

British Television and Film: The Making of a Relationship

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Historically, the relationship between film and television has been complex and varied. Although the film and television industries have often been seen as enemies, it is clear that this is a partial view of the past which largely derives from the disputes over sales of films to television in the 1950s.¹ Since then, however, the economics of film and television have become increasingly intertwined and it is now evident that television, along with the new delivery systems of video cassette, cable and satellite, have become crucial to the business of film production. This is nowhere clearer than in the tremendous resurgence of Hollywood during the 1980s and 1990s. Towards the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, the Hollywood majors were faced with economic crisis. By the end of the 1980s, however, they were once again restored to financial health, with studio revenues rising from \$2,495 million in 1980 to \$17,022 million in 1994 (which, even allowing for inflation, represents a substantial growth). The key to this remarkable turnaround lay in the ability of the studios to adapt to, and take advantage of, the new video and pay-TV markets. Thus, whereas, in 1980, returns from theatrical release (both domestic and foreign) accounted for nearly seventy-six per cent of studio revenues these were only responsible for twenty-four per cent of rev-

venues in 1994. In contrast, revenues from pay-TV rose over the same period from 4.8 per cent to over seven per cent while, even more dramatically, revenues from video increased from one per cent to 46.4 per cent.² Thus, while cinema attendances between 1983 and 1993 have barely increased in the US and have actually fallen worldwide, this clearly does not indicate that films have failed to maintain their popularity – only that they have been increasingly watched on a television screen.³

Television and Europe

Similar trends are also in evidence in Europe. In 1992, cinema box office accounted for only 34.8 per cent of Western European spending on film while video (both retail and rental) amounted to 41.1 per cent and pay-TV, the fastest growing part of the European market, accounted for 24.1 per cent.⁴ However, while European audiences, like audiences elsewhere, are increasingly watching films on TV and video, it is not, of course, European films which they are primarily watching. Thus, in 1990, US films had a 77.4 per cent share of the EC theatrical market and an even greater share of the video market.⁵ In the case of the UK, the largest video market in Europe, US films took an enormous ninety-four per cent share of video rentals in 1991.⁶ What this suggests is that while the Hollywood majors (which have increasingly become a part of media conglomerates with multiple media interests) have restored their fortunes by successfully capturing ancillary markets at home and abroad, the European film industries have been much less successful in exploiting the new outlets. Given the general downturn in cinema attendances in Europe (a drop of nearly twenty-four per cent across Western Europe between 1983 and 1993), this has inevitably contributed to the problems of European film production. Thus, while the US majors have been able to maintain a more or less consistent level of output during the 1980s, European film production has been in steady decline, dropping by nearly twenty-five per cent in the EU countries between 1980 and 1994.⁷

It is within this context that television has increasingly emerged as an important source of investment for European filmmakers. According to figures provided by *European Filmfile*, fifty-one per cent of European films in production in June 1994 were backed by television finance.⁸ In some cases (Belgium and Portugal), television had a stake in all of the country's films while in France and Germany, Europe's leading film-producing nations, television was involved in seventy-four and sixty-three per cent of film productions respectively. However, the relationship between television finance and film which exists in Europe is fundamentally different from the one which prevails in the US. In the case of the US, it was the commercial pay-TV channels such as HBO (Home Box Office) and Viacom (which acquired Paramount in 1994) which, keen to secure a stable supply of popular films for cable, became a major source of film finance in the 1980s.⁹ In Europe too, private television, as in Italy, has also

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provided some film investment. However, in the main, it has been public service broadcasters, rather than commercial companies (unless required to do so by government), which have provided the bulk of financial support for European filmmaking.

This can be seen right across Western Europe: in the support for film of ORF in Austria, RTBF and BRT in Belgium, YLE in Finland, ERT in Greece, RTP in Portugal, TVE in Spain, SVT in Sweden and SSR in Switzerland. However, it is in the large film-producing countries of Italy, Germany and France that television support for film has been most notable. RAI, the Italian public service broadcaster, for example, has had a legal obligation to co-operate with film production companies and has provided significant support for Italian directors, including Fellini, Rossellini, Olmi and the Taviani brothers. In Germany, the public service broadcasters ZDF and ARD have also been closely involved with filmmakers. This relationship became formalized in 1974 under the Film and Television Agreement, which laid one of the cornerstones of the 'new German cinema' and provided assistance to directors such as Fassbinder, Herzog and Wenders. Under this agreement, the broadcasters have not only supported the Filmförderungsanstalt (FFA), or Film Support Agency, but also invested regular sums in film production. Thus, in the most recent agreement (covering 1993-6), the two broadcasting groups agreed to contribute DM 11 million per year to the FFA and a further DM 14.25 million to co-productions between themselves and film producers.¹⁰ In the case of France, it was the state broadcaster, ORTF, which initially provided support for film. Despite the splitting up of ORTF (in 1974) and the increasing privatization of French broadcasting in the 1980s, television's relationship to film has remained heavily regulated and it has remained a legal requirement for French television to support French film production. All five free-television channels – TF1, France 2, France 3, M6 and the Franco-German channel Arte – are obliged to operate a film-production subsidiary which, in 1993, led to them investing FFfr 364.5 million in films. The pay-television channel, Canal Plus, has also been obliged to support French films (to the tune of ten per cent of its turnover) with the result that it has invested even more: providing, in 1993, FFfr 454.45 million towards French film production.¹¹

Television and the UK

Support of film production by television has also been a significant trend in the UK. At the start of the 1980s, no television company was directly engaged in film production (although prior to the new franchise agreements of 1980, ATV had begun to explore the territory).¹² In the years which followed, however, the number of films produced or co-produced by television companies rose dramatically, reaching a total of forty-nine per cent of all UK productions in 1989, a figure that would be even higher if the, nominally British, 'off-shore' productions of American companies were

excluded.¹³ Indeed, so important had the relationship between film and television become by the end of the 1980s that, in 1990, the Policy Studies Institute suggested that 'the only factor which appears to have prevented the wholesale collapse of the British film production industry has been the increasing involvement of UK television companies'.¹⁴

Although it was the 1980s in which this relationship between film and television came to fruition, its origins may be traced to the 1970s. As early as 1973, the Cinematograph Films Council recommended, as part of its strategy for reviving the British film industry, that a levy be imposed on the showing of films on television in order to support film production.¹⁵ Underlying this proposal was a recognition of the importance of film to the television schedules: more feature films were shown on television than in other European countries and these amounted to about thirteen per cent of the BBC's output and twenty per cent of ITV's.¹⁶ However, the levels of revenue which television screenings of films generated relative to their theatrical release remained comparatively low. There was a suspicion that the prices which the television companies paid for films had been kept artificially low as a result of the BBC and ITV duopoly and that they certainly were not in proportion to the numbers who viewed them.¹⁷ This was a theme subsequently taken up by the Terry report of 1976 on *The Future of the British Film Industry* which urged British film producers and distributors to seek better prices for films offered to British television. Even more significantly, it also recommended that film production finance should be raised from the levy on excess profits of the Independent Television companies which had just been introduced the year previously.¹⁸ The issue was then considered again in 1977 by the Annan report on the future of British broadcasting. This included both a chapter on films on television and a specific section devoted to the issue of whether broadcasting companies should be required to finance the British film industry.¹⁹ In answering this question, the report detailed a number of ways in which this might be done. These included a levy on film transmission, a rise in the cost to television of films shown, use of the ITV levy (as recommended by Terry) and the encouragement of BBC and ITV production funds. However, all of these ideas were rejected by Annan which concluded that the development of a formal relationship between film and television was unlikely to ensure 'the rejuvenation of the British film production industry' and that television should therefore not be required to support British filmmaking.²⁰ Given this decisive thumbs down, it is something of a historical irony that it was the Annan report, nonetheless, which was to lead to the cementing of relations between British television and film which occurred in the 1980s.

