

**Creativity and Constraint: Bill Douglas and the British Film Industry in the
1970s and 1980s**

Submitted by Amelia Anne Watts, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Film, June 2022.

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Abstract

This thesis is a revisionist project that uses Scottish writer-director, Bill Douglas, as a case study, to make an original contribution to British film history scholarship on the 1970s and 1980s, and independent British cinema more broadly. This research takes a production-centred approach to uncover extensive new detail on the production of Douglas's films *My Childhood* (1972), *My Ain Folk* (1973), *My Way Home* (1978) (collectively titled *The Bill Douglas Trilogy*), and *Comrades* (1987). It contributes to the existing scholarship on Douglas and works to go beyond the narratives that exist so far of the productions.

The field of production studies has largely been dominated by the American film and television industry; this thesis examines the interplay between creativity and constraint during the 1970s and 1980s with a distinctly British focus. This project engages in micro, mid and macro-level analyses, examining mid-level negotiations, decision-making, and reanimates traces of work during the production of Douglas's films of both above and below-the-line workers. It also situates the films within the institutional frameworks of film funders, which enabled their production, including the BFI, the National Film Finance Corporation, and Channel 4 and it examines the involvement in the productions of key individuals who worked there.

This thesis is built upon extensive and original archival scholarship drawing upon largely unresearched materials including Bill Douglas's Working Papers housed at the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum at the University of Exeter, the Simon Relph Collection at the BFI Special Collections Archive, materials pertaining to the production of *Comrades* at Film Finances Archive and the Lindsay Anderson Archive at the University of Stirling.

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	5-6
<i>Abbreviations</i>	7-8
Introduction	9-42
Chapter One - The <i>Trilogy</i> and the BFI Production Board's Shifting Administration	43-90
Chapter Two - The Making of the <i>Trilogy</i> : Management Style and Self-Representation of Labour	91-145
Chapter Three - The <i>Trilogy</i> : Contracts, Sales, and Deficiencies in Distribution	146-191
Chapter Four - Creativity versus Business: Conflicting Priorities and Pressures of Commerce during the pre-production of <i>Comrades</i>	192-234
Chapter Five - 'A Lanternist and his Comrades': Working Dynamics and hidden labour during the production of <i>Comrades</i>	235-303
Conclusion	304-312
Postscript	313-314
<i>Appendix</i>	315-348
<i>Bibliography</i>	349-368
<i>Filmography</i>	369-375

List of Figures

- Figure 1** BFI Production Board Annual Funds, March 1970-March 1976.
- Figure 2** Films Selected by the Production Board during Mamoun Hassan's Tenure.
- Figure 3** Average Grant Funded by the BFI Production Board Compared to Grants Douglas Received.
- Figure 4** The *Trilogy* and the Percentage of the BFI Production Board's Annual Budget.
- Figure 5** Crew Members for the *Trilogy*.
- Figure 6** Cast and Crew Numbers for the *Trilogy*.
- Figure 7** Awards for *My Childhood*, *My Ain Folk*, *My Way Home*, and the *Trilogy*.
- Figure 8** Front Page of the *Tehran Journal*, 8 November 1972.
- Figure 9** *My Childhood*, *My Ain Folk*, and *My Way Home* Television Sales from 1974-1983.
- Figure 10** British Telecasts and Radio Pieces, March 1973-September 1981.
- Figure 11** The Lanternist in His Various Guises.
- Figure 12** On-Set Photograph, *Comrades. Stills*, November 1985.
- Figure 13** On-Set Photograph, *Comrades*, 1985, Nick Keen.
- Figure 14** Penny Eyles' Continuity Notes, BDC 1/COM/3/1.
- Figure 15** Sketch of Heliotype, Michael Pickwood, BDC 1/COM/3/2.
- Figure 16** Filming in Dorset Overages/Underages.
- Figure 17** Principal Photography Organisation Chart, UK, 9 September - 11 November 1985.
- Figure 18** Principal Photography Organisation Chart, Australia, 25 November 1985 - 4 January 1986.
- Figure 19** On-Set Photograph, *Comrades*, 1985, Nick Keen, BDC 1/COM/3/3.
- Figure 20** Hand-Drawn Map of Pre-Existing and Proposed Buildings in Tyneham, Michael Pickwood.
- Figure 21** Blossom and Decay, EXE BD 70035.
- Figure 22** Mr and Mrs Wetham, Penny Eyles Continuity Notes.

- Figure 23** Int. Wetham's Print Shop, Sketch by Bill Douglas, BDC 1/COM/3/5/3.
- Figure 24** Filming in Australia Overages/Underages.
- Figure 25** Int. McCallum's Hut, Sketch by Michael Pickwoad, BDC 1/COM/3/2.
- Figure 26** Still from *Comrades*.
- Figure 27** Sketch of Road, Michael Pickwoad, BDC 1/COM/3/2.
- Figure 28** Photograph by Donald Mackay of Andrew Noble, Bill Douglas, Judy Steel and David Steel at the James Hogg Monument, 10 March 1990.

Abbreviations

ACTT – Association of Cinematography, Television and Allied Technicians

AFI – Australian Film Institute

AIP – Associate of Independent Producers

AHRC – Arts and Humanities Research Council

BAFTA – British Academy Film and Television Arts

BBC – British Broadcasting Corporation

BBFC – British Board of Film Classification

BDCM – Bill Douglas Cinema Museum

BFFS – British Federation of Film Societies

BFI – British Film Institute

DES – Department of Education and Science

DPR – Daily Progress Reports

EIFF – Edinburgh International Film Festival

EMI – Electric and Music Industries

ICA – Institute of Contemporary Arts

IFA – Independent Filmmakers Association

ITV – Independent Television

LFF – London Film Festival

LFS – London Film School

MGM – Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

MUS – Marked Up Script

NFFC – National Film Finance Corporation

NFS – National Film School

NFT – National Film Theatre

PBS – Public Broadcasting Service

RAF – Royal Air Force

RFT – Regional Film Theatre

TOC – The Other Cinema

TUC – Trades Union Congress

UCLA – University of California, Los Angeles

ZDF - Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen

Introduction

Engraved on Scottish writer-director Bill Douglas's gravestone in Bishop's Tawton, Devon, is the epitaph: '[w]e only have to love one another to know what we must do'. These are the same words spoken by Diana Stanfield in Douglas's only feature film, *Comrades* (1987), and work to convey the film's sentiment of a hopeful vision of human society. In contrast to the film's presentation of community in village life, Douglas's own experience was somewhat different; he had a hard, impoverished childhood as depicted in his earlier autobiographical trilogy (*My Childhood* (1972), *My Ain Folk* (1973) and *My Way Home* (1978)), before going on to carry out his national service in the Royal Air Force in the mid-1950s.¹ Aside from four student films, of which only one, his graduation film, is readily available (*Come Dancing*, 1970),² his trilogy and *Comrades* are the only films he would go on to complete before his untimely death at the age of 57 in 1991.³ This thesis draws on Douglas's oeuvre as a case study of independent filmmaking during the 1970s and 1980s and closely analyses his largely unresearched set of Working Papers held at the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum (BDCM), along with a significant amount of relevant archival material across several repositories. This project examines the creative opportunities and constraints that were faced during the production of his films as a result of working

¹ For further biographical details, see Andrew Noble, "Bill Douglas, 1934-1991: A Memoir," in *Bill Douglas: A Lanternist's Account*, ed. Eddie Dick, Andrew Noble, and Duncan Petrie (London: BFI Publishing and Scottish Film Council, 1993), 13-27. I have used the notes and bibliography system in Chicago referencing style for this thesis. The referencing guidelines can be found here: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html [accessed 13 December 2021].

² The four films that Douglas made while a student at the LFS were *Charlie Chaplin's London*, *Striptease*, *Globe*, and his graduation film, *Come Dancing* (1970). Unfortunately, *Charlie Chaplin's London* has not survived. Bill Hodgson, a fellow student at London Film School, donated a mute 16mm cutting copy of *Striptease* with double joins, the soundtrack and a production file (which excludes the script) to the BDCM (See BDC 1/XAD/2). When discussing *Striptease*, which is an eight-minute film, Douglas said that viewers described it as 'the most erotic film they have ever seen . . . It was done against a black background. After she's stripped, she dismantles her whole body until there's just the hands left clapping herself'; Cynthia Kee, "Bill Douglas talks to Cynthia Kee," *London Portrait*, March 1987, 22.

Globe was thought to be lost, however, the London Film School have been in touch with Phil Wickham, Curator of the BDCM to say they think they have found a print of it.

³ Douglas' unmade films that he was working on at the end of his life were in the pre-production stage. The two projects were *Justified Sinner*, an adaptation of Scottish writer, James Hogg's eighteenth-century novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, and *Flying Horse*, an original script by Douglas on the moving image pioneer, Eadweard Muybridge.

within the film industry's infrastructure in this period of British film history. More specifically, this thesis takes a production-centred approach to unveil the complexities of the films' productions and goes beyond an analysis of the figure of the director, acknowledging and uncovering the contributions of the wider community of media makers that worked on these films.

Douglas's slender oeuvre received both national and international critical acclaim both at the time of the films' release and since. For instance, following their initial release, the *Trilogy* was lauded by the *Los Angeles Times* as 'arguably the finest achievement in narrative film to arrive from Britain in at least a decade',⁴ and *Comrades* was nominated as *The Independent's* Critics' choice for 1987.⁵ The films received numerous prestigious international awards: *My Childhood* won the Silver Lion for best feature film at the international Venice Film Festival in 1972—an impressive feat in light of its forty-eight minute running time—and *My Way Home* won the Berlin Fipresci prize in 1979.⁶ Douglas's films have frequently appeared on best British film lists and he has gained a reputation as one of Britain's most significant directors.⁷ Douglas has also been extolled by contemporary filmmakers such as Lenny Abrahamson, Lynne Ramsay and Peter Mullan.⁸

Despite these notable achievements, there has been relatively scant scholarly attention afforded to the director and many critics have highlighted this

⁴ Kevin Thomas, "Heralded Trilogy due at UCLA Today," *Los Angeles Times*, 10 May 1983.

⁵ "Critics' Choice for Last Year," *The Independent*, 6 January 1988, BDC 1/COM/5/2, BDCM.

Comrades was in the number one spot with nine commendations. Others in the list included *The Dead* (dir. John Huston), *Blue Velvet* (dir. David Lynch), *Good Morning Babylon* (dir. Paolo/Vittorio Taviani) and *Hope and Glory* (dir. John Boorman).

⁶ See pages 169-170, Figure 7, for a full list of awards for *My Childhood*, *My Ain Folk*, *My Way Home*, and the *Trilogy*.

⁷ The *Trilogy* was number twenty-seven of the best one hundred British films of all time in the *Time Out* poll created by industry figures in 2013, "100 Best British Feature Films List," *Time Out*, accessed 23 January 2023, <https://www.timeout.com/london/feature/855/100-best-british-films-the-list/8>. Similarly, in 2019 *My Childhood* was included in the magazine *Little White Lies* one hundred list of Best British Films, "100 Best British Films," *Little White Lies*, July-August 2019, No. 80, 43.

⁸ Lenny Abrahamson, "The Greatest Films of All Time 2012," *BFI*, accessed 3 January 2022, <https://www2.bfi.org.uk/films-tv-people/sightandsoundpoll2012/voter/1033>; "The Catcher with an Eye," *The Guardian*, 14 Saturday August 1999; Peter Mullan, "Filmmakers on film: Peter Mullan on Bill Douglas," *Saturday Telegraph*, 3 January 2004.

lack of recognition.⁹ In an attempt to explain this oversight as well as producing only a small body of work during his lifetime, Rhys Graham claims that during Douglas's career, the Scottish filmmaker, fell victim to 'a great lack of support from the British film bodies'.¹⁰ Similarly, Scottish writer and friend of Douglas, Andrew O'Hagan, said: '[h]e was a complete victim [of the] cultural intolerance in the British film industry of the non-commercial'.¹¹ An in-depth exploration and contextualisation of Douglas's productions suggest that when untangled, the narrative of Douglas's difficulties faced during his career and the struggle to make a greater number of films is much more complex than Graham or O'Hagan propose. This thesis works to situate the production of Douglas's films within the context of the 1970s and 1980s British film industry, examining the productions of the films from across his career and the way in which changing contours and shifts within the industry were navigated by him and fellow media makers that worked on the projects. In so doing, this research will examine more broadly what options were available to filmmakers like Douglas at this time in terms of financial support, as well as provide further insight into the key individuals who were working at the institutions and offered to fund the projects. This project draws upon an extensive amount of previously unseen archival material, as well as several oral testimonies based on interviews I carried out with media makers who worked with Douglas. I assess the extent to which Douglas's film productions experienced constraints as well as creative opportunities as a result of working within the infrastructure of the British film industry during the 1970s and 1980s.

Between 2014-2016 a large set of Douglas's Working Papers were acquired by the museum named after the director: the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum based at the University of Exeter. These largely unseen materials range from his time at the London Film School in 1969-70 to production materials from each of the three films that make up the *Trilogy* (1970-1978), a vast number of working documents for *Comrades* (1979-1987), as well as production materials concerning his unmade films, *Justified Sinner* and *Flying Horse* that he was

⁹ In 2008, *Little White Lies* included Douglas in the article "A Visual Account of Five of the World's Great, Unrecognised Filmmakers", *Little White Lies*, November-December 2008, 45.

¹⁰ Rhys Graham, "The Glimpse Given Life: An Elegy for Bill Douglas," *Senses of Cinema*, no. 10 (November 2000), <http://sensesofcinema.com/2000/underrated-overlooked/douglas/>.

¹¹ Andrew O'Hagan qtd in Kate Webb, "Bill Douglas Among the Philistines," *Cinéaste* 37, no. 3 (2012).

working on at the end of his life. The Papers also include materials from his time teaching at the National Film School in 1978 and later at the University of Strathclyde in 1990. The majority of the materials were donated by Douglas's close friend and executor of his estate, Peter Jewell. At the start of this project, the Papers consisted of thirty-eight boxes, however, it continues to grow thanks to further donations, mostly from Jewell, and it currently consists of fifty-eight boxes.¹²

The materials include items written by Douglas such as journals, reflections, and correspondence, but they also include further donations of working and production documents from crew members who worked with Douglas. For instance, the Papers include the editing script for *Comrades* from Mick Audsley (editor for *My Way Home* and *Comrades*), Penny Eyles's continuity books (script supervisor on *Comrades*) and Michael Pickwoad's production designs (production designer on *Comrades*). Thus, the wide range of materials offers the researcher the opportunity to approach studying the productions more holistically than both an auteur focused approach would allow, as well as previous scholarly work on Douglas has achieved. Close analyses of the materials uncover greater detail of the collaborative nature of filmmaking, labour, contribution, and input of different roles during a film production. Crucially, as the Papers include a significant amount of material from other crew members, it is for this reason that they are called 'Bill Douglas's Working Papers' and not simply *his* archive. It is fairly typical for a collection to be organised and revolve around a single figure, a key individual of prominence. In so doing, it becomes a useful navigational tool for researchers to find further information about these specific individuals, however, this, in turn, is a constraint because the collections are constructed around the notion that it is only this 'single figure' who is of importance. Although they are broadly categorised in the museum's catalogue as the 'Bill Douglas Papers', at lower levels of the catalogue's hierarchy, other individuals are

¹² During a paid internship in 2016, Arielle Woods catalogued and organised the material. Woods wrote a blog piece on the experience which can be found here: Arielle Woods, "The Bill Douglas Working Papers," Bill Douglas Cinema Museum, accessed 7 June 2021, <https://www.bdcmmuseum.org.uk/about/the-bill-douglas-working-papers-by-arielle-woods/>. From 2018 onwards, I have been responsible for cataloguing any incoming materials relating to Bill Douglas and his Working Papers at the BDCM.

mentioned and given prominence, displaying the collaborative nature of filmmaking within their categorisation.¹³

This project is centred on these largely unresearched set of archival materials at the BDCM as well as previously unseen documents pertaining to *Comrades* held at the Film Finances archive; materials from the Simon Relph collection at the BFI Special Collections, and personal correspondence between Douglas and his mentor and fellow filmmaker, Lindsay Anderson, held in the Lindsay Anderson Archive at the University of Stirling. The extensive archival research and analysis I have carried out reveal new details on these productions at a granular level, whilst situating them within the broader macro context of the 1970s and 1980s. In so doing, 'agency' within the Working Papers is framed carefully and complexly in relation to wider contextual issues. By applying a critical lens to these materials, this thesis provides new knowledge on the production culture of Douglas's films, the creative opportunities as well as constraints that were faced, insight into his colleagues' contributions, understanding of Douglas's working methods and approach to management, and broader issues relating to the conditions of independent film production during the 1970s and 1980s.

Of central importance to this thesis, then, are the following research questions. Firstly, to what extent did Douglas's film productions experience constraints as well as creative opportunities as a result of the British film industry's infrastructure of the 1970s and 1980s? Secondly, how can an in-depth analysis of one filmmaker's oeuvre, with a fairly small production team at various stages of production, contribute to the field of production studies research? As my work centres on my examination of a large hitherto unseen dossier of archival materials, this project illuminates ways in which archival documents such as Douglas's Working Papers can be used as a method of reappraising film productions, creative labour, and these otherwise obscured production histories. Working with a large set of materials, not only those held at the BDCM but also documents held at the University of Stirling, Film Finance Archive, and the BFI, brings with it the challenge of how best to present and visualise a complex

¹³ See "Bill Douglas' Papers" catalogue entry: <http://lib-archives.ex.ac.uk/TreeBrowse.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&field=RefNo&key=BDC+1> which demonstrates the hierarchical order in which the materials have been organised. For example, BDC 1/COM/3/1 is titled 'Continuity Folders - Penny Eyles'.

network of data and archival information. I have worked to utilise this data in several ways, not only through close and detailed analysis, but in mapping the hierarchies of the production, noting, for example, the geographical priority given to individuals in certain roles during the making of *Comrades* in Chapter Five. I have also utilised the materials to analyse the contribution of several workers' labour in bringing a scene together in *Comrades*, using the materials as a point of comparison to the final filmic text.

Argument Overview

The argument in this thesis is threefold. Firstly, the narrative that has been presented in the existing studies of Douglas thus far as a 'victim' of the British film industry, receiving 'a great lack of support from British film bodies', is, I argue, too simplistic an explanation for the challenges faced during Douglas's film productions and career, and it is a narrative which fails to account for the wider contextual impacts on his filmmaking. As this thesis elucidates, Douglas benefited more than some other independent filmmakers working during the period, even those who received funding from the same institutions. Although the budgets he had to work with were extremely tight, my research demonstrates that Douglas was unique in terms of levels of repeated financial support from the BFI Production Board for the *Trilogy* across the 1970s. Moreover, Douglas's film *Comrades*, received the largest level of support given by Channel 4 (£1 million) for any one single project at the time.¹⁴ This fiscal support was not without conditions and, as I examine, working within these frameworks brought constraints and obstacles, particularly concerning the distribution and availability of the films, as well as pressures due to differing agencies and 'actors' in the sphere of production which impacted creative choice. I argue that although Douglas received repeated financial support from the BFI for the *Trilogy*—particularly as a result of Mamoun Hassan's (head of production) strategic manoeuvring at the BFI Production Board, which I expand on in Chapter One—his films, in turn, became utilised in the Production Board's own funding applications as evidence of their achievements. *My Childhood* demonstrated the

¹⁴ Duncan Petrie, "The Lanternist Revisited: The Making of "Comrades"," in *Bill Douglas: A Lanternist's Account*, ed. Eddie Dick, Andrew Noble, and Duncan Petrie (London: BFI Publishing and Scottish Film Council, 1993), 177.

Production Board's success and helped to improve the reputation of the Board, which had up until then been a small production unit. However, by the second half of the 1970s, when Douglas's final instalment (*My Way Home*) was still to be completed, Douglas's *Trilogy* did not align with the BFI Production Board's shift in leadership, nor their ideological or aesthetic direction. Film historian, Sarah Street, describes Douglas as 'a victim of the limited and increasingly exclusive support structure for art films in the 1970s and of the academy's rather narrow theoretical orthodoxies'.¹⁵ My archival investigations allow me to interrogate this incongruence further and the impact as a result of this misalignment. Andrew Noble posits that 'if the Production Board had at that point [1979-1980] been enthusiastically supportive of the trilogy, a different distributive and hence fiscal outcome could have been achieved'.¹⁶ In contrast, I argue that the deficiencies in distribution of Douglas's *Trilogy* were not a result of Douglas's films standing apart from the Production Board's new direction and not having their full support, as Noble suggests, and that it was a problem with the institution's approach to distribution more generally.

Secondly, there are two narratives that surround Douglas and his films. As I have already noted, on the one hand, Douglas has been presented as a victim of the British film industry. On the other, he has been presented as 'difficult'.¹⁷ This representation of him as a 'creative genius' with idiosyncrasies impacting the production and a combative attitude towards his crew almost seems to excuse the lack of support given during his career as well as the lack of critical attention given to his work since. Taking a different approach, and informed by a critical framework of production studies, I examine Douglas's managerial approach and engage closely with the work of production studies scholar, John Thornton Caldwell.¹⁸ Due to the wealth of materials in the Working Papers from others who worked with Douglas, I explore the work and contribution of other crew members in-depth. As the materials available to me span across Douglas's career and

¹⁵ Sarah Street, *British National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 177.

¹⁶ Andrew Noble, "The Making of the Trilogy," in *Bill Douglas: A Lanternist's Account*, ed. Eddie Dick, Andrew Noble, and Duncan Petrie (London: BFI Publishing and Scottish Film Council, 1993), 172.

¹⁷ Brian Hoyle, "The Bill Douglas Trilogy," in *Directory of World Cinema: Britain*, ed. Emma Bell and Neil Mitchell (Bristol: Intellect Ltd., 2012), 230.

¹⁸ John Thornton Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008).

include his reflections on the production process at various stages, this raises questions of self-representation. Caldwell has very much shaped the notion of self-representation in the study of how both above- and below-the-line individuals act and interact in media production.¹⁹ In so doing, I position my approach and analysis in recognition that the Working Papers do not offer transparent access to a filmmaker's creativity. By highlighting the shifts and developments within Douglas's approach and presentation of the work as both a manager and a worker, this thesis demonstrates that there were changes in his approach to his handling of challenges and working with other crew members.

The term 'manager' has been deliberately used throughout this thesis to help situate and frame Douglas accordingly, particularly as a result of the production conditions he was working in. I intentionally use the term to further highlight and recognise the expectations placed on Douglas as a result of the often absent figure of the producer on-set, particularly during the *Trilogy* due to the small crews and the production culture. As the director, there is the responsibility to *manage* different creative input and ideas, and although the responsibility to ensure a project is delivered on time and in budget falls under the remit of the producer, this is something Douglas certainly had to be aiming for and overseeing when the producer was either absent or not really in place (an issue during the *Trilogy* that will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two). The term 'manager' brings to the fore some tensions when discussing a figure who has been framed as an auteur, as it suggests a significant departure from being a 'creative' or 'artist' and implies a more rigid role of responsibility and oversight. However, the purposeful choice to use the term 'manager' is not to deny the creative aspects of Douglas's work, rather to acknowledge that these aspects of work are carried out in tandem and are often overlooked in the examination of a director's work, particularly the academic work on Douglas produced thus far.

As well as examining Douglas's interactions with crew members, this thesis broadens its analysis to include the wider network of production to include key funders and individuals at those institutions. Douglas received financial support from one organisation (BFI Production Board) for the whole of the *Trilogy*, but when it came to *Comrades*, he received support from three institutions

¹⁹ Caldwell, *Production Culture*, 1, 5.

(Channel 4, NFFC and Curzon Ltd). By the 1980s, using a myriad of funding sources to support a film project became much more typical due to the lack of funding available to filmmakers.²⁰ This funding structure brought with it new challenges and a need to navigate a range of stakeholders' interests, preferences, and approaches. Moreover, the scale of funding for *Comrades* (£2.3 million),²¹ was much larger than Douglas had previously worked with during the *Trilogy* (£48,000 in total).²² From analysing Douglas's reflections, I argue that navigating these new contours and numerous stakeholders' preferences brought new constraints and challenges and impacted the production of *Comrades*, particularly during the final editing stage.

Finally, in the presentation of the long production period of Douglas's only feature film *Comrades* which spanned 1979 to 1987, the existing critical narrative often aligns with this notion of Douglas being difficult to work with, and, by implication, presenting him at fault in some way for being constrained in making further films, due to a lack of funding. Through my analysis of Douglas's interaction with producers and funders, I discuss the importance of reputation within the industry, exploring the insight that there may have been a perceived notion of risk in working with Douglas. As this thesis will elucidate, although there were certainly delays caused by Douglas due to negotiations with funders in making changes and finding the budget to implement them, a large proportion of the eight-year period from the script's completion to the film's release, was a result of the difficulty of securing both a producer and funding for the project. Moreover, both Hassan and Simon Relph (producer of *Comrades*) were committed to projects with Douglas at the end of his career: *Justified Sinner* and *Flying Horse*, respectively. Thus, the long production period relates more to the problems of the wider film industry at the time than to Douglas alone. Originally Douglas had intended for the film to be released to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, in 1984. As a result of the delays to production, the film itself was not released until 1987. Now into Thatcher's third premiership, this was a very different Britain than that in which Douglas had written his script, back in 1979. By 1987, union numbers were rapidly declining;

²⁰ John Patterson, "Films We Forgot to Remember," *The Guardian*, 16 May 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2008/may/16/filmandmusic1.filmandmusic3>.

²¹ Petrie, "Lanternist," 179.

²² Based on total figures from Noble, "Making," 118.

the film was released into a less receptive context which undoubtedly contributed to the film's poor distribution, leading it to become largely forgotten.

Ultimately, by drawing on a large set of archival materials, as well as examining pre-, production and post- including distribution, I argue that a more extensive reconfiguration of the knowledge of a film production can be achieved. When situated within the context of the institutional frameworks as well as wider issues of the film industry, the narrative of Douglas's film productions are shown to be much more complex than has previously been suggested. This work is the first study on Douglas to use extensive archival materials as the basis for a production-centred approach to analysis, open not only to Douglas but a collection of both above- and below-the-line collaborators he worked with. In so doing, this work uncovers and reflects upon the use and value of a collection of materials as the basis for a production-centred study. By connecting traces and key fragments held within the documents, I reveal these interwoven narratives of work, thereby reimagining the production culture during the making of these films within the context of the 1970s and 1980s British film industry.

Research parameters and justification of material

Douglas's film career spanned over two decades. Shortly after graduating from the London Film School in December 1970, Douglas secured funding for his short film, *Jamie* (as *My Childhood* was initially called), from the BFI Production Board in July 1971. Douglas secured funding from the Production Board for a further two instalments (*My Ain Folk* and *My Way Home*). Together, this set of films were collectively titled and marketed as *The Bill Douglas Trilogy*.²³ Following the completion of the *Trilogy*, Douglas carried out brief spells of teaching at the National Film School and embarked on his first feature film, *Comrades*. Douglas wrote the script for *Comrades* between 1979 and 1980, but due to difficulties in securing finance and a producer, the film did not commence principal photography under September 1985 and was not released until 1987.

This lengthy period illuminates the constraints on independent filmmakers working during this time in being able to realise and secure funding for their projects. The term 'independent cinema' is very broadly used in relation to films

²³ Henceforth, this will be referred to as the *Trilogy*.

made outside of the Hollywood mainstream studio system. Ultimately, the term 'independent cinema' is quite loose and fluid and could be applied due to a number of elements such as a film's funding structure and budget; film form; the production conditions or its distribution model. Initially one might assume that as Douglas's *Trilogy* received funding from a state subsidised organisation (the BFI), there is a contradiction in its dependence to the state and whether that allows for true independence. However, within the context of the British Film Industry in the 1970s and 1980s, Margaret Dickinson discusses the history of the term and how it 'became standard by the 80s when it acquired a more precise meaning through institutional associations: namely, an area of film activity support by the IFA [Independent Filmmaker's Association], assisted by grant aid and covered by a special union agreement'.²⁴ As this thesis notes in Chapter One, there was a special agreement between the BFI and the unions which enabled the organisation to keep production costs much lower by being able to pay crew less. Moreover, in terms of intervention, it would appear that it was only when the BFI came under fierce criticism and were threatened with legal action from another state organisation (the police) during the *Juvenile Liaison* scandal, that the more senior level of the Board of Governors interceded with the BFI Production Board's work and distribution of the film.²⁵ Thus, in relation to this thesis, in terms of institutional formulation of the BFI, the term 'independent cinema' is applicable and appropriate, and the production culture of Douglas's films during this period further align within this definition.

The size of Douglas's oeuvre provides a crucial opportunity for this thesis to provide a comprehensive overview of the productions across one filmmaker's career and include extensive, granular level detail and analysis. I have selected the films Douglas made between 1972 and 1987, as opposed to his home movies, student films or unmade projects, for the productive light they shed on the period, the landscape of independent filmmaking and the sources of financial support available to filmmakers. As Jill Forbes observed in 1985:

²⁴ Margaret Dickinson, *Rogue Reels: Oppositional Film in Britain, 1945-90*, (London: BFI Publishing, 2019), n.pag. In chapter one, Dickinson discusses the term 'independent' in considerable detail as well as the alternatives such as 'grant-aided', 'non-commercial', 'alternative', 'experimental', 'oppositional', etc.

²⁵ For further details, see Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "The 1970s" in *The British Film Institute, the Government and Film Culture, 1933-2000*, ed. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Christophe Dupin, (Manchester University Press, 2012), 173-174.

[t]he vicissitudes of Douglas's career mirror those of independent production in Britain: *My Childhood* was the first to emerge from the reconstituted BFI Production Board under Mamoun Hassan, and *Comrades* is the last to be supported by the National Film Finance Corporation [NFFC] and the last to be produced by Simon Relph before he takes over as chief executive of the British Screen Finance Consortium (the NFFC's successor) at the start of 1986. Douglas is therefore a barometer of an industry which must be judged by the extent to which it can manage to accommodate film-makers who, as Simon Relph put it, "don't just look for the best angle to shoot two actors talking to each other".²⁶

Not only did Douglas's films receive funding from key institutions during this period of British film history: the BFI Production Board, the NFFC, and Channel 4, but as Relph's comment indicates, using Douglas as a case study presents an important opportunity. Douglas is an example of art-led independent filmmaking in Britain during the 1970s and 1980s. More broadly, when many filmmakers were crossing the Atlantic to go work in Hollywood, working in British television or advertising, this study provides great value to understanding a filmmaker who continued to work in Britain.

The parameters for this project are the films that were produced during Douglas's career. I have consciously made this ruling as it provides an opportunity for analysis of the creative choices and decision-making processes behind the final texts we see today, as well as an understanding of the contractual agreements consented to by both parties and how these were implemented on a granular level. For example, as this thesis demonstrates, particularly during *Comrades*, there was a return of involvement and intervention from the funders towards the final stages in post-production. Thus, the materials pertaining to the films that were made allow for the most extensive examination of these films at different stages of the productions: pre-production developmental stages, principal photography and production, as well as post-production including editing and distribution. The work effectively situates the analyses of the materials within the institutional frameworks and their production cultures.

This thesis has taken an archival approach, as opposed to a textual approach, as it allows for a comprehensive exploration and uncovering of constraining and enabling factors during the films' productions as well as an understanding of certain decision-making processes and choices made. I.Q.

²⁶ Jill Forbes, "The Dark Side of the Landscape," *Sight & Sound*, Winter 1985, 34.

Hunter, Laraine Porter and Justin Smith acknowledge that a textual approach has 'inherent pitfalls of reflectionist readings of cinema's relation to society', and argue that by drawing on and interpreting primary and archival sources a researcher can recover 'qualitative evidence of film-makers' struggles to realise creative vision, turn a profit and sustain their careers'.²⁷ Further, in their discussion of recent scholarly work that utilises the Film Finances Archive,²⁸ a resource this project also employs, Hunter et al., argue '[that] far from being exhausted, archival film history is still yielding new secrets'.²⁹ Indeed, new archival research of working production documents allows for greater understanding of decision-making behind the final text, negotiations, and also greater knowledge concerning what did not end up being a part of the final film text and why. Moreover, this approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of agency, labour contribution and different roles.

