THE ISSUE OF NATIONAL CINEMA AND BRITISH FILM PRODUCTION

John Hill

It is, perhaps, a symptom of the low esteem in which British cinema has traditionally been held that a book devoted to the prospects of British cinema in the 1980s should conclude with a chapter entitled, 'But do we need it?'[1] Although the article itself, by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, was prompted by fears of the threat to the British cinema's survival, the fact that the question was posed in this way at all does suggest something of the lukewarm attitude towards British film that has often been prevalent among critics and, indeed, audiences. With the current low ebb in British film production, the shilly-shallying of the government in its policy towards the industry, and the decline in Channel 4's support for both feature production and workshop activities, the threat to the British cinema is now even greater than it was in the mid-80s. The importance of being able to argue successfully the case for why a national cinema is necessary or desirable has thus become all the more urgent. What I want to suggest, however, is that because of the lack of critical enthusiasm for the British cinema this is not always as easily accomplished at it might be and, indeed, that certain critical currents actually work against the case to be made.

To return to Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's question, there are two sets of arguments which are characteristically mobilised in defence of a national cinema. The first of these is economic and lays stress upon the value of a national film industry to the national economy in terms of the creation of jobs, attraction of overseas investment, export earnings and general knock-on effects for the service industries and tourism. Such arguments can become quite complex, both in terms of what counts as a specifically national cinema in an age of transnational communication industries and of how precisely the value of a film industry to the economy is to be measured. However, whatever the merits or otherwise of these arguments, they are fundamentally about the virtues of a national film *industry* rather than a national cinema proper, in the sense of a cinema that specifically attends to or addresses national concerns. It is, therefore, quite possible to conceive

of a British film industry, making films in Britain and employing British nationals, which is none the less not making recognisable British films. It is from this industrial standpoint that films like *Flash Gordon*, the *Superman* movies, *Insignificance* and *Full Metal Jacket* have qualified as 'British' films while, conversely, such a typically British film as *Shirley Valentine* is registered as American. This is not, of course, to say anything about the relative merits of these films but simply to note that economic arguments regarding the value of a national film industry do not necessarily guarantee a national cinema characterised by national preoccupations.

The case for a national cinema, then, is largely dependent upon cultural arguments. In particular, it is dependent upon a fundamental argument regarding the value of a home-grown cinema to the cultural life of a nation and, hence, the importance of supporting indigenous film-making in an international market dominated by Hollywood. However, such arguments are not straightforward and uncontested, and in the context of Britain the value of a 'British national cinema', both in itself and as a bulwark against Hollywood, has often been questioned. Such questions are, of course, linked to critical debates regarding the relative artistic merits of British and Hollywood films but have also been fuelled by more general intellectual trends: in particular, a growing scepticism towards and critical scrutiny of traditional conceptions of the nation, national identity and nationalism, and an increasing emphasis, within media studies, on the moment of reception and the active role played by media audiences. I want, therefore, to examine briefly these intellectual trends and assess their consequences for arguments in favour of a British national cinema. Although they would appear to work against such arguments I want to suggest that this need not neccesarily be the case, and that it is still desirable to argue for the importance of a British cinema, albeit on grounds which may differ from the conventional.

It has been argued by Richard Collins that many of the theoretical presuppositions of media and film studies in the 70s no longer hold sway. In particular, he argues that the 'dominant paradigm' of media studies – what he refers to, after Abercrombie et al., as 'the dominant ideology thesis' – has been subject to considerable strain.[2] While it could be argued that Collins (like Abercrombie and his colleagues) attributes far too neat a coherence to the various versions of the 'dominant ideology thesis', it is undoubtedly the case that enthusiasm for ideology critique has waned substantially. Three main reasons for this may be identified. First, there has been a querying and reformulation of the theories of ideology themselves. In particular, there has been a questioning both of the existence of a set of coherent and internally consistent ideas, values and attitudes that could actually be

identified as the 'dominant ideology' and of the importance of ideology (as opposed to economic constraint and pragmatism) in the winning of political consent and securing of social cohesion. Secondly, at the level of textual analysis, there has been a growing emphasis on the polysemy of media texts, the plurality (as opposed to singularity) of the meanings which texts may be seen to encourage, and on the potential ideological tensions and contradictions which may result. Finally, and for the purpose of this paper perhaps most importantly, there has been a growing emphasis on the role of audiences. Whereas 70s film theory was characterised by an emphasis upon the analysis of a film's textual operations and the spectator position which these encouraged, an increasing tendency within media studies during the 80s was empirically based audience research and a theoretical stress on the ability of audiences actively to construct their own readings of, and impose their own meanings upon, media texts.[3] Thus, if earlier film and media theory appeared to assume that audience response (or 'ideological effect') could simply be read off the text (or accounted for in psychoanalytic terms which were difficult to assess empirically) more recent media theory has tended to downplay the importance of the actual characteristics of texts in favour of an emphasis upon the interpretative licence and creativity enjoyed by media audiences.