It did so, of course, by virtue of its recommendations regarding a fourth channel. The idea of a fourth television channel had been in circulation since the 1960s but it was not until the 1970s that it really gained momentum.²¹ With the Annan report, however, its precise character began to take shape. The report was concerned that the new channel should not simply be

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Wholly financed by Channel Four: Robert Carlyle in Ken Loach's *Riff-Raff*

an extension of the BBC/ITV duopoly and rejected the proposal for an ITV2. Instead it proposed a new fourth channel which would 'encourage productions which say something new in new ways'.²² This would be run by a new Open Broadcasting Authority and financed from a variety of sources including advertising, sponsorship and grants. The following year the then Labour government published a white paper on broadcasting, which largely accepted these recommendations. However, before it found the time to pass the relevant legislation, it lost the 1979 general election. There were then fears that the incoming Conservative government, under Mrs Thatcher, would simply revert to the idea of ITV2 but the old-style Tory Home Secretary, William Whitelaw, persevered with the proposal, albeit in somewhat modified form, and Channel Four was successfully launched as the fourth national television channel on 2 November 1982.

Channel Four

Unlike the Open Broadcasting Authority envisaged by the Annan report, the new channel was to become a subsidiary of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) which also regulated the ITV companies. However, although within the IBA's ambit, the channel was nonetheless charged with a clear 'public service' remit to provide a distinctive television service. This meant that, under the Broadcasting Acts of 1980 and 1981, the channel was obliged to appeal to tastes and interests not generally catered for by the existing television services as well as to 'encourage innovation and experiment in the form and content of programmes'.²³ The channel was also provided with a clear set of financial arrangements which avoided some of the difficulties to which Annan's proposals for the OBA might have led. Thus, while its programme-making was to be financed purely by advertising, it was to be done so indirectly in the form of a subscription paid by the ITV companies as a percentage of their net advertising revenues. In return the ITV companies had the right to sell and collect the income from Channel Four's own advertising time. This arrangement provided particularly important financial protection for Channel Four in its early years as it was not until 1987 that the channel's advertising revenue exceeded its income from the television companies.²⁴ Finally, the channel adopted the 'publishing model' of broadcasting envisaged by Annan and which, in the context of British broadcasting, was to prove its most notable innovation. Thus, unlike the existing BBC and ITV companies, Channel Four did not itself operate as a production house but either purchased or commissioned work from independent production companies, the ITV companies or foreign sources. Its relationship to the independent sector was of particular importance and, by the end of the decade, over fifty per cent of the company's output was being provided by independent companies and a pattern of production had been set which other broadcasters were required to follow.²⁵ In fact it was this development which was probably at the heart of the channel's survival during the Thatcher years. For although it is often regarded as a paradox that the channel was able to support television programming which was so often at ideological odds with prevailing government attitudes, its ability to do so was partly reliant upon its role as a 'trojan horse' in the re-structuring of the economic basis of British television towards a more 'flexible', 'post-Fordist' mode of production.²⁶

It is this combination of a commissioning model of broadcasting and public service principles which also provided the context for the channel's support for film. The channel's first Chief Executive, Jeremy Isaacs was aware of the role which German and Italian television had played in encouraging film and, in his application for the post in 1980, he expressed his desire 'to make, or help make, films of feature length for television here, for the cinema abroad'.²⁷ At this stage, he did not envisage a theatrical release for Channel Four films in Britain. This was partly because union agreements made 'TV only' films cheaper to produce and partly because a cinema

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showing would make an early television transmission difficult. Under a barring policy operated by the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association (CEA), such films could only be shown three years after their initial cinema exhibition and this made television investment much less attractive than it might otherwise have been. Despite this obstacle, the channel did nonetheless proceed to provide some of its first commissions with a cinema release. Colin Gregg's *Remembrance* was the first of these and received a short theatrical run in June 1992, a few months prior to the channel beginning transmission. As David Rose, the channel's first Senior Commissioning Editor for Fiction, explained, 'no one was discussing theatrical windows of any kind when the early films were commissioned, but of course *Remembrance* and *Angel* (1982) were all made six, if not nine, months ahead of our going on air, so the filmmakers quite naturally began to look for these opportunities and we welcomed that'.²⁸ As a result, 'Films on Four' began to appear in cinemas on a selective basis and the channel was able to achieve some flexibility with the CEA regarding their early television transmission. This resulted in a formal agreement, in 1986, when the CEA agreed that the bar would not apply to films costing under £1.25 million, a figure then increased to £4 million in 1988. However, because of the channel's pressing requirements for programming, many of the early films enjoyed only a short cinema run. Thus, even successful films, such as *The Ploughman's Lunch* (1983), were denied as full a cinema release as they might have deserved.²⁹ In recent years, however, the channel has been able to build up a backlog of films and thus allow those films which merit it a proper cinema release. Thus virtually all of the films in the 1994 *Film on Four* season had been shown in cinemas and, in some cases (such as *The Crying Game*, *Waterland*, *The Long Day Closes*, all 1992), the television holdback had been over two years.

This use of a theatrical platform by Channel Four was not entirely without precedent: London Weekend Television, for example, had given a theatrical showcase to Peter Hall's *Akenfield* in 1975. However, what was new was the level of commitment to supporting film production and the numbers of 'television films' subsequently provided with a cinema release. The initial budget for *Film on Four* was £6 million out of which it was proposed to get twenty features made. As David Rose explained, 'the policy from the outset was to commission or set the cornerstone for some twenty feature length films a year ... Films made on comparatively modest budgets ... written and directed by established filmmakers and introducing new writing and directing talents'.³⁰ Since then the budget of *Film on Four* has risen (to around £10-12 million during the 1990s) but has generally been spent on fewer films (twelve in 1993, fifteen in 1994). The funding of the films themselves has taken three main forms: full funding, co-investment and the pre-purchase of television rights. Full funding was more common in the early days when the track record of the channel was as yet unproven but it has continued to be an option. Thus, in recent years, films such as *Riff-Raff* (1990) and *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) have been provided with one hundred

per cent finance. However, perhaps, the most notable example of full funding has been *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), a film which initially looked quite uncommercial but subsequently proved to be one of the channel's biggest successes of the 1980s and virtually became identified as the 'archetypal' *Film on Four*. However, such successes notwithstanding, the more characteristic strategy for the channel has been co-production and the vast bulk of films with which it has been involved have depended upon co-funding. This has usually involved the channel providing a combination of equity investment and payment for TV rights, although in some cases (such as *A Room With A View* [1985] and *Mona Lisa* [1986]) the channel has simply pre-bought the television licence. As a result the channel's financial stake in its 'Films on Four' has varied enormously, ranging from as little as £17,000 to over £1.3 million and from two per cent to one hundred per cent of the budget.³¹ In terms of actual numbers, however, the *Film on Four* output has been substantial. According to the channel's own calculations, between 1982 and 1992, it had invested £91 million in 264 different works.³²