Earlier work in film industry studies traditionally adopted a framework of political economy and a top-down approach, or as Timothy Havens and Amanda Lotz describe it, a "jet plane" perspective of media analysis that focuses on power relations and media ownership. Increasingly, the trend in production studies is to take a "helicopter view" or rather a micro approach that focuses on the details and complexities that a political economic approach would not afford.³⁰ My application of Production Studies instead offers an original approach that combines detailed institutional-level analysis to situate and further unveil the complexities of Douglas's film productions, analysing both wider contextual factors as well as granular behaviours of individual crew members and production cultures to offer a more comprehensive view and understanding of constraints and creative opportunities faced during the production of these films. Moreover, by analysing different stages of the productions (pre-, production and post-) and

²⁷ I.Q. Hunter, Laraine Porter, and Justin Smith, "Introduction," in *The Routledge Companion to British Cinema History*, ed. I.Q. Hunter, Laraine Porter, and Justin Smith, 1st Edition (London: Routledge, 2017), 1, 2 <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315392189>.

²⁸ See special issue of the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 34, 1, 2014 based on the archive of Film Financed Ltd.

²⁹ Hunter, Porter, and Smith, *Routledge Companion*, 2.

³⁰ Timothy Havens et al., "Critical Media Industry Studies: A Research Approach," *Communication, Culture & Critique* 2, no. 2 (2009): 240, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-9137.2009.01037.x>.

See also Janet Wasko, 'The Study of the Political Economy in the Media in the Twenty-First Century' *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics*, 10:3, 2014, for a good review of political economy themes and concepts.

examining figures and collaborators beyond the director, this creates a much more detailed, extensive and thorough analysis of a filmmaker's oeuvre at various levels of a production hierarchy than just a micro or macro approach would achieve.

Situating the Research

1. Bill Douglas and the British Film Industry

Almost three decades ago, John Caughie reflected that Douglas had been overlooked and neglected by scholars, but rather than lamenting this, Caughie instructed film scholars and critics not to mourn, but to analyse.³¹ As I previously suggested, however, there has continued to be a tendency to overlook Douglas within broad histories of British film as well as specific studies of the 1970s or 1980s, and relatively little attention has been afforded to the Scottish filmmaker. Unlike other filmmakers working during the period, like Ken Loach, Terence Davies, Peter Greenaway, or Derek Jarman, who have received considerable academic attention and numerous publications on their work,³² there has to date only been one book-length publication on Bill Douglas.³³ In 1993, two years after Douglas's death, the BFI published Eddie Dick et al., *Bill Douglas: A Lanternist's*

³¹ John Caughie, "Don't Mourn - Analyse: Reviewing the Trilogy," in *Bill Douglas: A Lanternist's Account*, ed. Eddie Dick, Andrew Noble, and Duncan Petrie (London and New York: BFI Publishing and Scottish Film Council, 1993), 199.

³² For example see: John Hill, *Ken Loach: The Politics of Film and Television* (London: BFI Publishing, 2011); Jacob Leigh, *The Cinema of Ken Loach: Art in the Service of the People* (London: Wallflower, 2002); Michael Koresky, *Terence Davies* (University of Illinois Press: 2017); Wendy Everett, *Terence Davies* (Manchester University Press, 2004); Martin Hunt, 'The Poetry of the Ordinary: Terence Davies and the Social Art Film', *Screen* 40, no. 1 (1999): 1–16; Wheeler Winston Dixon, "The Long Day Closes: An Interview with Terence Davies," in *Re-Viewing British Cinema, 1900-1992: Essays and Interviews*, ed. Wheeler Winston Dixon (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 249–60; John Orr, "The Art of National Identity: Peter Greenaway and Derek Jarman," in *British Cinema, Past and Present*, ed. Justine Ashby and Andrew Higson (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 327–38; Amy Lawrence, *The Films of Peter Greenaway: Museums and Moving Images* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997); David Pascoe, *Peter Greenaway: Museums and Moving Images* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997); Michael Charlesworth, *Derek Jarman* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011); Rowland Wymer, *Derek Jarman* (Manchester University Press, 2005); Niall Richardson, *The Queer Cinema of Derek Jarman: Critical and Cultural Readings* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009); Michael O'Pray, *Derek Jarman: Dreams of England* (London: BFI, 1996).

³³ Eddie Dick, Andrew Noble, and Duncan Petrie, eds., *Bill Douglas: A Lanternist's Account* (London: BFI Publishing and Scottish Film Council, 1993).

Account, an edited collection on the filmmaker.³⁴ *A Lanternist's Account* uses the scripts of the *Trilogy* as the centrepiece of their book and provides a helpful overview of some of the challenges faced during the production of Douglas's films with a tendency to focus on the conflicts between Douglas and other crew members. Although the collection includes contributions from leading academics, there continues to be a personal slant on Douglas's work with the foreword written by Anderson and a chapter from Hassan. Noble himself had worked closely with Douglas during his teaching fellowship at the University of Strathclyde and assisted him with his *Justified Sinner* project. Although Douglas's 'Scottishness' is fundamental to our understanding of Douglas as a filmmaker, this is not an area that will be explored in detail in this thesis as its focus is on production culture. It concerns UK working conditions beyond Douglas alone and does not, for example engage with textual analysis of Scotland-focused films, nor does it have the intention of examining his biography, which would be more appropriate subjects in relation to questions of nationality. Where appropriate during this thesis, examination is given to particular funding options available to Douglas as a Scot and correspondence is examined which has a distinct bearing on his national identity. Moreover, some of the difficulties he faced during the filming of the *Trilogy* due to both local and National displeasure toward the films as a result of the depiction of poverty in Scotland is highlighted. However, Douglas's own 'Scottishness' is not examined as an isolated aspect of analysis, since the debate concerning national identity of the films is beyond the scope of the focus of this thesis.

Noble's chapter 'The Making of the Trilogy' is largely based on interviews he conducted with crew members which were carried out shortly after Douglas's funeral.³⁵ I have listened to the original tapes of Noble's interviews as they are now part of the Working Papers collection at the BDCM.³⁶ There are some places in my thesis where I use these 'raw' materials, some that have been included in Noble's chapter, but as my research context is distinct from Noble's auteurist approach, I have re-evaluated and repositioned the interview material, using it to

³⁴ Dick, et al., *A Lanternist's Account*.

³⁵ Noble carried out interviews with Brand Thumin, David Mingay, Ian Sellar, Mick Audsley, Judy Cottam, Stephen Archibald, Mamoun Hassan, Charles Rees and Peter West to inform his chapter: Noble, "Making", 117-172.

³⁶ Recordings of the interviews are held at the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum, BDC 1/XAD/4/2, BDCM.

take a holistic approach to analysing the productions, investigating contributions from others during the productions and the production culture under Douglas's management. Noble's chapter focuses on the making of the *Trilogy*, centring on Douglas's behaviour during the productions, frequently mentioning Douglas's 'obsessive' nature as well as presenting Douglas as a tempestuous and volatile figure, describing the atmosphere on-set as 'fraught, painful, [with] obsessive intensity'.³⁷ Although Noble mentions other crew members, he often does so to support this image of Douglas as 'difficult', mentioning disagreements and aggressive behaviour towards crew members, arguing that Douglas had 'an apparent hard indifference to the crew around him'.³⁸ In contrast, I will expand on Douglas's representation of the production and crew members he worked with by undertaking close and detailed analysis of Douglas's personal reflections that are a part of the Working Papers. In so doing, I will highlight that there were developments in Douglas's approach to managing a film production, noting that he did in fact recognise and acknowledge contributions of work and labour to the projects.

Duncan Petrie's chapter on *Comrades*, 'A Lanternist Revisited' includes reference to some of the documents that are now held within Douglas's Working Papers.³⁹ Unlike Noble's chapter which largely takes a micro approach, Petrie's chapter starts by situating the release of *Comrades* contextually, highlighting that it was released during Thatcher's third premiership (1987-1990), commenting on the irony of the script's themes in light of the conservative government's treatment of the trade unions.⁴⁰ Petrie provides a useful chronological overview of the production and briefly acknowledges that the contribution of Jewell as script editor, Gale Tattersall as cinematographer and Audsley as the film's editor 'should not be underestimated'.⁴¹ By taking a holistic production-centred approach, my thesis works to expand on Petrie's point, uncovering much greater detail about different workers' contributions during the films, particularly during *Comrades*. Unfortunately, *A Lanternist's Account* does not include references to the sources used, and although it is clear that they have engaged with items that are now held within the Working Papers, there are some that I have been unable

³⁷ Noble, "Making," 120.

³⁸ Noble, "Making," 123.

³⁹ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 173-196.

⁴⁰ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 173.

⁴¹ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 189.

to trace the origins of. It is evident in both Noble and Petrie's approaches that their focus is on Douglas as the director. In contrast, my research works to go beyond centralising Douglas and encompasses the study of other workers during the productions. This thesis engages with important scholarly work within the field of production studies such as Vicki Mayer, Miranda J. Banks and John Thornton Caldwell's edited collection *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*,⁴² and Jennifer Holt and Alisa Perren's *Media Industries: History, Theory and Method*, as well as extensive archival research that I have carried out of a vast amount of previously unseen or unresearched materials.⁴³ Therefore, this thesis goes beyond the account of the productions that have been produced thus far, combining both micro, mid and macro analysis.

Since the Dick et al., publication, there have been a small number of articles published on Douglas's films such as Guy Barefoot's exploration of the *Trilogy* and autobiography.⁴⁴ Barefoot questions and analyses the need for truth and factual content in autobiographical films, highlighting, for example, that Douglas was never friends with a German soldier, and yet in *My Childhood*, Jamie, Douglas's alter ego, is shown to have a close friendship with German soldier, Helmuth.⁴⁵ Christine Sprengler's chapter 'Memory and Exile in the Bill Douglas Trilogy' examines Douglas's memory in the films, analysing the cinematic techniques utilised to achieve this representation.⁴⁶ Sprengler provides production details such as using 'actual objects [Douglas] had saved' as props, however, similar to Barefoot, Sprengler largely takes a textual approach and focuses on the themes of exclusion and personal memory.⁴⁷ My research does not examine the film's thematic concerns or cinematic representation of thematic foci, but instead takes a production-centred approach, uncovering new knowledge on the film productions.

⁴² Vicki Mayer, Miranda Banks, and John Thornton Caldwell eds., *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2009).

⁴³ Jennifer Holt and Alissa Perren, eds., *The Media Industries: History, Theory, Method* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2008).

⁴⁴ Guy Barefoot, "Autobiography and the Autobiographical in the Bill Douglas Trilogy ('My Childhood', 'My Ain Folk', 'My Way Home')" *Biography – An Interdisciplinary Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 14-17.

⁴⁵ Barefoot, "Autobiography," 14-17.

⁴⁶ Christine Sprengler, "Memory and Exile in the Bill Douglas Trilogy," in *Cultures of Exile: Images of Displacement*, ed. Wendy Everett and Peter Wagstaff, 1st Edition (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 95–110.

⁴⁷ Sprengler, "Memory," 99.

Paul Newland's article on the representation of rural landscape in *Comrades*, focuses on the film's 'politici[s]ed representation of English rural landscape'.⁴⁸ Newland refers to the critical discourse on the film's release and discusses Douglas's political position and whether he intended to make a political film.⁴⁹ My research acknowledges the difference in Britain's political landscape from the script's conception to its release, but expands on and analyses challenges faced to secure funding for a project on the Tolpuddle Martyrs as well as the motivations of key funders.

Mitch Miller's article, 'Who is the Lanternist: A Carnavalesque Reading of Bill Douglas's *Comrades*', examines the shifting role of the itinerant Lanternist throughout the film in his various guises.⁵⁰ The figure of the Lanternist (played by Alex Norton) was much commented on by contemporary critics; my research acknowledges the Lanternist as a useful device in telling a history of the moving image, investigating in detail two sequences in which Norton appears.

As well as being a filmmaker, Douglas was an avid collector of moving image ephemera. Together, with his close friend, Jewell, they amassed 'the finest collection of pre-cinema artefacts and memorabilia in the country'.⁵¹ There have been a small number of articles that discuss the collection;⁵² as I have taken a production-centred approach, I only refer to the collection when artefacts were used in *Comrades* or became part of the collection following the production.

In 2008, the BFI released a DVD of the *Trilogy* and *Comrades* in 2009, and later in 2012, they re-released each with a dual format edition with a DVD and Blu-ray, each with several new short essays in their accompanying

⁴⁸ Paul Newland, "We Come, Our Country's Rights to Save: English Rural Landscape and Leftist Aesthetics in *Comrades*," *Visual Culture in Britain* 16, no. 3 (2015): 332.

⁴⁹ Newland, "We Come," 331-347.

⁵⁰ Mitch Miller, "Who Is the Lanternist?: A Carnavalesque Reading of Bill Douglas," *The Drouth*, n.d., 35-46.

⁵¹ Webb, "Philistines".

⁵² Julian McDougall, "Comrades and Curators," *Journal of Visual Literacy* 38, no. 4 (16 May 2019): 245-61, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1051144X.2019.1611696>; Peter Jewell, "Collectors' Tales: A Personal Overview of Film Fiction at Bill Douglas Centre," *Film History* 20, no. 2 (2008): 149-63.

booklets.⁵³ Shortly thereafter, this led to a release in France.⁵⁴ To mark the twentieth anniversary of Douglas's death, in September 2011, the Bill Douglas Centre for the History of Cinema and Popular Culture (as it was then called), held a symposium on the director.⁵⁵ Since this event, however, there has been no new substantial work on the films, which this research works to remedy.

When reviewing *Comrades*, film critic, Philip French posited that '[o]ne wonders what long career this true poet of cinema might have had, had he been born in France rather than Newcraighall'.⁵⁶ My methodological approach does not incorporate the analysis of the film's aesthetics, however, the 'European' style of his filmmaking may have been an isolating factor and a constraint on Douglas in receiving greater financial support, and perhaps, as French suggests, had he been in Europe, maybe his career would not have been impacted by as many struggles. Chapter Three demonstrates that the *Trilogy* along with other Production Board films found better distribution success within Europe than in Britain.

This thesis is unique and original in its approach as it utilises a wide range of archival materials across and between different repositories to analyse each of the productions of Douglas's completed films. Unlike the aforementioned scholarly works that precedes this thesis, this work analyses the contributions of other individuals as well as Douglas.

2. British Cinema and the 1970s

Historically, British cinema of the 1970s has been largely overlooked in broad film histories of British cinema. Framed as the 'the decade that taste forgot', the misconception of the quality of filmmaking in Britain during this period has often

⁵³ *The Bill Douglas Trilogy*, DVD, directed by Bill Douglas, 1972-1978 (London: BFI, 2008); *Comrades*, DVD, directed by Bill Douglas, 1987 (London: BFI, 2009). *The Bill Douglas Trilogy*, Dual Format DVD and Blu-ray, directed by Bill Douglas, 1972-1978 (London: BFI, 2012); *Comrades*, Dual Format DVD and Blu-ray, directed by Bill Douglas, 1987 (London: BFI, 2012).

⁵⁴ The *Trilogy* was released on DVD in France by UFO in 2013. Following the success of the release, *Comrades* was released into select French cinemas for the first time in July 2014. See "Releases," Bill Douglas Cinema Museum, accessed 6 January 2022, <http://www.bdcmuseum.org.uk/about/bills-films/releases/>.

⁵⁵ "University Conference to Honour Film Maker," *Exeter Express and Echo*, September 2011, 22.

⁵⁶ Philip French, "Review," *The Observer*, 17 December 2006, BDC 1/COM/5/2, BDCM.

led it to be dismissed and overlooked. As Robert Shail highlights, what scholarly attention has thus far been given to the period, has often been isolated to a few films or directors like Nicolas Roeg.⁵⁷ This is evident, for example, in Amy Sargeant's *British Cinema: A Critical History*, in which her chapter on the 1970s uses *The Man Who Fell To Earth* (Nicolas Roeg, 1976) as her main case study.⁵⁸ Thanks to the work of revisionist scholars such as Shail, Sue Harper, Justin Smith, Newland and Sian Barber, this period of filmmaking has moved beyond this rather narrow characterisation.⁵⁹ Revisionist scholarly work on this period flourished around the 2000s. The conference: 'Don't Look Now: British Cinema in the 1970s', hosted by the University of Exeter in July 2007, resulted in Newland's publication with the same title as an outcome.⁶⁰ The following year there was the 'British Culture and Society in the 1970s' conference held at the University of Portsmouth as part of an AHRC funded project led by Harper.⁶¹ More recently, Sue Clayton and Laura Mulvey's publication *Other Cinemas: Politics, Culture and Experimental Film in the 1970s*, argues that there was an enormous amount of vibrant experimental work being produced in Britain across the decade.⁶² The work of these scholars has been crucial in helping to reframe this decade of British filmmaking. Although the aforementioned revisionist work on the decade has provided a much-needed reappraisal, these broad accounts of the decade have still given fairly minimal attention to the middle ground of low-

⁵⁷ Robert Shail, "Introduction: Cinema in the Era of 'Trouble and Strife'," in *Seventies British Cinema* ed., Robert Shail (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), vii.

⁵⁸ Amy Sargeant, "The 1970s," in *British Cinema: A Critical History* (London: BFI Publishing, 2005): 265-294.

⁵⁹ Sue Harper and Justin T. Smith, eds., *British Film Culture in the 1970s: The Boundaries of Pleasure* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011); Sian Barber, *Censoring the 1970s: The BBFC and the Decade That Taste Forgot* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2011); Sian Barber, "British Film Censorship and the BBFC in the 1970s," ed. Sue Harper and Justin Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), 22–33; Sian Barber, *The British Film Industry in the 1970s: Capital, Culture and Creativity*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Laurel Forster and Sue Harper, eds., *British Culture and Society in the 1970s: The Lost Decade* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010); Shail, *Seventies British Cinema*; Paul Newland, *Don't Look Now: British Cinema in the 1970s* (Bristol: Intellect Ltd., 2010); Paul Newland, *British Films of the 1970s* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

⁶⁰ Newland, *Don't Look Now: British Cinema in the 1970s*.

"Previous Conferences," accessed 10 December 2021, <http://humanities.exeter.ac.uk/research/conferences/previous/>.

⁶¹ See Preface to Forster and Harper eds., *British Culture and Society in the 1970s: The Lost Decade*.

⁶² Sue Clayton and Laura Mulvey, eds., *Other Cinemas: Politics, Culture and Experimental Film in the 1970s* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2017).

medium budget filmmaking, particularly those supported by state institutions like the BFI Production Board. An exception to this is the comprehensive history provided by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Christophe Dupin on the BFI.⁶³ More specifically, Dupin's work on the BFI Production Board during the 1970s, which has been invaluable to this thesis.⁶⁴ These ground-breaking works on the BFI and their various departments, including the Production Board, provide a vital institutional history. In contrast, the scale of my research is such that it works to use a filmmaker (Douglas) and his film productions as a case study to demonstrate the constraints and opportunities of working within this institutional framework and the wider context of the British film industry during the period; I incorporate both micro and macro-level analysis. The value of my approach is that, by analysing in-depth the films associated with Douglas, it is possible to provide a comprehensive example and understanding behind the constraints and creative opportunities faced by filmmakers during the 1970s.

3. British Cinema and the 1980s

In contrast to the revisionist work on the 1970s which seeks to re-evaluate the perception of British filmmaking of the period, there is a tendency in scholarly work on the 1980s to scrutinise the presentation of the British cinema undergoing a 'renaissance'. There were a number of reasons why this period was framed in such a way. Firstly, the establishment of Channel 4 in 1982. Secondly, the arrival of 'Britain's first purpose-built multiplex cinema'⁶⁵ (The Point in Milton Keynes) in 1985, and finally a flurry of British success at the Oscars.⁶⁶ However, this gives a distorted image, presenting the industry as much healthier than was really the case. In reality, funding was scarce, and the already minimal governmental

⁶³ Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey, and Christophe Dupin. *The British Film Institute, the Government and Film Culture, 1933-2000*, edited by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Christophe Dupin. Manchester University Press, 2012.

⁶⁴ See Christophe Dupin, "The BFI and British Independent Cinema in the 1970s," in *Seventies British Cinema*, ed. Robert Shail (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 159-74; Christophe Dupin, "The British Film Institute as a Sponsor and Producer of Non-Commercial Film: A Contextualised Analysis of the Origins, Administration, Policy and Achievements of BFI Experimental Film Fund (1952-1965) and Production Board (1966-1979)" (London, Birkbeck College, 2005).

⁶⁵ Stuart Hanson, *Screening the World: Global Development of the Multiplex Cinema* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 89, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-18995-2_5.

⁶⁶ For further details see "Oscars Ceremonies," Oscars, accessed 10 December 2021, <https://www.oscars.org/oscars/ceremonies/1980>.

support available became steadily more diminished following the government's solitary White Paper on the film industry in the decade in 1984, 'Film Policy'.⁶⁷ The White Paper resulted in the abolishment of the Eady Levy and the Quota and the government suggested no alternatives to either of these initiatives.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the White Paper led the NFFC to effectively be privatised when it became the British Screen Finance Consortium.⁶⁹ Douglas, who had completed his script for *Comrades* in a year (1979-1980), was looking for financial support for the project and there were long periods spent looking for a producer to come on board and to help secure funding. In so doing, this thesis aligns with the narrative of scholarly work on the period in the problematic framing of the period undergoing a 'renaissance'. However, my thesis expands on and demonstrates that although Douglas's film *Comrades*, did receive vital financial contribution from Channel 4, some creative choices were impacted as a result of receiving a substantial amount of its funding from a television broadcaster. Moreover, it highlights that although new purpose-built multiplex cinemas were introduced in Britain in the middle of the decade, for independent and art-led filmmakers like Douglas, this had a negligible benefit as these new multiplex cinemas often repeatedly screened the same large-budget mainstream commercial films.

In its entirety, this thesis is a revisionist project that seeks to use Douglas as a case study, to make an original contribution to the field of British film history scholarship on the 1970s and 1980s, and independent British cinema more broadly. This thesis uncovers further details of the production of Douglas's films, contributes to the existing scholarship on Douglas and works to go beyond the narratives that exist so far on the productions.

Methodology

In the past two decades, the field of production studies has seen significant growth and is now a well-established research area with numerous international

⁶⁷ See "Film Industry (Policy)" 19 July 1984, 64, accessed March 2018, <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1984/jul/19/film-industry-policy>.

⁶⁸ For a comprehensive overview of the destructive impact of the White Paper and government policy for the industry during this period see John Hill, "British Film Policy," in *Film Policy: International, National and Regional Perspectives*, ed. Albert Moran (London: Routledge, 1996), 99–110, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203978900>.

⁶⁹ Hill "British Film Policy," 100–101.

conferences, subsections of membership committees and designated journals to the field.⁷⁰ Feminist scholarly research, in particular, has made great strides in this field, working to uncover and make visible the work of female film workers typically in below-the-line roles.⁷¹ Furthermore, although the field of study, production studies has historically been American-centric in its focus, developing out of the study of Hollywood, particular studios, and television workers,⁷² scholars such as Andrew Spicer, Melanie Bell, Jack Newsinger and others have established a distinctly British focus.⁷³

The flourishing area of production studies has begun to influence historians of British cinema. Through a process of addressing omissions and questioning long-held assumptions as a result of the dominant approach in film studies of textual analysis, film historians are working to uncover a more 'complex account of film culture by bringing empirical, archival and oral history methods to bear on the contextual fields of film finance, policy and regulation, and on the sites of production, distribution, exhibition and reception'.⁷⁴ This in turn is

⁷⁰ For example: *Media Industries Journal*; *Creative Industries Journal*; Bi-Annual Media Industries Conference (UK Based); *Society for Cinema and Media Studies* (SCMS) Media Industries Scholarly Interest Group (founded 2011); *British Association of Film, Television and Screen Studies* (BAFTSS) Screen Industries SIG; *European Communication Research and Education Association* (ECREA) Media Industries and Cultural Production.

⁷¹ For example, see Melanie Bell, *Movie Workers: The Women Who Made British Cinema* (Chicago, University of Illinois, 2021); Frances C. Galt, *Women's Activism Behind the Screens: Trade Unions and Gender Inequality in the British Film and Television Industries* (Bristol University Press, 2020); Susan Liddy ed., *Women in the International Film Industry: Policy, Practice and Power* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020); Erin Hill, *Never Done: A History of Women's Work in Media Production* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2016).

⁷² Two foundational works in the field are Hortense Powdermaker, *Hollywood, the Dream Factory: An Anthropologist Looks at the Movie-Makers* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1951) and Leo C. Rosten, *Hollywood: The Movie Colony, the Movie Makers* (San Diego, California: Harcourt, 1941).

See John L. Sullivan, "Leo C. Rosten's Hollywood: Power, Status, and the Primacy of Economic and Social Networks in Cultural Production," in *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*, ed. Vicki Mayer, Miranda Banks, and John Thornton Caldwell (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 39–53 for his discussion on Rosten's work.

⁷³ For example, see Andrew Spicer, "'It's Our Property and Our Passion': Managing Creativity in a Successful Company – Aardman Animations," in *Building Successful and Sustainable Film and Television Businesses: A Cross-National Perspective*, ed. Eva Bakøy, Roel Puijk and Andrew Spicer (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect Ltd, 2017), 295-320; Bell, *Movie Workers*; Jack Newsinger, "Structure and Agency: Shane Meadows and the New Regional Production Sectors," in *Shane Meadows: Critical Essays*, ed. Melanie Williams, Sarah Godfrey and Martin Fradley (Edinburgh University Press: 2013), 21-34.

⁷⁴ Hunter, Porter, and Smith, *Routledge Companion*, 3.

beginning to influence new British film history publications such as the I.Q Hunter et al. 2017 compendium *The Routledge Companion to British Cinema* which evinces this shift in film studies from textual analysis to evidence-based accounts drawing heavily on archival resources to explore 'socio-economic determinants' of British film culture.⁷⁵

Production studies allows for a reimagining of the complexities of a film's design, construction, and execution. Philip Drake states:

production studies of film production can challenge the long-standing focus on directorial authorship in film studies by offering detailed accounts of collaborative production practices among writers, designers, producers, and craft workers, and present not only a fuller understanding of the organi[s]ation of cultural labo[u]r but also of the creative process.⁷⁶

Indeed, the field moves away from the historically dominant form of film studies work that focuses on the film text or even the director at the centre of its study, and instead provides a greater understanding as to how the film came into being, insights behind certain decision-making and the contributions of others during the filmmaking process.

A political-economic approach to the study of industry was initially favoured by scholars, resulting in a greater focus on large media institutions that prioritised the top tier of conglomerate hierarchies. Production histories that centre on select individuals have typically focused on figures such as directors and those working above-the-line. Increasingly, the rather romantic notion of the auteur has been scrutinised and its detrimental effect has been acknowledged by scholars both in the field of production studies as well as film studies. Michelle Hilmes, for example, argues that the notion of the auteur distorts the realities of media authorship and that it is important to recognise this struggle within production studies as there are converging factors and multiple sources of creative input to consider.⁷⁷ Contemporary scholars working in the field, such as Mayer et al., propose that there needs to be a micro-level approach to production studies to examine lived realities of workers, the hierarchies of production, as well

⁷⁵ Hunter, Porter, and Smith, *Routledge Companion*, 2.

⁷⁶ Philip Drake, "Critical and Cultural? Production Studies as Situated Storytelling," in *The Routledge Companion to Media Industries*, ed. Paul McDonald (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2022), 97.

⁷⁷ Michele Hilmes, "Nailing Mercury: The Problem of Media Industry Historiography," in *Media Industries: History, Theory, and Method*, ed. Jennifer Holt and Alisa Perren (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2009), 48.

as offer insight into the working relationships and interpersonal dynamics of the community that is created.⁷⁸ A production-centred approach that engages at the micro-level offers insights of labour and contribution that is often hidden or concealed of those workers who are classed as below-the-line. An auteur or textual approach fails to recognise the production as a working environment made up of many different interactions, processes, and contributions from a range of individuals rather than the top tiers of a production hierarchy. Eva Novrup Redvall notes how ‘exploring the actual production processes behind new works can nuance understandings of authorship and agency, allowing for a more detailed and explicit analysis of “makers and making” in specific circumstances’.⁷⁹ This thesis, therefore, does not focus on Douglas alone, rather, I undertake to study the work of both above and below-the-line labour and contributions to the films that have been obscured in previous histories and accounts, thereby gaining a nuanced understanding of agency during the productions. This is important because it offers new insights into the production process and allows for a much more comprehensive understanding of creative contribution and labour. The granular level analysis I have carried out is possible due to the wealth of materials held at the BDCM from various agents and, as such, I examine the contribution of other roles outside of the writer-director to provide a more comprehensive overview and wide-ranging account of the productions.

Jennifer Holt and Alissa Perren ‘perceive culture and cultural production as sites of struggle, contestation, and negotiation between a broad range of stakeholders’.⁸⁰ Moreover, Holt and Perren argue that these stakeholders are not limited to government and industry, but also include ‘ordinary people’ such as consumers and viewers.⁸¹ Holt and Perren’s notion of production as a site of negotiation between a range of stakeholders will be key in my approach and my application of this issue. As I previously suggested, due to infrastructural changes, the 1980s in particular saw filmmakers having to work with a greater number of ‘stakeholders’ and film funding came from a myriad of sources. I

⁷⁸ Mayer, Banks, and Caldwell, "Roots and Routes," 2.

⁷⁹ Eva Novrup Redvall, "Authorship and Agency in the Media Industries," in *The Routledge Companion to Media Industries*, ed. Paul McDonald (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2022), 224.

⁸⁰ Jennifer Holt and Alissa Perren, eds., *The Media Industries: History, Theory, Method* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2008), 5.

⁸¹ Holt and Perren, "History, Theory, Method," 5.

uncover the changing work environments of the industry by examining how working relationships developed and were navigated. Production is a complex process of multiple inputs and creative contributions and I recognise the importance to highlight these interconnected links and the individuals behind them rather than placing the process of decision-making on one individual. Hilmes argues that 'to isolate the contributions of a particular figure must always fundamentally distort the realities of media authorship'.⁸² Although my case study for this research project is a writer and director's body of work, in my approach I am careful throughout to avoid privileging the writer-director's role, and to avoid undermining the value production studies affords in uncovering further interpersonal dynamics during the production, nuances of agency, as well as hidden labour and creative contributions. In carrying out this research, I am aware of the interconnecting factors that allow for film production in a collaborative medium and avoid blurring the presentation of the actuality of labour.

It is a necessity for scholars working in this field to recognise the importance of an interdisciplinary approach. Mayer et al., examine different methodologies in production studies research and highlight how the field draws on conceptual tools and methods from a range of disciplinary contexts.⁸³ Their collection illuminates the interdisciplinary value of the field with academic contributions from the fields of sociology, geography, economics, film and media industry studies. Douglas Kellner argues that there is a need to combine 'history, social theory, political economy, and media/cultural studies in order to properly contextualise, analyse, interpret, and criticise productions of the media industries'.⁸⁴ I agree with the interdisciplinary value and so have taken this approach in my analysis.

My research has been informed by critical tools of recent production studies work. Paul McDonald's edited collection *The Routledge Companion to Media Industries* published in 2022, provides a comprehensive overview of

⁸² Hilmes, "Nailing Mercury," 48.

⁸³ See Vicki Mayer, Miranda Banks, and John Thornton Caldwell, "Production Studies: Roots and Routes," in *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*, eds., Vicki Mayer, Miranda Banks, and John Thornton Caldwell, (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 1-4.

⁸⁴ Douglas Kellner, "Political Economy, and Media/Cultural Studies: An Articulation," in *The Media Industries: History, Theory, Method*, ed. Jennifer Holt and Alissa Perren (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2008), 132.

different directions in the field of media industries research.⁸⁵ Drake's chapter examines the 'subdiscipline' of production studies within media industries research, investigating its 'benefits and limitations'.⁸⁶ Crucially, Drake highlights that although production studies scholars 'have primarily focused on production workers and processes' that there has been only 'a small number of scholars [that] have considered how such processes might be applied to distribution or exhibition'.⁸⁷ I have investigated production processes during the distribution and exhibition of the *Trilogy*, examining both Douglas's agency and involvement as well as other contributors such as Judy Cottam, the second producer of *My Way Home*, and the work of BFI distribution staff who had been specifically appointed in attempt to alleviate the criticisms the Board were facing due to their poor distribution of Board funded films. I have undertaken this analysis in to order to demonstrate how the distribution of films are a crucial part of the production process. My analysis reveals that Douglas films were not alone in their poor distribution and that this was an institutionally wide problem.