While this development has provided a corrective to the 'textual determinism' of 70s (and, indeed, much contemporary) film theory, it has also directed attention away from questions of the ownership and control of the media and the ways in which these relations may be seen to curtail the range and diversity of media forms and representations.[4] Indeed, an emphasis on the 'power' of audiences tends not only to discourage an interest in these issues but also to encourage a more ready acceptance of current media output and so lessen the demand for alternative, or simply different, types of films and television programmes. There is a clear difference, in this respect, from those perspectives which such work is superseding. Criticism of texts on ideological grounds, for example, was motivated in part by a belief that it was possible to envisage media work which did not display such shortcomings. In the same way, 70s film theory, whatever the merits of its commitment to avant-garde aesthetics, was closely identified with support for and promotion of new forms of film-making practice. For the newer kinds of reception theory, however, the relative freedom of the audience to produce its own meanings in relation to texts makes the encouragement of new types of media practice much less a priority. Indeed, in a curious inversion of the old orthodoxy, John Fiske comes close to arguing for not only the acceptability but also the desirability of ideologically conservative films such as *Rambo* on the grounds that they provide material for audiences actively to resist.[5]

If this dilution of th
and the corresponding
seen to have weakened
production, much the s
a national cinema. Inc
more, it can be seen h
argue against the need
on the grounds that 'di
of media output whic
duced'.[6]

This is, of course, an
British cinema, and so
recent writing on Briti
Nowell-Smith suggests
ture, and in popular
American films popula
the popularity of Amer
in particular, Nowell-S
tional assumptions abo
or national identity
screens has been allege
of view, may be seen to
be found in either Brit
which may be appropr
culturally specific ways
argue that the impact
Britain has been 'positi
styles and resources ..
been consciously mobi
traditional elites'.[8]

While this is an arg
dangers, none the less,
as the emphasis in me
texts and the activity o
of existing relations a
bution, so an emphas
films for British audie
film production and
cinema.[9]

This may be illustrat
Higson. In line with cu
that 'the parameters of
of consumption as mu
include 'the activity o

If this dilution of the 'dominant ideology thesis' in media studies and the corresponding emphasis on the activity of audiences may be seen to have weakened the case for new and alternative forms of media production, much the same could also be said in respect of the case for a national cinema. Indeed, to take the example of John Fiske once more, it can be seen how his audience-oriented approach is used to argue against the need for 'special-interest' or culturally specific work on the grounds that 'diversity' does not depend upon the actual range of media output which is available but is, for him, 'audience-produced'.[6]

This is, of course, an argument which would also apply in respect of British cinema, and something of a similar drift may be detected in recent writing on British audiences' response to Hollywood films. As Nowell-Smith suggests, 'the hidden history of cinema in British culture, and in popular culture in particular, has been the history of American films popular with the British public'.[7] In seeking to analyse the popularity of American films with British working-class audiences in particular, Nowell-Smith and others have put into question conventional assumptions about the 'dangers' – either to cultural standards or national identity – which Hollywood's domination of British screens has been alleged to present. Hollywood films, from this point of view, may be seen to offer pleasures, attitudes and meanings not to be found in either British films or British culture more generally, and which may be appropriated and made use of by British audiences in culturally specific ways. It is on this basis that Tony Bennett is able to argue that the impact of American popular culture, including film, in Britain has been 'positive' in 'making available a repertoire of cultural styles and resources ... which, in various ways, have undercut and been consciously mobilised against the cultural hegemony of Britain's traditional elites'.[8]

While this is an argument that is undoubtedly accurate, there are dangers, none the less, in what conclusions are drawn from it. For just as the emphasis in media studies more generally on the polysemy of texts and the activity of audiences has tended towards a legitimisation of existing relations and practices of media production and distribution, so an emphasis on the progressive qualities of Hollywood films for British audiences may serve to ratify existing relations of film production and undermine the case for a specifically British cinema.[9]