Although there have been attempts to define a *Film on Four* film as a particular type, the actual range of films supported has been quite wide. The abiding commitment has been to original screenplays on contemporary British subject-matter and many of the channel's most popular or critically successful films have fallen within this category: films such as *The Ploughman's Lunch* (1983), *Wetherby* (1985), *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), *Letter to Brezhnev* (1985), *No Surrender* (1985), *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987), *Life is Sweet* (1990), *Riff-Raff* (1990) and *The Crying Game* (1992). However, the channel has also supported costume drama (*Heat and Dust* [1982], *A Room With View*, [1985], *A Month in the Country* [1987]), comedy (*She'll Be Wearing Pink Pyjamas* [1984], *Hear My Song* [1991]), crime drama (*Mona Lisa* [1986], *Stormy Monday* [1987]), the British 'art movie' (*Comrades* [1986], *Fatherland*, [1986], *Caravaggio* [1986], the work of Peter Greenaway) as well as a number of 'international' projects including Gregory Nava's *El Norte* (1983), Wim Wenders' *Paris, Texas* (1984), Agnes Varda's *Vagabonde* (1986), Andrei Tarkovsky's *The Sacrifice* (1986), and Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Three Colours* (1993-4) trilogy. It is therefore quite difficult to identify any one clear aesthetic or characteristic which 'Films on Four' have shared. Geoff Andrew has suggested that the bulk of the films have, in fact, fallen within the 'dramatically conventional'.³³ However, this would seem to underestimate the extent to which many of the films have also challenged the conventions traditionally associated with British film and moved towards a more European mode of film practice, even if it is then the conventions of the European art film which have set the outer boundaries of the films' experiments.

Films of a more radical and experimental kind than would characteristically fall within the ambit of *Film on Four* have, however, been supported by Channel Four. This has been done through the Department of Independent



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'The growth of black filmmaking was a key development of the 1980s': Anni Domingo in Sankofa's *The Passion of Remembrance* (1986).

Film and Video which, under its first senior commissioning editor Alan Fountain, has not always been given the credit it deserves for its support of British film.³⁴ Given the growth during the 1980s of a primarily commercial independent sector, the term 'independent' can be misleading. In the case of the Department of Independent Film and Video, however, the idea of independence was specifically linked to a tradition of social and aesthetic radicalism, outside of the mainstream of film and television production.³⁵ As Fountain explained, the department was concerned to support 'the sort of work unlikely to be taken up elsewhere in the television system' and which would 'represent the alternative, oppositional voice'.³⁶ The main outlet for this material was *The Eleventh Hour* which supported work both from outside the UK (especially the 'Third World') as well as more unorthodox work from within, particularly political documentaries which defied the conventional TV norms of 'balance' and 'impartiality'. As a part of its policy, the department also supported low-budget independent cinema which typically deviated from the norms of mainstream cinema and sought to find fresh formal means to deal with social or political content. Films supported have included Ken McMullen's *Ghost Dance* (1983) and *Zina* (1985), Sally Potter's *The Gold Diggers* (1983), Mick Eaton's *Darkest England* (1984), Derek Jarman's *The Last of England* (1987), Peter Wollen's *Friendship's Death* (1987), Lezli-An Barrett's *Business As Usual* (1987) and Ron Peck's *Empire State* (1987).

The department also provided support to the independent film and video workshop sector which had first emerged in the late 1960s. Under the Workshop Declaration, agreed initially in 1982 with the ACTT, the British Film Institute, the Regional Arts Association, and the Independent Film-Makers Association, Channel Four committed itself to the financing of a number of 'franchised' non profit-making workshops. Such workshops were to be run co-operatively and would be committed to 'integrated practice': not only production but exhibition, distribution and the development of 'audiences, research, education, and community work' more generally.³⁷ Although only a proportion of all UK workshops benefited from the franchise system it undoubtedly helped to bring stability and financial security to those (about a dozen) which did. In return the channel was provided with a supply of programming for both its *Eleventh Hour* and *People to People* slots, including a number of notable film features such as Trade Film's *Ends and Means* (1984), Frontroom's *Acceptable Levels* (1984), Amber's *Seacoal* (1985) and *In Fading Light* (1989), Cinema Action's *Rocinante* (1986), Sankofa's *The Passion of Remembrance* (1986), Derry Film and Video's *Hush-A-Bye Baby* (1989) and, the first video feature designed for theatrical release, Birmingham Film and Video Workshop's *Out of Order* (1987). The particular importance of this work was its strong connections to the regions and concern to give a voice to those communities (blacks, women, the working class) which have traditionally lacked access to filmmaking. The growth of black British filmmaking, in particular, was a key development of the 1980s and was largely nurtured by the workshop movement.

Channel Four has also contributed to British filmmaking in other ways. As well as directly financing British films, it has provided support to other organizations involved in film production, including British Screen, the British Film Institute Production Board and the Scottish Film Production Fund. British Screen was born in 1985 when the government decided to 'privatize' the National Film Finance Corporation. Channel Four was one of three original funders who provided loans (subsequently converted to share capital) to the new company and the two organizations have subsequently been significant co-investment partners. Thus, between 1987 and 1992, Channel Four jointly backed forty-three films with British Screen and provided an average of around twenty-two per cent of British Screen's total film investments.³⁸ Since then, however, co-operation between the two has been in decline. This is primarily the result of a deal which British Screen struck with the satellite broadcaster BSkyB in April 1994.

Until 1994, satellite television had not been a significant contributor to British film production. British Satellite Broadcasting (BSB), launched belatedly in April 1990, had sought to follow Channel Four's example and did invest in a slate of original British films including *Chicago Joe and the Showgirl* (1989), *The Big Man* (1990), *Hardware* (1990), *Hidden Agenda* (1990), and *Memphis Belle* (1990). However, following its merger with Sky less than a year later, the company's investment plans for film were halted

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and the new British Sky Broadcasting (BSkyB) restricted itself to the occasional pre-purchase of satellite rights. However, BSkyB's movie channels (with less than twenty per cent of European material) have fallen a long way short of the EU's *Television without Frontiers* directive on European programming and this has been criticized by the Department of National Heritage (which has itself been under pressure from the EU to take action). Partly in an effort to improve the European content of its channels, BSkyB, therefore, concluded a three-year deal with British Screen for pay-television rights to its films. Although British Screen sees this arrangement as a means of opening up a new revenue stream for British films, the deal has been opposed by Channel Four which wants the films with which it is involved to be genuine premières and which is sceptical about the amounts of additional money which will result from the deal (if, as it suggests, the amounts paid for terrestrial TV rights drop in response). As a result, it is reluctant to participate in projects involving BSkyB and has scaled down its investments accordingly. Thus, during 1994, the channel invested in only two of the twenty films in which British Screen was involved.³⁹

As well as British Screen, Channel Four has also provided valuable support to the British Film Institute Production Board. This began life as the Experimental Film Fund in 1952 when it was chaired by Sir Michael Balcon. Funding, however, was not regularized until 1966 when the BFI committed itself to an annual grant and the Fund was re-christened the Production Board. It subsequently received extra funding from the British Film Fund Agency but since the abolition of the Eady levy in 1985, which funded the BFFA, it is Channel Four which has provided the Fund's most consistent source of finance (other than that allocated by the BFI itself). This has consisted of around £500,000 per year towards features (including films by Terence Davies, Peter Greenaway, and Derek Jarman), the production of shorts and development in return for which the channel receives automatic television rights. In certain cases, the channel has also provided additional equity investment, including most recently *3 Steps To Heaven* (1995), one of the first features to be made under the BFI's policy of 'low budget' (i.e. not more than £450,000) production.