Spicer notes that '[p]roduction studies scholars tend to adopt an ethnographic approach, combining interviews and field observations'.⁸⁸ During my research project, I have carried out interviews with Douglas's colleagues: Hassan, Audsley, Eyles and Jewell. Although my approach prioritises the archival materials, these interviews capture the media makers' memories and accounts of production, and in so doing, become another text and act of self-representation available for interpretation. The interviews have been referred to in this thesis and transcripts have been included in the appendix. Although some of the interviewees are now at the end of their long and impressive careers, some of them are still working in the industry. In light of this, I would argue that these interviews were less influenced by a concern of their reputation being impacted, but rather the act of memory making. For example, as the work that they were involved in took place between forty to fifty years ago, memories or feelings are likely to have altered over time or as a result of hindsight. Annette Kuhn, whose

⁸⁵ See Paul McDonald, *The Routledge Companion to Media Industries* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2022).

⁸⁶ Drake, "Critical and Cultural? Production Studies as Situated Storytelling," 96.

⁸⁷ Drake, "Critical," 101.

⁸⁸ Andrew Spicer, "Writing Film Industry History," in *The Routledge Companion to Media Industries*, ed. Paul McDonald (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2022), 433.

cinemagoing research engages extensively with oral testimonies and memory work argues:

memory is regarded ... as neither providing access to, nor as representing, the past 'as it was'; the past, rather, is taken to be mediated, indeed produced, in the activity of remembering... Informants' accounts are consequently treated not only as data but also as discourse, as material for interpretation.⁸⁹

Kuhn also discusses the dialogic process at work between researcher and interview informant and argues that 'in-depth interviews, for example... involve varying degrees of collaboration and shared productions of knowledge'.⁹⁰ In my process of interviewing Douglas's various collaborators, there were questions that I asked that actively sought for further understanding behind archival materials, working processes as well as their experience of working with Douglas as a manager.

The archival materials themselves are mostly working documents, intended to have very specific functions within the filmmaking workplace. As a historian, I am putting these documents to a different use, and treat them as 'texts' to be closely analysed and used to make interpretations, uncovering further detail and knowledge of the films' productions. Mayer et al., argue that '[o]ne must be mindful that all texts, whether found in an archive or one's own field notes, are constructions' and recommend researchers adopt 'a healthy dose of s[c]epticism and reflexivity as components of the research process'.⁹¹ As such, I have been self-reflexive of my methods and approach to the materials. The Papers also include more public-facing documents such as interview transcripts, reviews, and publicity material. Caldwell recognises that there are dangers in using information obtained through industrial documentation or interviews when he states that 'knowledge is *a/ways* managed; because spin and narrative define and couch any industrial disclosure; and because researcher-practitioner contacts are always marked by symbiotic tensions over authenticity and advantage'.⁹² Although Caldwell argues that it is both above- and below-the-line individuals who have 'spin' on their testimonies, he proposes that those who are at the top are

⁸⁹ Annette Kuhn, *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 9.

⁹⁰ Kuhn, *Everyday Magic*, 8.

⁹¹ Mayer, Banks, and Caldwell, "Roots and Routes," 5.

⁹² Caldwell, *Production Culture*, 2.

more likely to and that the labourer at the granular level is less likely to have a cultivated image that they present outwardly.⁹³ I agree in part with Caldwell; as I make evident in this thesis, at all levels of the production hierarchy the importance of reputation is paramount, as a result, this may influence a worker's presentation of a production. However, those who are working at the lower levels of the production hierarchies often have less opportunity to provide a testimony of their experience. For example, they are unlikely to provide a special feature film commentary and their opinion may need to be sought out specially. Thus, they may not have had as much opportunity for their testimony to be captured. Nevertheless, the importance of reputation prevails and, as such, may influence their narrative of events. Therefore, although production studies allows for an analysis of individual agency, in relation to the wider social conditions of the context in which they are working, there remains a need to recognise, interrogate and analyse motivations and 'spin' on testimonies at all levels of the production hierarchy.

As a result of the field's growth, there has been a recent increase in attention afforded to the methodological challenges, limitations, and benefits.⁹⁴ The historical approach and archival materials available to me affords access to internal communications and includes materials from pre-, mid- and post-production across the four films. However, the historical approach is not without its challenges. Most obviously, the ephemeral interactions and conversations that are not captured, documents that have not been preserved or survived and, most importantly, the factor that most influences my methodological approach is that the materials available to me pertaining to the *Trilogy* are largely procured from Douglas.⁹⁵ Therefore, in terms of further scope of other crew members and their accounts of the production culture and labour, using the Working Papers held at

⁹³ Caldwell, *Production Culture*, 2.

⁹⁴ Amanda D. Lotz, "Building Theories of Creative Industry Managers: Challenges, Perspectives, and Future Directions," in *Making Media Work: Cultures of Management in the Entertainment Industries*, ed., Derek Johnson, Derek Kompare, and Avi Santo (New York; London: NYU Press, 2014), 25–38; Chris Paterson et al., "Production Research: Continuity and Transformation," in *Advancing Media Production Research: Shifting Sites, Methods, and Politics*, ed. Chris Paterson et al. (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 3-19.

⁹⁵ The *Comrades* materials held at the BDCM includes a number of key working documents from other crew members such as Mick Audsley, 'Comrades' Editor's Script, BDC 1/COM/2/3, Penny Eyles, Continuity Books One to Four, BDC 1/COM/3/1, and Michael Pickwood, Production Designs, BDC 1/COM/3/2.

the BDCM for the *Trilogy* has some limitations regarding the extent of examining other crew members' representation. However, I have used this as an opportunity to examine Douglas's self-representation of his management and fellow collaborators. Additionally, I have also consulted obituaries following Douglas's death in 1991 which provides further insight. Denise Mann suggests that for the researcher, it is useful to view 'interviews with above-the-line and below-the-line TV talent as cultural art[e]facts containing evidence of an intricate, interlocking system of heavily codified, discursive knowledge'.⁹⁶ Although the more public-facing materials such as interviews and trade journals allow for other perspectives, I acknowledge Caldwell's proposal that these sorts of materials have had greater influence and shaping of self-interest and spin, so this is kept in mind during the analyses.

To effectively carry out micro-level archival research to gain knowledge of below-the-line and hidden labour, it is necessary that a range of working documents are available. At the BDCM, the Papers' largest asset is the materials pertaining to Douglas's only feature film *Comrades* as donations have been received from a range of individuals who worked on the film. The materials include many iterations of the script, casting papers, correspondence, storyboards, budget details, Jewell's research notes, Eyles's continuity scripts, Pickwood's production designs, Nick Keen's on-set stills and Audsley's editing script which I have closely analysed to uncover greater understanding of their roles and input. I have also made extensive use of materials from other repositories including Lindsay Anderson's archive held at the University of Stirling and the correspondence held there is between Anderson, Douglas, and later between Anderson and Jewell; the Simon Relph collection held at the BFI National Archive and never before seen material relating to *Comrades*, held at the Film Finances Archive.⁹⁷ Throughout the thesis, I have worked to weave these wide-ranging sources (legal, financial, personal, administrative and creative) held

⁹⁶ Denise Mann, "It's Not TV, It's Brand Management TV," in *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*, eds., Vicki Mayer, Miranda Banks, and John Thornton Caldwell (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 104–5.

⁹⁷ The impact of COVID-19 has meant that I was only able to access half of the materials held in the Film Finance archive before they had to close. Due to ongoing restrictions and the delivery of this project, I have been unable to resume my study of the materials held there, but I was fortunate enough to access all of the Daily Progress Reports for the production and correspondence between Simon Relph and the Film Finances Archive before this occurred.

from different institutions into a rich tapestry of analysis of the films' productions. Through close analysis of these materials, this work provides a new understanding of the processes of negotiation, decision-making and constraints facing the production. This thesis offers the first interpretation of these new materials and resources and grounds them within the context of the British film industry during the 1970s and 1980s, and the sector of low-mid budget filmmaking in particular. As with all archival research, there are limitations, and, by the very nature of the study, capturing ephemeral interactions from a working environment brings challenges; it is through the accumulation of these artefacts and oral testimonies that a conceptualisation of the production processes is created and made visible.

By adopting a production studies approach and using the Working Papers as the basis of my research, this thesis untangles and moves beyond the limited narratives that surround Douglas's film productions. Through my original interpretation of the largely unseen set of archival materials, this thesis examines and situates the film productions within the framework and conditions of the 1970s and 1980s British film industry.

Chapter Overview

Pragmatically, I have decided to structure my thesis chronologically as this approach best allows for tracking changes in Douglas's approach to management and shifts in scale of the productions, while highlighting alongside broader macro changes in conditions within the 1970s and 1980s British film industry. The organisation of Douglas's Working Papers at the BDCM has aided my chronological approach. Jewell had largely ordered the material roughly by production and time in Douglas's life, and much of the original organisation has been kept in place and replicated in how it has been catalogued.⁹⁸

The structure of this thesis is as follows: Chapters One, Two and Three investigate the production of the *Trilogy* and Chapters Four and Five examine *Comrades*. More specifically, Chapter One focuses on the early pre-production stages of the *Trilogy*, examining how Douglas was able to secure funding for a series of three autobiographical films as well as working within the institutional

⁹⁸ Woods, "Bill Douglas Working Papers".

framework of the BFI Production Board. Cumulatively, Douglas's *Trilogy* offers a case study of almost a decade's worth of work with the same institution, but during this time the BFI experienced several shifts in leadership. This chapter tracks the various shifts of the BFI Production Board under the different heads of production: Hassan (1971-1974), Barrie Gavin (1974-1975), and Peter Sainsbury (1975-1985) and how this impacted Douglas and the production of the *Trilogy*. I argue that *My Childhood* in particular became a beacon for the types of filmmaking the BFI Production Board funded at the beginning of this decade but as a result the film's success became utilised in the Production Board's own funding applications.

By examining the archival material that pertains to the *Trilogy*, I argue that the shifts in ideologies and direction of the heads of production did impact the filmmaking production process in a number of ways. I argue that in comparison to other BFI Production Board films of the time, Douglas was a recipient of a much larger amount of financial support, and he benefited from political manoeuvring and strategy; Hassan secured funding for all three of Douglas's films due to his strategic thinking and a tactical approach. Along with a discussion of Hassan's strategic manoeuvring, I discuss how he framed Douglas as an artist and auteur. More specifically, I highlight how the auteur theory began to gain prominence in the 1970s with the growth of the teaching of film at Universities across Britain and this auteurist categorisation of filmmakers was utilised by Hassan as a tool in securing funding from the Board for Douglas.

Chapter Two then shifts to look at a granular level of the production of the *Trilogy*, engaging closely with Caldwell's notion of self-representation and Amanda D. Lotz's work who argues that production studies offers an opportunity to engage with management studies.⁹⁹ In so doing, while focusing on Douglas's self-representation in the documents, I engage with Mayer et al., who frames documents as texts and constructions.¹⁰⁰ In my analysis I interrogate Douglas's representation of labour and his management style during the making of the *Trilogy* as he is often framed as 'mercurial',¹⁰¹ difficult and stubborn, and by

⁹⁹ Lotz, "Building Theories," 25–38.

¹⁰⁰ Mayer, Banks, and Caldwell, "Roots and Routes," 5.

¹⁰¹ Paul Newland, "Report: "Bill Douglas Symposium" Bill Douglas Centre for the History of Cinema and Popular Culture, University of Exeter, 23 September 2011," *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 9, no. 2 (2012): 286.

undertaking a closer analysis it is possible to reveal a greater range of agents and negotiations.

Chapter Three offers an examination of the *Trilogy* in relation to an analysis of distribution, interrogating the strategies, agents and negotiations which influenced its placements, circulation and commercial status. This chapter focuses on the distribution of the final instalment, *My Way Home* (1978), as well as the repackaged version of the *Trilogy*, released in 1979. This chapter argues that although the *Trilogy* was by no means well distributed and that there were many deficiencies in the business decisions during this process, in comparison to other films produced by the BFI Production Board at the time, Douglas's *Trilogy* was marginally better, securing both national and international television sales.

Chapter Four then moves on to examine Douglas's only feature film, *Comrades*. Here, I examine the myriad of funding sources that the film secured financial support from and look closely at the figure of the producer. As this chapter demonstrates, the producer was vital in being able to secure finance for the project and it was a slow process to secure someone in the role. Eventually, the film began production with Ismail Merchant as producer, however, this was later aborted in 1984. When discussing Merchant and Douglas's work, Petrie says that 'their collaboration was to prove a disaster'.¹⁰² There is a wealth of material held at the museum including correspondence between Merchant and Douglas as well as a script returned to Douglas with Merchant's notes and comments. This archival material provides the opportunity to examine in detail their working relationship in order to uncover greater understanding as to why this working relationship failed and ultimately culminated in an aborted production. Further, following Merchant's withdrawal, Relph came to the project which allows for further investigation into the different approaches taken to produce the project.

Finally, in Chapter Five, I extend my analysis of *Comrades* as a production case study, and I return to the idea of Douglas's managerial style. I explore the labour of select individuals working during the production under Douglas's management. In so doing, I uncover and investigate labour that is typically hidden by the narratives that surround a film production. This concealment of workers' labour within the capitalist framework dominates production studies histories.

¹⁰² Petrie, "Lanternist," 179.

Therefore, this chapter works to reanimate traces of labour of specific individuals during the production of *Comrades*. This chapter offers a granular level evaluation of work processes, contributions, and roles of the script editor, the script supervisor, the editor, and the production designer.

Returning to my research questions, as my work centres on my examination of a large hitherto unseen dossier of archival materials, this thesis asks to what extent did Douglas's film productions experience constraints as well as creative opportunities as a result of the British film industry's infrastructure of the 1970s and 1980s? Secondly, how can an in-depth analysis of one filmmaker's oeuvre with a fairly small production team at various stages of production contribute to the field of production studies research?

Chapter One

The *Trilogy* and the BFI Production Board's Shifting Administration

A radical shift of policy was sanctioned: it became the avowed intention to intervene in the cultural drift of things in order to establish a British Art Cinema.

Peter Sainsbury¹

Andrew Higson argues that 'the 1970s can be regarded as a transitional period for cinema, caught between two more significant moments', referring here to the British New Wave films of the 1960s and the defiant anti-Thatcher films of the 1980s.² Higson goes on to suggest that 'cinema itself was not in decline but was going through a complex process of diversification and renewal'.³ It is precisely because of its transitional nature that cinema of this period in Britain had for a long time failed to receive significant critical attention. In the past two decades, revisionist work on British cinema in the 1970s has moved beyond the narrow definition of a struggling commercial film industry following a sudden withdrawal of American finance; it has transcended the long-held view as 'the decade that taste forgot' or 'the morning after' the explosive 1960s.⁴ However, the middle ground of low-budget and non-commercial films supported by the leading public funding body—the BFI—from the late 1960s towards the end of the 1970s, has, for the most part, continued to be overlooked or has only briefly been acknowledged thus far.

This chapter concentrates on the period 1971-1979, as this was when Douglas was working with the Board. It examines what the place of the *Trilogy* was within the remit of the Production Board, asking how the films aligned well or worked counter to its policy at various points across the decade and what impact this had. I investigate how work differed under key individuals at the Production

¹ Peter Sainsbury, "Independent British Filmmaking and the Production Board," in *British Film Institute Productions 1951-1976: A Catalogue of Films Made Under the Auspices of the Experimental Film Funds 1951-1966 and the Production Board-1976*, ed., John Ellis (London: BFI Publishing, 1977), 11.

² Andrew Higson, "A Diversity of Film Practices: Renewing British Cinema in the 1970s," in *The Arts in the 1970s: Cultural Closure*, ed., Bart Moore-Gilbert, (London: Routledge, 1994), 217.

³ Higson, "Diversity of Film Practices," 237.

⁴ Barber, *Censoring the 1970s*; Barber, "British Film Censorship and the BBFC in the 1970s"; Harper and Smith, *British Film Culture in the 1970s*; Newland, *Don't Look Now*; Newland, *British Films of the 1970s*; Shail, ed., *Seventies British Cinema*.

Board and identify key shifts in its criteria, administration, and direction. It is not the intention to provide a history of the BFI or its Production Board here.⁵ Instead, this chapter examines how the Production Board, a relatively minor unit that operated on a very small and, at times, unpredictable budget, carried out its work in the late 1960s into the 1970s and draws on Douglas's *Trilogy* as a case study.

Christophe Dupin's examination of the BFI during this period, along with his and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's comprehensive and vital institutional history has been crucial to this chapter.⁶ By taking a production-centred approach and using the *Trilogy* as a case study, this thesis examines and situates the films' productions within the institutional framework of the BFI, building on Dupin's account of the Production Board in the 1970s in its examination of key individuals. Aside from Nowell-Smith and Dupin, work on the BFI as an institution has been surprisingly scarce in film history. Nowell-Smith and Dupin posit '[the BFI's] absence from the history books is partly due to the ambiguous status of British cultural life, uncomfortably squeezed between "the arts" and popular entertainment'.⁷ It is well documented that the commercial industry in Britain was struggling during the 1970s, however, Nowell-Smith and Dupin's comment begins to raise questions regarding 'the arts' and the definition and place of an art cinema in Britain. Paul Newland and Brian Hoyle state: 'the existence of an art cinema in a European country such as France, for example, is rarely if ever contested, such claims have very rarely been forcefully made about Britain'.⁸ The place of the BFI and its role in British film culture and production was rather ambiguously placed between the longstanding binaries of culture and populism. As this chapter makes evident, during the 1970s, the BFI Production Board made some attempt to navigate these divisions and to find its place within British film culture. Returning to Peter Sainsbury's statement at the beginning of this chapter, this period was experiencing a 'cultural drift'; the commercial film industry was barely surviving and there was a lack of an established 'art cinema' in Britain.⁹ The Production

⁵ See the excellent work by Dupin which offers a comprehensive overview of the Production Board and its origins as the Experimental Film Fund: Dupin, "Sponsor".

⁶ Nowell-Smith and Dupin, *British Film Institute*.

⁷ Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey, and Christophe Dupin. "Introduction." In *The British Film Institute, the Government and Film Culture, 1933-2000*, edited by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Christophe Dupin, 1–13. Manchester University Press, 2012, 3.

⁸ John Hill, "The Rise of British Art Cinema in the 1980s," in *British Art Cinema: Creativity, Experimentation and Innovation*, ed. Brian Hoyle and Paul Newland (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), 5.

⁹ Sainsbury, "Independent British Filmmaking," 11.

Board did experience a shift in policy in the 1970s; in fact, they saw several shifts in terms of leadership, ideology, and the types of filmmaking output across the decade. Arguably, it is because the Board's films were a product of Britain's lack of an established 'art cinema', combined with the lack of the institution's clearly defined role and place in film culture at this time that has led to an absence in critical attention for their films. It is the level of the Production Board's agency in intervening in British film culture during this period of 'transition' that is of interest here. As I demonstrate, it was a vital force in British film production that helped to sustain low-budget feature film production during the 1970s. As such, it deserves much greater critical attention.

During the 1970s, the Board supported films such as *Winstanley* (Kevin Brownlow and Andrew Mollo, 1975), *Requiem for a Village* (David Gladwell, 1975), *A Private Enterprise* (Peter K. Smith, 1974), Horace Ové's *Pressure* (1976) and Bill Douglas's *Trilogy* (*My Childhood*, 1972; *My Ain Folk*, 1973; *My Way Home*, 1978).¹⁰ Duncan Petrie advocates:

[c]ollectively, this body of work signalled a new vitality in cinema aesthetics and storytelling from Brownlow and Mollo's examination of the seventeenth-century 'digger' riots, to Ové and Smith's engagement with the respective experiences of the Afro-Caribbean and Asian communities to Britain, to the intensely contemplative aesthetic of Douglas.¹¹

My Childhood, in particular, marked a turning point for the Production Board in terms of its 'intensely personal narrative',¹² its austere and poetic style, and the

¹⁰ A number of BFI Production Board films from this period have received DVD or Blu-ray release, some are available on the BFI player, and some are unavailable to access. Some critical attention has been given to several films supported by the BFI Production Board surrounding this period in the 1950s and 1980s. For example, attention has been given to the co-productions with Channel 4 in the 1980s, which Alan Burton and Steven Chibnall have referred to the Board's "Golden Age" (Alan Burton and Steve Chibnall, *Historical Dictionary of British Cinema* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 82.) The Board's role in their production, however, has often been explored only briefly; analysis has typically been textual, focusing on the film's style, aesthetics, the director, or the focus has been on their co-production partners, such as Channel Four. A large majority of films that were part of the Free Cinema movement in the mid-1950s were supported by grants from the Experimental Film Fund (later named the BFI Production Board in 1966). This movement helped to launch the 'film careers of Tony Richardson, Lindsay Anderson and Karel Reisz, all key figures in the British cinema of the 1960s'. See Duncan Petrie and Melanie Williams, "Introduction," in *Transformation and Tradition in 1960s: British Cinema*, Richard Farmer, Laura Mayne, Duncan Petrie and Melanie Williams, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 17; *Free Cinema (1952-1963)* (3-DVD box set) BFI: London, 2006.

¹¹ Duncan Petrie, *Screening Scotland* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 149.

¹² Sargeant, *British Cinema: A Critical History*, 277.

level of critical praise and international recognition that it received.¹³ Each of the three films that make the *Trilogy* received full funding from the Board,¹⁴ and were made slightly in excess of £3,000, £12,000 and £33,000, respectively.¹⁵ This level of repeated and full financial support from the institution for one filmmaker was unparalleled. Such funding has only been similarly matched in this period with the likes of the filmmaker Peter Greenaway, who received funding from the Board towards the end of the 1970s with his films *Vertical Features Remake* (1978), *A Walk Through H: The Reincarnation of an Ornithologist* (1978) and his pseudo-documentary, *The Falls* (1980).¹⁶ Crucially, the very nature of a filmmaker's trilogy—a series of linked films—provides a unique opportunity to track and analyse changes in production conditions. Due to the collective length of time it took to produce the films, the filming of the *Trilogy* spanned shifting policies and governance of the Board, providing an important opportunity to analyse the institution's impact on a micro-level of an individual series of productions.

My methodological approach is to critically analyse primary sources that relate to the production of Douglas's *Trilogy*, with a specific focus on securing funding and the pre-production stages, such as the BFI's interventions, comments, and involvement with the scripts. I focus on identifying the agency of the key personnel at the Production Board which is vital groundwork for further discussions of later stages of the productions in Chapters Two and Three. This chapter mediates between macro and micro examination and offers original archival analysis to gain an understanding of the conditions of production and the involvement of those working at the BFI. Douglas's Working Papers include a significant amount of correspondence between himself and various senior BFI

¹³ Dupin, "BFI and British Independent Cinema in the 1970s," 162.

¹⁴ Douglas ended up contributing £300 of his own funds towards the completion of *My Way Home*. See Receipt from Peter Sainsbury to Bill Douglas, 17 July 1979, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM (hereafter cited as Receipt, BDC 1/TRI/1/3).

¹⁵ Noble, "Memoir," 118. This does not account for the maintenance grant of £150 which Douglas received for *My Childhood* and *My Ain Folk*.

¹⁶ Greenaway continued to receive support from the BFI into the 1980s, but these were co-productions with Channel 4. These co-productions were: *The Draughtsman's Contract* (1982) and *A Zed and Two Noughts* (1985). Terence Davies received full-funding from the Production Board for his first film *Children* (1976) followed by part-funding for his following to instalments *Madonna and the Child* (1980) and *Death and Transfiguration*. For these final two films, Davies received additional financial support from Greater London Arts Association. For further details see "Madonna and Child (1980)," *Screen Online*, accessed 2 October 2021, <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/505985/index.html>.

personnel: Mamoun Hassan (head of production 1971-1974), Barrie Gavin (head of production 1975-1976) and Peter Sainsbury (head of production 1976-1985),¹⁷ as well as other key figures such as Michael Relph, the chairman of the Production Board (1972-1979) and BFI director, Keith Lucas (1972-1978).¹⁸ These materials allow for an analysis of the interaction between the filmmaker and the institution as they provide insight into the constraints and framework that Douglas was to work in. Other materials I have consulted at the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum (BDCM) that I refer to in this chapter include Douglas's application for *Jamie* (as *My Childhood* was initially called) to the Production Board. My analysis of this vitally important document provides a new understanding into the application process and the material that was given to committee members when deliberating whether the project should receive funding. I have consulted a series of Douglas's sent and unsent letters to various members of the BFI as well as Douglas's journals, which offer a different view into Douglas's aspirations, frustrations and responses to the framework and constraints he was working within at this time.¹⁹ The letters provide an opportunity to reflect upon the lines of communication that Douglas had with the BFI and the conditions of working with this funder. By no means am I suggesting that every film production funded by the Production Board followed the same trajectory or that every filmmaker working at this time had the same experience, I recognise that every film production is different. However, the material available to me offers the opportunity to analyse and provide an example of the conditions of working within the institutional framework of the Production Board in the 1970s. During this research project, I have carried out a small number of interviews with key individuals who worked with Douglas at different points in his career, including Hassan and a number of crew members. Excerpts from the interviews I carried out with Hassan will be included here to add further interpretative value of the self-reflexive process of media makers.²⁰

¹⁷ Sainsbury worked under Gavin beforehand as production supervisor and after Gavin left, Sainsbury was appointed as Gavin's replacement.

¹⁸ Michael Relph was the father of Simon Relph who would be the producer of Douglas' film, *Comrades*.

¹⁹ Douglas had been prompted by Eddie Dick, Film Producer and Author, to start writing a memoir of making the Trilogy. See Noble, "Making," 127.

²⁰ See Appendix, items 1-3, for interview transcripts.

To best achieve this study of the *Trilogy* and its relation to shifting policies, the chapter begins with an overview of the Production Board, its structure, its receipt of funding and the projects it typically supported in the 1970s. I identify that not only was there an increase in the level of funding that the Production Board had access to which allowed them to embark on a new direction of filmmaking, but that there was also a shift in ideologies and intentions by those who were in the role of head of production at the BFI. The chapter then provides a more in-depth exploration of each of these individuals and how they exercised their agency and influence in the role. This is not to assume that these individuals had *complete* autonomy over the decision-making process of which projects to fund and how they were produced, however, as this chapter elucidates, they were key participants in the managerial processes of the productions. In the role of head of production, they had considerable influence over the decision-making as to which projects received funding from the Board. Essentially, then, I ask how the *Trilogy* worked alongside or counter to the direction of the Board and address how the series of films may have been impacted by the Board's policy and its key individuals.

The BFI Production Board

From 1952 until 1966, the Production Board went by another name, the Experimental Film Fund. The name change was agreed on as the word 'experimental' meant different things to different people.²¹ Dupin discusses that in contrast, the 'Production Board' was felt to be neutral and unspecific, and it was hoped that the name change would allow for greater flexibility in the choice of projects it could fund.²² Consequently, filmmakers from a wider range of backgrounds might be more likely to apply as the fund may have previously been felt to be off-limits to them due to their filmmaking style. The name change did not initiate a financial, structural or departmental change, nor did it alter the Production Board's direction of funding, which at this time was largely confined to shorts.²³ Rather, it was between mid-1971 to mid-1972, when two senior personnel at the Production Board departed: Bruce Beresford, the Production

²¹ Dupin, "Sponsor," 138.

²² Dupin, "Sponsor," 138.

²³ Dupin, "Sponsor," 171.

Officer, and Michael Balcon, the Production Board's Chairman, that the first in a series of more significant shifts and changes were instigated.²⁴ In June 1971, Mamoun Hassan, a filmmaker (*The Meeting*, 1964) and editor, was appointed as Beresford's interim replacement (later being made permanent), and producer, Michael Relph, was selected by Balcon to replace him as chairman. Following this, the Production Board was made into its own department with the proviso that several members from the Governor's Board also had to be on the Production Board Committee. This condition was an attempt to ensure that there were lines of communication between both departments of the BFI. The level of finance that was available to the Production Board grew significantly. While still a very meagre budget, the funds available to the Production Board increased (see Figure 1 below), enabling them to move towards the most significant change which was to fund low-budget features and featurettes, a move in policy that was cemented by the Board's award of funds to Douglas's first film, *My Childhood* (1972).

Date	Funds
March 1970 – March 1971	£31,853
March 1971 – March 1972	£86,481*
March 1972 – March 1973	£123,019
March 1973 – March 1974	£103,578
March 1974 – March 1975	£111,632
March 1975 – March 1976	£121,000

Figure 1. BFI Production Board Annual Funds, March 1970-March 1976. Data was taken from the BFI Catalogue: British Film Productions, 1951-1976.²⁵

Operationally, at the start of the decade, the Production Board staff were a very small team of three. There was the production officer (the title was later changed to head of production following the departmental change), the production secretary and the technical officer. There were the BFI Governors who were the governing body that oversaw the activities of the BFI to whom the BFI

²⁴ Dupin, "Sponsor," 171.

²⁵ *There is a discrepancy with the figure for March 1971 to March 1972; in Alan Lovell, ed., *BFI Production Board*, (London: BFI, 1976), 66, Lovell suggests that the figure was £84,078.

director was answerable. Then, there was the Production Board Committee, a separate committee from the Governors. The *modus operandi* of the Production Board Committee Members' term was that they could be in their position (which was voluntary) for a fixed term of three years and it was the Board of Governors who were allegedly responsible for appointing new committee members.²⁶ However, as John Ellis suggests, 'there are usually a dozen chosen by the [h]ead of [p]roduction or by the [d]irector of the BFI on the haphazard basis of personal acquaintance etc', implying a greater level of agency for the head of production and director of the BFI.²⁷ Therefore, they could think strategically about who to appoint and how this might affect potential votes when deciding on what films to fund. It was the Production Board unit staff (the head of production, Nita Bird the production secretary and Cedric Pheasant the technical officer) who saw to the daily running of the Board.²⁸

To return to the changing financial position of the Board, the Experimental Film Fund's operational budget for the entire fourteen-year period of its existence was extremely limited. As Dupin explains, it 'was ... about £30,000, that is, just over £2,000 a year on average'.²⁹ Following Jennie Lee's (the first arts minister) appointment in 1964 after Labour's return to power, the Production Board did indeed see a slight increase in their funding, but it was not until the early 1970s that the Production Board's budget was raised substantially enough to fund low-budget features more seriously.³⁰ The Production Board's annual funds, as shown in Figure 1, demonstrates that between 1970 and 1976 the two most significant budget increases took place in 1971 and 1972. This first rise in funding was mostly due to a large increase in the grant from the Department of Education and Science (DES) and annual income from the Eady Levy, which coincided with the change in key personnel and was secured after a paper was submitted by

²⁶ Dupin, "Sponsor," 122.

²⁷ John Ellis, "Production Board Policies," *Screen* 17, no. 4 (Winter 1976): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/17.4.9>.

²⁸ Nita Bird and Cedric Pheasant were in these roles throughout Hassan's, Gavin's, and Sainsbury's tenure.

²⁹ Dupin, "Sponsor," 58.

³⁰ After a long period of Conservative rule from 1951 to 1964, when the Labour government returned to power, the first Arts Minister, Jennie Lee was appointed which resulted in an increase in governmental support to the BFI. The intention of this increase in funding, however, was for the BFI to develop a Regional Network of Film Theatres, a small part of it was to go towards the education department and only some of it was to go towards the Production Board's fund.

Hassan.³¹ The increase in available funds to the Board was also supported by the inclusion of income from the Vivien Leigh award which had been raised from the prestigious gala screening of the 70mm *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939) on 10 September 1968.³² Two projects that were direct recipients of money earned from the award investment were *Winstanley* and *Loving Memory* (Tony Scott, 1970).³³ It was this first modest increase in annual income in 1971 that allowed the BFI Production Board to embark on a more ambitious programme to fund low budget features as well as shorts.

