherwise have had.

The yearly intake of the NFS is in the region of twenty five students, of an average age of around 27. This is so they 'have had some life experience'(11) as Colin Young puts it. The course lasts for three years, although this period may be extended as students have to complete a graduation film which may delay their date of completion. In the first year students are taught a range of skills before moving onto their chosen specialist area, be it direction, screenwriting, cinematography, editing or whatever. These skills are taught by people with industry experience, for example the camera department is currently being run by the veteran cinematographer Walter Lasally. Young agrees that the school is there to teach basic craft but the basic philosophy behind the programme is to encourage a learning-based, as opposed to a teaching-based, curriculum with students encouraged to learn from their own initiatives by posing and solving their own

problems. Film school also give students the opportunity to learn from closely studying the work of other directors.

In addition to film school, some film-makers enjoyed an institution-based training at art school which eventually led them to film as a medium of expression every bit as effective and relevant as painting or sculpture. Many film-makers with an art school background have tended to remain in the experimental or avant garde sector but some command bigger budgets and audiences and can be said to operate on the margins of the mainstream. The classic examples in this category are Peter Greenaway and Derek Jarman, both of who have very unique approaches to their art which in different ways betrays their origins: Greenaway in terms of his formal plots and rather classical static compositions, Jarman with regard to his visual and aural collages. Another notable film-maker with an art college background is James Scott who, like Jarman, trained at the Slade before moving into cinema.

But it must also be said that very few film students will graduate straight to feature films, they will usually have to broaden their experience by working in some related field. Even once they have made their first feature it is highly unlikely that this is the only work they will do. Given the limited resources available for film production each year in Britain most film-makers must find some alternative sources of employment while they are waiting to begin work on their next major project. The major areas other than features within which film-makers work are television drama, documentaries, advertising and pop-promos.

I shall briefly consider each area and the implications each may have for the development of an individual film-makers approach to the medium.

The relationship between TV drama and cinema has been the topic of countless debates over the past decade, particularly in relation to Channel 4 and much of the work commissioned for the 'Film on Four' slot. The general argument has been that many of these films are essentially televisual rather than cinematic in nature, relying on the script and the actors to force the narrative along rather than by means of images and imaginative editing. This in turn feeds into a more fundamental debate about the verbal primacy of British cinema in general which is considered in chapter eight. Traditionally television drama takes the theatre as its model and early TV plays were often shot 'live': continuous action covered by several cameras in much the same way as an outside broadcast is constructed. Technique therefore tended to be functional and to serve the script. The implications of all of this is that film-makers whose background is ostensibly TV drama tend to make television when they are supposed to be making cinema. It is argued by some that they are unable to use the full range of possibilities offered by cinema. Consequently the development of a personal style is subordinated to the sensitive handling of content. Indeed it is this sensitivity which constitutes one of the strengths of much television drama and 'Film on Four' productions, despite the criticisms of stylistic impersonality and lack of visual imagination. Examples of film-makers who moved into feature films

from television drama include Stephen Frears, Ken Loach, Michael Apted, Richard Eyre and Roland Joffe. Some continue to work in TV and some, Eyre and Loach for example, are also involved in theatre.

The mirror image of this state of affairs is provided by the world of commercials. Unlike drama which is usually made on a tight budget, many commercials are rather lucrative assignments with substantial resources and relaxed schedules: film-makers are afforded opportunities to experiment with technique and only have to produce approximately 15-30 seconds of usable footage a day as opposed to 4 or 5 minutes in the case of film. Film-makers also have the opportunity to work with the best technicians in the business on commercials and fees are very high. The problems such conditions can create are that when a film-makers who has either been trained in, or whose experience of film-making is almost exclusively in the the world of, commercials comes to make a feature film style can occasionally overshadow narrative development, rendering their work visually interesting but ultimately rather unsatisfying.