In a similar manner, Channel Four has also helped to fund the Scottish Film Production Fund which was established in 1982. Operating on an overall budget of about £400,000 by the mid-1990s, this fund has been committed to the promotion of Scottish cinema and has been involved in supporting a range of shorts, documentaries and features, including *Venus Peter* (1989), *Play Me Something* (1989) and the highly successful *Shallow Grave* (1994).⁴⁰ In the case of Wales, the significance of Channel Four has been the establishment of its Welsh-language television service, S4C. S4C has been responsible for about twenty-five hours a week of Welsh-language programming and has commissioned around five films or 90-minute documentaries per year. Most of these have been for television transmission

only but some have received a theatrical release, notably in the case of Stephen Bayly's *Coming Up Roses* (1986) and Karl Francis's *Boy Soldier* (1986). More recently, films such as *Elenya* (1992), *Gadael Lenin/Leaving Lenin* (1993) and the Oscar-nominated *Hedd Wyn* (1992) have increased awareness of the films which S4C has supported.⁴¹ As for Northern Ireland, Channel Four has possibly had less impact than in the other 'national regions'. However, its support for the workshop movement did make possible the production of the first indigenous Northern Ireland film features since the 1930s, most notably Frontroom and Belfast Film Workshop's *Acceptable Levels* (1983) and Derry Film and Video's *Hush-a-Bye Baby* (1989).

ITV and BBC

However, if Channel Four, by a variety of means, has been the most consistent and committed of television companies involved in film production, it has not been completely alone. Indeed, the very success of its film policies, and the kudos it has enjoyed as a result of them, encouraged other television companies to become involved in film production as well. One company, Thames Television had, in fact, established its own filmmaking subsidiary, Euston Films, as far back as 1971 but, apart from the occasional TV spin-off such as *Sweeney!* (1976), had mainly been involved in the production of television series, shot on film. During the mid-1980s the company decided to return to film production, financing in part *Bellman and True* (1987), *A Month in the Country* (1987), *Consuming Passions* (1988), and *Dealers* (1989) (made with Rank) and financing in full *The Courier* (1987).

Central Television also established its own film subsidiary, Zenith Productions, in October 1984. Central had previously financed Stephen Frears' *The Hit* (1984) and Zenith continued with a policy of medium-budget feature investment, producing amongst others *Wetherby* (1985), *Sid and Nancy* (1986), *Wish You Were Here* (1987), *Prick Up Your Ears* (1987), and *Personal Services* (1987). In October 1987, the company was sold to Carlton Communications which then merged it with its own production unit, The Moving Picture Company. This had been acquired the previous year and, under producer Nigel Stafford-Clark, had been responsible for a number of early 'Films on Four' such as *The Bad Sister* (1983, shot, in fact, on video), *Parker* (1984) and *The Assam Garden* (1985). The new Zenith embarked upon a further slate of productions (including *For Queen and Country*, *The Wolves of Willoughby*, *Patty Hearst*, and *Paris By Night*, all 1988) but ran into financial difficulties as a result of problems with US distributors. In November 1989, Carlton sold forty-nine per cent of the company to Paramount, following which there was a greater emphasis on television production (although the company was involved in the two Hal Hartley movies *Trust* [1990] and *Amateur* [1994]). This emphasis on television drama continued when the company was acquired by Portman

Entertainment in 1993 after Carlton TV, a subsidiary of Carlton Communications, won the London weekday television franchise from Thames and was required to reduce its ownership share.

The third television company to establish a filmmaking subsidiary was Granada which set up Granada Film Productions in 1987. The company invested in three productions (all made, in fact, for transmission on Channel Four) – *Joyriders* (1988), *Tree of Hands* (1988), *Strapless* (1988) – before it was merged in 1989 with Granada's production division which, under Steve Morrison, was responsible for *The Magic Toyshop* (1986), *The Fruit Machine* (1988), and the Oscar-winning *My Left Foot* (1989). Other companies made smaller but, nonetheless, significant contributions. London Weekend Television put money into *A Handful of Dust* (1987), *The Tall Guy* (1989), *Wilt* (1989) and *Under Suspicion* (1991); TVS co-produced *The Innocent* (1984), *The Dawning* (1988), and *The Queen of Hearts* (1989) (all sold to Channel Four); Scottish Television was involved in *Gregory's Girl* (1980), *Ill Fares the Land* (1983), *Comfort and Joy* (1984), *Killing Dad* (1989), and *The Big Man* (1990); Grampian made a small investment in *Play me Something* (1989), as did Ulster Television in *December Bride* (1990).

As for the BBC, it had a long tradition of shooting drama on film but specifically for TV transmission. Indeed, in 1977, the producer Kenith Trodd drew up a list of television dramas shot on film, the bulk of which were the BBC's, in order to highlight the quality of British television films when compared with British feature films seen at the cinemas.⁴² During the 1980s, however, the BBC too began to become involved in films intended for cinema release. It did so initially, through the Programme Acquisitions Department, which was involved in pre-buying television rights for films such as *Gandhi* (1982), *The Shooting Party* (1984), *The Bostonians* (1984), and *White Mischief* (1987). In the late 1980s, the drama department, under Mark Shivas, also began to invest in films with a view to theatrical release. Four films (*War Requiem* [1988], *Dancin' in the Dark* [1989], *Fellow Traveller* [1989] and *The Reflecting Skin* [1990]) backed by the drama department were given a cinema release and others followed: *The Object of Beauty* (1991), *Truly, Madly, Deeply* (1990), *Edward II* (1991) and *Enchanted April* (1991). However, the decision to proceed with a theatrical release was largely taken on an ad hoc basis (*Truly, Madly, Deeply* and *Enchanted April*, for example, were not originally intended for the cinemas) and the pressures for early television transmission led to distribution problems. No UK-based company was interested in distributing *The Object of Beauty*, for example, and a film such as *Utz* (1992) was denied theatrical distribution altogether despite its success at film festivals. In an attempt to address these problems, the policy of the drama department was refined in 1993. Mark Shivas became the new Head of Films with a responsibility for co-producing about five new features per year as well as investing in other independently-produced British features. The distinguishing characteristic of this strategy, compared to previous BBC policy, is that

such features are planned from the start to have full theatrical and video releases. *Priest*, *Captives* and *A Man of No Importance*, all given a cinema release in 1995, have been examples of this policy in action.

Television economics

However, if television – and Channel Four in particular – became the most significant source of British film finance during the 1980s, it should also be apparent that this was primarily the result of cultural rather than commercial factors. Although Channel Four has been party to a few spectacular box office successes (most recently *The Crying Game* and *Four Weddings and a Funeral* [1994]) the benefit of theatrical release to the channel has not been primarily the box office returns which they have generated but rather the critical attention and publicity which a showing in cinemas has attracted as well as the general prestige which has attached to the channel as a result of its support for 'quality' filmmaking. The 'film' label has also encouraged better viewing figures than might otherwise have been achieved for single television dramas. Indeed, two of the films in the first season – *Secrets* (1982) and *The Country Girls* (1983) – achieved the channel's second and third best ratings of 1983. Nonetheless, when measured according to conventional commercial criteria, most of the channel's films can be seen to have made a loss. Indeed, in its submission to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, the channel cheerfully acknowledged that 'in ten years only a handful of films had actually made a profit for the channel'.⁴³ Of course, Channel Four is not dependent upon direct financial returns in the same way as conventional film production companies but it has to some extent 'subsidized' film production insofar as the relatively high percentage of the Channel's overall budget (6.2 per cent between 1982 and 1992) devoted to *Film on Four* has not been matched by the number of programme hours or audience ratings which it has provided. As Isaacs explained in the early days of *Film on Four*, he regarded such films as having 'a socio-cultural provenance and purpose' which went beyond their financial returns or contribution to the ratings.⁴⁴