Hassan claims that it was him who had initiated this change to fund low-budget features.³⁴ Dupin explains, however, before Hassan had come to the Board, the Production Board had already provided some financial support towards low-budget features or featurettes with Don Levy's film *Herostratus* (1967), which was screened both in Britain and internationally, and Tony Scott's *Loving Memory* (1970).³⁵ *Herostratus* had a fairly significant budget of £10,000, however, this finance did not come solely from the Fund as it was a co-production between the Experimental Film Fund, the BBC and former BFI director, James Quinn, who had personally contributed to the budget.³⁶ In terms of the production culture during *Herostratus*, Amnon Buchbinder states that 'its unpaid cast and crew [were] taking public transit to reach shooting locations'.³⁷ Up until this point, the Production Board's record of producing low-budget features was relatively minor; they did not have the experience nor the capacity to help facilitate a more substantial programme of low-budget features and the conditions of production were quite amateur. This is not meant as a criticism of Beresford who was the production officer at the time, who during his tenure 'produced seventy-six shorts,

³¹ This paper was co-written with filmmaker Barney Platts-Mills who was also a governor on the Board; Mamoun Hassan, Interview with Author, 5 March, 2020.

³² It was on Balcon's suggestion that following the event the money raised from the award would be best invested into capital shares, *British Film Institute Productions 1951-1976: A Catalogue of Films Made Under the Auspices of the Experimental Film Funds 1951-1966 and the Production Board-1976*, ed., John Ellis (London: BFI Publishing, 1977), 64.

³³ Dupin, "Sponsor," 119.

³⁴ Dupin, "Sponsor," 187.

³⁵ Dupin, "Sponsor," 119.

³⁶ Michael Brooke, "The BFI Production Board: The Features," *Screen Online*, accessed 9 September 2021, <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1348538/index.html>.

³⁷ Amnon Buchbinder, "You Can Get Out: Herostratus Now," in booklet for *Herostratus*, Dual Format DVD and Blu-ray, directed by Don Levy, 1967 (London: BFI, 2009), 7.

directing, photographing, and editing many of them himself', rather a comment that the Board simply did not have the budget or the experience to embark on this approach seriously.³⁸ After succeeding in securing a further increase in the DES and Eady Levy grants again in 1972, the Production Board had greater financial resources to accelerate their policy of funding low-budget feature films; in this second application, Hassan utilised the award success of Douglas's first instalment of the *Trilogy, My Childhood*, as evidence of the success of the Production Board's new policy to fund low budget features.³⁹

The Production Board's conscious decision to move towards funding a greater number of low-budget features and to begin to reposition its role in British film culture was due to several factors. Firstly, following the withdrawal of American funding in the wider British film industry, as well the reluctance of British majors 'to use promising but untried talent on international pictures because of the high risk involved', funding opportunities were largely absent for filmmakers.⁴⁰ Secondly, in 1970 the Arts Council had put into place a new funding scheme for artists' films or films about art, which encroached on the Production Board's wide brief and previous activity.⁴¹ Thirdly, in the autumn of 1971, Britain's first National Film School was founded; Douglas would go on to teach at the National Film School (NFS) later in 1978.⁴² This coincided with an increase in the teaching of filmmaking and film studies at university level across the country. Whilst at film school, students would have the opportunity to produce short films and, like the Production Board, the film school also had the intention to provide opportunities to nurture domestic filmmaking at a time when this was extremely difficult.⁴³ Finally, in light of the fractured and precarious state of the film industry, making a short film no longer promised a follow-on opportunity for future film production and work. Thus, the Production Board began to reconsider their role as a training

³⁸ Gary Crowdus and Udayan Gupta, "An Aussie in Hollywood: An Interview with Bruce Beresford," *Cinéaste* 12, no. 4, (1983): 20.

³⁹ Hassan, Interview, 5 March 2020.

⁴⁰ Margaret Dickinson and Sarah Street, *Cinema and State: The Film Industry and the British Government 1927-84* (London: BFI Publishing, 1985), 241.

⁴¹ Dupin, "BFI and Film Production," 202.

⁴² The other teaching position that he held later on in his career was at the University of Strathclyde in 1990 as Carnegie visiting fellow in the Department of English Studies, Noble, "A Memoir," 25.

⁴³ See Colin Young, "National Film School," *Sight & Sound*, Winter 1971-1972, 6, for his explanation of the role of the NFS.

ground for filmmakers and what their place was in the film industry.⁴⁴ The newly established film school and their remit helped to cement the idea that the Production Board needed to expand its activities to fund longer films and that they could work informally as the next stage after film school. It was not necessarily the criteria of the Production Board that filmmakers came directly from film school. For example, *Winstanley* received backing and the filmmakers, Andrew Mollo and Kevin Brownlow, had already made a feature film, *It Happened Here* (1966), as well as some television documentaries.⁴⁵ Alternatively, Terence Davies—who originally trained as an accountant and worked as a shipping office clerk in Liverpool before heading to drama school in Coventry—had no filmmaking experience but secured funding from the Production Board for his script *Children* (1976).

To receive funding from the Production Board, filmmakers were expected to submit a script which would then be processed and read by the head of production. If the head of production decided to put the script forward for consideration, it would then be given to the committee members to read prior to a committee meeting where they would then vote on whether they felt the Board should support the project. If the head of production wanted to reject a project, then they would have to explain their reason for the rejection and this would be circulated to the committee, with the opportunity for committee members to request to read the rejected script should they wish.⁴⁶ In terms of workload for the committee members, this was quite substantial for what was a voluntary position. Writing in 1976, David Robinson commented:

[the] voluntary committee that constitutes the board under the chairmanship of Michael Relph has just completed the consideration of 230 film projects... However conscientious the individual members of the board, and however careful the selection system, the operation will be fallible, and an undue measure of responsibility must devolve on the full-time paid secretary of the board. Hence the success and style of the board has been closely linked to the taste and personality of the secretary.⁴⁷

The power of the head of production to propose, or to reject a script was, in some ways, pragmatic; given the sheer number of applications received it permitted a

⁴⁴ Significantly, the school's first director, Colin Young, became a prominent member of the Production Board the following year after its opening, Dupin, "Sponsor," 172.

⁴⁵ David Wilson, "New Directions," *Sight & Sound*, Summer 1972, 143.

⁴⁶ Jeremy Isaacs, "Winning the Pools," *Sight & Sound*, Winter 1980, 22.

⁴⁷ David Robinson, "British and Proud of It: Uncommercial Cinema," *The Times*, 14 May 1976.

streamlining of selection, but it also demonstrates the significant level of agency that the head of production had in shaping the Production Board's support for specific projects, and consequently the overall direction of where resource might be allocated. Oftentimes, the committee meetings were quite a confrontational and heated environment and, for the likes of Beresford and Hassan, they thrived in this space, whereas Gavin 'found the confrontational nature of this relationship utterly frustrating'.⁴⁸ Behind the scenes, there was a process of back lobbying and manipulation to secure votes during the committee meetings.⁴⁹ Philip French—a member of the Production Board Committee on two occasions (1968-1970 and 1973-1975)—commented that both Beresford and Hassan were 'astute politicians in their ways'.⁵⁰ In contrast, Gavin criticised:

[d]uring my period at least, there was no sense in which the [h]ead of [p]roduction actually *made* the policy. He could propose, he could advise and most often he could use his position as secretary to the committee to push for projects which he thought important.⁵¹

Gavin's criticisms of the role were based on how he felt his autonomy was limited. Rather than being able to solely decide on the project, the head of production had to have secured the committee's votes and, as such, the head of production would sometimes have to fight on behalf of a project and be a skilful negotiator to push for the committee's support. Inevitably, those in the role would need to think tactically as to who to put on the committee and which projects to put forward.

With this in mind, it is unsurprising that the Production Board's selection process was not without criticism. Writing in 1976, John Ellis argued that '[t]he selection procedure was, until 1976, the most passive of all modes open to the Board. Scripts or treatments were submitted: no consistent attempt was made to solicit projects from groups or individuals'.⁵² Ellis's position was contentious to some, and his piece provoked negative responses by filmmaker and theorist Peter Wollen and Jane Clarke from the Independent Filmmakers Association

⁴⁸ Dupin, "BFI and Film Production," 206.

⁴⁹ Dupin, "Sponsor," 129.

⁵⁰ Dupin, "Sponsor," 129.

⁵¹ Barrie Gavin, "Barrie Gavin, Head of Production 1974-76," in *British Film Institute Productions 1951-1976: A Catalogue of Films Made Under the Auspices of the Experimental Film Funds 1951-1966 and the Production Board-1976*, ed., John Ellis (London: BFI Publishing, 1977), 132.

⁵² Ellis, "Production Board Policies," 11.

(IFA).⁵³ Wollen and Clarke's comments led Ellis to correct his original statement, stating that Hassan was more active than he had previously conveyed, noting that Hassan sought out and commissioned several feature films during his time as head of production, but that since his departure this practice had ceased.⁵⁴ In her reply, Clarke expressed concern that any strategy or criteria set by the Production Board would either be formulated by the BFI 'rather than the filmmakers it claims to support, or by the Production Board members appointed individually by the BFI'.⁵⁵ This evinces a degree of mistrust towards the Production Board if they were to set a criteria and a slight accusatory tone, implying a lack of involvement with the filmmakers 'it claims to support'.⁵⁶

In Ellis's article on the Board, he notes that the selection procedure had been altered that year (1976) due to 'accountancy procedures (at the Government's insistence) that [all] money is spent during the year for which it is allocated'.⁵⁷ This change was not initiated by the Production Board and had quite a large impact on their decision-making processes as this now meant they would need to have a year's programme selected and confirmed in advance by April each year.⁵⁸ This affected the timing of when the Production Board would agree to support a project or allow for additional funds to be given to a project.⁵⁹ In terms of remit, the Production Board came under much scrutiny from different parts of the industry as some wanted a well-defined policy, whereas others felt that this would do more harm, preventing originality to excel. Dupin argues that '[a]lthough the official remit of this scheme varied significantly over the years, one common denominator of this remit remained the funding of films made outside the framework of the industry'.⁶⁰ Ultimately, the Board intended to provide opportunities for under-represented filmmakers, focusing on those who would be unable to receive support elsewhere, including both experienced and first-time directors. This was evident in the early days of the Experimental Film Fund,

⁵³ Peter Wollen, "Correspondence," *Screen* 18, no. 1 (1 March 1977): 119-120, <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/18.1.119>; Jane Clarke, "Correspondence," *Screen* 18, no. 1 (1 March 1977): 120-22, <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/18.1.120>.

⁵⁴ John Ellis, "Reply," *Screen* 18, no. 1 (1 March 1977): 122-26, <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/18.1.122>.

⁵⁵ Clarke, 120.

⁵⁶ Clarke, 120.

⁵⁷ Ellis, "Production Board Policies," 11.

⁵⁸ Ellis, "Production Board Policies," 11.

⁵⁹ Ellis, "Production Board Policies," 11.

⁶⁰ Dupin, "Sponsor," 10.

supporting projects such as *Together* (1956) by female director Lorenza Mazzetti and *Ten Bob in Winter* (Lloyd Reckord, 1963), the first short film by a Black British filmmaker. Under its new name as the Production Board, it funded the first feature film by a Black British filmmaker, Horace Ové's film *Pressure*, women filmmakers received funding, such as Gael Dohany, Sue Clayton and Laura Mulvey, as well a number of filmmaking cooperatives.⁶¹ Despite working with varying levels of budgets, starkly different ideologies and preferences in film style, the commitment to support under-represented filmmakers or filmmaking styles is apparent during each of the tenures of Hassan, Gavin and Sainsbury.

This section has reflected upon the framework of the Production Board and why they began to move in a new direction to back low-budget features and featurettes. As I have suggested, the agency afforded to the head of production influenced the Board's consideration of an individual project or application, and they had considerable sway over who would be selected as committee members. I will now demonstrate in further detail the changes led by the different heads of production and explore their own individual working methods and approaches to the role. As Douglas's *Trilogy* spanned across three heads of production's tenure, this will establish who these individuals were that he would work with.

Mamoun Hassan, Head of Production, BFI Production Board 1971-1974

Mamoun Hassan took over from Australian filmmaker Bruce Beresford (1966-71) as the BFI production officer in June 1971. An experienced filmmaker who had been working in the industry for ten years, Hassan was aware of the struggles that both experienced and new filmmakers faced in trying to raise financial support at this time.⁶² According to filmmaker, Kevin Brownlow (who Hassan had worked with previously as assistant editor), it was Brownlow who wrote to Stanley Reed, then director of the BFI, recommending that he consider Hassan for the role of production officer.⁶³ Originally, Hassan had been offered the position

⁶¹ *Ten Bob in Winter* is available for free on the BFI Player: <https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-ten-bob-in-winter-1963-online>.

⁶² Dupin, "Sponsor," 184.

⁶³ Kevin Brownlow, *Winstanley: Warts and All* (London & Yorkshire: UKA Press Publishing, 2009), 47.

temporarily for an initial period of six months.⁶⁴ Dupin argues that it was Hassan's 'recommendation to the Board' of Douglas's script that consolidated his permanent position as production officer.⁶⁵ *My Childhood* was the first film made under Hassan's aegis and it was because of its high critical success—receiving the Silver Lion for Best First Feature at Venice Film Festival—that Hassan secured his role.⁶⁶ Indeed, as mentioned earlier, the success of *My Childhood* was utilised in an application made by Hassan for further funding from the DES as an example of the BFI's success in their new direction.⁶⁷ The application was successful, and as Figure 1 (page 49) demonstrates, the Board's annual budget experienced another increase when the budget rose from £86,481 in 1972 to £123,019 in 1973.⁶⁸

Up until this point, the films produced by the Production Board had not received this kind of international recognition or acclaim. Further, the prestige of the film's international festival success meant that the film acted as a beacon, helping to demonstrate the legitimacy of the Production Board's new approach to funding low-budget features or featurettes.⁶⁹ In the popular press of the time, Douglas's first film was recognised as being embedded as a part of the Production Board's policy; David Wilson commented: *My Childhood* is 'a fair example of the Board's [new] policy in practice'.⁷⁰ Therefore, the film was a significant turning point for the Production Board and worked as a marker of the shift in policy to fund low-budget features and featurettes.

Unlike the other heads of production, Gavin (1974-1975) and Sainsbury (1975-1985), Hassan carried out a process of informal 'commissioning'.⁷¹ Although the Board's new policy intended to fund low-budget features, they continued to support shorts.⁷² As I have demonstrated in Figure 2 (see pages 59-

⁶⁴ During an interview with Author on March 5 2020, Hassan stated that this initial period was for six months, however, Dupin, "Sponsor," 184, suggests that it was for three.

⁶⁵ Dupin, "Sponsor," 184.

⁶⁶ Dupin, "BFI and British Independent Cinema in the 1970s," 162.

⁶⁷ Hassan, Interview, 5 March 2020.

⁶⁸ *British Film Institute Productions 1951-1976: A Catalogue of Films Made Under the Auspices of the Experimental Film Funds 1951-1966 and the Production Board-1976*, ed., John Ellis (London: BFI Publishing, 1977), 64.

⁶⁹ Dupin, "BFI and British Independent Cinema in the 1970s," 162.

⁷⁰ Wilson, "New Directions", 143.

⁷¹ Dupin, "Sponsor," 194.

⁷² Dupin, "BFI and Film Production," 204–5.

61), during Hassan's tenure (June 1971-July 1974), thirty-five films were selected by the Production Board Committee.⁷³ Douglas's first two films were both under sixty minutes (*My Childhood* forty-eight minutes and *My Ain Folk* fifty-five minutes, respectively), however, collectively, the *Trilogy* has a feature-length running time of a hundred and seventy-five minutes.

Throughout Hassan's career, he has taken the approach to stay in a job for a maximum of three years. According to Hassan:

I usually left when I thought I knew what was going on, which is about three years. Now you may think this is very arrogant. How could I know? Of course, I didn't know, but I kind of knew... I began to realise what the problems were. The minute you realise what the problems are, you're in trouble. You shouldn't think about the problems, you should think about what you want to do.⁷⁴

As production studies scholars, such as Caldwell, suggest, there is always an element of self-interest, promotion, and 'spin' in the disclosures by producers and craftspeople.⁷⁵ Here, Hassan presents himself as being willing to take risks and that there is fearlessness in his approach which has potential gains of appearing strong and in control. By not committing to any role longer than three years it suggests that he is focused on his aims and intentions. This focus on facilitating and mediating the sources of finance for projects aligns with the responsibility and role of the producer figure. If I refer again to Figure 2, in which I have compiled the films that were selected by the Production Board Committee during Hassan's tenure, films marked with an asterisk (of which there are twenty-two) were still to be completed by the time he left the BFI. Most importantly, however, at least by Hassan guaranteeing these films as being selected, the financing had been committed and allocated for these films to be made, illustrating his continued influence on film culture even after he had left the organisation.

Hassan had significant experience in filmmaking and British film culture. Hassan had worked in the industry as an editor as well as director for the BBC, and he demonstrated his awareness of the wider film industry and the growth in the experimental sector by supporting the appointment of avant-garde filmmaker,

⁷³ Dupin suggests that there were thirty-eight films initiated under Hassan, (see Dupin, "BFI and British Independent Cinema," 163), however, based on the list of films included in the Appendix in Alan Lovell (ed.), *BFI Production Board*, London: BFI, 1976, 62-66 and Hassan's start dates, I conclude that there were thirty-five.

⁷⁴ Hassan, Interview, 5 March 2020.

⁷⁵ Caldwell, *Production Culture*, 3.

Malcolm Le Grice, to join the Production Board's Committee.⁷⁶ Le Grice joined at a time when the committee saw a significant replacement of a number of its members.⁷⁷ New members included: Colin Young, the director of the new National Film School, Margaret Matheson (then Margaret Hare) who was the youngest female British television producer, and former BFI grantee, Jack Gold, who had been part of the Free Cinema movement.⁷⁸ Dupin notes, 'this new generation of members were much younger (without the Chairman, the average age was under 40) and therefore more aware of the latest developments in British cinema than most of their predecessors on the Board'.⁷⁹ What this replacing of the Production Board's committee members demonstrates is a concerted attempt to be more reflective of current British film culture by accounting for and including those who were representative of activities in the wider British film landscape.

The films made during Hassan's tenure such as *Winstanley*, *My Childhood*, *My Ain Folk*, *A Private Enterprise*, have vastly different subject matters, however, they have similar episodic narratives and production conditions. Between 1971 and 1974, the Production Board selected films such as *A Moon and the Alley*, a musical set in Notting Hill boarding house set for demolition, the avant-garde director, Steve Dwoskin's experimental and voyeuristic film, *Central Bazaar*, and Stan Hayward's short animation film *The Mathematician*, demonstrating a much wider variety of filmmaking taking place during Hassan's tenure than is often assumed.

	Film	Director	Select- ion Date	Completi on Date	Runni ng Time
1	<i>My Childhood</i>	Bill Douglas	Jul-71	Jul-72	46
2	<i>Full Circle</i>	Tim Wood	Jul-71	Nov-74	10
3	<i>The Flying Man</i>	Colin Gregg	Aug-71	Jul-72	27
4	<i>Incident</i>	Jonathan Gili	Sep-71	Apr-72	1.15
5	<i>Deadground</i>	Richard Tombleson	Sep-71	Mar-73	14

⁷⁶ Dupin, "BFI and British Independent Cinema in the 1970s," 163.

⁷⁷ Dupin, "Sponsor," 187.

⁷⁸ Dupin, "Sponsor," 187.

Margaret Matheson would go on to produce *Scum* directed by Alan Clarke, 1979, Boyd's Company and *Made in Britain*, directed by Alan Clarke, 1982, Central Independent Television, Dave Rolinson, *Alan Clarke* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 33.

⁷⁹ Dupin, "Sponsor," 187.

6	<i>Timecheck</i>	David Hall	Nov-71	Mar-72	45
7	<i>Windows</i>	John Gibbons	Nov-71	Mar-72	4
8	<i>Portrait of David Hockey</i>	David Pearce	Nov-71	Oct-72	14
9	<i>Skinflicker</i>	Tony Bicat	Mar-72	Oct-72	41
10	<i>Winstanley</i>	Andrew Mollo and Kevin Brownlow	Mar-72	Jul-75	95
11	<i>Enverounen</i> (completion grant)	Simon Mallin and William Diver	Aug-72	Apr-73	15
12	<i>My Ain Folk</i>	Bill Douglas	Sep-72	Nov-73	55
13	* <i>The Mathematician</i>	Stan Hayward	Sep-72	1976	5
14	* <i>Talacre School Project</i>	Inter-Action	Dec-73	1976	90
15	<i>Home and Away</i>	Michael Alexander	Nov-72	May-74	31
16	* <i>A Private Enterprise</i>	Peter Smith	Nov-72	Dec-74	76
17	* <i>Central Bazaar</i>	Steve Dwoskin	Jul-73	Mar-76	157
18	* <i>The Walker</i>	Stephen Weatherill	Jan-73	Jun-74	8
19	* <i>Solarflares Burn for You</i>	Arther Johns	Mar-73	Oct-74	8
20	* <i>L'Anée '71</i> (completion grant)	Giovanni Gnechchi-Ruscione	Mar-73	Feb-75	17
21	* <i>Requiem for a Village</i>	David Gladwell	Jun-73	Jul-74	70
22	* <i>Gundown</i> (completion grant)	Philip King	Jul-73	Dec-73	17
23	* <i>Dialogue</i>	Chris Majka	Jul-73	Aug-74	17
24	* <i>Brown Ale With Gertie</i>	Alan Brown	Jul-73	May-74	32
25	* <i>Moon over the Alley</i>	Joseph Despin and William Dumaresq	Oct-73	Nov-74	107
26	* <i>After Eight</i>	William Raban	Dec-73	Feb-76	30
27	* <i>The Racer</i>	Tony Garner	Feb-74	Sep-75	40
28	* <i>Fly a Flag for Poplar</i> (completion grant)	Liberation Films	Feb-74	Sep-75	79
29	* <i>Children</i>	Terence Davies	Feb-74	Apr-76	46
30	* <i>Enemy</i>	Tony Bagley	Feb-74	Sep-75	65
31	* <i>Dinosaur</i>	Tony Bicat	Feb-74	Apr-75	42
32	* <i>Pressure</i>	Horace Ove	Jul-74	Oct-75	120

33		Ken McMullen and Chris Rodriguez	Jul-74	Jan-76	90
	* <i>Resistance</i>				
34		Gael Smith/Dohany	Jul-74	1976/1979	2x50
	* <i>KME</i>				
35		Bill Douglas	Jul-74	1978	70
	* <i>My Way Home</i>				

Figure 2. Films selected by the BFI Production Board during Hassan's tenure. Data compiled using Lovell, BFI Production Board, and Hassan's and Gavin's start and end dates in the role of head of production. Films marked with * were selected by the Committee during Hassan's tenure, however, they were not completed until after he had left the role, under Gavin or Sainsbury.

During Hassan's two and half years at the Production Board, he helped to secure greater financial input from the government and had brought greater professionalisation operationally, such as paying crew members. Hassan claimed:

it was I who actually instituted the practice of paying people. Until that moment, the BFI had no money to pay people, so they paid expenses. After we got the tremendous amount of money which came in very soon after *My Childhood* was made, which changed our policy when we went into feature film production, I said to the Board that we had to pay people, that we couldn't go on with the old ways because it was a completely different activity.⁸⁰

The pay was still low, but it meant that the Production Board's new policy could function, especially in light of the helpful 'support of the film-makers' unions, who relax[ed] their usual crewing requirements in favour of Board films'.⁸¹ Under Hassan's leadership, the Production Board transformed from a minor filmmaking unit of the BFI that was viewed as a 'training ground' for inexperienced filmmakers, to a noticeably more professionalised department offering to fund both tyro and experienced directors.

Hassan encouraged and tried to cultivate a collaborative production culture at the BFI. Many filmmakers worked on each other's films, including Tony Bicât who worked as associate producer on *My Ain Folk*; Gale Tattersall and Kevin Brownlow worked for Douglas, and Douglas worked as a screenwriter for

⁸⁰ Mamoun Hassan, Interview with Andrew Noble, BDC 1/XAD/4/2, BDCM.

⁸¹ Robinson, "British and Proud".

Michael Alexander's film *Home and Away* (1974).⁸² In so doing, Hassan created a mini-studio of sorts, based in Lower Marsh Street near Waterloo.⁸³ This 'studio' fostered a particular kind of production culture that encouraged a sharing of resources, where filmmakers and crew were working together and giving input on each other's films. When recalling this working environment, Hassan described it as a 'small oasis'.⁸⁴ More broadly, the 1970s witnessed the closure of some of Britain's biggest studios; studios that had once employed a large permanent crew and staff were no longer employed. Many British studios were turning to a 'four walls' system whereby a production company rents the space and separately contracts freelance staff, crew, and any additional facilities that may be required. Many studios saw a slimming down of their actual physical space. Shepperton Studios, for example, was 'cut down to eight stages on a far smaller lot'.⁸⁵ As such, the industry's workforce was progressively becoming freelance and there was an increased casualisation of labour. The shifting of business practices influenced and shaped the changing of production cultures of this time. In contrast, what was taking place at the Production Board was a sharing of expertise and a commitment to the films they were creating, not an increasing individualisation of labour or expertise. In light of the wider context and changes in the workforce's environment, what Hassan created during his time at the Production Board appears even more significant: an integrated mini studio. It could be argued, then, that through this sharing of resources between mostly young or inexperienced filmmakers, the Board did in fact continue its role as a sort of training ground for filmmakers, providing an opportunity to learn from one another, to gain additional experience and to make contacts.

One of the prerogatives of being in the role of head of production was that they were given the agency to 'spend small sums of money on behalf of the

⁸² Dupin, "Sponsor," 193; David Wilson, "Images of Britain," *Sight & Sound*, Spring 1974, 86.

⁸³ Hassan was offered an office space in the BFI offices in Dean Street; however, he refused this space and chose to continue staying based at Lower Marsh Street, Hassan, Interview, 5 March 2020.

⁸⁴ Hassan, Interview with Author, 27 March 2020.

⁸⁵ Kiri Bloom Walden, *British Film Studios* (Oxford: Shire Publications, 2013), 71. Many American directors came over to shoot their films in British studios during this time. For example, *Star Wars* (dir. George Lucas, 1977), *Star Wars: Episode V – The Empire Strikes Back* (dir. Irvin Kershner, 1980), *Star Wars: Episode VI – Return of the Jedi* (dir. Richard Marquand, 1983), *2001: A Space Odyssey* (dir. Stanley Kubrick, 1968) and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (dir. Steven Spielberg, 1981) were all filmed at Elstree Studios.

Board' prior to a committee meeting.⁸⁶ Dupin explains that they could authorise the funds for a test sequence to be carried out or other work in support of a project before being submitted for selection, 'or to help a filmmaker complete his film'.⁸⁷ Hassan used this privilege to fund the test sequence for Davies's *Children* in advance of him submitting the script to the committee.⁸⁸ It was after carrying out this test sequence that Davies was granted financial support for the project. This ability to work around policy was similarly demonstrated in the Production Board's arrangement with the unions. The agreement was such that after Hassan had approved a token sum of a hundred pounds towards Mike Leigh's *Bleak Moments* (1971),⁸⁹ the film qualified as a Production Board film so it could escape the normal union rules for mainstream film production.⁹⁰ This is demonstrative of Hassan's strategic and considered approach, looking for ways to best support low-budget feature filmmakers, in as many ways as possible, despite having very limited means to do so.

During Hassan's tenure, the Production Board expanded its activities and Douglas's *Trilogy* was a crucial example of this change in direction. Douglas made both *My Childhood* and *My Ain Folk* whilst Hassan was at the BFI. Hassan was a key figure in the British film industry in the 1970s and the 1980s, and after leaving the BFI he would eventually move to the National Film Finance Corporation (NFFC) at the end of the decade. As the NFFC were one of the funders for *Comrades*, Hassan's involvement will be explored in more depth in Chapter Four of this thesis, but while at the NFFC Hassan continued to direct his support to filmmakers who would otherwise struggle to secure funding elsewhere. Hassan was a crucial influence in adjusting the NFFC's remit of only supporting films on a commercial basis. This was demonstrated by Hassan securing NFFC financial backing for films such as *Babylon* (Franco Rosso, 1980), set in Brixton, the film is a subcultural snapshot of the reggae music scene in Thatcherite Britain;

⁸⁶ Dupin, "Sponsor," 130.

⁸⁷ Dupin, "Sponsor," 130.

⁸⁸ Hassan, Interview, 5 March 2020.

⁸⁹ Christopher Meir, "The Industry and/of the Auteur: Producing and Marketing Mike Leigh," in *Devised and Directed by Mike Leigh*, eds., Bryan Cardinale-Powell and Marc DiPaolo (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 17, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781628928662.ch-001>.

⁹⁰ Dupin, "Sponsor," 192–93.

Gregory's Girl (Bill Forsyth, 1981) which had no major stars, and Douglas's *Comrades*.

Barrie Gavin, Head of Production, BFI Production Board 1974-1975

Following Hassan's resignation in 1974, there was another shift in the direction of support by the Production Board. It was at this juncture that the Production Board shifted from supporting a majority of narrative features to social and political documentaries. Charles Rees—assistant producer of *My Ain Folk* and editor of *A Private Enterprise* (Peter Smith, 1974)—briefly stepped in and oversaw the BFI's production activities, but it was Gavin who was Hassan's official replacement as head of production.

Gavin, who had worked as a producer at the BBC and had a background in arts programmes and documentaries, was at the BFI for a short term of just eighteen months, which has often led his contribution to be overlooked. During this short time, however, he achieved a great deal. As mentioned, Figure 2 (pages 59-61) shows that when Gavin took on the role as head of production, there was a backlog of twenty-two films that had been selected by the committee under his predecessor, Hassan. In addition, as Dupin notes, there were also a further two projects that had been initiated by Beresford four years earlier that were still to be completed.⁹¹ This supports my earlier notion that Hassan may not have thought of the longevity of his aims and intentions, rather, his efforts were to get films selected by the committee and the funding confirmed for a project. Nonetheless, Figure 2 conveys the sheer size of the workload that greeted Gavin when he took up the role as head of production.

One of the projects that Gavin did back was the controversial documentary *Juvenile Liaison* (Nick Broomfield and Joan Churchill, 1976). Following police pressure—due to the unflattering portrayal of the Yorkshire police juvenile division shown in the film—the BFI Governors banned the film from public screenings. The documentary led the Production Board and Governors to fallout and, following this, there was a heated struggle and much discussion concerning

⁹¹ Dupin, "Sponsor," 217–18.

the level of independence that the Production Board should be afforded. Nowell-Smith explains:

[Keith] Lucas was trying to reassert BFI control over the Production Board and Peter Sainsbury, as Head of the Production Department, was engaged in a separate struggle to reduce the Board's grip on project selection. In the battle over film production, Sainsbury was to get his way and so to some extent was Lucas. The Board retained its independence as final arbiter of which projects were to be supported, but in other respects its powers were much reduced. Were there to be another *Juvenile Liaison* affair, it would not be able to defy the BFI.⁹²

The controversy of the film and the adverse publicity it brought to the Production Board led to a review of its autonomy and its relationship with the Governing Committee. It was under Gavin that the Production Board fostered a brief period of political radicalism 'when the Board also funded films by London Women's Film Group, Cinema Action and the Berwick Street Collective'.⁹³ Despite being a state-funded organisation, under Gavin and later Sainsbury, the Production Board were opening up to supporting oppositional and alternative forms of filmmaking, even if, in the case of *Juvenile Liaison*, it meant that it came to blows with another state organisation: the police.⁹⁴ Despite Gavin's criticisms of the battles that he faced in the role of head of production with the committee that I discussed earlier, evidently he was able to successfully obtain support for radical documentaries and filmmaking cooperatives. This was a clear shift from the filmmaking output under Hassan directed towards narrative features, or with one director as the applicant.

Dupin notes that the Production Board's move to a majority of documentary filmmaking is also likely to have been an economic consideration.⁹⁵ Indeed, by shifting the focus to the documentary genre, it would mean smaller crews which in turn would mean lower labour costs.⁹⁶ The cost to produce low-budget feature films was increasing, and although the Board's annual budget remained fairly constant (see Figure 1, page 49), it became increasingly difficult

⁹² Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "The 1970s," in *The British Film Institute, the Government and Film Culture, 1933-2000*, ed. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Christophe Dupin (Manchester University Press, 2012), 173–74.

⁹³ Danny Birchall, "Occupy! (1976)," *Screen Online*, accessed 18 May 2020, <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1379623/index.html>.

⁹⁴ Ellis, "Reply," 125.

⁹⁵ Dupin, "BFI and British Independent Cinema in the 1970s," 164.