This may be illustrated by an article on national cinema by Andrew Higson. In line with current trends in audience study, Higson suggests that 'the parameters of a national cinema should be drawn at the site of consumption as much as the site of production of films' and, thus, include 'the activity of national audiences and the conditions under

which they make sense of and use the films they watch'.[10] The problem with this formulation, however, is that it appears to lead to the conclusion that Hollywood films are in fact a part of the British national cinema because these are the films which are primarily used and consumed by British national audiences. Clearly Hollywood films do play a major role within British film culture. However, to elide the distinction, as Higson does, between the *cinema in Britain* and British *national cinema* seems not only to be conceptually unhelpful but also, by virtue of the emphasis on *consumption*, to blur the arguments for film *production* which is specifically British rather than North American.

What, of course, adds to this problem is that arguments regarding film consumption and the positive aspects of US films in a British context are often linked to a certain disdain for the conventional characteristics of British films. As Nowell-Smith suggests, when compared with their American counterparts, British films have often come across as 'restrictive and stifling, subservient to middle-class artistic models and to middle- and upper-class values'.[11] The continuing preoccupation of 'quality' British cinema with literary adaptation, the past, and the lives and loves of the upper classes also suggests that Nowell-Smith's remarks retain their relevance. However, they cannot be seen to apply uniformly, and certainly fail to do justice to the more varied forms and representations which have been a feature of British film-making in the 80s. Nevertheless, even if Nowell-Smith's remarks were entirely justified it would still be important to defend the *principle* of a national British cinema even if current practice was less than could be wished for. The argument, in this respect, may be viewed as analogous to that regarding the concept of public service broadcasting. While historically the actual practice of public service broadcasting may have had its shortcomings, the principles which have underlain it still remain worth defending (especially when, as at present, under attack).[12]

What is at stake here, however, is not simply the artistic merits of British films but also the versions of national identity which they have conventionally provided. Criticism of the British cinema, in this regard, is often associated with a more general critique of the traditional conceptions of nationalism and national identity with which British films have characteristically been linked. As Raphael Samuel has argued, 'nationality no longer belongs to the realm of the taken-for-granted', and conventional conceptions of the nation, nationalism, national identity and national culture have all been subject to critical scrutiny in recent writings.[13] At the risk of simplification, the main lines of argument may be identified.

First, it has been argued that while nation-states undoubtedly exist

and play a substantial role i
cultural realities, nations an
logically given but represent
structed communities and
insight it follows that nation
it is given expression must b
Schlesinger has referred to a
consequences for the concep
which they construct nation
to be fixed and static but su
even 'reinvention'. Second,
wardly 'pure' and bounded
with 'outside' cultural influe
conceived of as unproblem
pression of different social
sites of actual and potential

Hence, it is a constant
impose upon the nation not
sealed (or 'authentic') conc
sense of unity which fails t
identities and forms of belo
region) which may exist wit
Britain this suppression of
is more than one national
nation-state and, therefore
culture' and nation-state o
Thus, the resurgence of
national sovereignty) chara
eminently an *English* nati
identity' of Scotland and
collective identity) have be

To return to the earlier
arguments are unsympathe
ing, as they do, that such a
or else in hock to a restrict
ity. It also provides a furth
writers for American rath
observer puts it, 'the heter
Hollywood may be seen t
exemplified by British cine

However, while it is cer
depended upon and pron
identity, what I want to su
itself does not necessarily

and play a substantial role in the shaping of economic, political and cultural realities, nations and national identities as such are not ontologically given but represent 'imagined' or socially and culturally constructed communities and forms of belonging.[14] From this basic insight it follows that national identity and the cultural forms in which it is given expression must be conceived of in dynamic, or what Philip Schlesinger has referred to as 'actionist', terms.[15] This has three main consequences for the conception of national cultures and the ways in which they construct national identities. First, these must be seen not to be fixed and static but subject to historical change, redefinition and even 'reinvention'. Second, they cannot be regarded as straightforwardly 'pure' and bounded but rather as hybrid and in interaction with 'outside' cultural influences and identities. Third, they cannot be conceived of as unproblematically unified or as the automatic expression of different social groups within the 'nation', but rather as sites of actual and potential contestation and challenge.