This indirect 'subsidy' of film by television is not, however, surprising. As with Europe as a whole, a growing dependence upon television by the film industry was related to the crisis undergone by the British film production sector during the 1970s and 1980s. During the 1970s, cinema attendances in Britain fell consistently and, by 1984, had reached an all-time low of 58.4 million. Audiences did begin to rise thereafter, managing to climb to over one hundred million again by 1991. This growth, however, was a response to the opening of multiplexes, from 1985 onwards, and was largely to the benefit of Hollywood rather than British films. Thus, in 1992, British features (including co-productions) only accounted for 6.8 per cent of the domestic box office while US films accounted for 92.5 per cent.⁴⁵ Inevitably, this decline in the domestic theatrical audience, combined with a



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Defying the notion of a 'TV aesthetic': Frances Barber and Brian Deacon in Peter Greenaway's *A Zed and Two Noughts* (1985)

growth of US box office share, has reduced the attractiveness of investment in British film, a situation not helped by the Conservative government's decision to end the tax incentives which had fuelled the 'renaissance' of British filmmaking in the early 1980s.⁴⁶ As a result, there was a retreat, during the 1980s, from film investment by both the City (especially in the wake of the Goldcrest debacle) and British distributors and exhibitors. The consequence of this is that there are now no integrated companies with interests in all aspects of the film business (as Rank and ABPC once did) and the industry is badly split between producers on the one hand and distributors/exhibitors – mainly devoted to the showing of Hollywood product – on the other. In such circumstances, it is only television, along with state-funded bodies such as British Screen, which have been prepared to finance indigenous production on a regular basis.

This is a point worth making given the grudging respect which has so often been shown towards television for its support of film. For ever since the early days of Channel Four, there have been constant complaints that the films which television finances have lacked the cinematic values associated with 'real cinema'.⁴⁷ However, what these criticisms have tended to assume is some kind of 'essential' difference between film and television which is difficult to sustain. There are, of course, a number of arguments which can be made in this respect but even a quick glance at some of the films made with television money reveals the problem. *Paris, Texas* (1984), *Room with a View* (1985), *A Zed and Two Noughts* (1985), *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987), *Distant Voices, Still Lives* (1988) and *Naked* (1993) have all, for example, been financed by Channel Four for its *Film on Four* slot. However, beyond their common destination it is difficult to identify any shared television influence or 'TV aesthetic'. What this would suggest is that it is not so much the television medium itself which is the issue but the use to which it is put. Indeed, what is often noticeable about the conventional criticisms of British 'television films' (literariness and lack of visual intelligence, on the one hand, or subordination to a realist aesthetic, on the other) is that these are simply the same criticisms which have always been directed at a certain type of British filmmaking.

At root, then, it is probably not the assumed diminution of film by televisual values which critics of the television film object to so much as its relative cheapness and absence of Hollywood-type 'production values'. However, the pertinent point here is that the British film industry would not have become so dependent on television if a big budget popular cinema had been a realistic possibility. The fact is that the might of Hollywood is now so substantial and linked to so many factors (the scale of its production, the concentration of resources and deal-making activity in Los Angeles, the size and relative homogeneity of the US home market, the successful penetration of ancillary markets, and the ownership and control of an international network of distribution and exhibition interests) that other national industries really cannot expect to compete with it.⁴⁸ Like it or not, the use of television resources to support indigenous film production in Britain and Europe has become a necessity. And television, especially public service television, simply cannot match the resources of Hollywood, where, in 1992, the average cost of a studio film (including marketing and advertising) was \$42.4 million.⁴⁹

On the other hand there is the possibility that television films can draw sustenance from television's public service tradition and speak to their own cultures in a way that Hollywood films increasingly do not. The big money-making films from Hollywood are now predominantly 'event' movies, targeted at audiences worldwide and increasingly lacking the close connection with US cultural experience which the best Hollywood movies once had. Thus, even in the US there has been something of a reaction in the form of a growth of low- and no- budget pictures (such as *Straight Out of Brooklyn*

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[1991], *Swoon* [1991], *Slacker* [1991] and *Clerks* [1994]) which have sought to give expression to the experiences of social groups which have characteristically been excluded from the mainstream. And whatever its subsequent international success, it has also been a feature of the best British and European cinema that it too has been rooted in its own specific culture. It is this tradition of filmmaking which television, given its public service obligations, is most capable of assisting. The issue in respect of Britain therefore is not so much whether it is desirable that television should support film but whether it will continue to possess the means to do so. This question has become especially pertinent in the 1990s given that the climate of broadcasting, in Britain and across Europe, has become increasingly commercial and cost-conscious and has made support for film more difficult, as the examples of RAI in Italy and RTVE in Spain have demonstrated. In Britain the consequences of this new environment have also been evident in the experience of the ITV companies.

Television changes

As has already been indicated, a number of ITV companies were tempted to invest in feature film towards the end of the 1980s. Altogether, ITV companies were involved in about twenty productions between 1985 and 1989. However, in 1988, the government altered the way of collecting the ITV levy (in effect a tax paid by the ITV companies for the right to broadcast) by imposing it on advertising revenues rather than, as from 1974, on profits. This had the effect of increasing the amount of levy which the broadcasters had to pay (an increase of £17 million in two years) as well as closing off a form of 'tax shelter' whereby ITV companies had written off up to thirty per cent of their production costs against the levy.⁵⁰ As a result, the making of features became much less attractive than before and ITV involvement in feature production fell by one-third between 1989 and 1990.

This drop in production was also related to the anxiety surrounding the allocation of television franchises due to be announced in 1991 (and which did, indeed, result in two companies involved in film production – Thames and TVS – losing their licences). The now notorious system of competitive bidding used to decide the new franchise-holders also reduced the amount of money available for programme-making, and, given its high cost, feature production was destined to be less appealing.⁵¹ Disputes over the involvement of Granada Television in film production were, for example, one of the factors which led to the resignation of Granada Chairman David Plowright in February 1992 while, more generally, ITV investment in British films virtually disappeared. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the restoration of some kind of incentives to ITV companies to invest in film (such as relief on annual payments liability) has been among the proposals for which the British film community has been lobbying, returning ironically to more or less the same policy which Terry had recommended some twenty years previously.⁵²

The legislation under which the ITV franchises were awarded was also responsible for putting Channel Four on a more commercial footing than hitherto. Under the 1990 Broadcasting Act, the channel became a statutory corporation and, from the start of 1993, was responsible for selling its own advertising. Although there were initial fears about how the channel might fare, it has actually done far better than many predicted. In 1992, the channel achieved a ten per cent share of the UK television audience for the first time (a target which Isaacs had initially hoped to reach by the end of 1985). As regards advertising, it has done even better - securing 19.8 per cent of terrestrial net advertising revenue in 1994. As the annual report for 1994 explains, the channel's commercial success in this respect has been based upon its ability to attract a younger and more upmarket (ABC1) audience.⁵³ However, this very success has also generated its own problems. Under the 1990 Act, the channel is required to pay, to ITV, fifty per cent of the revenue it earns over fourteen per cent of the joint advertising and sponsorship revenues of ITV and Channel Four. By the same token, if the channel's revenue were to fall below fourteen per cent, ITV would be liable to support Channel Four. Although this formula was intended as a safety net for Channel Four, it has instead become a subsidy to the ITV companies. Under the formula, Channel Four was obliged to pay the ITV companies £38.2 million in 1993 and £57.3 million in 1994. Ironically one of the biggest beneficiaries of this arrangement has been Carlton, the company which controversially won the franchise from Thames Television and which was cautioned by the Independent Television Commission in 1994 for its 'unimpressive' performance, particularly in respect of its networked programmes.⁵⁴ Understandably Channel Four has launched a campaign against this funding formula, arguing that it is money which is going into ITV shareholders' pockets rather than into quality programming. The significance for film in this respect is that the channel has committed itself to extra investment in film production should the funding formula be amended.