⁹⁶ Ellis, "Production Board Policies," 17.

to fund low-budget features due to rising rates of inflation.⁹⁷ Furthermore, Gavin still had to continue the completion of the backlog of films left by his predecessors which would have impacted the resources and capacity of the team. With regards to our understanding of production cultures of the period and the withdrawal of American funds which led to an increasing individualisation and flexibilisation of labour in British studios, taking an approach to keep production costs down would have been appealing to the BFI. As a public-funded body, there is a need for some degree of measurable success to sustain its governmental financial support, and by keeping costs down this would provide evidence of a considered economic approach. This demonstrates how the funding available to the Production Board during the mid-1970s impacted not only the genre of filmmaking and direction of support, but it also affected production cultures as smaller more intimate crews were required for this style of filmmaking. In contrast, although still relatively small for the length of the films, the crews for Douglas's productions grew with each consecutive film.⁹⁸

Gavin continued to work with the same team members who had worked under Hassan (Bird and Pheasant), however, he also appointed a production supervisor, Peter Sainsbury.

Peter Sainsbury, Head of Production, BFI Production Board 1975-1985

Following Gavin's resignation, Sainsbury took over his role as head of production in January 1976. After Sainsbury's appointment, the team grew even further; there was a new deputy head/productions officer, Keith Griffith, and administrative assistant Angela Astor. Later, following criticisms of the poor distribution of the Production Board films (an aspect I will examine in much greater detail in Chapter Three), Hilary Thompson was appointed to the role of films promotions officer, who later hired an assistant, Carole Myer in 1977.

In contrast to Hassan and Gavin, Sainsbury's initial approach was to make a larger quantity of short films and to rein in 'feature-film production in favour of

⁹⁷ Dupin, "BFI and British Independent Cinema in the 1970s," 169.

⁹⁸ See Figure 5, pages 91-92, in Chapter Two which offers a breakdown of numbers of crews.

avant-garde experiment and radical documentary'.⁹⁹ Under Gavin's leadership, Sainsbury had witnessed a shift to political radicalism with the Production Board supporting films by far-left collectives and feminist film cooperatives.¹⁰⁰ Sainsbury reined in feature-film production even further than Gavin in favour of more avant-garde experimental filmmaking. James Caterer argues, 'Sainsbury was part of a generation of politicised film policy-makers, whose manifesto of "independent cinema" was influenced by the radical cultural theory of academic discourse and the artistic avant-garde'.¹⁰¹ The *Trilogy* did not fit with the direction that Gavin or Sainsbury (at this point) wished to take the Production Board. For example, the only narrative feature released during Gavin's tenure was Ové's *Pressure*, and that had originally been backed by Hassan.¹⁰² At this point, Douglas had made *My Childhood* and *My Ain Folk* and still had the final part of the *Trilogy* to complete. The Board's output had formally shifted to more experimental and ideologically challenging films and Douglas's films were clearly at odds with the other films that the Board were supporting under Sainsbury such as *A Walk Through H*, *Riddles of the Sphinx* (Peter Wollen and Laura Mulvey, 1979), *Nocturna Artificialia* (Stephen Quay and Timothy Quay, 1979) and *The Song of the Shirt* (Susan Clayton, 1979); Sainsbury had an interest in 'cinematic formalism and ...Marxist ideology'.¹⁰³

By the end of the decade, the Board had moved back towards supporting low-budget features and even began full-scale theatrical releases. Sainsbury himself suggests that this was a self-conscious attempt 'to establish a British Art Cinema based on narrative feature forms'.¹⁰⁴ This shift was evident in 'a re-engagement with narrative towards the end of the decade', most notably with Chris Petit's *Radio On* (1979), a co-production with German filmmaker Wim Wenders's production company: Road Movies Filmproduktion which was released the following year after Douglas's film *My Way Home*.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "Diamonds are Forever," *Sight & Sound*, 18:10, October 2008.

¹⁰⁰ See Appendix 1, in Lovell, *BFI Production Board*, 65.

¹⁰¹ James Caterer, *The People's Pictures: National Lottery Funding and British Cinema* (Cambridge: Scholars Publishing, 2011), 27.

¹⁰² Hassan, Interview, 5 March 2020.

¹⁰³ Noble, "Making," 151.

¹⁰⁴ Sainsbury, "Independent British Filmmaking," 11.

¹⁰⁵ Hill, "British Art Cinema in the 1980s," 187.

Radio On had a budget of £80,000 and Wenders' production company agreed to provide half of the budget. For further information about the film, see Brian Hoyle,

Throughout the 1970s one of the recurring criticisms the Board faced was the lack of guidelines for applicants. Sainsbury openly expressed that he supported the idea of introducing an explicit policy.¹⁰⁶ This issue was debated in the academic journal *Screen* at the time.¹⁰⁷ Although implementing a specific criteria or policy would not have had a direct effect on Douglas as his funding had already been secured for his final film in July 1974, it is significant that the criticisms that the Production Board faced during this period concerned their direction of funding and lack of clear, specific criteria given to applicants, especially as Douglas's films were so at odds with the rest of their output.

My Childhood

By discussing the Production Board's changing role in British film culture and the different heads of production that worked there across the 1970s, it is now possible to use this as a foundation for understanding how Douglas worked within this framework, the differing working relationships, and the impact the approaches by key personnel at the Board had on the films' productions. As I have already highlighted, not only did Douglas's *Trilogy* receive unparalleled continuous financial support from the Board, but it proved a turning point for the Board stylistically and formally. The film cemented the Production Board's initial approach to fund longer films at the beginning of the 1970s during Hassan's tenure.

Douglas graduated as a mature student at the age of thirty-six from the London Film School (LFS) in 1970 with a first-class honours degree. Andrew Noble suggests that whilst he was at film school he wrote the script, *Jamie*. However, Douglas had in fact met with the filmmaker, Lindsay Anderson, who would become his friend and mentor, or as Peter Jewell referred to him, '[Bill's]

"Radio On and British Art Cinema," *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 6, no. 3 (2009): 411, <https://doi.org/10.3366/E1743452109001101>.

¹⁰⁶ Peter Sainsbury, "Funding Bodies and Funding Procedures in Relation to Independent Film-making," in *BFI Production Board*, ed., Alan Lovell, (London: BFI, 1976), 9.

¹⁰⁷ Ellis, "Production Board Policies"; Ellis, "Reply"; Clarke, "Correspondence"; Wollen, "Correspondence".

father-confessor',¹⁰⁸ in September 1968 to discuss the script.¹⁰⁹ Initially, Douglas sought financial support for the project from the Films of Scotland Committee [FSC] in 1971, however, the committee rejected it in June 1971.¹¹⁰ In the rejection letter, the director of the FSC, Henry Forsyth Hardy, commented that although he had read the script with great interest, the committee's main concerns were 'to project a forward-looking country—although this is no criticism of the film as a film—this would not do so'.¹¹¹ The FSC's priority at this time was the mode in which Scotland was portrayed. Shortly before, the Scottish Tourist Board had been founded in 1969 and this led to a concerted effort to launch tourism as a major industry with an emphasis on heritage, images of rural and picturesque highlands and traditional industries.¹¹² In light of this, the FSC's funding centred on the genre of documentary, particularly relating to rural themes, with films released such as *Islands of the West* (1972), *Gardens by the Sea* (1973) *A Pride of Islands* (1973), *Travelpass* (1973) and *Clydescope* (1974) or urban spaces, like *Walkabout Edinburgh* (1970) and *Glasgow 1980* (1971).¹¹³ In stark contrast, Douglas's deeply personal film depicts his harrowing and impoverished childhood and is set during the last days of World War II.

Following this rejection, Douglas then sought financial support from the Production Board and submitted his application at a crucial time of change, when

¹⁰⁸ Peter Jewell's Memoirs of Bill Douglas, Chapter Two "Comrades-in-Waiting," in *Long-Awaited Comrades*, 1, BDC 1/COM/1/4, BDCM (hereafter cited as Jewell, "Comrades-in-Waiting, BDC 1/COM/1/4).

¹⁰⁹ Noble, "Memoir," 126.

In Peter Jewell, Chapter "Willie," Unpublished Biography on Bill Douglas, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1, BDCM (hereafter cited as Jewell, "Willie," BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1), he says that the script was based on an earlier short story Douglas wrote two years prior to film school titled 'Return Journey' in reference to Dylan Thomas' thirty-minute radio piece *Return Journey to Swansea*, broadcast by the BBC in 1947. (For further information see Nerys Williams, "Dylan Thomas's 'Return Journey to Swansea': A Collaborative Radio Poetic." *Modernist Cultures* 14, no. 1 (n.d.): 88–10).

During a discussion with Jewell in July 2021, he tracked down a postcard from Anderson about his first meeting with Douglas where they discussed the script, this was dated 13 September 1968. Jewell has since donated the postcard to the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum, see Postcard from Lindsay Anderson to Bill Douglas, 13 September 1963, BDC 1/TRI/1/1, BDCM.

¹¹⁰ Letter from H. Forsyth Hardy, Director, Films of Scotland, to Bill Douglas, 25 June 1971, BDC 1/TRI/1/1, BDCM (hereafter cited as H. Forsyth Hardy to Douglas, BDC 1/TRI/1/1).

¹¹¹ H. Forsyth Hardy to Douglas, BDC 1/TRI/1/1.

¹¹² Petrie, *Screening Scotland*, 110.

¹¹³ *Islands of the West* (1973) was directed by Bill Forsyth who would go on to receive the first feature film funding that was given by Films of Scotland Committee. See Petrie, *Screening Scotland*, 153-158 for his discussion of Bill Forsyth.

Beresford was still the production officer, but Hassan was shortly to join in June 1971. In Hassan's obituary to Douglas, he recalls that on finding the script, Beresford had left 'two piles of scripts on the desk: one, very tall of rejects and one, very small of possible. On top of that pile was a script by Bill Douglas'.¹¹⁴ Noble states that 'Douglas thought his script had been rejected by Beresford'.¹¹⁵ When interviewed in 2020, Hassan claimed that he did not realise at the time of writing Douglas's obituary (1991) that the script had already been turned down by Beresford.¹¹⁶ Hassan's reframing of events here could be interpreted as reflecting Caldwell's 'spin' on his testimony, working to further present himself as an integral figure in Douglas's career. As the accounts differ, it remains unclear which pile the script was found on, but as Noble notes, 'what is certain is that Mamoun Hassan discovered it among a pile on the desk'.¹¹⁷ After reading the first few pages of the script, Hassan felt that he did not need to go beyond the first ten pages to know what it was going to be because he could see images so clearly.¹¹⁸

When it came to the committee meeting where the Production Board were to vote on Douglas's project, after the script had been circulated, Hassan recalls that several committee members said that they did not like the script.¹¹⁹ Hassan recollects that Balcon, then chairman of the Production Board, challenged Hassan as to if he would 'put [his] neck on the block for this?'¹²⁰ Hassan agreed and Balcon confirmed the Board's award of the money.¹²¹ In Hassan's account, he questioned the democracy of this process, with which Balcon responded:

Mamoun, no no. They were not elected, they were *selected*. We selected them, the Governing Board and the Production Board. We selected them. And you'll have a say in selecting the future members. ... I go with the strongest feeling. And if the strongest feeling is against it and [although] there were no's, ... they were sort of mild no's. Yours was the strongest feeling of yes. So, I go with the strongest feeling.¹²²

In the absence of minutes, these accounts and recollections are fascinating, but the different accounts and emotive recollections are challenging to interpret. As

¹¹⁴ Mamoun Hassan, "His Ain Man," *Sight & Sound*, 1 November 1991, 22.

¹¹⁵ Noble, "Making," 126–27.

¹¹⁶ Hassan, Interview, 5 March 2020.

¹¹⁷ Noble, "Making," 126–27.

¹¹⁸ Hassan, Interview with Author, 5 March 2020. See also Hassan "His Ain Man" for a description of Hassan's first interaction with the script.

¹¹⁹ Hassan, Interview, 5 March 2020.

¹²⁰ Hassan, Interview, 5 March 2020.

¹²¹ Hassan, Interview, 5 March 2020.

¹²² Hassan, Interview, 5 March 2020.

Caldwell argues, there are dangers to using knowledge obtained through industrial documentation or interviews because ‘knowledge is *a/ways* managed; because spin and narrative define and couch any industrial disclosure’,¹²³ Hassan presents himself here as somewhat of a crusader. Hassan has to convey his feelings outwardly, vocally campaigning on a project’s behalf to help secure funding for a project that he felt to be worthy of an investment. This discussion demonstrates the level of autonomy that was available to the head of production, being able to tactfully select certain individuals to become future committee members. In addition, it is also indicative of the culture of the committee meetings I previously alluded to, that the head of production had to fight, advocate and champion films that they felt the Production Board should select.

Hassan was keen to support *My Childhood* because he was fearful that Douglas would not be able to find backing elsewhere in the industry.¹²⁴ In Hassan’s letter to Douglas confirming that his application for *My Childhood* was successful, he stated: ‘[y]ou’ll make an important film. I know it’.¹²⁵ In light of what was happening in the wider industry—the withdrawal of American funding and a more risk-averse stance toward new filmmakers that saw many filmmakers turn to television, like Ken Loach, Stephen Frears, Mike Leigh and Alan Clarke, or to move across the Atlantic such as Ridley Scott and Alan Parker—Hassan’s concern regarding Douglas being able to secure funding elsewhere is justified.¹²⁶ The application that Douglas submitted to the Production Board Committee meeting, dated 14 July, 1971, shows that he was applying for £3,650 and proposed that the film would be sixty minutes long, filmed in colour, and on 16mm.¹²⁷ Moreover, the proposal states that Douglas’s graduation film, *Come Dancing*, would be shown at the meeting, where the committee would then discuss and consider whether to fund *Jamie* (as the film was still called on the application form).¹²⁸ With regards to the timeline of the film being accepted, Hassan had joined the BFI in June 1971 and by 15 July, Douglas had received a confirmation from Hassan that the committee had passed the script and budget

¹²³ Caldwell, *Production Culture*, 2.

¹²⁴ Hassan, Interview, 5 March 2020.

¹²⁵ Letter from Mamoun Hassan to Bill Douglas, 15 July 1971, BDC 1/TRI/1/1, BDCM (hereafter cited as Hassan, 15 July 1971, BDCM).

¹²⁶ Dickinson and Street, *Cinema and State*, 241.

¹²⁷ Bill Douglas’ application for the BFI Production Board, *Jamie*, 14 July 1971, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas, Application, BDC 1/TRI/1/1).

¹²⁸ Douglas, Application, BDC 1/TRI/1/1.

of £3,000 and that Douglas would receive the maximum grant available to filmmakers of £150.¹²⁹ Fresh out of film school and having already been rejected by the FSC, Hassan's decision to back Douglas evinces the Production Board's policy to foster those who would otherwise not be able to find support.

Douglas's application to the Production Board provides crucial insight into what was given to the volunteer committee members when deliberating whether they should give a film funding or not. Although the script would have been available to committee members and circulated in advance of the meeting for their consideration, the document at the meeting itself is only short and is three pages in length. It is unsurprising that the document is so short in light of the number of applications that they would need to review. The document includes an extremely brief explanation of production details simply noting that it will be filmed on 16mm, in colour, will be sixty minutes long and has an estimated cost of £3650.¹³⁰ A short description as to who Douglas is follows: 'Bill Douglas was a student at the London Film School, where he made three films', followed by a synopsis of the film and five very short script extracts.¹³¹ The length of this document combined with the little details the committee had about Douglas—apart from seeing his film *Come Dancing* on their consideration—shows that the committee members had very little to make their decision on. It was then the head of production who would almost work as a stand-in for the applicant to advocate that they should receive funding for the project.

Significantly, this short treatment-like document includes little detail about the logistics of production. For example, it does not include a breakdown detailing the budget or location, rather its focus is on the film's narrative. The document includes the final scene of the film with a greater degree of ambiguity than the final film text shows. In the document, Douglas describes it as the following:

Jimmy hoists himself onto the bridge.

The train passes under the bridge hiding Jimmy in its steam. The steam disperses leaving the bridge empty.

The wagons drift away all sound and sway towards the horizon.¹³²

¹²⁹ Hassan, 15 July 1971, BDCM

¹³⁰ Douglas, Application, BDC 1/TRI/1/1.

¹³¹ Douglas, Application, BDC 1/TRI/1/1.

¹³² Douglas, Application, BDC 1/TRI/1/1.

In this creative treatment for the closure of the film, Douglas designs a level of ambiguity into his writing, creating uncertainty as to whether Jamie (or rather Jimmy at this stage) does commit suicide as it does not include details of showing Jimmy sitting atop a train wagon; it would be left up in the air for the audience to interpret whether he had survived or not. In contrast, in the same application, Douglas had written in the synopsis of the film, 'Jamie runs off, boards a train and, like Helmuth leaves the place for good', which is much clearer, optimistic, and conventional.¹³³ In an early script draft of *My Childhood*, the moment of relief for the audience in the reveal that Jamie has survived the jump is included:

Jamie hoists himself over the bridge.

When the train passes under he jumps.

He lands on a mound of coal. He forces himself up for air.

The wagons drift away all sound and sway towards the horison [sic].¹³⁴

The difference in endings show that Douglas was unsure how he should end the film, whether to have a fairly conventional and happy ending or to leave it up to the audience to interpret. It also demonstrates his ability to design either ending. The fact that there are both types included on the same application document is further indicative of his indecision regarding the matter. This uncertainty continued as there were further negotiations and deliberations regarding the filming of this final scene with the film crew during principal photography of *My Childhood*, which I will return to and expand on in Chapter Two.

Although the Production Board intended to support non-commercial filmmaking, in terms of the creative freedom filmmakers had, stating on the front of the application that their function was to 'enable young film-makers to begin their careers and to offer creative freedom to both professionals and non-professionals', the materials evince some commercial pressures directed by personnel at the BFI.¹³⁵ For example, originally Hassan wanted the *Trilogy* to be filmed in colour, so much so that Noble suggests that it was a condition of the Production Board to give the funding towards the project.¹³⁶ When explaining the requirements of the project to a prospective cinematographer, Douglas stated: 'I

¹³³ Douglas, Application, BDC 1/TRI/1/1.

¹³⁴ Bill Douglas, Early Script of 'My Childhood', BDC 1/TRI/1/1, BDCM.

¹³⁵ British Film Institute, Application for a Film Making grant from the British Film Institute Board, BDC 1/TRI/1/1.

¹³⁶ Noble, "Memoir," 127.

originally felt the film in black and white. But colour it has to be. Still, I don't see this as a drawback. In contrast to the descending gloom of the theme, colour will supply its own special irony'.¹³⁷ Although Douglas acknowledges the potential aesthetic advantage of this juxtaposition between colour and theme, the way he says that it 'has to be' in colour suggests that he felt he had little choice at this point to assert his preference. It is possible to infer that at this very early stage in his first project and career, as well as the lack of available funding elsewhere, he may have been reluctant to be too forceful or combative. In an attempt to help secure support from the committee, it is possible that Hassan influenced Douglas to state that the film would be in colour on his application. Fortunately, when the rushes came in, the decision was made that the film should be in black and white.¹³⁸ In an interview, Hassan suggests that it was after seeing these rushes he knew it had to be in black and white.¹³⁹ Noble argues that this decision was made 'in the name of cheapness' and there would certainly have been a financial benefit to filming in black and white.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, Hassan's move to print in 'panchromatic black and white' cannot necessarily be assumed to be exclusively due to aesthetic and stylistic reasons which he suggests was the motive behind this decision, but also because of the financial benefit.¹⁴¹ The fact that *My Childhood* was filmed on 16mm could be interpreted as a tentative approach to the new initiative to fund low-budget features and featurettes at this early stage as well as to Douglas who was an unknown filmmaker at this point. This choice of format was not unusual as collectively these early Production Board films were often on 16mm film because it was far cheaper than 35mm. Unfortunately, this factor undoubtedly contributed to their poor distribution and will be examined in greater detail in Chapter Three. Douglas's further films with the Production Board (*My Ain Folk* and *My Way Home*), were both filmed on 35mm which demonstrates greater confidence in their reach.

¹³⁷ Letter from Bill Douglas to George Bekes, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/1, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas to Bekes, BDC 1/TRI/1/1).

¹³⁸ Noble, "Making," 127.

¹³⁹ Hassan, Interview, 5 March 2020.

¹⁴⁰ Noble, "A Memoir," 127.

¹⁴¹ Victoria Wegg-Prosser, "MY CHILDHOOD," *Monthly Film Bulletin* 39, 456 (1972): 168.

As head of production, it was Hassan's responsibility to appoint crew for both *My Childhood* and *My Ain Folk*, and later it fell to Sainsbury to find the crew for *My Way Home*. Regarding *My Childhood*, Douglas explains:

from the outset my choice of cameraman was limited by the budget and I found myself out of contact with the best talent available and all too easily with students. I explained my situation to Mamoon [*sic*] who very kindly stepped in to help. Soon, I found myself in touch with [Chris] Menges, [Peter] Sushitsky [*sic*] and Laszly [*sic*] [Kovács] and in competition with features. Nothing came of them.¹⁴²

As this was during an early stage of Douglas's career, Douglas may have needed assistance carrying out this task as he was unfamiliar with a reliable crew. Furthermore, because of budgetary constraints, Douglas suggests that he was limited to student talent rather than professional or experienced. Although the Production Board did have an arrangement with the unions which meant that they were able to pay lower rates, the total budget of £3,000 (with a 10% contingency and 5% equipment maintenance) was still a very small budget to work with.¹⁴³ The *Trilogy*, as well as the other narrative features made under Hassan, were all characterised by semi-professional conditions.¹⁴⁴

In terms of payment and the initial agreement made, the following structure was in place:

[f]rom 1970, the system that had operated was that the film-maker was given an option of receiving no payment whilst making the film, but receiving 25% of the revenue until the costs had been recovered by the fund, and thereafter 50% of the revenue. The other option was to be paid up to £150 during the making of the film and then 25% of the revenue, and of profits after costs had been recovered.¹⁴⁵

Douglas agreed to the latter and, as such, he received a £150 maintenance grant for *My Childhood*—in today's equivalent this would have been £2,168.25—and then an additional 25 per cent of the revenue and the profits once the costs had been recovered by the BFI.¹⁴⁶ Essentially, the first option offered by the BFI was a deferral deal in that Douglas would have had to agree to receive no payment

¹⁴² Douglas to Bekes, BDC 1/TRI/1/1.

¹⁴³ Budget Breakdown for *My Childhood*, BDC 1/TRI/1/1, BDCM (hereafter cited as Budget Breakdown for *My Childhood*).

¹⁴⁴ Dupin, "BFI and Film Production," 204–5.

¹⁴⁵ *British Film Institute Productions 1951-1976*, 64.

¹⁴⁶ Based on figure taken from the *Bank of England* inflation calculator, *Bank of England*, accessed 3 March 2021, <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>, inflation averaged 5.5% a year.

until costs had been recovered, with the incentive of a greater proportion of 50 per cent revenue when this had been achieved. It is understandable why a filmmaker would opt for the guaranteed payment of the £150 upfront rather than having to wait on the possibility of receiving more. Not only were these films unlikely to be commercially successful, but it was extremely improbable that they would recover their costs for a considerable period, if at all. As a result of the BFI's shift in policy to fund feature film production, the terms regarding the payment of crew had to change, before this, the BFI had only paid expenses.¹⁴⁷ As evinced in the draft budget for *My Childhood*, the budget accounted for paying the crew: Bob Withey (sound), Iain Smith (producer), Hasnath Majumdar (assistant editor—who was replaced).¹⁴⁸ Although the pay was low, this helped to professionalise the working conditions of film productions funded by the Production Board.

Initially, Douglas did not have the intention of making a *Trilogy*. However, it was Hassan's strategic manoeuvring that helped secure funding for two further parts. Hassan's approach to secure further funding was to invoke a resonant comparison between Douglas and internationally renowned art cinema directors Mark Donskoi and Satyajit Ray, both of whom had trilogies behind them.¹⁴⁹ Hassan recalls:

[s]o I came up with a wheeze. Jamie was clearly about Bill's childhood, so I pretended that Bill always intended to make a "childhood" trilogy—with echoes of Mark Donskoi's Gorky films and Satyajit Ray's Apu trilogy. We were not, I said, backing three films, but one film in three parts. Bill went along with this. Jamie became *My Childhood* and the trilogy was born.¹⁵⁰

Hassan presents himself here as a clever trickster, contriving a backstory to secure further funding and support from the Board. Additionally, Hassan's comment illuminates the power structures of certain roles. Here, he depicts his agency over the committee by being able to manoeuvre the Board to achieve what he wanted, echoing French's characterisation that he was an 'astute politician'.¹⁵¹ Hassan's reference to Donskoi and Ray—two filmmakers who were

¹⁴⁷ Hassan, Interview, BDC 1/XAD/4.

¹⁴⁸ Budget Breakdown for *My Childhood*.

¹⁴⁹ Mamoun Hassan, "His Pain Was Our Pain," *The Guardian*, 20 June 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2008/jun/20/filmandmusic1.filmandmusic6> (accessed 27 July 2018).

¹⁵⁰ Hassan, "His Pain".

¹⁵¹ Dupin, "Sponsor," 129.

well-established in art cinema and, more importantly, not British—is a clever comparison as it highlights the prestige and artistic importance that the films could have, helping to further increase the Production Board's reputation and the possibility of establishing a British art cinema. In this sense, he uses the film strategically as representative of the Board's success and new direction. Moreover, Hassan presents himself here as though it was he who intuited that the film was autobiographical when it has been well documented that it was Anderson (a mentor to Douglas) who questioned Douglas about the autobiographical nature of the script.¹⁵² Furthermore, it was Anderson who suggested the title be changed from *Jamie* to *My Childhood* and it was after Anderson encouraged Douglas to embrace the autobiographical nature of the script, that Douglas changed the name of the main character—his alter ego—from Jimmy to the more common Scottish name, Jamie, and that the film was to be set in Scotland, not Liverpool, as had been Douglas's intention originally.¹⁵³

The success that *My Childhood* received at Venice Film Festival in 1972 allowed the Production Board to move more seriously into feature production. Hassan states that:

[*My Childhood*] represented ... the beginnings of an alternative cinema in Britain. Denis Forman, then chairman of the BFI, pointed out to the government that the BFI was doing what the National Film Finance Corporation, the quango responsible for film funding, was not interested in. Minister for the Arts Lord Eccles was persuaded. The BFI went into features and the budget was increased twentyfold.¹⁵⁴

The critical success that *My Childhood* received allowed the BFI to use it as a negotiating tool; the film provided a crucial example to the government that the Production Board was filling the gap of non-commercial cinema, an area of British film that was not being fulfilled by the NFFC whose remit was commercial cinema. If we return to the notion of the Board as a shaping 'agent' that is intervening in this 'cultural drift' taking place in the 1970s, what is shown here is an attempt by the Board to influence the government during this period of the British film industry's 'transition'.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Noble, "Making," 125.

¹⁵³ Noble, "Making," 125.

¹⁵⁴ Hassan, "His Pain".

¹⁵⁵ Higson, "Diversity of Film Practices," 217.

My Ain Folk

Following the release of *My Childhood*, the filming of *My Ain Folk* began shortly after. The international critical acclaim and attention that the film brought the Production Board, combined with Hassan's strategic presentation that the film was, in fact, part of a trilogy, led the committee to agree to further financing. The acclaim, along with an increase in budget, led to an escalation in pressure for the films to successfully continue. Noble suggests that 'no longer was Douglas an anonymous grantee of the BFI but at the forefront of the Board's consciousness and ambitions'.¹⁵⁶

At the beginning of *My Ain Folk*, Douglas inserts a sequence from *Lassie Come Home* (Fred M. Wilcox, 1943) shown in brilliant technicolour within the diegesis. This visual juxtaposition from the main film which is in black and white is used to great effect to show that art offers escapism and colour, but that life is black and white. Due to the low budget for *My Ain Folk*, there were initial difficulties in obtaining permissions to use the clip from *Lassie Come Home* (an MGM production) as it was very expensive. Hassan suggested an alternative, the historical film, *Bonnie Prince Charlie* (Anthony Kimmins, 1948) produced by London Films.¹⁵⁷ Douglas was outraged by his suggestion.¹⁵⁸ Although this would have been a much cheaper clip to obtain, this would have changed the impact of the opening considerably. *Bonnie Prince Charlie*, which stars David Niven, shows stereotypical images of Scotland, with luscious highlands and painted backdrops. In contrast, *Lassie Come Home* is set in Yorkshire and tells the story of a poor man, Sam Carraclough (a Scot) doing his best to support his family during a period of deep unemployment and coming to the difficult decision to part with his dog Lassie for financial reasons. Although a visual juxtaposition would have been made possible purely by the distinction between black and white and colour, and there would have been a further contrast in the representation of Scotland, as Noble suggests, the dog in *Lassie* is 'so deeply embedded in the yearning consciousness of [his] childhood generation, who always makes it home'.¹⁵⁹ Indeed, Lassie is nostalgic of childhood for all ages and, as such, can be viewed

¹⁵⁶ Noble, "Making," 135.

¹⁵⁷ Noble, "Making," 141.

¹⁵⁸ Noble, "Making," 141.

¹⁵⁹ Andrew Noble, "Bill Douglas's Trilogy," in *From Limelight to Satellite: A Scottish Film Book*, ed. Eddie Dick (BFI Publishing and Scottish Film Council, 1990), 141.

as being more thematically appropriate to the film and thus more impactful in its overall effect.

In addition to Hassan's involvement regarding the use of the Lassie clip, Hassan tried to intervene by suggesting the use of a fade out in several places to avoid narrative confusion as a signifier of time passing, and in an attempt to echo the shaft descent.¹⁶⁰ Douglas commented:

[t]he fade never made any senses to me, one of the reasons being that it did not echo the shaft descent. As to its use as a break in time (you and I agreed on lindsays [*sic*] direct cut to black as a proper echo) well that decision or indecision stems from our different view points'.¹⁶¹

It is unclear from the materials how the matter was eventually resolved, but the final film shows that there was no fade out used to echo the shaft's descent which implies Douglas ultimately had the final decision over the matter.

Another point of contention that demonstrates creative differences between the two men was Hassan's suggestion that the film should be broken up into four places with intertitles used to explain to the audience what was happening.¹⁶² In correspondence to Douglas, Hassan said 'I suggest four cards. The placing is exact. The wording I leave to you'.¹⁶³ The way in which Hassan states: '[t]he placing is exact.' demonstrates that he is making it clear to Douglas that he has the autonomy here. Hassan does not leave room for Douglas to negotiate or have the creative freedom to suggest an alternative approach or placement. Hassan then proceeds to discuss in detail his four proposed places. Firstly, Hassan suggests one following the long shot of the welfare van taking Tommy to the welfare home. Hassan justifies that the audience needs the information that it is Tommy, commenting:

[t]he opening titles will suggest to people that the boy in the cinema is the teller of the story. It's true that at the end of Reel 1 Jamie shouts for

¹⁶⁰ Letter from Bill Douglas to Mamoun Hassan, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/2, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas to Hassan, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/2).

¹⁶¹ Douglas to Hassan, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/2.

¹⁶² Letter from Mamoun Hassan to Bill Douglas, 1973, BDC 1/TRI/1/2, BDCM (hereafter cited as Hassan to Douglas, 1973, BDC 1/TRI/1/2).

In Noble, "Making," 141, he suggests that Hassan proposed that the film should be broken up in five places, however, he does not list where these should be. In the letter I have consulted, Hassan specifies four.

¹⁶³ Hassan to Douglas, 1973, BDC 1/TRI/1/2.