Hence, it is a constant criticism of nationalism that it seeks to impose upon the nation not only a historically frozen and hermetically sealed (or 'authentic') conception of identity but also an imaginary sense of unity which fails to take account of the variety of collective identities and forms of belonging (such as class, gender, ethnicity and region) which may exist within the national community. In the case of Britain this suppression of difference is all the greater in so far as there is more than one national community within the boundaries of the nation-state and, therefore, no obvious alignment between 'national culture' and nation-state of the sort assumed by nationalist ideology. Thus, the resurgence of nationalist sentiment (and concern for national sovereignty) characteristic of the Thatcher years has been preeminently an *English* nationalism to which the claims to 'national identity' of Scotland and Wales (along with various other forms of collective identity) have been subordinated.

To return to the earlier argument, it can now be seen why such arguments are unsympathetic to the case for a national cinema, implying, as they do, that such a cinema will either be narrowly nationalist or else in hock to a restricted or homogenising view of national identity. It also provides a further reason for the enthusiasm of critics and writers for American rather than British films in so far as, as one observer puts it, 'the heterogeneity of "the popular"' as presented by Hollywood may be seen to challenge 'the fixity of the "national"' as exemplified by British cinema and British culture more generally.[16]

However, while it is certainly the case that British films have often depended upon and promoted quite restricted notions of national identity, what I want to suggest is that the idea of a national cinema in itself does not necessarily imply this sense of 'fixity'. It is true, none the

less, that national cinema has often been conceptualised in this way. This can be seen from two examples. Writing in the context of Australian cinema, Susan Dermody and Elizabeth Jacka, drawing on the work of John Hinde, suggest that 'the *true* national cinema' (my italics) is characterised by a strong bond or 'feedback loop' between films and audiences.[17] In a similar fashion, Raphael Samuel suggests that in comparison with other periods, British cinema in the 40s *was* 'national cinema', and thus provides 'a precious index to the imaginative preoccupations of the time'.[18] In both cases, the idea employed of a natural cinema implies a tight, symbiotic relation between films and audiences and a clear, unified version of national identity and national preoccupations. At an empirical level, this is probably a more problematic phenomenon than the writers suggest. In the case of wartime Britain, for example, both the unity of the national community and the inclusiveness of the representations of national identity provided by the cinema may be queried.[19] Whatever the empirical evidence, however, it does not seem necessary or, indeed, desirable that national cinema (to be regarded as properly national) be required to conform to these characteristics. What I want to argue instead is that it is quite possible to conceive of a national cinema which is *nationally specific* without being either nationalist or attached to homogenising myths of national identity. One of the weaknesses of Andrew Higson's formulations, in this respect, is that, in dealing with the idea of a national cinema, he simply runs together 'national specificity' with 'imaginary coherence' and 'a unique and stable identity'.[20]

However, as Paul Willemen has argued, 'the discourses of nationalism and those addressing or comprising national specificity are not identical'.[21] To illustrate this point he takes the example of the black British films of the 80s, which he argues are 'strikingly British' without being nationalistic. Indeed, what is noticeable about such films, be it *My Beautiful Laundrette* or *Passion of Remembrance*, is not only the expanded sense of 'Britishness' which they offer but also their sensitivity to social differences (of ethnicity, class, gender and sexual orientation) within an identifiably and specifically British context. From this point of view, it is quite possible to conceive of a national cinema, in the sense of one which works with or addresses nationally specific materials, which is none the less critical of inherited notions of national identity, which does not assume the existence of a unique or unchanging 'national culture', and which is quite capable of dealing with social divisions and differences. Indeed, in a provocative reversal of the usual criteria for a 'national cinema', Willemen argues that the 'genuinely' national cinema can, in fact, be neither nationalist nor homogenising in its assumptions about national identity if it is to address successfully the complexities of nationally specific social and

cultural configurations. Th
undermine the case for a
make its existence all the

The difficulty, of course
terised by questioning and
which is encouraged by th
success in the internatio
national specificity in fa
Thomas Elsaesser has argu
but none the less 'internat
be of critical importance t
a film.[22] Rather, the probl
city for international cons
most conventional or reac
national identity. Hence,
been rather successful in
ary heritage, the war years
education', and, in doing
circulating quite limiting
Thus, the images of Brit
precisely those which a m
would seek to challenge.