James Park points out that given the nature of commercials production in terms of resources and schedules, many film-makers find it difficult to adapt to the budgets and pressures of feature production, particularly in Britain where resources are often minimal and efficiency held at a prime. Consequently, as Park puts it:

"...commercials directors tend to gravitate towards Hollywood

where they can apply their visual virtuosity to a high budget chintzy work rather than chance their arm on a gritty piece of contemporary drama."(12)

The classic examples of such individuals are Alan Parker (THE WALL, BIRDY, ANGEL HEART, MISSISSIPPI BURNING), Adrian Lyne (FOXES, FLASHDANCE, NINE AND A HALF WEEKS, FATAL ATTRACTION), and brothers Ridley (ALIEN, BLADERUNNER, LEGEND, SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER ME) and Tony Scott (THE HUNGER, TOP GUN). The work of each of these film-makers is distinguished by visual and technical virtuosity but this is often at the expense of intelligent narrative development. Each of the above mentioned film-makers has gravitated towards American melodrama which tends to rely heavily on rather clichéd plot devices and narrative resolutions. Such constraints are occasionally imposed by studio heads in the interests of commercial appeal, one recent example being the resolution of Adrian Lynne's FATAL ATTRACTION which was different in the original script.

However, as Alan Rusbridger points out in an article on TV commercials published in THE GUARDIAN (13), the standard progression from ads to cinema has been reversed somewhat with agencies queuing up to hire directors from cinema and television. Many of these film-makers have little in common with the Anglo-Americans noted above and include Mike Radford, John Amiel, Peter Greenaway, Charlie Gormley and Ken Loach. Given the lack of opportunity to make features many directors are prepared to work for agencies during periods of inactivity. Rusbridger also points out that commercials are relying more and more on cinema techniques and many are designed and directed to have the look

and feel of certain feature films. Particular directors are often hired to recreate previous work in cinema or TV for the purpose of selling cars, alcohol or whatever.

The same problems which can affect the cinema work of film-makers used to working in commercials can also sometimes apply to directors trained in pop-promos, although budgets for promos have fallen in recent years from the rather extravagant levels of the early eighties creating working situations similar, in terms of resources, to low budget film production . The criticisms levelled at the top commercials directors would equally apply to someone like Russell Mulcahy, responsible for some of the most glitzy and expensive pop promos of the decade and the director of RAZORBACK and HIGHLANDER. The later feature in particular is characterised by gratuitous camera movement and visual pyrotechnics which are frequently unrelated to the narrative development as such.

Julien Temple is arguably another film-maker whose work in features has been adversely affected by his background in promos. Certainly ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS tended to be structured along the lines of a series of pop promo set pieces. However, to be fair, Temple was attempting to make a film in the tradition of the Hollywood musical. Temple is unrepentant about the techniques which have influenced his cinema:

"I don't think the influence of pop promos is totally negative. I think obviously you've got to be aware of the strengths of that form and the weaknesses over 90 minutes of film. When I did videos I always had something to say. I wasn't just trying to flatter pop stars."(14)

What promos do afford film-makers which commercials do not is the opportunity to work on the script of the promo along with the band or artist in question. Commercials projects on the other hand come complete with script written by the advertising agency. Budgets in promos are also often limited, forcing film-makers to be inventive. For example Derek Jarman was able to develop his Super 8 technique by way of pop promos contracted for The Smiths. These were effectively a dry run for his innovative Super 8 feature THE LAST OF ENGLAND. On the other hand many promos are rather messy unfocussed affairs and often highly derivative. Jarman's Super 8 work has been widely imitated with film-makers even denigrating other formats to achieve a grainy Super 8 'look', but arguably it has not been equaled in terms of visual imagination or technique.

An interesting British feature project inspired by the promo is ARIA, a series of 10 operatic arias interpreted in particularly idiosyncratic ways by various cinema directors including Nicolas Roeg, Ken Russell, Jean Luc Godard, Julien Temple, Charles Sturridge, Robert Altman, Bruce Beresford, Franc Roddam, Derek Jarman and Bill Bryden. The project was co-ordinated and produced by Don Boyd. What was interesting was the range of different approaches taken by each film maker ranging from the glossy location work of Roddam and Roeg to the super 8 technique favoured by Derek Jarman.