Tommy. Only it's a shout, which means that it's not clearly enunciated and more than one person has wondered what Jamie was saying.¹⁶⁴

The second is that Hassan argues that there is confusion concerning whether the Jamie's father lives.¹⁶⁵ The third place would be after Jamie has placed the apple on the grandfather's bed and exits through the window, commenting that 'I know this will surprise you but I am not the only one who felt the need for some narrative/emotional comment about the grandfather: that he is the grandfather'.¹⁶⁶ Finally, he wanted to place a fourth intertitle before the door opens to reveal the soldier.¹⁶⁷ Hassan argued that '[t]here's a need to re[-]establish his identity (more than one person who saw the film, including Ken Wlaschin, thought he was a new character) and also something else, something emotional'.¹⁶⁸ In these final two points, in an attempt to try and support his own criticisms, Hassan commented that he was not alone in his views.¹⁶⁹ Hassan specifically mentions National Film Theatre (NFT) Programmer, Wlaschin, in an attempt to validate his reasoning for why the audience would need further information by having these additional title cards.¹⁷⁰ As Noble rightly argues, adding in title cards would not only have been a confession of narrative failure, but it would have undermined Douglas's style and the powerful use of the image.¹⁷¹ In terms of Douglas's approach, Hassan recalls that Douglas had said '[n]ever show the audience something... that it can imagine better than you can show it'.¹⁷² Similarly, Robert Shail describes Douglas's preference for 'elliptical editing... in which key plot information is frequently withheld, forcing the audience to engage actively with the films to fill in the missing pieces'.¹⁷³ In an unsent letter to Hassan, Douglas discusses his approach, he explains that 'each move makes for a progression or a plus as we call it. Each move is a verb'.¹⁷⁴ Hassan's suggestion to use intertitles demonstrates that his prioritisation was to make the film's narrative easily understandable for audiences; however, this would have severely misaligned

¹⁶⁴ Hassan to Douglas, 1973, BDC 1/TRI/1/2.

¹⁶⁵ Hassan to Douglas, 1973, BDC 1/TRI/1/2.

¹⁶⁶ Hassan to Douglas, 1973, BDC 1/TRI/1/2.

¹⁶⁷ Hassan to Douglas, 1973, BDC 1/TRI/1/2.

¹⁶⁸ Hassan to Douglas, 1973, BDC 1/TRI/1/2.

¹⁶⁹ Hassan to Douglas, 1973, BDC 1/TRI/1/2.

¹⁷⁰ Hassan to Douglas, 1973, BDC 1/TRI/1/2.

¹⁷¹ Noble, "Making," 141.

¹⁷² Hassan, "His Pain".

¹⁷³ Robert Shail, *British Film Directors: A Critical Guide*, (Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 58.

¹⁷⁴ Douglas to Hassan, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/2.

with Douglas's style of filmmaking. Moreover, it was not that Douglas was intentionally disregarding the audience, rather, he wanted them to have to work. For example, in a lecture Douglas gave later in his career, he explained that: 'we have to be sure the audience knows where they are. But if we're not careful, the audience won't be doing any work at all. The more information, the less mystery. The less opportunity to surprise'.¹⁷⁵ Eventually, Douglas conceded to include one inter-title early into the film following the miner's descent:

Granny died leaving Tommy and me to fend for ourselves
Tommy had no idea where his father was but I knew where to find mine
As things turned out I wasn't sure about anything

Douglas agreed to this on the basis that had an audience member not seen *My Childhood* beforehand, then it would give them the context of the film.¹⁷⁶ Douglas's acceptance of the merits of including the above inter-title to avoid confusion and encourage audience engagement demonstrates that this decision was a result of negotiation and a discursive process between himself and Hassan.

The film was completed in 1973. Douglas then began working on the script for the final instalment of the *Trilogy*, *My Way Home*, in time of transition for the Production Board, between Hassan leaving and Gavin becoming head of production.

My Way Home

Whilst writing the script for the final instalment of the *Trilogy* (Winter 1973-Spring 1974) Douglas underwent negotiations with the Production Board regarding him not having received a script grant for his final film. Douglas had received a maintenance grant for each of the previous two film scripts and assumed that he would receive a third grant for the final instalment. When it became known to Douglas that this would not necessarily be the case, he began threatening the Production Board that he would withhold his script for the final instalment until he received a grant. In a letter to Michael Relph, chairman of the committee, Douglas

¹⁷⁵ Bill Douglas, "Script-writing and Adaptation" Lecture, BDC 1/XAD/3/1, BDCM.

¹⁷⁶ Peter Jewell, In Discussion with Author, September 2021.

wrote '[a]s you know I have absolutely no money, and short of losing friends, I have no intention of borrowing any more that I have to. This will make the writing of Part III difficult to pursue'.¹⁷⁷ Douglas goes on to say '[i]f you want the script of Part III the door is open to you to finance the writing as you did Part II'.¹⁷⁸ It is unclear from the documents why the terms shifted here and a script grant was not offered to Douglas, perhaps this had not been allocated for by Hassan before he left. However, the materials show that in January 1974 in response to Douglas's request, Relph stated that 'it is very unusual for grants to have been made for two films, let alone three, to the same applicant'.¹⁷⁹ In Relph's correspondence to Douglas, he states that it would have to be deliberated in February's committee meeting.¹⁸⁰ It was not until 2 April 1974 that Douglas was notified that he had been awarded a script grant of £250 for *My Way Home*.¹⁸¹ The timeline of this award being granted suggest that the £250 was either allocated in the new financial year (April 1974-1975), or that the committee was able to allocate the monies from the remaining funds for the 1973-4 financial year. Crucially, during this period the leadership of the Production Board was transitioning from Hassan to Gavin, Douglas began communicating with Relph, instead of Rees who was the intermediary. Although the *Trilogy* is an exceptional case in that it could be considered one film, but it could also be considered three separate films, the Production Board had set a precedent of providing script grants for parts one and two. Therefore, it is understandable that Douglas would assume he would receive a grant for part three. Furthermore, it would be a limiting factor for many filmmakers as many would not necessarily have the financial means to pursue writing a script without a grant.

When the script had been completed and submitted to the Production Board, there were some criticisms made. In Noble's chapter on 'The Making of the Trilogy', he suggests it was Hassan who first expressed criticisms of the draft script of *My Way Home* which was then followed by a letter from Stanley Reed,

¹⁷⁷ Draft letter from Bill Douglas to Michael Relph, January 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/2, BDCM (hereafter cited as Draft Letter, Douglas to Relph, 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/2).

¹⁷⁸ Draft letter, Douglas to Relph, 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/2).

¹⁷⁹ Letter from Michael Relph to Bill Douglas, 15 January 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/2, BDCM (hereafter cited as Relph to Douglas, 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/2).

¹⁸⁰ Relph to Douglas, 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/2.

¹⁸¹ Letter from BFI Production Board Office to Bill Douglas, 2 April 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/2, BDCM.

(BFI director 1964-72).¹⁸² However, based on the materials held at the BDCM, Reed had in fact written to Douglas previously on 19 May 1974 to discuss his own concerns,¹⁸³ and it was later on 29 July 1974, that Hassan wrote to Rees with his thoughts on the script.¹⁸⁴ In Reed's correspondence with Douglas he expressed his discomfort at having to 'act the critic' and frequently made sure to include positive comments on the script throughout his letter.¹⁸⁵ There are, however, several criticisms Reed had regarding the script; his biggest concern seemed to be the character of Patrick (as Robert was initially called).¹⁸⁶ More specifically, Reed expressed worry about the 'sympathetic depiction' of Patrick and was concerned regarding the way in which the actor who would play Patrick would be able to deliver his lines.¹⁸⁷

Despite resigning from the Production Board in February 1974, Hassan was approached by Rees who was temporarily leading the production activities for his comments on the film's script. It is unclear from the materials if this was on Douglas's behest, or that Rees was doing it without Douglas's knowledge. During the early script drafts for *My Way Home*, Hassan criticised Douglas of 'over-writing' in his correspondence to Rees.¹⁸⁸ Hassan suggested adding subtitles to *My Way Home* for parts three and fourteen and disapproved of the use of flashforwards and flashbacks, stating that they were unconvincing and inappropriate in a trilogy format.¹⁸⁹ Hassan commented that '[h]e is now [*sic*] longer an original film-maker but trying to be one—with borrowings from the New Wave and, heaven help us, from one Bill Douglas's and even suggests that Douglas's vision is not there on the script, stating that because of that, he will 'flounder'.¹⁹⁰ Hassan concluded in his comments to Rees that he felt the film should be turned down and that to decline it would be 'the generous thing' to do.¹⁹¹

¹⁸² Noble, "Making," 149-151.

¹⁸³ Letter from Stanley Reed to Bill Douglas, 19 May 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM (hereafter cited as Reed to Douglas, 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/3).

¹⁸⁴ Letter from Mamoun Hassan to Charles Rees, 29 July 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM (hereafter cited as Hassan to Rees, 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/3).

¹⁸⁵ Reed to Douglas, 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

¹⁸⁶ Reed to Douglas, 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

¹⁸⁷ Reed to Douglas, 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

¹⁸⁸ Hassan to Rees, 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

¹⁸⁹ Hassan to Rees, 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

¹⁹⁰ Hassan to Rees, 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

¹⁹¹ Hassan to Rees, 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

Following the criticisms of the script, Douglas again threatened to pull out of making the final part of the *Trilogy* and even rejected the script grant of £250 that he had only received after much perseverance and negotiation.¹⁹² It was during this pre-production stage that Gavin had become head of production at the BFI Production Board. The BDCM materials contain only one piece of correspondence from Gavin to Douglas, but it provides vital insight into how Gavin tried to assert his position and that of the Production Board.¹⁹³ In an attempt to remedy the relationship between Douglas and the BFI, Gavin wrote to Douglas in August 1974 with the intention of 'establish[ing] our working relationship',¹⁹⁴ asking:

[c]an we get on with part three of the trilogy? The Members of the committee expressed some reservations about the script which Peter Sainsbury has outlined to you in his letter. He tells me that you have been considering these reservations and that you propose to submit your further thoughts upon my arrival at the Board. I have now arrived and I am waiting to hear from you. So now you can devote your energies to the script and leave reliability to me.¹⁹⁵

It is unclear what the 'reservations' expressed by Sainsbury that Gavin refers to here were, however, this illustrates that there were others beyond Hassan and Reed who expressed reservations regarding the script. Fortunately, these issues were resolved, and filming went ahead. The principal photography was completed in two halves. The shoot for the first half of *My Way Home* which is set in Scotland began in 1974, then, the second half which is set in Egypt and depicts Douglas's military service in the RAF was completed in 1976. The production had

¹⁹² Unfortunately, the script drafts of *My Way Home* do not survive, however, according to Jewell, Douglas had originally planned that Jamie's mother would be still alive. Jewell recalls, '[t]here is a poignant scene in his first draft discovering his mother is still alive. It would have been complex for an audience to understand, and perhaps it is not surprising the scene did not survive in the final draft'. Jewell, "Willie," BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1. Jewell began writing a biography on Douglas shortly after he had passed away in 1991. Unfortunately, only a few chapters survive in hard copy and are now part of the Working Papers (BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1). There are other chapters written by Jewell, however, they are currently inaccessible as they are held on a broken Amstrad computer which is also at the BDCM.

¹⁹³ Letter from Barrie Gavin to Bill Douglas, 27 August 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/2, BDCM (hereafter cited as Gavin to Douglas, 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/2).

¹⁹⁴ Gavin to Douglas, 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/2.

¹⁹⁵ Gavin to Douglas, 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/2.

gone on a two-year hiatus to allow for Stephen Archibald (the actor who plays Jamie) to grow physically into the part.¹⁹⁶

In terms of finances that the BFI were committing to the project, *My Way Home* had a proposed budget of £33,000.¹⁹⁷ Collectively, Douglas had received three grants from the Board, totalling £48,000.¹⁹⁸ The final part of the *Trilogy*, *My Way Home*, was the costliest out of the three films. In comparison to the average grant funded by the Production Board compared to the grants that Douglas received for each of his three films (see Figure 3 on page 86), both *My Ain Folk* and *My Way Home*'s budget far exceeded the average grant for a film production in 1972-73 which was £6,210, whereas Douglas received £12,000 for *My Ain Folk* that year. Similarly, as Figure 3 shows, in 1974-1975, the average grant was £6,752, whereas Douglas received £33,000. Furthermore, concerning the Production Board's annual funds, Douglas received an increasingly large percentage of their annual budget. For example, my calculations in Figure 4 demonstrate that for the respective year in which each film in the *Trilogy*'s budget was allocated, *My Childhood* received 3.47 per cent of the budget, *My Ain Folk* 9.75 per cent, and *My Way Home* a significant 29.56 per cent of the Production Board's annual budget. Although the final part of the *Trilogy* was not released until 1978, the early pre-production phases began shortly after the release of *My Ain Folk* in 1974. This was whilst Gavin was still in the role of head of production so have been accounted for in the 1974 budget. Even in comparison to the average grant given by the Production Board towards the end of the decade when *My Way Home* was released in 1978, the average grant (£16,200) was less than half of what Douglas had received for the *Trilogy*'s final instalment. This demonstrates that in terms of financial commitment, the Production Board supported Douglas significantly higher than the average grant that they gave to other filmmakers' projects.

¹⁹⁶ 'My Way Home' Production, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, Catalogue Admin History, accessed 29 May 2020, <http://lib-archives.ex.ac.uk/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=BDC+1%2fTRI%2f1%2f3>.

¹⁹⁷ Noble, "Making," 118.

¹⁹⁸ Noble, "Making," 118.

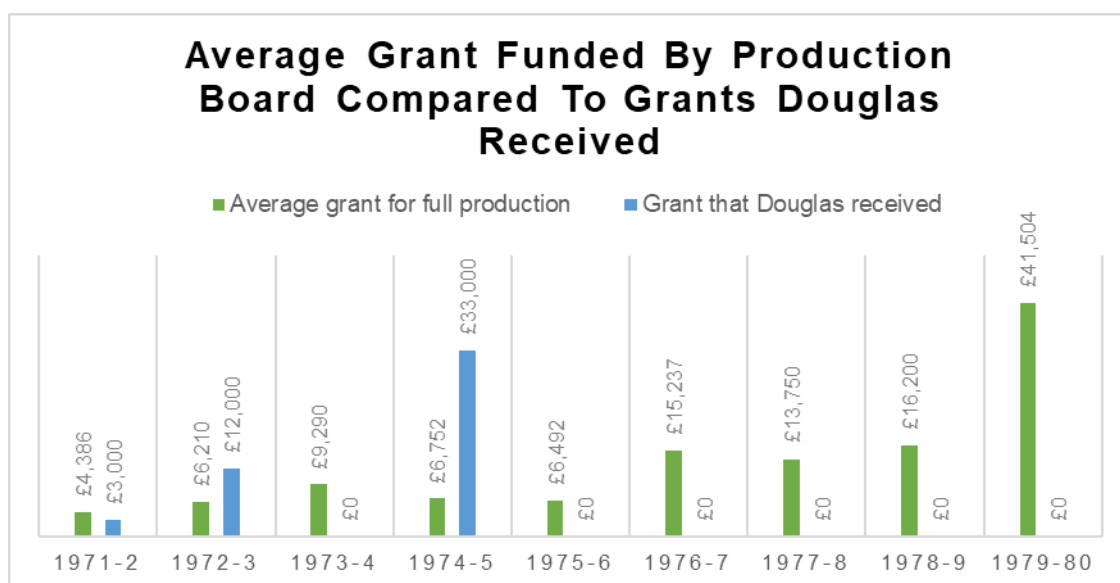


Figure 3. Average Grant Funded by Production Board from 1971-1980 Compared to Grants Douglas Received that I have compiled.

Financial Year	Total BFI Production Board Annual funds	Film	Production budget given to Douglas's films	Percentage of BFI's PB Annual Budget
March 1971-72	£86,481	<i>My Childhood</i>	£3,000	3.47%
March 1972-73	£123,019	<i>My Ain Folk</i>	£12,000	9.75%
March 1974-75	£111,632	<i>My Way Home</i>	£33,000	29.56%

Figure 4. The Trilogy and the Percentage of BFI's Production Board's Annual Budget that I have compiled.

During the post-production of the final film, the Production Board's correspondence with Douglas evinces their anxiety to have the film completed. For example, when writing to Douglas, Sainsbury expressed that 'we are extremely reluctant to allow the film to remain unfinished after having made such a large investment, and in view of the artistic importance of the trilogy as a whole'.¹⁹⁹ In light of the financial commitment the Production Board had given to the project in relation to their annual budget, it is understandable that there would

¹⁹⁹ Letter from Peter Sainsbury to Bill Douglas, 29 June 1977, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM (hereafter cited as Sainsbury to Douglas, 29 June 1977, BDC 1/TRI/1/3).

have been a need to see the film completed. Not only had *My Way Home* been in production for three years at this point, but the *Trilogy* had been in production for six years, from 1971. The films were also associated with the narrative features from Hassan's tenure, an association which Sainsbury was trying to move away from under his leadership of the Production Board.

Douglas grew increasingly frustrated in not being allowed to make a number of changes to the film. In June 1977, he went over the Production Board and sent a letter of complaint to the entire the Board of Governors.²⁰⁰ In this letter, he explained that *My Way Home* was still not complete.²⁰¹ Douglas stated that '[t]his sad situation is, I feel, due largely to there having been little or no practical help guidance or encouragement from the Production Board'.²⁰² Douglas goes on to say:

[t]his was not the case in the past, for *My Childhood* or *My Ain Folk* under the able supervision of Mamoun Hassan. At that time there was real involvement in the working of film. All time was valuable time and since he was always one ... of us there was very little wasted in either time or money.²⁰³

This strategy by Douglas of going above the head of production echoes when he went to Relph over Rees or Gavin. This suggests that he assessed that he did not have the same level of trust or support from the head of production.

Douglas's frustrations towards the Production Board grew and discussions regarding his proposed changes to *My Way Home* continued for some time. Douglas was so adamant about making these changes that he agreed to pay £300 of his own money towards the final changes.²⁰⁴ Whether the film would have benefited from extra resources to make further changes seemed to be in considerable doubt from the Production Board's position, but this will be examined in much greater detail in the next chapter. As a state-funded institution, accountable to the public and open to criticism, one filmmaker had received a significant proportion of their annual budget and the delay of *My Way Home* would

²⁰⁰ Letter from Bill Douglas to the BFI Governors, 30 June 1977, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas to BFI Governors, BDC 1/TRI/1/3). In the Working Papers' there are two responses to Douglas' letter from Governors, John Freeman (11 July 1977), and Lady Margaret Casson (13 July 1977), BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM.

²⁰¹ Douglas to BFI Governors, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

²⁰² Douglas to BFI Governors, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

²⁰³ Douglas to BFI Governors, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

²⁰⁴ Receipt, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

have been disconcerting as not only was it selected during an earlier predecessor's tenure, but because it became apparent that the film necessitated additional financial support. The ongoing delays to the film's completion would have also taken away resources from the team.

Conclusion

My Childhood can be considered as the instigating project that helped to cement the shifting strategy of the Production Board to fund low-budget features. The critical success that *My Childhood* received helped to secure Hassan's position at the Production Board as well as their new policy. In so doing, it helped other filmmakers to obtain support for their projects when film finance for low-budget films was extremely scarce in Britain. Following Hassan's departure, however, the *Trilogy* seemed to be at odds both ideologically and stylistically with the new policy under Gavin and Sainsbury, who favoured political and radical documentary or the avant-garde. From the very beginning, Douglas's films were embroiled in the political and ideological conflict and changes to the Board. John Caughie states, 'the *Trilogy* seemed to offer a possibility, but one without an inheritance, another of those brief moments of possibility which punctuate British Cinema'; there was a sense of discordance with the filmmaking of the time.²⁰⁵ If we return to Sainsbury's comment used at the beginning of this chapter, throughout the period attempts were made by the Production Board to act as an 'agent', intervening in this 'cultural drift' of non-commercial cinema, endeavouring, in some ways, to influence during a period of 'transition'. Whether it be through narrative fiction features under Hassan, political and radical documentary work under Gavin, or the experimental avant-garde under Sainsbury, the Production Board worked to reassess its role in British film culture, shifting its direction but always intending to fund those who would struggle to secure funding elsewhere.

Ultimately, during the 1970s the Production Board transcended its initial role as a minor unit, and while Douglas's *My Childhood* helped to initiate this, it was also aided by the Production Board which was becoming a vital resource at

²⁰⁵ John Caughie, "The Bill Douglas Trilogy," in *The Bill Douglas Trilogy*, Dual Format DVD and Blu-ray, directed by Bill Douglas, 1972-1978 (London: BFI, 2012), 8–9.

the beginning of the decade for filmmakers looking to make low-budget features. The film was used as a negotiating tool to help secure increased funding from the government, and the shift in direction by the Production Board provided a step for newly graduated film school students, like Douglas, as well as opportunities for non-film school students, helping to start the careers of filmmakers such as Davies. The Production Board's profile was raised considerably in this period and the critical success of *My Childhood* acted as a beacon for their new strategy, helping to cement their direction of support towards more low-budget features which it navigated with limited resources.

Even though the BFI had a relatively modest output during the 1970s, their support was vital for projects that would otherwise have never been made. This was a time of uncertain and fragmented production cultures and in some ways, the Production Board still offered a training ground to filmmakers during Hassan's tenure through its integrated mini studio which saw a sharing of resources and film language. Filmmakers, including Douglas, gave input on films outside of their projects. Arguably, the Production Board provided an opportunity where filmmakers did not have the same commercial pressures on them, but there were some attempts to influence Douglas's second film to make it more understandable for audiences. Moreover, the deeply rooted problems of distribution were a real problem for these filmmakers, a factor which will be explored in Chapter Three. Ultimately, the policy under Hassan in setting out to move into low budget features was a vital mechanism that allowed for some growth in indigenous film production.

By using Douglas as a case study, this chapter has demonstrated the critical position of the BFI as an institution and the 'apprenticing culture' that the Production Board cultivated. I have demonstrated the framework that Douglas was working within and how his films were utilised in the BFI's own applications to demonstrate the strength of their new approach to funding features and featurettes and the critical acclaim this would bring. I have also alluded to some of the creative tensions that emerged during the production such as the licensing fee for the *Lassie Come Home* clip and the involvement regarding the script and the use of flashbacks. These creative tensions and moments of conflict were not isolated cases and were apparent during each of the productions.

When the Production Board gave Douglas the funding to make *My Childhood* in 1971, he had only made home movies and four student films; the Production Board took a risk on an unknown filmmaker when there was a lack of resources and institutions in British film able to do so. As the making of the *Trilogy* went on, the budgets of the films increased. Douglas suggests that the impact of this was greater interference and less autonomy.²⁰⁶ The next chapter will examine Douglas's representation of labour and his managerial style, investigating moments of conflict and negotiation during the productions of the *Trilogy*, and the pressure Douglas put on the crew to show enthusiasm towards the work.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Letter from Bill Douglas to John (Surname Unknown), Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/2, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas to John, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/2).

Chapter Two

The making of the *Trilogy*: management style and self-representation of labour

I've never seen people more unhappy than on a Bill Douglas shoot. He made people do what he wanted them to by, as it were, connecting with depression... Maybe it was not depression but grief; he made everyone connect with their grief so that there was no kind of joy in the making of his films.

Mamoun Hassan¹

There are innumerable popular books, lists and blogs online that detail troubled film productions, concentrating on the challenges and conflicts that arose during the making of a film, such as going over budget, exacting or flamboyant behaviours of directors, script rewrites and injuries on-set.² Vicki Mayer et al., argue that the production of a film can 'become as storied and mythologized as the *content* of the films and TV shows'.³ Further, Mayer et al., highlight that it is ironic how we come to learn about media producers through representations that they make themselves.⁴ This idea that we learn about media makers through representations that they cultivate is important to remember when analysing sources. Indeed, the more public-facing documents written by the popular press have largely been cultivated or at least heavily influenced and shaped by those at the top of the industries' hierarchies. It is important to read Mamoun Hassan's words, cited at the beginning of this chapter, cautiously and even, perhaps, sceptically. During the making of the *Trilogy*, those at the top of the 'industrial

¹ Noble, "Making," 121. See Hassan, Interview, BDC 1/XAD/4/1 for full interview.

² For example: Ryan Lambie, "26 Incredibly Arduous Film Productions," *Den of Geek*, 14 June 2019, accessed 1 May 2020, <https://www.denofgeek.com/movies/26-incredibly-arduous-film-productions/>; Adam Chitwood, "9 Movies That Were Notoriously Difficult to Make," *Collider*, 5 February 2020, accessed 1 May 2020, <https://collider.com/movies-with-troubled-productions/#the-bourne-identity>; Eric Eisenberg, "10 Troubled Productions That Wound Up Producing Great Movies," *Cinema Blend*, accessed 21 August 2020, <https://www.cinemablend.com/new/10-Troubled-Productions-Wound-Up-Producing-Great-Movies-108737.html>.

³ Vicki Mayer, Miranda Banks, and John Thornton Caldwell, "Foreword," in *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*, eds., Vicki Mayer, Miranda Banks, and John Thornton Caldwell, (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), n.pag.

⁴ Mayer, Banks, and Caldwell, "Roots and Routes," 1.

food chain' would have been individuals such as Hassan, Peter Sainsbury and, as the writer-director, Bill Douglas. These individuals would have had the most opportunity to speak publicly about the experience of the making of these films and the reasons behind certain decision-making, thereby having the concurrent opportunity to promote a certain image of the films' productions in the process. Thus, it is typically those individuals who work 'above-the-line' who have considerable control over shaping the history of a film's production and of what is more widely known. This chapter will acknowledge and analyse this structure and, where possible, overcome it by using a wide range of archival documents from the production, as well as testimonies of individuals who worked on the films. In so doing, it will uncover, interrogate, and examine the representation of labour during the making of the *Trilogy*.

The previous chapter analysed Douglas's interactions with the institutional framework of film funding in Britain in the 1970s, examining how the BFI Production Board, as a funder, gatekeeper, and decision-maker, saw the potential in Douglas's mode and style of filmmaking, and how the key agents and the institution endeavoured to shape, channel, and position his work. These activities and interactions simultaneously enabled and constrained Douglas's filmmaking. This chapter will shift the focus from the framework of funders and institutions to analysing cultures of production at the level of the making of Douglas's *Trilogy*. This chapter will investigate the production of the *Trilogy* on the micro-level, interrogating the self-representation of labour, Douglas's management, challenges faced, and the production culture as represented by Douglas, noting changes and shifts between the three films. My analysis will trace a path through Douglas's archive, acknowledging his investment in his creative projects and, at the same time, examining the sources as working documents, which, in many ways, frame and define a temporary creative culture of the crew and production. As many of these items were not intended for publication, such as draft and unsent correspondence, the interpretive process includes another layer of interrogation. Amanda D. Lotz argues that the production studies paradigm 'could also provide a foundation for studies of management, although these scholars [Caldwell and Mayer] have focused their attention mainly on identifying the meaningful agency possessed by those less likely to be considered "managers," such as video editors, casting assistants, and other "below-the-line"

roles'.⁵ The scope of my project with a production-centred approach allows me to examine and reveal the agency of those in below-the-line roles, as well as analyse how Douglas represents himself as a manager of a production site, or as Caldwell frames these spaces: 'a new corporation that starts up, functions intensely, and closes down in a matter of months'.⁶ Although the productions can be viewed as separate entities, there was some continuity in workers across the films, as shown in the chart I have compiled (see Figure 5 below), for the most part, Douglas had to learn how to manage an entirely new crew with each film.

Crew	Roles	<i>My Childhood (MC)</i>	<i>My Ain Folk (MAF)</i>	<i>My Way Home (MWH)</i>
Bill Douglas	Scriptwriter and Director			
Mick Campbell	Cameraman			
Brand Thumin	Editor (<i>MC</i>), Assembly Editor (<i>MAF</i>)			
Bob Withey	Sound Recordist			
Tim Lewis	Sound Editor			
Gale Tattersall	Additional Photography (<i>MC</i>), Cameraman (<i>MAF</i>)			
Bahram Manocheri	Additional Photography			
Mike Billings	Sound Mixed			
Roger Pratt	Assistant Cameraman			
Ian Seller	Continuity (<i>MC</i>), Assistant Director (<i>MAF</i>)			
Nick Moes	Assistant Director			
Geoffrey Evans	Producer			
Peter West	Editor and Sound Editor			
Peter Harvey	Sound Recordist (<i>MAF</i>), Dubbing Editor (<i>MWH</i>)			
Mike Ellis	Sound Editor			
Doug Turner	Dubbing Mixer			
Elsie Restorick	Property (<i>MAF</i>), Art Direction (<i>MWH</i>)			

⁵ Lotz, "Building Theories," 30.

⁶ Caldwell, *Production Culture*, 113.

Crew	Roles	<i>My Childhood</i> (MC)	<i>My Ain Folk</i> (MAF)	<i>My Way Home</i> (MWH)
Bob Taylor	Assistant Cameraman (MAF), Camera Assistant (MWH)			
Gordon Craig	Personal Assistant			
Roderick Farquharson	Production Assistant			
Charles Rees	Assistant Producer			
Tony Bicat	Assistant Producer			
Nick Nascht	Producer			
Ray Orton	Cameraman			
Digby Rumsey	Sound Recording			
Mick Audsley	Editor			
Jeff Strasburg	Camera Assistant			
Steve Shaw	Camera Assistant			
Abdul and Ali	Camera Assistant			
Martin Turner	Assistant Director			
Bob Settle	Production Assistant			
Celia Southerst	Production Assistant			
Fatima Rateb	Production Assistant			
Mr Safwat	Production Assistant			
Hag Shaffrey	Production Help			
Keith Silva	Continuity			
Oliver Bouchier	Art Direction			
David Mingay*	Editor (before Mick Audsley)			
Richard Craven	Production Supervision			
Judy Cottam	Production Supervision			

Figure 5. Crew Members for the Trilogy. Compiled using credits from BFI Player.⁷

As the crew were mostly completely new with each production, being able to track and analyse changes in the production culture becomes somewhat difficult. This is where the unsent letters composed by Douglas, and a draft, unpublished reflection that Douglas began writing on the production of the filming of *My Childhood* after being encouraged by Eddie Dick to do so, as well as his private notes and criticisms become especially useful.⁸ I frequently refer to

⁷ *Not included on credits.

⁸ Noble, "Making," 127.

Dick was not only one of the editors for the only publication on Bill Douglas (Dick, Noble, and Petrie, eds., *A Lanternist's Account*) and a school publication study guide:

Douglas's 'journals', which are not typical or diary-like in form: they are neither daily nor periodic accounts, nor are they ordered by date; rather, they range from brief one-page undated reflections in isolation to lengthy reports. I analyse the correspondence between himself and key individuals during the production at the BFI further, as well as refer to correspondence between Douglas and filmmaker Lindsay Anderson, which are held in the Lindsay Anderson Archive at the University of Stirling. Both sets of materials—due to their private nature—offer a different view into Douglas's aspirations, frustrations, and responses to the framework he was working in, as well as his perception and representation of the production culture. The letters held in the BDCM offer an insight into the key events of the production. These letters also raise questions regarding the way in which Douglas 'represents himself' as a manager, the opinions he had of other crew members and his response to challenges faced across the production of the three films.

The aim here, then, is to go behind-the-scenes of the production of the *Trilogy*, looking at key events and working relationships at different stages of production during the making of each of the three films. However, rather than simply offering a description or account of who did what, where and how, I am engaging with Caldwell's notion of self-representation of labour.⁹ As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, there has been minimal critical literature on Douglas's films, especially compared to other British filmmakers working during this period. Furthermore, existing work has typically taken a textual approach, concentrating on the film texts with thematic foci such as autobiography and memory.¹⁰ Andrew Noble's chapter 'The Making of the Trilogy' stands apart as it provides an account of the production; Noble presents it as a rather tumultuous affair, focusing on Douglas's 'challenging' nature, and concentrating on the conflicts that arose.¹¹ By engaging with previously unseen archival documents and recent scholarly production-centred research, this chapter rearticulates the production of the *Trilogy* and unveils further details concerning the complexities and challenges faced by these media makers, and the production culture.

Eddie Dick et al., *A Study Guide for The Bill Douglas Trilogy*, Glasgow: Scottish Film Council, 1993. Dick worked for the Scottish Film Council, Scottish Film Production Fund and later Scottish Screen.

⁹ Caldwell, *Production Culture*, 1, 5.

¹⁰ For example, Barefoot, "Autobiography"; Sprengler, "Memory".

¹¹ Noble, "Making," 117-172.

My methodology undertakes close analysis of the archival documents, with a specific line of enquiry regarding the representation of labour and Douglas's management. A micro-level analysis will offer a greater understanding of the complexities of practice and daily experience of the production culture than a macro or political economic approach would allow.¹² Miranda Banks suggests that, 'rather than reify the binary of singular creativity against structural constraints, the idea of production cultures allows for a more coherent examination of producers as they work, live, and organi[s]e together'.¹³ Inevitably, when studying a film production, there is a complex paradigm of interconnecting factors to consider. As such, I do not position Douglas as a singular creative central figure working against the structural constraints of a fragmented film industry, but rather examine *his* representation of labour, his fellow filmmakers, and his management style.