It is for this reason that
the kind he envisages is
cinema. It is also a furthe
arguments are the most
cinema. Not only is a Briti
forces unlikely to flourish
film which is most able t
ties is not necessarily of
contribution to British cu

It has to be recognised,
with the premises on whic
policy has been based. As
80s, *Film Policy* (1984),
regarded by government
industry'.[24] The case fo
'artistic' or 'public serv
Indeed, the only 'cultural
Paper concerns 'national
national standing' of Briti
and way of life to a wid
upon an entirely problem
this argument pays no a

cultural configurations. Thus, arguments which in one light appear to undermine the case for a national cinema may be seen in this light to make its existence all the more important and pressing.

The difficulty, of course, is that a nationally specific cinema characterised by questioning and inquiry is not the kind of 'national cinema' which is encouraged by the market-place. This is not simply because success in the international market requires the downplaying of national specificity in favour of a spurious 'universal' appeal. As Thomas Elsaesser has argued, the employment of 'nationally specific', but none the less 'internationally recognisable', referents in films can be of critical importance to the marketing and international success of a film.[22] Rather, the problem is that the marketing of national specificity for international consumption is likely to encourage the use of the most conventional or readily recognisable markers of nationality and national identity. Hence, as Elsaesser observes, 'British films ... have been rather successful in marketing and packaging the national literary heritage, the war years, the countryside, the upper classes and élite education', and, in doing so, have also succeeded in constructing and circulating quite limiting and restricted versions of 'Britishness'.[23] Thus, the images of Britain where are most readily exportable are precisely those which a more enquiring (or 'proper') national cinema would seek to challenge.

It is for this reason that Willemen argues that a national cinema of the kind he envisages is characteristically a 'poor' and a 'dependent' cinema. It is also a further reason why cultural rather than economic arguments are the most important ones for the defence of national cinema. Not only is a British cinema left simply to the mercy of market forces unlikely to flourish (or, indeed, survive), but the type of British film which is most able to exploit international economic opportunities is not necessarily of the type most capable of making a valuable contribution to British cultural life.

It has to be recognised, of course, that such a perspective is at odds with the premises on which recent (and not so recent) government film policy has been based. As the sole White Paper on film to appear in the 80s, *Film Policy* (1984), makes apparent, British cinema has been regarded by government as straightforwardly a 'commercial film industry'.[24] The case for support for the British cinema on either 'artistic' or 'public service' grounds is simply not acknowledged. Indeed, the only 'cultural' argument to appear anywhere in the White Paper concerns 'national pride' and the value to the 'country's international standing' of British films which advertise 'the national culture and way of life to a wide audience overseas'.[25] Apart from drawing upon an entirely problematic conception of 'the (sic) national culture', this argument pays no attention at all to the contribution of British

films to cultural debate and understanding *inside* Britain and the value which might be attached to this.

Given the nature of the economic policies pursued by the Conservative government in recent years and the accompanying hostility to 'subsidy', it has been tempting for those arguing in support of a British cinema to abandon cultural arguments in favour of 'hard-headed' economic ones (or, as James Park has recently done, propound a blunt 'commonsense' of the sort that the money is available if only British producers could demonstrate the correct mix of 'energy, imagination' and 'sound business sense').[26] While such arguments may have some tactical merit, it seems to me that in the long term they are unlikely to ensure the continuing viability of a British cinema or deliver the infrastructure which it will require. As Elsaesser has argued, in the context of the 'new German cinema', a flourishing national cinema is dependent upon a 'politics of culture' or cultural commitment to the political support of film which is itself born of 'a will to create and preserve a national film and media ecology amidst an ever-expanding international film, media and information economy'.[27]

Clearly no such will currently exists in British political circles. However, in a sense, this makes the insistence upon the cultural dimension of film production all the more important, as it is only on the basis of a renewed cultural and political commitment to national film 'ecology' that British cinema is likely to prosper. To return to my opening remarks, this is also why it is important that arguments for a national cinema should be supported. Although motivated by 'progressive' cultural impulses, the combination of critical suspicion of the 'national' and populist celebrations of audience preferences may simply end up endorsing the operations of the market place (and its domination by transnational conglomerates) and, hence, the restricted range of cultural representations which the market provides. The case for a national cinema, in this respect, may be seen as part of a broader case for a more varied and representative range of film and media output than the current political economy of the communications industries allows.