Another training ground worth considering is that of documentaries. The documentary tradition is very strong in

British cinema history, with John Grierson and Humphrey Jennings standing out as two of the major figures in British film-making during the thirties and the war years. Several notable features directors originally worked in this area including Alberto Cavalcanti and Harry Watt, who both worked under Grierson at the GPO film unit, and Lindsay Anderson and Karel Reisz, who both made rather poetic documentary films inspired by Jennings, under the Free Cinema banner before moving into feature production in the early sixties.

One of the current batch of film-makers who trained in documentaries is Mike Radford, whose work in this are includes THE LAST STRONGHOLD OF THE PURE GOSPEL and THE MADONNA AND THE VOLCANO. Radford explains that this experience taught him the ability to think on his feet and react to the moment. This in turn helps to explain Radford's approach to cinema; that is, his disinclination to make use of storyboards and his preference for working 'out of the feel and atmosphere that's actually in the place'. A fellow NFS graduate and a contemporary of Radford is Nick Broomfield who made his reputation primarily as a documentarist with the films CHICKEN RANCH, SOLDIER GIRLS and DRIVING ME CRAZY has recently moved into features with DIAMOND SKULLS. Other film-makers who trained in documentaries include David Drury, Pat O'Connor and Bill Forsyth.

These then are some of the ways in which the concept of the individual film-maker can be said to be meaningful despite the general collaborative nature of the film-making process. Clearly

many films are still attributable to certain directors, albeit directors who are often working in conjunction with the same creative 'team' over a range of projects. But such a team requires an overall sense of direction and purpose and this, appropriately enough, should be provided by the director who, as I pointed out, is the one person who makes a creative input at every stage of the process and who is in a position to choose between possible solutions to particular problems and can accept or reject the advice of the various 'experts' as he or she sees fit. For this reason individual film-makers do stand out and deserve some consideration with regard to their ideas, influences and experience, all of which help to contextualise what we refer to as the individual stylistic and thematic concerns of any particular film-maker.

NOTES

(1) James Park: LEARNING TO DREAM: THE NEW BRITISH CINEMA Faber & Faber (London) 1984.

(2) Gilbert Adair & Nick Roddick: A NIGHT AT THE PICTURES Columbus Books (London) 1985.

(3) Martyn Auty & Nick Roddick (eds.): BRITISH CINEMA NOW, BFI (London) 1985.

(4) Alexander Walker: NATIONAL HEROES Harrap (London) 1985.

(5) Alexander Walker: HOLLYWOOD ENGLAND Harrap (london) 1986.

(6) Paul Coates: THE STORY OF THE LOST REFLECTION Verso (London) 1985.

(7) Interview with Charles Gormley 11/5/88.

(8) ibid.

(9) Interview with Mike Radford 21/7/87.

(10) Interview with Neil Jordan 2/6/88.

(11) Interview with Colin Young 17/8/88.

(12) Park p32.

(13) Alan Rusbridger: 'Ad Men Discover a Fatal Attraction' THE GUARDIAN 3/3/88.

(14) Interview with Julien Temple 20/7/88.

CONCLUSION

In the general overview of theories of creativity which constitutes the first chapter of this study I arrived at two fundamental tensions which exist at the heart of an explanation of the creative process. The first of these is the tension between innovation and repetition - is the product of the creative process genuinely innovative or is it merely a novel combination of existing and recognisable elements ? Secondly, there is the tension between the operation of subjective factors such as individuality and intentionality as components of the created 'work', and the objective structuring of the creative process resulting in an object, which for analytical purposes is distinct from its creator.