This chapter will address the following questions. How has a media producer like Douglas represented themselves and the production culture during the making of the *Trilogy*? Additionally, is there an active shaping of representation in the documents? In asking these pertinent questions, this chapter will offer insights not only into the making of this series of films but also the making and representation of media makers themselves. The aim here is not to present Douglas as an audacious bastion committed to his vision, nor to present him as a victim to the capitalist confines of film business or fallow period of history for the British film industry. Instead, I will analyse how Douglas represents himself as a manager, the crew, and the production culture during the making of the *Trilogy*.

Scale of Production

After Douglas had secured funding for *My Childhood* in July 1971, he was assisted by Hassan to appoint the film's crew members. As mentioned in the

¹² Amanda D. Lotz, "Industry Level Studies and the Contributions of Gitlin's Inside Prime Time," in *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*, ed. Vicki Mayer, Miranda Banks, and John Thornton Caldwell (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 26–27.

¹³ Miranda Banks, Bridget Conor, and Vicki Mayer, eds., *Production Studies, The Sequel!: Cultural Studies of Global Industries* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 1.

previous chapter, the films produced by the Production Board under Hassan regularly used non-professional actors. Furthermore, there was a relaxation of standard crewing requirements due to an arrangement with the unions, which meant that the crew could be paid less. The *Trilogy* was no exception, and despite collectively being one of the largest investments made by the Production Board in the 1970s, as well as each consecutive film's budget increasing substantially, all three films used mostly non-professional actors (largely local people from the area) and benefitted from the Production Board's agreement with the unions. In the BBC Scotland documentary *Bill Douglas: On Stony Ground* (1992), Douglas said that he only really wanted to work with non-actors and so this arrangement with the BFI and the budget allocated was appropriate for this.¹⁴ Working with non-actors was something Douglas strove for and even had difficulty negotiating and securing later on in his career when he had a bigger budget and union restrictions to adhere to during the making of *Comrades*. Thus, his use of non-professional actors was not an ideological or stylistic allegiance to the Production Board, nor a prohibitive factor or constraint due to the low budget; rather, it was Douglas's preferred approach.¹⁵ Douglas did not just employ locals for acting in the films. For example, Elsie Restorick—a housewife and mother of Hughie Restorick who plays Tommy in the films—assisted with production design and continuity.¹⁶ It was not only Douglas who was at the beginning of his career, as the crew were also largely first-time filmmakers with minimal experience of working on professional production sites.

As highlighted in the previous chapter, the series of films were collectively a considerable investment for the Production Board in relation to their annual budget. In comparison to British commercial feature films—the top-grossing British film in 1972 was Alfred Hitchcock's penultimate film *Frenzy*, which had a

¹⁴ *Bill Douglas: On Stony Ground* (BBC Scotland, 1992).

¹⁵ Douglas was influenced from his time at Joan Littlewood's workshop company in Stratford East; Noble, "Memoir," 18.

¹⁶ Elsie Restorick is credited as Property in *My Ain Folk* and Art Direction for *My Way Home*. Ian Sellar said that Elsie Restorick assisted him with continuity, Ian Sellar, Interview with Andrew Noble BDC 1/XAD/4/2.

budget of \$3,500,000¹⁷ and a total crew of forty-eight¹⁸—the *Trilogy's* budget of approximately £48,000 and scale of the workforce was very small indeed. As we can see in Figure 6 (below), which shows a calculation for the total number of crew and cast for each film, for *My Childhood* it was just twenty-three; *My Ain Folk*, twenty-nine, and *My Way Home*, thirty-eight. These figures do not account for those who were fired from the production nor those who may have contributed but were uncredited, nevertheless, it demonstrates that each of the films had a very small-scale production and workforce.

	<i>My Childhood</i>	<i>My Ain Folk</i>	<i>My Way Home</i>
Cast	11	13	16
Crew	12	16	22
Total	23	29	38

Figure 6. Cast and Crew Numbers for the Trilogy. Compiled using press releases for *My Childhood*, *My Ain Folk* and *My Way Home*, BDC1/TRI/3/3, Bill Douglas Cinema Museum, Exeter.

The small-scale production and budget might lead one to initially assume that the production site would be non-hierarchical. John Alberti argues that in both mainstream and independent film production, the workplace is 'radically hierarchical' and that there are 'practices that define the director as the central voice of authority on set'.¹⁹ Alberti suggests that 'the amorphous yet culturally enduring idea of the auteur' seeps into the production site.²⁰ In the 1960s and 1970s, the idea of the 'auteur' had more broadly permeated the film industry, particularly in Europe. As was made evident in the last chapter, film schools in Britain expanded considerably during the 1970s and the teaching of film in

¹⁷ "United Kingdom Movie Index", *The Numbers*, accessed 17 September 2021, <https://m.the-numbers.com/United-Kingdom/movies>. "Frenzy (1972)" *The Numbers*, accessed 17 September 2021, <https://www.the-numbers.com/movie/Frenzy#tab=summary>.

¹⁸ This figure of forty-eight excludes cast and includes Hitchcock as writer-director and uncredited producer. "Frenzy Crew List," *IMDb*, accessed 17 September 2021, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0068611/fullcredits/?ref_=tt_ql_cl.

¹⁹ John Alberti, "The Director as Facilitator: Collaboration, Cooperation and the Gender Politics of the Set," in *Indie Reframed: Women's Filmmaker and Contemporary American Independent Cinema*, ed. Linda Badley, Claire Perkins, and Michele Schreiber (Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 288, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1g0529f.23>.

²⁰ Alberti, "Director as Facilitator," 291.

universities further reinforced the auteur theory's dominance and the centralisation of the director figure. Hassan's comparisons of Douglas's work to directors such as Mark Donskoi and Satyajit Ray as a stratagem to secure further support from the committee for an additional two films similarly reflects the importance and prioritisation of the director figure to institutions and funding bodies like the BFI.²¹ Following the release of *My Childhood*, and especially after the release of the completed *Trilogy*—which was and continues to be advertised as *The Bill Douglas Trilogy*—Douglas was often compared by the contemporary popular press to filmmakers such as François Truffaut and his Antoine Doinel series.²² Douglas did not initially set out with the intention of making a trilogy. However, as Claire Perkins argues, as a form 'throughout cinema history the trilogy has consistently been associated with ideas of aesthetics and auteurism'.²³ Furthermore, Perkins states that '[p]romotion of the trilogy structure builds and encapsulates a sense of intentional authorial agency'.²⁴ Therefore, in terms of film form, a trilogy's structure also has its associations with auteurism and authorial agency, further enhanced by its autobiographical content.

Douglas was not only framed and compared to artist filmmakers by Hassan at the level of negotiation with the committee but also at the production site. Ian Sellar—who oversaw continuity for *My Childhood*—recalls that 'Mamoun set the context that Bill was an artist'.²⁵ As a beginner, Douglas did not have an established reputation as an 'auteur' or artist, however, this early insistence and framing of Douglas by Hassan may have led to certain expectations or influenced behaviours from crew members. This notion of Douglas as an artist has been maintained by Hassan and was similarly echoed when I interviewed him at the beginning of 2020: '[t]hat's the one thing that one has to realise from the very

²¹ For further details about the industrial utility, the economic and commercial value of the auteur see Timothy Corrigan, "The Commerce of Auteurism," in *Film and Authorship*, ed. Virginia Wright Wexman, (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 96-111.

²² Vincent Canby, "Movie: Trilogy on a Life," *The New York Times*, 18 May 1983, BDC 1/TRI/3/1, BDCM.

In 1978, there was a special *Arena: Cinema* programme where Gavin Millar interviewed Douglas and central to this programme was a clear comparison of his work to Truffaut; this programme coincided with a Truffaut season on BBC: Rosemary Bwen-Jones, *Arena: Cinema* (England: BBC2, 11 October 1978).

²³ Claire Perkins and Constantine Verevis, eds., *Film Trilogies: New Critical Approaches* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 4.

²⁴ Perkins and Verevis, 4.

²⁵ Sellar, Interview, BDC 1/XAD/4/2.

beginning is that he is not a film professional, he's a film *artist*, which is something different'.²⁶ Caldwell discusses the importance of trade stories and rituals and proposes the notion of genesis myths for those working in the above-the-line creative sector.²⁷ Douglas did not have an extensive résumé that preceded him, and it was not until after *My Childhood* was awarded the Silver Lion for Best First Feature at Venice Film Festival in 1972 that he began to gain critical acclaim and recognition. Hassan's assertion that Douglas was an artist both to the Board as well as the crew, even early on, in a way 'functions as a form of territorial turf marking' on Douglas's behalf.²⁸ In so doing, this practice, as Caldwell posits, 'gives contemporary status to practitioners by establishing a special, interpersonal pedigree of distinction' and separation.²⁹ Whilst Douglas was given a chance to make *My Childhood* with a small budget of £3,650 (including the maintenance grant of £150), Hassan framed and positioned Douglas as an artist to those who were at the level of being able to grant funding and in an attempt to aid Douglas in establishing his reputation on-set with the crew.

***My Childhood* – Initial Challenges**

The principal photography of Douglas's first film, *My Childhood*, took place in September 1971 for three weeks.³⁰ During the filming, the crew and cast would be working collaboratively and intensively over a short period to collectively realise this very emotionally sensitive and personal experience of Douglas's childhood. This section will look at how Douglas represented and framed the making of this film, the challenges faced and his attempt to manage this community of filmmakers.

In Douglas's reflection on *My Childhood*, he explains that there were three main problems or, as he calls them, 'nightmares' that affected the production.³¹ These were: bulldozers coming to demolish the village of Newcraighall where the

²⁶ Hassan, Interview with Author, 5 March 2020.

²⁷ See Caldwell, "Trade Stories and Rituals," in *Production Culture*, 37-68.

²⁸ Caldwell, *Production Culture*, 49.

²⁹ Caldwell, *Production Culture*, 48.

³⁰ Filming started on the 6 September 1971; September was decided to be the best month for lighting in Scotland, Bill Douglas, Reflections on the filming of *My Childhood*, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1). Douglas had to return with Mick Campbell and Gale Tattersall, Noble, "Making," 118.

³¹ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

filming was taking place; the concern expressed by villagers regarding the reveal of poverty in Newcraighall within the film, and the availability of the two boys who played the film's two lead characters (Jamie and Tommy, played by Stephen Archibald and Hughie Restorick, respectively).³²

Firstly, Douglas explains that the reason why the village of Newcraighall was to be demolished was because of the instability of the mine that ran directly underneath, which was causing the village to slip.³³ Douglas states that at the beginning of September 'three quarts of the village is deserted. The [s]ound man is happy for the silence'.³⁴ However, he then goes on to declare that '[d]uring the three weeks shoot the sound man is due for a heart attack. The bulldozers are moving in. Then a word with the labourers has them generously working hand in hand'.³⁵ Several members of the crew, as well as film critics who met with Douglas, commented on his charm.³⁶ The way in which Douglas explains that a word with the labourers had them 'generously working hand in hand', concurs with this image of charm, as it implies his ability to negotiate when necessary to obtain what was needed.

The films were likely one of the last records remaining of the village, of a past that was quite literally slipping away. Douglas suggests that it was for this reason that he had to move quickly in securing funding because 'soon the bulldozers will arrive to churn all into rubble' and it would be unlikely the village would still exist.³⁷ Therefore, not only were there pressures and an urgency to secure funding in advance of the first film before the village was to be demolished, but the demolition had some impact on the filming itself and the ability of the crew to carry out their work, particularly the sound man. Moreover, the way in which the landscape was changing meant that there would be further repercussions surrounding the filming of the following two parts of the *Trilogy*, it was unclear how much of the village would be left on their return.

³² Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

³³ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

³⁴ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

³⁵ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

³⁶ Geoff Andrew, "Releases," *Time Out*, 19-26 August 1987, No. 887, 15-17, BDC 1/COM/5; when interviewed by Noble, Ian Sellar said: 'He was a very charming man and he could use it' BDC 1/XAD/4, BDCM; Sheila Johnson, "Obituary of Bill Douglas," *The Independent*, 20 June 1991, BDC 1/4/3, BDCM.

³⁷ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

The second 'nightmare' Douglas discusses in his account is the representation of the villagers in the film as impoverished and destitute. Douglas explains that during the filming of *My Childhood*, he was approached by a concerned villager who was anxious with regards to the film's exposure of poverty.³⁸ According to Douglas, '[s]he wants me to make a glamorous film about village life, her adjective not mine'.³⁹ Douglas stipulates that it was this comment that led him to instruct 'the crew not to part with the script under any circumstances. I'm afraid if the word gets round how much poverty there will be in the finished film they might banish me', however, this guarded approach with the script was exercised by him in other ways.⁴⁰ For example, Douglas similarly took the tactic to keep the script from the actors in an attempt to try and get the most natural and unrehearsed performance from them. Douglas also took this approach when working with actors during *Comrades*. The way in which Douglas instructed the crew not to part with the script, which would have allowed the villagers to know further details about the film, as well as the actors, is demonstrative of the collectivity of production, displaying cooperation between himself and the crew for the benefit of the working experience, the performance and, ultimately, the final film. The way in which the actors also did not see the script highlights the manoeuvring of work taking place between the director and the actors and the crew around them, as this approach would impact their work. When interviewed by Noble, Archibald commented:

[Bill] wouldn't show me the script, he would just tell me what to do. He would take me away ... away from everyone else One situation had to be sad and Bill took me aside and he started talking to me and he knew my Granny had died a couple of years previously and he started talking to me about my Granny and he knew I was really close to her ... I had tears in my eyes and everything.⁴¹

By keeping the script away from the actors, it meant that Douglas would have had to spend time speaking with them to explain the scene, helping actors to develop an emotional connection to the character and to explain what was needed from them. This is not an unusual approach and is adopted by other directors such as Andrei Tarkovsky, however, the crew would have to account for

³⁸ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

³⁹ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁴⁰ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁴¹ Stephen Archibald, Interview with Andrew Noble, BDC 1/XAD/4/2, BDCM.

this method and any additional time it may have taken for Douglas to explain a scene to an actor before photography could commence.⁴²

The final 'nightmare' in Douglas's account of the production of *My Childhood* concerns the headmaster at the Craigmillar School, where the two child actors, Archibald and Restorick, were pupils. Douglas states that this 'nightmare' led to a strained relationship between himself and the headmaster:

[i]n the headmasters [*sic*] eyes these two [boys] were his biggest dunces, were forever playing truant and besides he had other children who were more deserving, better looking, more intelligent, law abiding and imaginative. Needless to say our relationship was strained from the start.⁴³

Douglas and the headmaster had arranged that the boys would be available to the production for two days in each of the three weeks' of shooting and that this raised concerns for him as to how he would 'get a performance out of them in time'.⁴⁴ Indeed, if the boys had only been available for two days for each of the three weeks' of shooting, then this would have only allowed for a total of six days that the crew could work with them. This timeframe would have been a considerable time pressure and constraint on the production and the boys themselves. Douglas suggests that this problem was resolved by the boys as they expressed a desire that they did not want to go to school but would rather work on the film.⁴⁵ In Douglas's account, he says that it was because of the boys' dedication, and from witnessing their performance improving, that he decided to break the law.⁴⁶ Although Douglas does not explain how one can intuit that this was from letting the boys truant from school to continue filming.⁴⁷ This corresponds with a comment made by Archibald who said, 'I don't know how [Bill] managed to wangle it, but he'd get me out [of school] every day'.⁴⁸ Douglas conveys that he had nothing to lose by doing this when he states that although he 'intended [on] returning to film the second part to be called *My Ain Folk*. It hadn't occurred [*sic*] to me I could get the money. And besides it was unlikely the

⁴² Andrei Tarkovsky famously kept the script from the actors to ensure they did not envisage the ending before they began, thereby influencing their performance and approach.

⁴³ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁴⁴ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁴⁵ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁴⁶ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁴⁷ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁴⁸ Archibald, Interview, BDC 1/XAD/4/2.

village would exist'.⁴⁹ Evidently, during the filming of *My Childhood*, Douglas had come to believe or was at least doubtful that he would be able to secure funding for a further film. This is a reasonable concern to have had, as further funding was not yet guaranteed and it was unprecedented for the Production Board to allocate repeated funding to the same filmmaker, particularly during the start of the decade when they were only just starting to embark on the initiative of funding low-budget features and had come under fierce criticism only a couple of years before.⁵⁰ Douglas's comment could be inferred as a rebellious streak in his willingness to break the law. However, as a manager, under significant pressure of delivering a film in a short time frame, as well as the pressure of it being his first film, this demonstrates a pragmatic approach to achieving results, by making the boys be available for as long as he and the crew would need them to successfully complete filming.

***My Childhood* – Further Challenges**

In light of making a trilogy of films, there were additional concerns and pressures during the production of *My Childhood*. Not only were there concerns regarding the changing landscape and the additional funding needed for the second and third instalments, but the possibility of filming a further two films led to additional pressures on the narrative of *My Childhood* itself. As this section will show, the pressure on the narrative manifested itself through the difficult dynamics at play between Douglas and the film's second producer, Brian Crumlish.

Within Douglas's account of the production, which was initially intended for publication and a wider audience, he is very critical of Crumlish, repeatedly voicing his concerns in his correspondence to Hassan about Crumlish's insufficiencies.⁵¹ Crumlish, a fellow Scot, had attended the London Film School (LFS) a few years prior to Douglas and would later go on to make *Tickets for the*

⁴⁹ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁵⁰ In 1970 a group of BFI Members who formed a group call the Action Committee complained and challenged the BFI's practices. For further details see Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "The British Film Institute," *Cinema Journal*, 47, No. 4, (Summer 2008): 127-128; Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "From the 1964 Government to the 1970 Crisis," in *The British Film Institute, the Government and Film Culture, 1933-2000*, ed. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Christophe Dupin (Manchester University Press, 2012), 111-112.

⁵¹ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

Zoo (1991).⁵² Crumlish replaced the film's first producer Geoffrey Evans after Evans left to take an acting job.⁵³ In a handwritten letter addressed to Hassan, Douglas conveys how he struggled to assert his authority over the crew and to get them to respect him over Crumlish.⁵⁴ It is unclear whether this letter was sent, was a draft, or was more of a cathartic exercise and process for Douglas that enabled him to express his anguish about Crumlish. However, this document provides crucial insight into Douglas's account of his relationship with Crumlish and, more broadly, his expectations of the crew. Douglas states that Crumlish was indifferent and that 'many of the examples would be excluded' from the letter, which implies that Douglas considered Crumlish's offences to be both extensive and frequent.⁵⁵ Significantly, Douglas briefly recognises and highlights the good work carried out by Crumlish, acknowledging that he helped during the filming at the hospital—the scene with Jamie's Mother—when he states, '[i]t is true he helped me at the hospital when I had two and a half hours only to film what would usually have taken eight hours'.⁵⁶ It was from that moment onwards that, according to Douglas, Crumlish 'took over' and: '[a]ny enthusiasm [Crumlish] had was centred on himself. ...He was helped somewhat by the crew who, deciding they did not like what I was doing, went behind my back and fetched Brian'.⁵⁷ The way in which Douglas says that Crumlish 'took over' and his phrasing of how the crew went behind his back conveys he considered it a betrayal by the crew to see Crumlish as a greater authority figure than him within this space. Additionally, this quote is very telling regarding the importance Douglas placed on crew members to demonstrate enthusiasm; he is highly critical if it was not directed towards the work, the film or possibly to himself. The hierarchy of production is certainly evident here, too, as Douglas expresses a concern and a reluctance to relinquish control, especially to Crumlish. In contrast to the typical image of the director having control during a production, what this evinces is a struggle or at least a concern on Douglas's part in terms of being able to maintain authority, reflecting a level of insecurity and his need to have respect from the crew.

⁵² Noble, "Making," 134.

⁵³ Noble, "Making," 134.

⁵⁴ Letter from Bill Douglas to Mamoun Hassan, Unsent, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas to Hassan, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1).

⁵⁵ Douglas to Hassan, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁵⁶ Douglas to Hassan, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁵⁷ Douglas to Hassan, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

On the set of these early Production Board films, the 'producers' had a different set of responsibilities to what was typically expected. In their comprehensive study of the producer figure, Andrew Spicer, Anthony McKenna and Christopher Meir, discuss the different 'roles' of the producer and explores the intermediary nature of the role, combining the creative artistic world as well as finance.⁵⁸ Further, Spicer et al., argue that '[o]n a basic level, as recogni[s]ed within the media industries themselves, a producer needs to be distinguished from an associate or line producer (or production manager), whose job is to control the logistics of the actual production'.⁵⁹ Indeed, with regards to the making of the *Trilogy*, the title of 'producer' was given almost tokenistically, as Hassan explains, 'these people were given the title of producer, but they were all effectively production managers'.⁶⁰ For example, Crumlish was not required to fulfil certain requirements of the producer, like negotiating and securing film finance which was carried out by Hassan, to have an understanding of audiences, or to employ crew members, rather, he was expected to help with the logistics of the production. With extremely tight budgets, it was difficult to get someone in the role of production manager, so as a form of payment and an additional incentive, Hassan credited those in the role as producer.⁶¹ Timothy Havens argues that '[w]ork environments, for instance, routini[s]e activities through professional codes, conventional business practices, executive training sessions, team-building activities, and the like and in that process reproduce the structures of the industry'.⁶² There are certain professional codings attached to particular job roles. Even in independent film productions such as *My Childhood*, production sites maintain some degree of hierarchy and witness a reproduction of structures present in the industry. By giving the title of producer to Crumlish, it replicated

⁵⁸ Andrew Spicer, Anthony McKenna, and Christopher Meir, "Introduction," in *Beyond the Bottom Line: The Producer in Film and Television Studies*, ed. Andrew Spicer, Anthony McKenna, and Christopher Meir, (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 1.

⁵⁹ Andrew Spicer, "Why Study Producers?" Paper given at the Dept. of Theatre, Film and Television Studies, University of Aberystwyth, 2 November 2011, <http://michaelklingerpapers.uwe.ac.uk/pub3.htm>.

⁶⁰ Hassan, Interview, BDC 1/XAD/4/2.

⁶¹ Hassan, Interview, 5 March 2020.

⁶² Timothy Havens, "Towards a Structuration Theory of Media Intermediaries," in *Making Media Work: Cultures of Management in the Entertainment Industries*, ed. Derek Johnson, Derek Kompare, and Avi Santo (New York; London: NYU Press, 2014), 46, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qfm5v.3.

hierarchical structures or perceptions by crew members of Crumlish's authority, however, his actual role and responsibilities were that of a production manager.

With regards to the director, the impact of the auteur theory has not only been deleterious to the study of certain roles within film studies scholarship, leading contributions of other workers to be overlooked,⁶³ but it has also influenced the production site on a granular level. Chris Mathieu posits '[t]here is a general consensus on the acceptance of the director's authority. A second basic maxim is that the good of the film should be everyone's overriding concern not individual opportunities for expression', which correlates with Douglas's need for the crew to demonstrate enthusiasm and commitment.⁶⁴ Douglas states:

[i]t did not take long for the crew to disrespect me. Let me tell you something I should have told them. I miss nothing not a flicker of an eye and I can fully predict what will happen. And it does. Of course I say nothing. I like to let life happen because it never fails to fascinate me.⁶⁵

Here, Douglas represents himself as demonstrating a level of tolerance and restraint to avoid conflict, implying that he prefers to be an observer. Despite this, Douglas still decides to tell Hassan 'what [Hassan] will not see in the rushes'.⁶⁶ This action conveys his intense dissatisfaction and need for respect from the crew. Moreover, by feeling the need to tell Hassan the goings-on of how he perceived the dynamics on-set and the difficulties he was facing, it demonstrates that Douglas sees and treats Hassan as the authority figure here, indicating his accountability is to Hassan despite him not being present on set. This evidences Douglas alliance to the idea of a hierarchy within a film production, referring to the person he views as not only having more authority but also recognising that Hassan is also more experienced than himself.

Within his correspondence to Hassan, Douglas has the opportunity to shape and cultivate a certain representation of the production culture, choosing what to disclose and what to withhold. In so doing, this process of retelling stories about personalities and difficult crew members helps to shape not only the

⁶³ Andrew Spicer, "The Author as Author: Restoring the Screenwriter to British Film History," in *The New Film History: Sources, Methods, Approaches*, ed. James Chapman, Mark Glancy, and Sue Harper (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 89.

⁶⁴ Chris Mathieu, "The 'Cultural' of Production and Career," in *Behind the Screen: Inside European Production Cultures*, ed. Petr Szczepanik and Patrick Vonderau, 1st edition, Global Cinema (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 52.

⁶⁵ Douglas to Hassan, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁶⁶ Douglas to Hassan, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

representation of the production to Hassan but potentially has further longevity if it was then echoed by Hassan during interviews or conversations with individuals working in the industry. These comments by Douglas work to assert his identity as the director in control. It also provides an opportunity to blame other crew members for inadequacies in the final film. This is illustrated in the letter when Douglas provides an account of a heated moment of conflict and tension between himself and Crumlish. The incident in question was on the final day of shooting when they were scheduled to film the final scene of the film, which sees Jamie running to the bridge and jumping over as a train is coming, leaving the audience to momentarily be unsure if he has committed suicide or is on the train. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Douglas had already demonstrated a degree of uncertainty as to how he should end the film in the application he submitted to the Board. The disagreement during filming concerned Crumlish obtaining a suitable smoke machine and a safety blanket for the protection of Archibald. In Douglas's account, he says that Crumlish appeared with a 'tiny smoke box', which would not be suitable for creating enough smoke.⁶⁷ The size of the smoke box meant that the scene would only work as a close-up, which would have greatly affected the ending of the film and its impact. When recounting this issue in his correspondence with Hassan, Douglas said, 'that might be all right for the London [F]ilm [S]chool but it is not all right by me'.⁶⁸ Here, Douglas frames Crumlish as though he is still at the level of, or at least willing to accept the quality of student filmmaking, attempting to distance himself from Crumlish's abilities. The fact that Douglas and Crumlish were a few years apart when studying at the LFS could suggest that this has further insult or critical implication on the level of Crumlish's work, as though Douglas was asserting that he had moved beyond student-level and that he was above him. Like the crew, Douglas himself was inexperienced. On one hand, then, it could be argued that he is being unfairly critical of others in his representation; on the other, in his role as writer-director, as well as it being his first film, there were additional pressures felt by Douglas to distinguish himself from the other crew members and a need to have his expertise and skill acknowledged by Hassan. Moreover, although Hassan alludes to Crumlish's role as being more of a production manager than a producer, Douglas's distancing from Crumlish evinces his struggle with authority figures within that production

⁶⁷ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁶⁸ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

site in finding a footing and a hold in his role as a manager and director within the on-set hierarchy.

In Douglas's account, the smokebox incident had a further impact with regards to how he felt the crew perceived him. In his role of director, there appears certain pressures to maintain his position within the production hierarchy. In the academic study of the role of director, they are commonly referred to as 'helmets'.⁶⁹ Virginia Wright Wexman notes that this term 'likened their role to that of the captain of a ship who must steer a hulking vessel through inclement weather and mechanical breakdowns while managing a large crew'.⁷⁰ In Douglas's account he explains that his confusion and lack of distinction between smoke and steam when he provided instructions became a source of entertainment for the crew.⁷¹ He states: '[i]t is not a good idea to be made foolish in front of everybody. ...Mr Crumlish liked a sneak laugh at my expense'.⁷² Douglas's concern of being viewed as 'foolish' demonstrates that he felt he had to present a certain professional image to the crew to be able to maintain a level of control over the working environment. This illustrates Douglas adopting a professional position within the hierarchy of the work environment on-set and a need to have respect from the crew to maintain his authority as a manager.

Douglas goes on to say, '[a]t bottom [Crumlish] disliked my preference for the fixed camera and saw the hand held camera as a great ... move forward'.⁷³ Therefore, their disagreements were not restricted solely to their approach and attitude to the work itself, nor did they only coalesce around the different roles and the power dynamics attached to them, but it included their differences in cinematic style, an area that would not be the responsibility of a production manager. Being the director comes with the responsibility to navigating multiple creative input and expertise. Michelle Hilmes highlights how the notion of the auteur distorts the realities of media authorship and that it is important to recognise this struggle within production studies as there are converging factors and multiple sources of creative input to then consider.⁷⁴ What is evidenced here

⁶⁹ Virginia Wright Wexman, ed., *Directing, Behind the Silver Screen: A Modern History of Filmmaking* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2017), 1.

⁷⁰ Wright Wexman, 1.

⁷¹ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁷² Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁷³ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁷⁴ Hilmes, "Nailing Mercury," 48.

is that the filmmakers have differing styles and approaches, and in the role of the director there is a responsibility to navigate these different points of input effectively, a trait that could also be applicable to the role of a producer. Evidently, there was an unhealthy producer/director dynamic in that neither has negotiated a position with the other and clearly defined their role or rather their expectations of the role. Therefore, whilst the image of power placed on the individual author is accurate to a point, it is being administered within a framework or interconnecting factors or individuals with different priorities, which, consequently, can either be a constraint or a creative opportunity. The outcome of this is dependent on several factors, such as working relationships and dynamics, agreement and receptivity to the suggestion, the feasibility of carrying it out and cost, among others. In Douglas's role as director, he is responsible for managing creative input and differences, however, he interpreted the differences between himself and Crumlish as a threat to his authority over the crew.

Douglas recounts that Crumlish's solution to resolve the smokebox issues and the filming of the final scene was to '[j]ust let the boy run away'.⁷⁵ Although a solution to a logistical problem and sourcing of appropriate equipment, Crumlish's idea to let the boy run away would have considerably affected the film's narrative. Douglas argued that the possibility of suicide or survival in the audience's mind would have a much greater impact. The conflict regarding the ending led Douglas to imply it was a strategy by Crumlish because he wanted to 'rewrite the scene'.⁷⁶ The way in which Douglas represents Crumlish's vocalisation on the ending further reveals creative tensions at play; Douglas criticises Crumlish's need for his creative input to be acknowledged and sees it as a challenge to his creative authority over the narrative. As suggested, in the role of director there is a need and expectation that they must negotiate and manage creative suggestions, expertise, and opinions from the crew. Within Douglas's representation of the production culture, and at this point in his career, he evidences that on-set hierarchy was not settled to a single consistent pattern or aligned with particular expectations.

Douglas requested Crumlish to contact Helen Eccles, a local, to see if anything could be done regarding obtaining a smokebox that would be

⁷⁵ Douglas to Hassan, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁷⁶ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

appropriate for filming.⁷⁷ Douglas explained in an unsent letter to Hassan that Crumlish had lied to him about having contacted her, stating 'there was no such call'.⁷⁸ This mistrust towards a worker would be a problem for any manager. Referring again to Mathieu who states that it is generally accepted that the 'overriding concern should be for the good of the film', showing commitment and enthusiasm for the project is something that Douglas repeatedly returns to, criticising Crumlish and other crew members' for what he perceives as their lack of enthusiasm.⁷⁹ In Duncan Petrie's examination of Lindsay Anderson, he comments on Anderson's and Douglas's similarities: 'both men shared an unshakeable belief in the integrity of the artistic vision of the director and the responsibility of everyone working on the film to serve that vision'.⁸⁰ Petrie's use of the word 'responsibility' is pertinent to the examination of Douglas's response to Crumlish, as Douglas evinces his expectations of those around him to commit to the work and their specific role which in Crumlish's case was to make filming logistically possible. Significantly, Evans is credited as the producer for *My Childhood* and Crumlish is left uncredited.

Similarly to Douglas's criticisms of certain crew members, in Sellar's and Rees's accounts of Douglas, they both suggest a lack of consistency of Douglas being present.⁸¹ For example, they comment that Douglas would often go off by himself, so much so that the crew sometimes had trouble finding him before a day of shooting would begin.⁸² This representation of Douglas as purposefully isolating himself or finding time to be solitary by physically separating himself from the crew without informing them of his whereabouts juxtaposes the notion of togetherness, collaboration, and collectivity. Douglas's action to take time to separate himself from the crew would have inevitably impacted their ability to work and start filming for the day. Whilst it could be perceived as part of his own working processes, in light of the tight schedule the crew had to work to, the impact of Douglas's disappearances and delays this would cause could further

⁷⁷ Douglas to Hassan, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁷⁸ Douglas to Hassan, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁷⁹ Mathieu, "Cultural," 52.