I began by citing Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's question regarding the British cinema: do we need it? On strict utilitarian grounds, it would have to be conceded that the British cinema does not constitute a basic necessity. However, even though we might not need it, we might legitimately *want* the British cinema to survive and flourish. If we do, and basically I have argued that we should, then it becomes a question of what *kind* of British cinema we want. The implication of my argument is that the most interesting type of British cinema, and the one which is most worthy of support, differs from the type which is often hoped for – a British cinema capable of competing with Hollywood

and exemplifying the vi
tion of British cinema r
to be more modest. Ho
be correspondingly mo
lenging representations
Britain.

Notes

This is a revised version
Communication Associat

1. Geoffrey Nowell-Smi
Auty (eds), *British Ci*
2. Richard Collins, 'Par
(London: Unwin Hyr
Hill and Bryan S. Tur
and Unwin, 1984). F
lumping together of
their intellectual traje
difficulties in accon
research, see James
cation Research: A
vol. 15, nos 2–3, 19
3. For a recent selection
Remote Control Te
Routledge, 1989).
4. David Morley has re
that the objective of
for macro-analysis b
questions" of ideolo
consumption, uses a
his subsequent form
analyses of the specif
lar types of media c
work of an analysis
to put to the side qu
the global meets the
no. 1, Spring 1991,
5. John Fiske, *Unders*
1989), p. 57.
6. John Fiske, *Televisio*
7. Nowell-Smith, 'But
8. Tony Bennett, 'Popu
Politics, Ideology an
sity Press, 1982), p.
9. In an analogous case
privileging of the a

and exemplifying the virtues and values of Britain. A different conception of British cinema recognises that its economic ambitions will have to be more modest. However, its cultural ambitions can, and should, be correspondingly more ambitious: the provision of diverse and challenging representations adequate to the complexities of contemporary Britain.

Notes

This is a revised version of a paper originally delivered to the International Communication Association Annual Conference, Dublin, 1990.

1. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, 'But do we need it?', in Nick Roddick and Martin Auty (eds), *British Cinema Now* (London: British Film Institute, 1985).
2. Richard Collins, 'Paradigm Lost?', in his *Television: Policy and Culture* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990). See also Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill and Bryan S. Turner, *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1984). For the sake of convenience I am accepting Collins's lumping together of film and media studies, although I am conscious that their intellectual trajectories have been distinctive. For an example of the difficulties in accommodating film studies within mainstream media research, see James Curran, 'The New Revionism in Mass Communication Research: A Reappraisal', *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 15, nos 2–3, 1990.
3. For a recent selection of essays within this tradition, see Ellen Seiter et al., *Remote Control Television Audiences and Cultural Power* (London: Routledge, 1989).
4. David Morley has recently responded to criticisms of this type by arguing that the objective of audience research should not be to substitute micro- for macro-analysis but rather 'to integrate the analysis of the "broader questions" of ideology, power and politics ... with the analysis of the consumption, uses and functions of television in everyday life'. However, his subsequent formulation that this will lead to 'the production of analyses of the specific relationships of particular audiences to the particular types of media content which are located within the broader framework of an analysis of media consumption and domestic ritual' still seems to put to the side questions of media ownership and control. See 'Where the global meets the local: notes from the sitting room', *Screen*, vol. 32, no. 1, Spring 1991, p. 5.
5. John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 57.
6. John Fiske, *Television Culture* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 320
7. Nowell-Smith, 'But do we need it?', pp. 151–2.
8. Tony Bennett, 'Popular Culture and Hegemony in post-war Britain', in *Politics, Ideology and Popular Culture* (1) (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1982), p. 13.
9. In an analogous case, Stuart Cunningham discusses how cultural studies' privileging of the active audience was used by John Docker to argue

against Australian content regulation for television. See 'Cultural theory and broadcasting policy: some Australian observations', *Screen*, vol. 32, no. 1, Spring 1991. Cunningham's recommendation that 'cultural theory ... must take greater stock of its potential negative influence on progressive public policy outcomes' (ibid., p. 85) is clearly salient to my own argument. Jostein Gripsrud, commenting on the link between macro and micro issues in audience studies, has also stressed the importance of theory in 'the production of ideas about *alternatives* to given conditions' and, hence, its role in guiding what empirical questions are attended to in the first place. See, 'Notes on the Role of Theory', paper delivered to the International Communication Association Annual Conference, Dublin, 1990.