With regard to my substantive consideration of current British cinema and issues of creativity, the first of these tensions can be dealt with in a brief and relatively straightforward manner. The commercial imperative informing practically all film-making tends to operate against genuine innovation which, as I argued, always involves a moment of non-recognition and consequently runs the risk of alienating an audience. This outcome is implied in Adorno's conception of Modernism which is for him trully innovative and unsettling. At the very least there will be a resulting breakdown in communication to borrow Williams' use of the term.

The general thrust in film-making therefore is towards the

creation of cinematic fictions which may be novel at the level of storyline but which never the less conform to general expectation with regard to formal construction and narrative development. This pressure towards repetition is compounded in the case of British cinema by the fact that, historically, the funding of film-making in this country has been extremely unstable, effectively preventing the development of a cultural 'space' in which experimentation can take place. Britain has neither the financial muscle of Hollywood nor the benefits of generous public subsidy enjoyed by many European industries. It is also significant that the last bastion of non-commercial film production in the U.K. - the BFI Production Board, has tended in recent years to concentrate on relatively orthodox feature production which is similar in form and content to mainstream commercial film-making.

Turning to the second consideration - the tension between subjective and objective elements of the creative process, there are several interesting issues which are raised in relation to my concentration on Cinema. Taking the subjective side first, I attempted to demonstrate in the last chapter why I believe the notion of individuality is still a meaningful one despite the overwhelmingly collaborative nature of film-making and the general concentration on the external structuring of the creative process in hand. Some film-makers do have an individual style which is readily identifiable in their work - Derek Jarman, Peter Greenaway, Bill Forsyth, Neil Jordan, Nicolas Roeg and Ken Russell are a handful of examples from recent British cinema.

Closely related to individuality is the question of intentionality. Given the general inclination in cinema towards attracting rather than alienating the audience, towards achieving unproblematic communication, the intention to create a recognisable and comprehensible fiction is generally realised to a greater or lesser degree. Film-makers may wish at times to enable their audience to see the world in new ways but this will usually be within an orthodox format or mode of cinematic storytelling. This is not to argue that there is a direct correlation between intentionality and outcome, that audiences perceive a film in exactly the way the film-maker intended, or indeed that a film-maker is totally clear in his or her own mind what is being communicated. But, by and large, I would argue that a successful and unproblematic communication is reached between film-maker and audience.

The issue of intentionality is also raised in my consideration of recent theoretical writings concerned with the process of enunciation and the positioning of the spectator within the text, applied to the work of John Ford and Alfred Hitchcock by Browne and Flitterman respectively. I argued that these writings revealed, although this remains unacknowledged, the skilful manipulation of audience-response by the film-makers concerned. The manipulation of audience-response may be unambiguous - an audience laughs, experiences fear or tension when it is directed to do so. On the other hand a film-maker may intentionally leave meanings open or ambiguous. This usually occurs in more formally

inventive cinema, a recent rare example from British cinema being Derek Jarman's THE LAST OF ENGLAND.

There are other intentionalities to consider other than the film-makers. The intentionality of the financiers is significant in that they invest in a particular idea which they have judged to be a commercial proposition with a certain box-office appeal and which a film-maker subsequently realises as a film. The film-maker is therefore usually obliged to adhere to the original idea with any deviations being at the level of minor surface detail. In this way commercial pressures preserve original intentionality and work against deviation in the process of production. Finally, there is the intentionality of the various collaborators. Cinematographers, editors, designers etc. all have ideas regarding the nature of their contribution and, to an extent the final outcome. The question becomes one of reconciling intentionalities in the process of collaboration and directing them towards a common goal. The various contributors are not merely extensions of the film-maker's will, but contributions must be directed towards a coherent end product or the collaboration will be unsuccessful. Hence the need for an overall creative co-ordinator - the role usually occupied by the director.

However, as I have attempted to demonstrate throughout this study, subjective considerations are constantly subject to external structuring. Creative activity always occurs in a material context which provides the necessary resources, imposes

constraints, poses questions, suggests solutions and constitutes the finite 'space' within which the subjective input is made. Such activity never occurs in a vacuum as the Romantic ideal would imply. In such a way creativity depends upon context, without such a context creative activity cannot occur.