Of course, the other side of this coin is that the requirement to sell its own advertising has obliged the channel to become much more ratings conscious and possibly less equipped to fulfil its original programming remit. Anxiety, in this respect, may be traced back to the departure of Jeremy Isaacs, the channel's first chief executive, at the end of 1987 and his replacement by Michael Grade, the then Controller of BBC1. Grade's appointment was a controversial one and opposed by Isaacs at the time. Only a few months before his arrival at Channel Four, Grade had called for the privatization of Channel Four and his record of boosting ratings at the BBC through clever scheduling led many to question whether he was the best person to safeguard the channel's distinctive remit. After his first year in the job, the trade paper *Broadcast* ran a survey which suggested that in 1989 there was less drama (including *Film on Four*) than there had been under Isaacs but rather more light entertainment and imported shows.⁵⁵ Since then there has been a continuing concern that the channel has moved in too populist

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a direction and made too much use of repeats and imported US programmes.⁵⁶ Although it would be wrong to exaggerate the changes to the channel's output, which has continued to demonstrate great diversity (as the ITC 1993 performance review partly confirmed), it is nonetheless the case that the increasingly commercial climate in which the channel has had to operate has had consequences for the channel's programming commitments, including its ability to support film.⁵⁷

As has been argued, the channel's investment in film production in the 1980s was, to some extent, 'underwritten' by the arrangements between the channel and the independent television companies concerning the sale of advertising. With the channel no longer guaranteed its income and in competition with the other television companies for advertising, there has inevitably been pressures not only to make programming more 'popular' but also to reduce programme costs and so provide less 'protection' to culturally prestigious, but relatively 'uneconomic', programming such as *Film on Four*. This has been manifest in the squeeze on programming budgets which has occurred since 1991 and the cuts which both *Film on Four* and the Department of Independent Film and Video have experienced. The 1994 budget for *Film on Four*, in this respect, was actually £2 million lower than in 1988.

It is, of course, clear that the channel remains committed to support for film and, given its Oscar nominations in recent years, it could be said that the profile of *Film on Four* is higher than ever. There is a danger, nonetheless, that the increasingly commercial climate in which the channel is required to operate may encourage less risk-taking and greater conservatism. A survey of 'Films on Four' backed by the channel in 1994 may be suggestive in this regard.⁵⁸ Out of fifteen new features which *Film on Four* was supporting, nine were with US partners. This is, of course, partly the result of the channel having to find new investment partners to replace British Screen but it also indicates a certain move towards the US market and a form of relatively 'safe' filmmaking (exemplified by *Death and the Maiden* [1994], *Vanya on 42nd Street* [1994], *Oleanna* [1995] and *The Madness of George III* [1995]). It is also notable that, of these fifteen films, the channel had equity investment in only five. In the case of the rest, the channel has paid for the television licence alone. Although in some cases the payment for television rights is substantial (£500,000) and above what might have been expected, this paring back on equity investment is also an indication of how the channel has become less prepared to take financial risks on films or 'subsidize' those with less obviously commercial prospects. The 'deficit-financing' of feature films that was a characteristic of Channel Four in the 1980s, and which was critical in getting some of the more unorthodox films of the period made, could therefore be becoming increasingly rare.

If this is the case, it is a trend rendered more significant by virtue of policy changes at the Department of Independent Film and Video which has ended

its ongoing support for the workshops and moved away from support for film features. The withdrawal of support for the workshops can itself be seen as a largely commercial consideration. As was the case with Film on Four in the 1980s, the channel's support for the workshops rested upon a belief in the social and cultural value of this sector and, hence, a commitment to provide it with 'subsidy' insofar as the number of programme hours the workshops provided (fifteen to twenty per year) was relatively low in proportion to their budget allocation (£1.7 million for the year ending March 1990). Given these economics (and the decline in support for the workshops from local and metropolitan authorities), the Department of Independent Film and Video sought to move towards a more project-based system of funding for the workshops at the end of the 1980s.⁵⁹ In doing so, it was hoped that the workshops' financial dependence upon the channel would be reduced and that they would be encouraged to find other forms of financial support. In 1991, the Department abandoned its separate budget for the workshops altogether, since when the workshops have been forced to compete for resources in the same way as conventional producers. At the same time, the department has also moved away from the low-budget feature work which had been one of its distinguishing characteristics. Under the new commissioning editor, Stuart Cosgrove, there has been a greater emphasis on documentary than fiction and an increased concern to widen the department's appeal, exemplified by the six-week season in 1995 devoted to the sex industries, *The Red Light Zone*. Cosgrove has argued that the department's agenda must change and has questioned whether 'encouraging formal innovation in film and video art, and providing support to small-scale international filmmakers' really coincides with 'independence in the 1990s'.⁶⁰ Certainly, it is appropriate that the strategies of independent film should not stand still.⁶¹ However, without continuing support from Channel Four, an area of activity, once regarded by Jeremy Isaacs as critical to the channel's distinctive purpose, will certainly find it more difficult to flourish.⁶²

Government policy

What this suggests is that the conditions which prevailed in the 1980s, and which allowed the relationship between television and film to develop so successfully, are no longer the same in the 1990s. Although it would be difficult to say that the government has actually ever evolved a policy on the relations between film and television, it is nonetheless clear that government decisions have been of paramount importance in determining how film and television have co-operated. It was government broadcasting policy which, probably unexpectedly, encouraged television to support film. It has also been the subsequent changes to broadcasting policy which have made it more difficult for television companies to continue to fund film in the ways they once did. However, despite a wish to assist the film industry, there has been a reluctance on the part of government to respond to this situation and

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its attitude towards the role which television has played in supporting film has proved ambivalent.

This is most evident in the first policy document to appear since the White Paper on film in 1984, *The British Film Industry* (1995). This identifies the dependence of British film on television as a 'problem' even though it goes on to argue that 'the independent production sector created by the establishment of Channel Four and the introduction of the independent production quota is key to the establishment of a dynamic film and audiovisual industry'.⁶³ The equivocation here appears to stem from a certain hankering for a big-budget, internationally popular British cinema. Thus, television is blamed for 'producing mainly low-budget films' which lack 'prospects in the international cinema market'.⁶⁴ This in itself is a questionable conclusion: the experience of the 1980s and early 1990s suggests that not only can these films have an international appeal but that they often do much better financially than big budget, 'international' projects, such as those which precipitated the collapse of Goldcrest. Indeed, the document itself picks out three Channel Four films (*Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *The Crying Game* and *The Madness of King George*) as evidence of the vitality of British film. However, even if it were the case that the British industry needed to think 'bigger', there is no evidence that the government is prepared to provide the means for it to do so. Its strategy for increasing production finance, in this respect, consists only of lottery funding and an advisory committee of producers and financiers. It does not, as yet, consist of the kind of fiscal incentives which most other countries (including, of course, Ireland) have found necessary in order to make an increase in film investment a reality. It is surely for this reason that the DNH document, whatever its claims to represent a new milestone, really does not anticipate much change to the status quo and therefore identifies the independent sector created by television as the fundamental motor of British filmmaking. In acknowledging this, it could also have used the opportunity to fashion a more coherent policy for regulating the relations between television and film. It is, however, one of the disappointments of the document that it does not. It makes no reference at all to possible incentives to the ITV companies to invest in film and flatly rejects any change to the Channel Four funding formula. This latter proposal had been recommended by the National Heritage Committee's report on the film industry but, along with many of its other suggestions, was politely put aside.⁶⁵