10. Andrew Higson, 'The Concept of National Cinema', *Screen*, vol. 30, no. 4, Autumn 1989, p. 36.
11. Nowell-Smith, 'But do we need it?', p. 152.
12. For a similar argument, see Paddy Scannell, 'Public Service Broadcasting: The History of a Concept', in Andrew Goodwin and Garry Whannel (eds), *Understanding Television* (London: Routledge, 1990). John Caughie suggests a comparison between public service broadcasting and 'public service cinema' in 'Broadcasting and Cinema: 1 – Converging Histories', in Charles Barr (ed.), *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema* (London: British Film Institute, 1986).
13. Raphael Samuel, 'Introduction: Exciting to be English', in R. Samuel (ed.), *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, vol. 1, *History and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. xix.
14. The classic statement of this position may be found in Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983). For a more recent discussion see Homi K. Bhaba (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990).
15. Philip Schlesinger, 'On National Identity: some conceptions and misconceptions criticized', *Social Science Information*, vol. 26, no. 2, 1987, p. 260.
16. James Donald, 'How English Is It? Popular Literature and National Culture', *New Formations*, no. 6, Winter 1988, p. 33.
17. Susan Dermody and Elizabeth Jacka, *The Screening of Australia*, vol. 1, *Anatomy of a Film Industry* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1987), p. 34.
18. Raphael Samuel, 'Introduction: Exciting to be English', p. xxviii.
19. See, for example, Graham Dawson and Bob West, 'Our Finest Hour? The Popular Memory of World War II and the Struggle Over National Identity', in Geoff Hurd (ed.), *National Fictions* (London: British Film Institute, 1984); also Jeffrey Richards, 'National Identity in British Wartime Films', in Philip Taylor (ed.) *Britain and the Cinema in the Second World War* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989).
20. Andrew Higson, 'The Concept of National Cinema', pp. 37–8.
21. Paul Willemen, 'The National', Paper delivered to International Communication Association Annual Conference, Dublin, 1990. I am grateful to Paul Willemen for making this paper available to me.
22. Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema: A History* (Basingstoke: Macmillan/BFI, 1989), p. 322.
23. Thomas Elsaesser, 'Images for England (and Scotland, Ireland, Wales ...)',

Monthly Film Bulle
sis of how Australi
have led to films
notions of the natio
the Australian peo
Wheelwright and K
Australia (Sydney:
24. *Film Policy*, Cmnd
Act which followed
Council, ended the
Film Finance Corpo
towards state suppo
to a long-standing t
garet Dickinson an
'the framework of
Industry and the B
Institute, 1985).
25. *Film Policy*, p. 18.
26. James Park, *British*
1990), p. 168. Less
mendation for the
enthusiasm for the
point that 'the cent
Korda, Balcon, Grie
absence in Britain
tent public support'
New Questions for
to Satellite: A Scott
27. Thomas Elsaesser,

Monthly Film Bulletin, September 1984, p. 208. For a comparable analysis of how Australian attempts to compete in the international market have led to films which 'blur social and economic processes behind notions of the nation, of Australianness, of the Australian character and the Australian people', see Sam Rhodie, 'The Film Industry', in Ted Wheelwright and Ken Buckley (eds), *Communications and the Media in Australia* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987), p. 155.

24. *Film Policy*, Cmnd 9319, (London: HMSO, 1984), p. 1. The 1985 Films Act which followed this White Paper abolished the Cinematograph Films Council, ended the Eady levy on exhibitors and 'privatised' the National Film Finance Corporation. Although notable for the extent of its hostility towards state support for film, the document does conform, none the less, to a long-standing tradition of film policy and legislation which, as Margaret Dickinson and Sarah Street have argued, has been conceived within 'the framework of commercial policy'. See *Cinema and State: The Film Industry and the British Government 1927–84* (London: British Film Institute, 1985).
25. *Film Policy*, p. 18.
26. James Park, *British Cinema: The Lights that Failed* (London: Batsford, 1990), p. 168. Less hard-headed, however, is Park's rather bizarre recommendation for the establishment of 'script factories' (ibid., p. 173). His enthusiasm for the enterprise of producers also ignores John Caughie's point that 'the centrality of producers to British cinema' (such as Dean, Korda, Balcon, Grierson, Puttnam) has, in fact, been a consequence of the absence in Britain of either 'a stable industrial infrastructure' or 'consistent public support' for the cinema. See Caughie's 'Representing Scotland: New Questions for Scottish Cinema' in Eddie Dick (ed.), *From Limelight to Satellite: A Scottish Film Book* (London: BFI/SFC, 1990), p. 22.
27. Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema*. p. 3.

BFI working papers

New Questions of British Cinema

Edited by
Duncan Petrie