While I criticised Adorno for neglecting the subjective input in the creative process, his insistence that design is almost always subject to change in the process of realisation in film-making is interesting at a formal level when we consider Cinema. Although I have just argued that the intentionality embodied in the original idea is largely realised in the final work due to a variety of factors including commercial pressure, it is interesting to consider that the idea undergoes a process of transformation from a set of words on a page: the pre-filmic embodiment of the idea, to the audio/visual product which is the outcome of the process. This involves a fundamental transformation of medium from words to images. Now while it is true to say that some film-makers storyboard an entire script - transforming the pre-filmic idea into images, many use storyboarding only selectively, to solve certain technical problems, and some do not use storyboards at all. Consequently it can be argued that the actual process of production determines the outcome in such a way which goes beyond intentionality, vindicating Adorno's argument to a certain extent. In addition, original filmic ideas can be transformed through the process of editing - emphases can be altered, the chronology of events disrupted, the whole meaning of the film changed. A film-maker may find that elements which appeared to

work on paper do not quite hold together in the same way on screen. Occasionally financiers will demand the right to final cut, effectively giving them, rather than the film-maker, the final creative say with regard to the product.

To conclude, it is obvious that creativity is dependent on the interrelation of subjective and objective factors. With regard to cinematic creativity, Paul Coates correctly stresses the importance of constructing a theory which considers questions of individuality, in the shape of style or mise-en-scene, in relation to 'other factors' which form the material context of film production. In addition to Coates' observations, I would argue that the subjective input into the creative process can be rescued further from Romantic individualism by regarding it in terms of a practical rather than a transcendental concept. Regarding subjectivity largely in terms of effort (albeit in line with questions of intentionality), rather than inspiration or imagination, is useful in that it renders creative activity practical activity, which in turn places a stress on the material context which gives rise to the activity and structures its outcome. This is what I have attempted to do in this study with regard to the creative process of film-making in a given cultural context.

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PERIODICALS CONSULTED

A.I.P. & Co.

PRODUCER.

SCREEN INTERNATIONAL.

SIGHT & SOUND.

STILLS.

TELEVISUAL.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEWS

The following interviews were conducted during the course of my research and these are extensively referenced in the main text.

Name	Where Interviewed	Date
GRAHAM BRADSTREET	London	07/04/88
PATRICK CASSAVETTI	London	21/07/87
AL CLARK	London	17/07/87
MICHAEL COULTER	Glasgow	11/05/88
ROGER DEAKINS	London	18/07/88
BILL DOUGLAS	Edinburgh	24/07/88
JOHN DURIE	London	07/04/88
BILL FORSYTH	London	21/07/87
ALAN FOUNTAIN	London	06/06/88
MARGOT GAVAN-DUFFY	London	22/07/88
CHARLES GORMLEY	Glasgow	11/05/88
CHRISTOPHER HOBBS	London	07/04/88
DEREK JARMAN	Edinburgh	17/08/87
GARETH JONES	London	22/07/88
NEIL JORDAN	Shepperton	02/06/88
TONY LAWSON	London	04/06/88
MARGARET MATHIESON	London	20/07/87
COLIN MACCABE	London	15/07/87
RITA MCGURN	Glasgow	20/06/88
JAMES MACKAY	London	09/04/88

RON PECK	London	08/04/88
TOM PRIESTLEY	London	11/04/88
SARAH RADCLYFFE	London	07/04/88
MIKE RADFORD	London	21/07/87
SIMON RELPH	London	22/07/87
MARY JANE REYNER	Glasgow	20/06/88
DAVID ROSE	London	22/07/87
MARK SAMUELSON	London	20/07/87
MARK SHIVAS	London	16/07/87
JULIEN TEMPLE	London	20/07/88
STEVE WOOLLEY	London	07/11/88
COLIN YOUNG	Edinburgh	17/08/88

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