Conclusion

It is evident that in Britain, as in the rest of Europe, television has played, and is destined to continue to play, an important role in the nurturing of filmmaking. However, its ability and willingness to do so does depend upon government policies which are prepared to sustain public service broadcasting and protect it against mounting commercial pressures. Such a

cinema is not going to compete with Hollywood, which even if desirable is not realistic, but it can attend to the realities, the experiences and the imaginings to which Hollywood is unlikely to give voice. Although the history of the 1980s is sometimes portrayed as a period of decline for the cinema, and one in which it became debilitatingly dependent upon television, it is also a period in which British filmmaking became more culturally diverse and more aesthetically adventurous than in any previous period. That it did so was precisely the result of the involvement of television and the extended possibilities for filmmaking which a public service broadcaster such as Channel Four provided. However, the economic basis of this cinema has not proved sufficiently solid to withstand the increasingly commercial pressures of broadcasting in the 1980s. As a result, the range and diversity of British filmmaking may be beginning to narrow. This is not inevitable but, if it is a trend which is to be reversed, it will require more vigorous support for television, and its involvement with film, than current government policy appears prepared to provide.

References

1. For a discussion of the history of Hollywood's longstanding interest in television, see William Lafferty, 'Film and Television' in Gary R. Edgerton, *Film and The Arts in Symbiosis: A Resource Guide* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988).
2. These percentages are derived from calculations made by Goldman Sachs which appear in *Screen Finance*, 5 May 1993, p.8 and 17 May 1995, p.10. The percentages for both pay-TV and video have, in fact, dipped slightly during the 1990s due to the growth of revenue from videodiscs and pay-per-view.
3. *Screen Digest*, September 1994, p.207. Douglas Gomery argues that movie watching, in fact, became more popular than ever during the 1980s as a result of the new outlets, especially video. See *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (London: BFI, 1992), p.276.
4. *Screen Digest*, March 1993, p.60.
5. *Screen Digest*, April 1992, p.84.
6. *BFI Film and Television Yearbook 1993* (London: BFI, 1992), p.60.
7. *Screen Digest*, June 1995, p.130.
8. *European Filmfile*, Issue 7, vol.1, p.3.
9. According to Jim Hillier, HBO became the largest financier of Hollywood movies in the 1980s. See *The New Hollywood* (London: Studio Vista, 1993), p.35.
10. *European Filmfile*, Issue 7, vol.2, p.84. A detailed examination of the relations between film and television in West Germany may be found in Martin Blaney, *Symbiosis or Confrontation? The Relationship between the Film Industry and Television in the Federal Republic of Germany from 1950 to 1985* (Berlin: Sigma Medienwissenschaft, 1992).
11. *European Filmfile*, Issue 7, vol.1, p.96.
12. ATV, which became Central after 1980, had, through its subsidiary company Black Lion Films, invested in a number of films intended for television in the run-up to the franchise period. One of these, *The Long Good Friday* (1979), did, however, receive a cinema release following a controversy over proposed cuts for television. Two others, Stephen Frears' *Bloody Kids* (1980) and Ken Loach's *Looks and Smiles* (1981) ('a film for television' according to its publicity materials), were also given a theatrical run after their television transmission.

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13. Richard Lewis, *Review of the UK Film Industry: Report to BSAC* (London: BFI, mimeo, 1990), p.20.
14. Andrew Feist and Robert Hutchison (eds.), *Cultural Trends*, no.6, (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1990), p.33.
15. Cinematograph Films Council, *Thirty-sixth Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 1974* (London: HMSO, 1975), p.6. The Council also recommended, following the example of France and Italy, that the television authorities should voluntarily restrict the showing of films on television to certain days and times. Members of the Council subsequently met with representatives of the BBC, the IBA and the Independent Television Companies Association to discuss the Council's proposals but no agreement was forthcoming. See Cinematograph Films Council, *Thirty-seventh Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 1975* (London: HMSO, 1975), p. 6.
16. These figures are for 1974-5 and are cited in the Annan report. See *Report of the Committee on the Future of Broadcasting*, Cmnd. 6753, (London: HMSO, 1977), p.336. More recent figures suggest that the percentage of films on the ITV channels has dropped a little and that the BBC percentage has slightly risen. In the case of Channel Four, feature films (excluding *Film On Four*) accounted for 16.7 per cent of output in 1994. See Channel Four Television Corporation, *Report and Financial Statements 1994* (London: Channel Four, 1995), p.22.
17. According to Vincent Porter, a newly-appointed member of the Cinematograph Films Council, the sums paid annually by British television for screening British features was about one-tenth the fees paid by German television for German films. See 'Can Germany's Experience Help British Film-makers?', *Vision*, vol.2 no.1, March 1977. The prices paid for features by television continued to be a bone of contention and both the Association of Independent Producers (AIP) and the Association of Cinematograph Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT) lobbied for a levy on television transmission of films in the early 1980s.
18. See *The Future of the British Film Industry*, Report of the Prime Minister's Working Party, Cmnd.6372, (HMSO: London, 1976). The levy itself had initially been introduced in 1964 but, until 1974, had been imposed on advertising revenue rather than profits.
19. *Report of the Committee on the Future of Broadcasting*, p.340.
20. *ibid.* p.342. A further report from the Interim Action Committee of the Film Industry, chaired by Harold Wilson, however, took the opposite view, arguing that 'the future health of both film and television lies in giving every possible encouragement to investment in production, whether of TV features, film for TV, or feature films intended for showing first in cinemas and subsequently by other means, including television' and recommending that investment in film should be deductible by the ITV companies against excess profits levy. See *Film and Television Co-operation*, Fourth Report of the Interim Action Committee of the Film Industry, Cmnd. 8227, (London: HMSO, 1981) pp.4-5.
21. A useful overview of the pre-history of Channel Four is provided by Sylvia Harvey, 'Channel 4 Television: From Annan to Grade' in Stuart Hood (ed.), *Behind the Screens: The Structure of British Television in the Nineties* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1994).
22. *Report of the Committee on the Future of Broadcasting*, p.482.
23. *Broadcasting Act 1981*, (London: HMSO, 1982), p.13.
24. Channel Four Television Company Ltd, *Report and Accounts for year ending 31 March 1990* (London, 1990), p.44.
25. In 1987, the government announced that it expected the BBC and ITV to take up twenty-five per cent of their output from independent production companies by 1992. This twenty-five per cent quota was subsequently enshrined in the Broadcasting Act of 1990. See *Broadcasting Act 1990* (London: HMSO, 1990).

26. See John Woodward, 'Day of the Reptile: Independent Production Between the 80s and the 90s' in Richard Paterson (ed.) *Organising for Change* (London: BFI, 1990) and Kevin Robins and James Cornford, 'What is "flexible" about independent producers?', *Screen* vol.33 no.2, Summer 1992.
27. Jeremy Isaacs, *Storm Over 4: A Personal Account* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989), p. 25. Isaacs also indicates that his experience as chairman of the British Film Institute Production Board made him conscious of the needs of independent film-makers for an additional television outlet.
28. Quoted in 'Rose on "Film on Four"', *AIP & Co.*, March 1984, pp.21-2.
29. See Chris Auty, 'Films in Boxes', *Stills*, 8, September-October, 1983, pp.40-41.
30. Quoted in Nigel Willmott, 'The Saviour of the Silver Screen', *Broadcast*, 28 October 1983, pp.13-14.
31. John Pym provides financial information on virtually all 136 films transmitted as part of the *Film on Four* slot between 1982 and the end of 1991 in *Film on Four: A Survey 1982/1991* (London: BFI, 1992). Financial information on films backed by Channel Four in 1994 may be found in *Screen Finance*, 14 December 1994, p.5.
32. Monopolies and Mergers Commission, *Films: A report on the supply of films for exhibition in cinemas in the UK* (London: HMSO, 1994), p.151.
33. Geoff Andrew, 'Four Better, Four Worse', *Broadcast*, November 1992, p.29.
34. In addition to the Drama Department and the Independent Film and Video Department, the channel has also supported film through the Multicultural Affairs Department (which has provided pre-purchase monies for films such as *Salaam Bombay* [1988] and *Mississippi Masala* [1991]) and the Films Acquisition Department (which has pre-bought a number of films including *Drop Dead Fred* [1991] and *A Map of the Human Heart* [1992]).
35. A good overview of the history of independent cinema is provided by Simon Blanchard and Sylvia Harvey, 'The Post-war Independent Cinema – Structure and Organisation' in James Curran and Vincent Porter (eds.), *British Cinema History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), pp. 226-41.
36. Alan Fountain quoted in *AIP & Co.*, no.51, February 1984, p.18.
37. *ACTT Workshop Declaration* (ACTT: London, 1984), p.1.
38. See *Screen Finance*, 6 October 1993, pp.13-14.
39. British Screen Finance Limited, *Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 December 1994* (London: British Screen, 1995).
40. For a discussion of the Scottish Film Production Fund by its first chairman, see Ian Lockerbie, 'Pictures in a Small Country: the Scottish Film Production Fund', in Eddie Dick (ed.), *From Limelight to Satellite: A Scottish Film Book*, (Glasgow and London: Scottish Film Council and BFI, 1990). For a different assessment, critical of the Board's move into features, see Colin McArthur, 'In Praise of a Poor Cinema', *Sight and Sound*, August 1993, pp.30-32.
41. See David Berry, *Wales and Cinema: The First Hundred Years* (Cardiff and London: University of Wales Press and BFI, 1994), esp. Section Four "Television and a Welsh Film "Mini-boom"".
42. See *Vision*, vol.2, no.1, March 1977 pp.14-19. This list is reproduced, and added to, in Jayne Pilling and Kingsley Canham (eds.), *The Screen on the Tube: Filmed TV Drama* (Norwich: Cinema City, 1983).
43. Monopolies and Mergers Commission, *Films: A report on the supply of films for exhibition in cinemas in the UK*, p.151.
44. Quoted in Stephen Lambert, 'Isaacs: Still Smiling', *Stills*, no.6 May-June 1983, p.26.
45. 'UK Film, Television and Video: Statistical Overview', *Film and Television Yearbook 1994* (London: BFI, 1994), pp.42-4.

46. For an assessment of the Conservative government's film policy in the 1980s, see John Hill, 'Government Policy and the British Film Industry 1979-90', *European Journal of Communication*, vol.8, no.2, 1993, pp.203-24.
47. John Dugdale defends the tradition of television films against what he calls 'the Campaign For Real Movies' in *The Sunday Times*, 4 April 1993.
48. For a good discussion of the weak competitive position which the British film industry occupies in relation to Hollywood, see Steve McIntyre, 'Vanishing Point: Feature Film Production in a Small Country' in John Hill, Martin McLoone and Paul Hainsworth (eds.) *Border Crossing: Film in Ireland, Britain and Europe* (Belfast and London: Institute of Irish Studies/BFI, 1994).
49. *Screen Finance*, 5 May 1993, p.9.
50. For the details, see Neil McCartney, 'Change in UK Levy system threatens ITV film deals', *Screen Finance*, 29 June 1988, pp. 9-11.
51. According to figures provided by Terry Iltott, the sums paid by the ITV companies to the treasury amounted to £330 million in 1993. See *Film and Television Yearbook 1994* (London: BFI, 1993), p.49.
52. In 1993, for example, the Producers Alliance for Film and Television (PACT) Film Strategy Group prepared a series of briefing documents for the Department of National Heritage which included recommendations that the ITV companies be granted relief on film production expenditure against Percentage of Qualifying Revenue (PQR) payments (i.e. the annual sums which ITV licence-holders had committed to paying in their licence applications). The same proposals may be found in Jonathan Davis and Geoff Mulgan, 'Britain: The Hollywood of Europe?' in Geoff Mulgan and Richard Paterson (eds.), *Hollywood of Europe* (London: BFI, 1993).
53. *Channel Four Television Corporation Report and Financial Statements 1994* (London: Channel Four, 1995), pp.35-6.
54. Independent Television Commission, *1993 Performance Reviews*, mimeo (London: ITC, 1994), p.14.
55. William Phillips, 'Has C4 Sold Its Soul', *Broadcast*, 8 December 1989, p.19.
56. See, for example, the report by Maggie Brown, 'Channel Four "has breached remit to win viewers"' in *The Independent*, 5 March, 1993, p.2. Jonathan Davis suggests that the growing use of repeats and bought-in programmes by the channel results from the failure of income to match growing transmission output. He points out that, between 1984/5 and 1990/1, total transmission output grew by 94.9 per cent whereas income growth was only 49.5 per cent. As a result, he argues that the levy percentage should be raised in order to encourage greater investment in original programming. See 'Four Needs More', *Impact*, no.2, January 1992, pp.16-18.
57. According to the ITC, a comparison of 1993 with 1992 did not suggest 'any general narrowing of range', although it did observe that 'the amount of entertainment in the schedule overall increased while films, in particular, decreased'. See Independent Television Commission, *1993 Performance Reviews*, p.70.
58. *Screen Finance*, 14 December 1994, p.5.
59. See Adam Barker, 'Film workshops face pressure from C4 and BFI', *Screen Finance*, 8 February 1989, pp.9-10 and Alan Lovell, 'That was the Workshop that was', *Screen* vol.31, no.1, Spring 1990, pp.102-108. A similar economic logic has also been at work in the department's changing relationship to the BFI which has involved a move away from long-term funding and an increased emphasis on case-by-case funding for its film features (*Screen Finance*, 19 May 1993, p.5).
60. Stuart Cosgrove, 'In the Midnight Hour', *The Guardian*, 6 March 1995, Section 2, p.15.
61. In a 1992 article, Rod Stoneman, then deputy commissioning editor in the Independent Film and Video Department, complained that independent filmmakers

had often failed to take 'the opportunity to extend their work to the specifics of a television space and ensure that the programme functions in that context' and called for more debate on how British independent film operated in relation to television. See 'Sins of Commission', *Screen*, vol.33 no.2, 1992, pp.141-2.

62. Concluding his Channel Four memoirs, Isaacs suggests that the continuation of the channel's support for low-budget features and the *Eleventh Hour* would be key indicators of the channel's faithfulness to its 'distinctive purpose'. See *Storm Over 4*, p. 198.
63. Department of National Heritage, *The British Film Industry*, Cm 2884, (London: HMSO, 1995) p.5 and p.18.
64. *ibid*, p.5.
65. National Heritage Committee, *The British Film Industry*, vol.1 Report and Minutes of Proceedings (London: HMSO, 1995), para.197. Following the publication of the *Broadcasting Bill* in December 1995, the government has, however, committed itself to a review of the funding formula from 1998.

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BIG PICTURE SMALL SCREEN

THE RELATIONS BETWEEN FILM AND TELEVISION

Edited by John Hill and Martin McLoone



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