⁸⁰ Duncan Petrie, "Lindsay Anderson and Scotland: Identity and the Inveterate Outsider," in *Lindsay Anderson Revisited: Unknown Aspects of a Film Director*, ed. Erik Hedling and Christophe Dupin (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 198.

⁸¹ Charles Rees, Interview with Andrew Noble, BDC 1/XAD/4/2, BDCM, and Sellar, Interview, BDC 1/XAD/4/2.

⁸² Rees, Interview. Sellar, Interview, BDC 1/XAD/4/2.

distance and separate himself from the crew and lead to increasing frustrations towards him.

These different perspectives and representations of Douglas can return us to Hassan's words, quoted at the beginning of the chapter. Hassan's representation portrays a sense that working with Douglas on the production site connected crew members to deep feelings of grief, however, there were some long-lasting friendships created and Douglas would praise some individuals openly in his correspondence to Hassan as well as his private reflections. For example, in Douglas's reflection on the *Trilogy*, he suggests that it was because of Archibald that he would return to film *My Ain Folk*. He states:

[t]here he was, crying as if the world was about to disintegrate. There was no way out. I had to come back. I promised I'd come back. It wasn't only me he would miss but the crew, these strangers from the south he never knew existed. He had to come to realise the world was more than his own anguished doorstep. How difficult it is to break a promise, especially to a child.⁸³

Here, Douglas represents himself as having paternalistic inclinations towards Archibald and, although there were other factors such as his career and funding that would be the reason to return, the way in which he demonstrates his need to keep a promise to Archibald shows he deeply cares for him. Equally, Archibald recalled an incident when Ian Smith's wallet went missing and Smith accused Archibald of taking it and slapped Archibald.⁸⁴ This led Douglas to fire Smith, however, Archibald spoke to Douglas, resulting in him giving Smith back his job because Archibald felt it was a misunderstanding and that he was not to blame.⁸⁵ Douglas's reaction here is comparative to how a father might react. Douglas acknowledged the similarities between himself and Archibald, stating that '[Archibald] was very like me. I'd look into his eye, and I could see that he knew exactly what I was talking about. I'd just glance at him and say, ["Oh, you know what I mean."] It was as if he was my left arm'.⁸⁶ Furthermore, the way in which Douglas has a paternalistic relationship and inclination towards Archibald is a manifestation of the hierarchy on-set.

⁸³ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁸⁴ Archibald, Interview, BDC 1/XAD/4/2.

⁸⁵ Archibald, Interview, BDC 1/XAD/4/2.

⁸⁶ "A very Scottish Childhood," *Sunday Herald*, 7 June 2008, BDC 1/TRI/3/1, BDCM.

Outside of the production site, Douglas continued to keep in touch with Archibald and his family.⁸⁷ Incidentally, he also had the intention to cast him as Legg in his feature film *Comrades* (1987). At the time of filming, however, Archibald was in prison and despite fervently trying to arrange his release, Douglas was unsuccessful. Douglas similarly demonstrated how he cared for Archibald in his journal when he discussed the headmaster's dismissive attitudes towards the two boys which made him like them even more.⁸⁸ A longstanding friendship was created between them, which suggests that, although some have framed the production culture as challenging as a working environment, there were friendships created that continued long after the production was finished.

Although Douglas unhesitatingly voiced his criticisms of Crumlish, he did single out and praise three members of the crew during *My Childhood* in his correspondence to Hassan. These were: Mick Campbell (cinematography), Roger Pratt (assistant camera) and Ian Sellar (continuity).⁸⁹ The way in which Douglas corresponds with Hassan to inform him about Campbell, Pratt and Sellar's efforts shows that Douglas singled out both good workers as well as those that disappointed him, whether he congratulated them personally is unknown. Similarly, in the materials held at the BDCM, there is an undated document by Douglas containing a speech he may have delivered, likely before a screening to the local community, after the film was complete. He states:

I would like to thank everybody who helped during the making of the film a year ago. It takes a long time to put a film together BUT you have all been very patient AND I'd better warn you, you will have to be quick if you hope to catch a glimpse of yourself. Anyway I hope you like it because I would like to come and make another film.⁹⁰

Within this speech, Douglas expresses gratitude towards those who helped and for their patience in the delivery of the film. Although this could be read as an emotional sentiment, it is also indicative of his pragmatic attitude to enable him to return to make another film.

⁸⁷ See Letter from Bill Douglas to John Archibald, Undated, BDC 1/XAD/5/1, BDCM; Letter from Mrs Archibald to Bill Douglas, Undated, BDC 1/XAD/5/1, BDCM; Letter from John Archibald to Bill Douglas, 20 October 1971, BDC 1/XAD/5/1, BDCM; Photographs of Stephen Archibald and wife Maggie on trip to London with Peter Jewell, BDC 1/XAD/9/1, BDCM.

⁸⁸ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁸⁹ Douglas to Hassan, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁹⁰ Bill Douglas, Speech, Handwritten, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1, BDCM.

Evidently, during the production of *My Childhood*, there is a complex representation of the production culture put forward by Douglas. For Douglas, as well as for many crew members, it was their first experience working on a professional film. There were a number of challenges that impacted the production that were out of their control. In terms of Douglas's authority within the production site space, in his unpublished account, he conveys that he felt his autonomy was threatened by Crumlish, a fellow 'above-the-line' figure who had attended LFS. Douglas also demonstrated concern regarding the respect shown towards him by the crew. Although Douglas was highly critical of Crumlish, he does acknowledge those who he felt had worked well but demonstrates a concern and prioritisation for the crew to demonstrate enthusiasm and commitment towards the work. Ultimately, by Douglas expressing these concerns, it is indicative of insecurity felt in his own ability to manage and a process of jostling for his position and place within the production context and hierarchy, particularly appropriate in early stage careers. Moreover, an auteurist approach might present this as a producer versus director, Crumlish was not in reality in the role of producer, but rather that of a production manager and their relationship reflected their navigation of place within the production hierarchy.

***My Ain Folk* – Clashes in Management**

Unfortunately, Douglas did not continue penning his account of the production of the *Trilogy* that was intended for future publication further than the beginnings of *My Childhood*. He did carry out a process of writing lists of criticisms and notes reflecting on the productions of the following two films. Often undated and unaddressed, these documents provide crucial insight into his view of challenges faced, his perception of fellow crew members, and what work he felt needed to be done and why.

Following the release of *My Childhood*, no longer was he an unknown filmmaker that the Production Board had taken a gamble on, he had proven that Production Board films could achieve prestigious international prizes. It was shortly after the release of *My Childhood* that the filming of *My Ain Folk* began, in October 1972. This short time between making the two films allowed little time or opportunity for Douglas to develop or reflect on his approach. This section will

move on to Douglas's similar repetition of management strategy and alienation of crew members due to certain behaviours.

In advance of the production, Douglas wrote to David Brown, the Councillor of Newcraighall, to assuage any negativity that the villagers may have had towards the production because of the representation of poverty of the village in his first film.⁹¹ Although *My Childhood* had been well-received internationally, Douglas's account recalls the criticisms following the screening at Edinburgh Film Festival, which was met with 'lukewarm to polite reviews'.⁹² Following the festival, he said that he 'felt like a criminal' and 'like a traitor'.⁹³ This negativity from both villagers and local film critics, and their denunciation of the film clearly affected Douglas, shown by his statement that '[m]y sense of shame turned to rage, for to admit shame was to negate my familys [sic] existence'.⁹⁴ Therefore, there may be a sense of alienation felt from his fellow villagers, that his identity and experience was being denied or dismissed by them, which was likely to have been further compounded by the lack of financial support given by Films of Scotland and a mostly English crew.

When reflecting on the principal photography stage of *My Ain Folk*, Hassan has framed it as a turbulent affair, specifically highlighting Douglas's behaviour towards soundman, Peter Harvey, after an accidental erasure of a take, as well as a suicide threat by Douglas.⁹⁵ In spite of Douglas repeatedly singing Sellar's praises to Hassan during *My Childhood*, on the first day of shooting *My Ain Folk*, Douglas attempted to fire Sellar for obtaining the wrong kind of jam jars.⁹⁶ This portrayal of an extreme reaction suggests that there was an intensity to Douglas's behaviour that the crew had to work under and navigate. Noble provides an account of these interactions in his chapter in *A Lanternist's Account*.⁹⁷ The Working Papers held at the BDCM do not include details about these events, so will not be the focus here. Nevertheless, the materials do include a vast amount

⁹¹ Jewell, "Willie," BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁹² Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁹³ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁹⁴ Douglas, Reflections, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/1.

⁹⁵ Hassan, "His Ain Man"; Noble, "Making," 139.

⁹⁶ Noble, "Making," 136.

⁹⁷ See Noble, "Making," 136-39. Noble provides an account of Douglas throwing a chair in frustration for having written the scene in which Tommy is taken away by the social worker and a struggle breaks out. There is no evidence in the Working Papers that corresponds with this and as there are no references included in the publication, I have been unable to trace Douglas' comment.

of correspondence between Douglas and the BFI regarding the editing of the film. This period of the production is so heavily documented by Douglas within the materials that it will be the focus of this section. Noble warns that 'writing about it ... incurs the same danger as editing it: you cannot see the wood for the trees'.⁹⁸ The huge amount of documentation, combined with Douglas's habit of not dating his correspondence, his notes of criticisms and journal entries, does add to the challenge.⁹⁹ In spite of this, through close-analysis of the materials, this section will provide an overview of the editing period and an analysis of Douglas's representation of those he worked with during this time. Moreover, this section will expand on Douglas's management strategy, how he worked with other managers, 'above-the-line' workers and creative staff.

The editing itself took over a year to complete and saw two editors (Brand Thumin and Peter West), Hassan, and Douglas's mentor, Lindsay Anderson assist. At one point there were even discussions of a third editor (Roger Crittingdon, an editing lecturer at the National Film School) joining the project.¹⁰⁰ Douglas explains that pressure began when he wanted to bring back two editors—Brand Thumin (editor) and Tim Lewis (sound editor)—both of whom had worked on *My Childhood*.¹⁰¹ It was in fact during post-production, after eight months of editing that Hassan chose to replace Thumin with West, a more experienced editor who worked at the BBC.¹⁰² Considering the pressures to achieve a timely release in light of the financial commitment that the Production Board had given to the project, it is understandable that after a period of eight months, Hassan would suggest that another more experienced editor be brought in. It is likely to be because of pressure to ensure the completion of the film in a timely manner so that the film could be shown at particular film festivals that

⁹⁸ Noble, "Making," 140.

⁹⁹ A trait that Lindsay Anderson, who was a meticulous record-keeper, tried to curtail. In correspondence with Douglas, Anderson requested that he 'Do get in the habit of dating your letters', Letter from Lindsay Anderson to Bill Douglas, 21 March 1983, LA/5/01/9/10, Lindsay Anderson Collection, University of Stirling (hereafter cited as Anderson to Douglas, LA/5/01/9/10).

¹⁰⁰ According to Douglas, Hassan planned for Crittingdon to join for four weeks. It is certainly possible, however, there is no evidence to suggest that he did, nor is he listed on the credits; Letter from Bill Douglas to Lindsay Anderson, Undated, LA/5/01/2/9/4, Lindsay Anderson Collection, University of Stirling.

¹⁰¹ Letter from Bill Douglas to John (no surname included), Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/2, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas to John, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/2).

¹⁰² Noble, "Making," 139 suggests it was six months, however, the correspondence and recordings suggest eight.

contributed to Thumin's dismissal. Douglas contests that it was because the head of the Production Board's friends were to be appointed instead that led to Thumin and Lewis being sacked.¹⁰³

Thumin had indeed worked on *My Childhood* with Douglas, however, during the editing of the film, Hassan—who was an experienced editor himself—assisted them in the process.¹⁰⁴ During an interview, Thumin explained that he was led to understand from Hassan that the reason he was dismissed was because Hassan's approach was to avoid favouritism and to try out different crew members to provide as many opportunities as possible, an approach that the Production Board did try to follow; a process that contributed to lack of consistency in crew working on the three films.¹⁰⁵ Although Hassan had presented his decision to Thumin in this way, it is likely that Hassan was aware and understood that bringing in someone else with more experience at this stage to assist with completing the film was needed. *My Ain Folk* was more complex in its requirements than *My Childhood*. Evidently, Thumin was given a significant amount of time (eight months) to work on the editing of *My Ain Folk*, and it was not simply a dismissal based on the nepotism of the head of production, as Douglas implies in his account.

Douglas suggests that it was the critical success that *My Childhood* had received that led to greater involvement from the BFI during the making of *My Ain Folk*, as early as March 1973.¹⁰⁶ For example, Douglas explains that:

[t]he days of *My Childhood* in the editing room were very happy. I was at that exciting stage where one is a beginner. Nobody knew who I was. Nobody expected anything. I was wonderfully free from interference. Everyone was there to help. And because of this *My Childhood* turned out very well for all concerned.¹⁰⁷

This comparison to his experience of making *My Childhood* is not an isolated one. For instance, in a letter to Michael Relph, Douglas explained that unlike *My Childhood*, one of the troubles that *My Ain Folk* faced was that it had been seen too early 'as raw as a foetus' and that as a result of comments received, the

¹⁰³ Douglas to John, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/2.

¹⁰⁴ Thumin, Interview, BDC 1/XAD/4/2.

¹⁰⁵ Thumin, Interview, BDC 1/XAD/4/2.

¹⁰⁶ Letter from Bill Douglas to Michael Relph, 14 August 1973, BDC 1/TRI/1/2, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas to Relph, BDC 1/TRI/1/2).

¹⁰⁷ Douglas to John, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/2.

editing became 'unsure, very self-conscious and difficult'.¹⁰⁸ By comparison, Douglas states that there was greater patience in viewing the rough and fine cut of *My Childhood*. By blaming the conditions of work of having to screen *My Ain Folk* too early as the reason to edit, Douglas does not acknowledge that it might be due to a lack of ability or that he needed greater assistance. Nor does he recognise that he had a clearer idea with *My Childhood* as he had worked on it for so long and that *My Ain Folk* was a more complex project. Rather, he suggests it was the pressures from the Production Board that impacted their work negatively, affecting their ability to edit.

It was after Thumin's dismissal that Douglas's correspondence became increasingly critical of the BFI, which he directed towards Hassan. Douglas made several parallels to the callousness of Hollywood, comparing the BFI to MGM.¹⁰⁹ In a letter to Michael Relph, sent in August 1973, and thus nine months into the editing process, Douglas states '[t]he editor has gone, unfairly sacked by ruthlessness I thought had gone out with Hollywood and I find myself relegated to the back seat'.¹¹⁰ Douglas's criticisms of Thumin's replacement, arguing that he was unfairly sacked and not acknowledging that having someone else join could provide a fresh perspective, more experience and thus a level of creative expertise to offer, could suggest a deeply-felt loyalty to Thumin. Alternatively, to Douglas, Thumin represented a stable force, a person who had worked with him on his first film, which had been proven to be critically successful. During the post-production stage of the film, there is a small group of people required to bring the final film together. Within this group, there is a need for trust and having an unknown editor to Douglas who was appointed by Hassan may have been disconcerting as he would have to adjust and learn to work with someone new in the cutting room. Furthermore, Douglas may have interpreted this as a challenge to his managerial authority. Either way, it was the firing of Thumin that seemed to

¹⁰⁸ Douglas to Relph, BDC 1/TRI/1/2.

¹⁰⁹ In an undated letter from Bill Douglas addressed to Keith Lucas, he states, 'The Production Board may have designs after MGM, but the Mayers of this world are dead now'; Letter from Bill Douglas to Keith Lucas, A, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/2, BDCM. Similarly, when interviewed by Noble, Hassan also said that Douglas sent a letter to a lot of people where he compared him to Louis B. Mayer at MGM, Hassan, Interview, BDC 1/XAD/4/2, BDCM.

¹¹⁰ Douglas to Relph, BDC 1/TRI/1/2.

markedly effect and influence a shift in Douglas's representation of Hassan and the BFI in his materials.

After West was appointed as the editor of *My Ain Folk*, Douglas became very dismissive of him in his private lists of criticisms, as well as in correspondence to key individuals at the BFI. Douglas states that '[t]he [new] editor, as it turned out, was working two projects at the same time; *My Ain Folk* and one for another company'.¹¹¹ Douglas's comment on West working on more than one project can be interpreted as being critical of West, implying either a lack of loyalty or the ability to manage to work on two projects at once. This is further indicative of Douglas's need for crew members to demonstrate their commitment to the project at hand. Moreover, he says that the editor 'had not seen *My Childhood* and so, naturally, he did not understand my way of working', suggesting a further lack of understanding and inability to carry out the work effectively due to his unfamiliarity with Douglas's work.¹¹² The representation put forward by Douglas of his and West's relationship has been criticised by Noble who suggests they were quite good friends.¹¹³ Indeed, at one point during the post-production period, Douglas even stayed with West for a month in his home in Clapham at West's expense.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, it was his friendship with West that led him to meet Mick Audsley, who would go on to work initially as sound editor, then editor, on *My Way Home*, and as the editor on *Comrades*.¹¹⁵ Additionally, later during the post-production of *My Way Home*, Douglas sought West for advice. Douglas wrote: 'Peter is always good to talk with. Who knows maybe we can take in a film and maybe he will even give me some advice and hope for the future. That's the kind of person Peter is'.¹¹⁶ The way he talks about West here—wanting to socialise with him, hoping for his advice—completely juxtaposes how he represents him and their relationship in his documents when they worked together on *My Ain Folk*. Douglas did not hesitate to repeatedly express to the Production Board his intense dissatisfaction with West's attitude,

¹¹¹ Douglas to John, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/2.

¹¹² Douglas to John, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/2.

¹¹³ Noble, "Making," 145.

¹¹⁴ Noble, "Making," 145 and Mick Audsley, Interview with Author, 9 March 2020.

¹¹⁵ Audsley, Interview, 9 March 2020.

¹¹⁶ Bill Douglas, Twenty-three page document in red ink, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3, BDCM (hereafter cited Douglas, Twenty-three, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3).

frequently noting his lack of enthusiasm and professionalism.¹¹⁷ It is unclear exactly why Douglas was so overly critical of West—even in his private documents—but it could be inferred as a clash of management agendas between him and Hassan who had enforced and implemented West's appointment. Significantly, analysis of Douglas's relationship with West conveys the difference in his temperament between the workspace of the cutting room and outside of work; he could be highly critical of someone, even if he was close friends with them.

West projected that it would take him three weeks of working full-time to finish the film, however, the editing took much longer than he expected, and he ended up working on it for five months.¹¹⁸ West had been released from the BBC specially to work on the film. As a result of the unexpected extension and time delays, Hassan later wrote to Huw Wheldon, the managing director of the BBC, in November 1973, to request West's release for additional time.¹¹⁹

The clash in management between Douglas and Hassan had come to a head earlier on during post-production on Friday 10 August 1973, when an incident at the BFI premises involving the police saw Douglas being physically removed after trying to take cans of film off the premises. Douglas discusses this encounter in his account and explains that he had arranged to meet with West to work on a scene that he stipulates the editor was having difficulty with.¹²⁰ He recalls that, on his arrival, West 'was not there as he was working on his other film and trying to meet a deadline'; Douglas then responded to West's unavailability as follows: '[n]o matter, I studied the trouble scene on the editing machine'.¹²¹ Here, Douglas's representation of the incident indicates that he did not care that West was torn between work commitments, framing it as though

¹¹⁷ Letter from Bill Douglas to Michael Relph, December 1973, BDC 1/TRI/1/2, BDCM; Bill Douglas, "List of Errors due to Lack of Communication," Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/2, BDCM.

¹¹⁸ Peter West, Interview with Andrew Noble, BDC 1/XAD/4/2, BDCM.

West suggests it was 12 weeks that he worked on the editing, (West, Interview, BDC 1/XAD/4/2), Thumin suggests West worked on it for five months (Thumin, Interview, BDC 1/XAD/4/2). As West discusses his witnessing of the confrontation between Douglas and Hassan regarding the film cans that occurred in August 1973 and worked on it till at least December 1973 for the LFF copy, it suggests that he was working on it for at least five months.

¹¹⁹ Noble, "Making," 139.

¹²⁰ Douglas to John, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/2.

¹²¹ Douglas to John, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/2.

West was struggling to grapple with the work. Therefore, he implies that he was only there to help and assist, in his role as manager. Douglas recalls that shortly afterwards, a telephone conversation between himself and the head of production followed:

[Hassan] was in a fury. He wanted to know why I was in the building. I tried to explain but he heard nothing. He wanted to know why I was working behind the editors back, editing the film. Once more I tried to explain but in his fury he heard nothing. He ordered me out reminded me I was trespassing [*sic*] on British Film Institute property. ... The next thing I knew there was a man in front of me. He was from another part of the building. He told me I was to vacate the premises immediately or he was to ring the police.¹²²

There are two draft letters by Douglas, addressed to Hassan, in which he recalls the event that are part of the Working Papers.¹²³ The first draft is full of numerous spellings errors and typos, indicating that Douglas wrote this in haste shortly after the event. Douglas explains that he slammed the phone down on Hassan's secretary when she had called to notify him that the police had been made aware of his unwanted presence. In the first draft, Douglas asks:

[w]hy was it necessary to roder [*sic*] me out of the building and why was the police contacted? ... I would like the history behind this behaviour explained to me in detail so that I might have a proper understanding. In truth I see no reason why I should not be allowed inside the building. Is there not a film of mine being edited there?¹²⁴

In contrast, in his interview with Noble, West, recalls this event is as follows:

[t]here were moments of complete farce that happened. [Bill] was so dissatisfied with how the cut was going at times he would take the tins off the racks and run up the road with them, a classic joke case. And Mamoun, who could be quite hysterical, phoned for the police to get these cans back, saying it was BFI property, not his. ... but there were many amusing aspects like that. They weren't so funny at the time.¹²⁵

Here, West suggests Douglas's actions were intended as more of a joke but were misinterpreted by the BFI, leading the situation to escalate. In comparison to Douglas's representation, West saw the event as quite humorous and suggests Douglas's actions of taking the cans of film were in good nature.

¹²² Douglas to John, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/2.

¹²³ Draft letters from Bill Douglas to Mamoun Hassan, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/2, BDCM.

¹²⁴ Draft letters from Bill Douglas to Mamoun Hassan, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/2, BDCM.

¹²⁵

Douglas detailed this clash in an undated and unaddressed note stating that: 'I could hardly get a word in edgeways. Hysteria was in the air'.¹²⁶ He then went on to explain that it became necessary for him to then shout to be heard over the screams and that, as a way of protest, he would take two cans of film with him.¹²⁷ On one hand, this process of self-reflexivity that Douglas carries out here could be an attempt to gain an understanding of this conflict and the differing motives behind certain actions. On the other, there is a sense of justifying his behaviour, that it was necessary to shout just to be heard. He is, therefore, presenting himself as a victim, harmlessly working on the film while the editor was working on his other projects.

Douglas recalled this incident to Anderson as well, in which he framed it slightly differently again when he explained:

on my arrival in the building there was a phone call for me. It was from Mamoun. He was as hysterical as a spoilt child with a broken toy. Had he not screamed, had he been reasonable he would have got a reasonable answer. I am not a saint and so the sounds that issued forth between us were the sounds of hell.¹²⁸

Douglas then goes on to suggest that it was *after* being screamed at by Hassan during this confrontation that he left with a couple of cans of film as a way of retaliating. The way in which he presents this interaction is more like a head-to-head confrontation with Hassan. In doing so, he suggests he is more authoritative and combative. For Douglas, Anderson was like a mentor to him, therefore, there could have been a greater need felt by him to display 'presence' and authority. Furthermore, as Anderson was a vocal critic of the BFI, Douglas might have been more inclined to show that he too was having difficulty working with them.

It was shortly after this incident that Hassan wrote to Douglas in which he reassured him by stating:

[f]or the record, you are in creative control of the film; you and nobody else. However, Film is a co-operative venture and technicians do not normally operate well when given orders. In the end you have to decide whether you want collaborators, who can offer you something creative, or instruments, who will give you what you want but no more. That is your

¹²⁶ Bill Douglas, Notes of Criticisms, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/2, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas, Criticisms, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/2).

¹²⁷ Douglas, Criticisms, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/2.

¹²⁸ Letter from Bill Douglas to Lindsay Anderson, Undated, LA/5/01/2/9/2, Lindsay Anderson Collection, University of Stirling.

decision. I am and will continue to be interested in the film and do my best for it.¹²⁹

Here, Hassan reinforces Douglas's sense of creative authority over the film. However, he also clearly reminds him that making a film is a collaborative process and thus that there is an opportunity to utilise creative expertise and input from others. With regards to Hassan's correspondence with Douglas following this heated interaction, Caldwell considers the conventionalised behaviours of production spaces and coding of particular roles when he states, '[t]he male director ... is given a longer behavioural leash'.¹³⁰ The way Caldwell suggests that the director is given a degree of laxity regarding his behaviour is certainly evident in the way that Hassan corresponds with Douglas following this heated interaction. Although Hassan makes explicit his feelings regarding utilising creative expertise and encourages Douglas to work with other crew members, ultimately, he suggests that the decision is up to Douglas.

Following this incident, Keith Lucas, director of the BFI, wrote to Douglas.¹³¹ Lucas suggested that the best course of action henceforth would be to allow West to provide Douglas with a cut version and 'then for you, as director, to exercise your creative control', which echoes Hassan's assertion.¹³² After Lucas's communication, Douglas did stop sending any further letters for seven to eight weeks—a period to which Douglas refers as his 'retirement'.¹³³ It was agreed between Douglas and the BFI that during this period he should take a break and stay away from the cutting room, leaving West to it. Douglas's materials reflect a deep dissatisfaction in having to stay away, expressing his frustration with being relegated outside the cutting room:

I am not allowed inside the cutting room while my film is being salvaged. I am not allowed to make suggestions or hear suggestions until the reel has been cut. If I oppose the changes being made there is melodrama Griffith might have grabbed with both hands and because of its underlying cruelty when I am told that if I think I know better they will leave it to me and that entails a walk out.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Letter from Mamoun Hassan to Bill Douglas, Michael Relph and Keith Lucas, 14 August 1973, BDC1/TRI/1/2, BDCM.

¹³⁰ Caldwell, *Production Culture*, 73.

¹³¹ Letter from Keith Lucas to Bill Douglas, 21 August 1973, BDC 1/TRI/1/2, BDCM (hereafter cited as Lucas to Douglas, BDC 1/TRI/1/2).

¹³² Lucas to Douglas, BDC 1/TRI/1/2.

¹³³ Letter from Bill Douglas to Keith Lucas, B, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/2, BDCM.

¹³⁴ Douglas, Criticisms, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/2.

Again, Douglas references Classical Hollywood through his comparison to D.W. Griffith's melodramas and uses this to further present himself as being treated unfairly and as a victim of cruelty. Although West was an experienced editor, his background was in documentary and television. Douglas sought advice from Anderson who advised that he take a holiday.¹³⁵ In Douglas's private account, he suggests that the reason he agreed to stay away was because of lethargy: 'I was very tired and needed a rest', when he had actually been advised by a number of key figures working at the BFI—Lucas and Hassan, as well as Anderson—to take a break and leave West to it.¹³⁶ This representation by Douglas is more decisive and authoritative of him choosing to take a break rather than being told to and works to convey his agency over the decision.

For a long time during the editing, Douglas had kept the script from West.¹³⁷ As previously mentioned, Douglas kept the script from the actors with the intention of trying to create a more natural, unrehearsed performance. On the one hand, perhaps Douglas felt that in giving West the script, he would lose editorial control. West's appointment was initiated by Hassan, and after being encouraged to stay out of the editorial room, it is possible that Douglas interpreted this as some sort of allegiance between the editor and the BFI, and, consequently, as a threat to his creative control and management. On the other hand, perhaps, as a manager, Douglas felt that by keeping the script from West it would enable him to look at the materials and work produced thus far with a fresh perspective, and he felt it was a legitimate creative process that was needed.

Partway through the editing, West had to return to the BBC. After completing a full day's work at the BBC, West would spend his evenings and weekends working on the film from 7 pm until the early hours of the morning. From the Production Board's perspective, there were time pressures to consider, as there was a rush to finish the film in time for the London Film Festival (LFF) on 5 December 1973 to build on the momentum and success of *My Childhood*. West

¹³⁵ Petrie, "Anderson and Scotland," 198. In Noble, "Making," 147-148, he suggests that it was West who 'invited Anderson to come along and see how things were going. Anderson was appalled and told Douglas the best thing he could do was leave everything to West and take four weeks' holiday'.

¹³⁶ Douglas, Criticisms, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/2.

¹³⁷ Noble, "Making," 148.

fell ill, which meant that there was increased pressure on the BFI's desired timeframe. Individuals at the BFI, such as Hassan and Lucas, blamed West's illness on the strain of working on the film; West was committing his time and even sacrificing his health for the film. Fortunately, West recovered, and they managed to finish the film in time to be shown at the LFF as intended.

Despite having been shown to the public and press at the LFF and selling the film to an exhibitor (George Hoellering at the Academy Cinema), Douglas requested that further changes be made to the film. Relph suggests that it was at this point that the BFI became unable to say yes to Douglas's alteration requests.¹³⁸ It is reasonable to see why the BFI would have to decline Douglas at this point. Not only were there financial concerns as the film had already gone over budget, but the film had also now been shown to the public and to critics. Douglas repeatedly stressed to the Production Board committee his dissatisfaction in them allowing the editor to have the 'final say'.¹³⁹ Douglas interpreted the BFI's senior personnel making the decision that Douglas be kept out of the cutting room and advising him to stay away—in his words 'forced to leave'—as a loss of his creative agency and editorial control. In so doing, he presents himself cast aside in preference for the editor due to the BFI's lack of support for the amendments he wished to make.

Douglas's vehemently pursued the BFI to have amendments made. He insisted that they would take one day and in an unsent letter threatened to serve the Production Board with an injunction order so as to have these amendments carried out.¹⁴⁰ It is unclear if an injunction order was ever processed or if the threat was ever directly made. Nevertheless, the very consideration of taking legal action against them evinces the determination Douglas felt that these amendments needed to be made. Douglas offered the Tehran film festival prize money he had won for *My Childhood* in 1972 to make the amendments, further

¹³⁸ Letter from Michael Relph to Bill Douglas, 4 January 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/2, BDCM.

¹³⁹ Letter from Bill Douglas to Mamoun Hassan, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/2; Letter from Bill Douglas to Michael Relph, December 1973, BDC 1/TRI/1/2; Two versions of draft letter from Bill Douglas to Michael Relph, late 1973, BDC 1/TRI/1/2; Letter from Bill Douglas to Michael Relph, 4 January 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/2, BDCM.

¹⁴⁰ Letter from Bill Douglas to Keith Lucas, Marked Not Sent, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/2, BDCM.

demonstrating his commitment to making the changes as he was not in a financially stable position.¹⁴¹

After Douglas's requests to be permitted to make further alterations were rejected by the BFI, he wrote to Hoellering, the manager of the Academy Cinema, London. Hoellering had entered into an agreement with the BFI based on the screening of *My Ain Folk* at the LFF, and consequently was an exhibitor who might have influence for Douglas's case. Douglas requested Hoellering's help to pressure the Production Board to make the alterations, explaining that the editor chose to discard a long shot in favour of a close-up.¹⁴² By going to the exhibitor who the Production Board had entered into an agreement with, Douglas demonstrates his adamance in having this scene altered. This demonstrates the complexities of film production and that the final film text does not reflect the discontent that may be felt towards the final cut by the director.¹⁴³ Therefore, this representation of labour by Douglas indicates that there were more complex negotiations and discussions behind particular scenes and that he was not completely satisfied with the final film.

In spite of this challenging time, throughout Douglas's correspondence and time working with the BFI, he exhibits awareness of the importance of reputation and working relationships within the industry. During the making of *My Ain Folk*, Douglas explicitly stated in his correspondence with the BFI that he would not openly discuss his relationship with the Production Board and that he expected the same in return.¹⁴⁴ Douglas understood the importance of respecting confidentiality, and of reputation, both to him and the BFI, and the consequence of projecting a more amicable working relationship outwardly. Chris Smith and Alex McKinlay note, '[a] poor reputation for delivering work weakens access to future work, which with short term contacts, means the individual can easily

¹⁴¹ Letter from Bill Douglas to Mamoun Hassan, 8 December 1973, BDC 1/TRI/1/2, BDCM.

¹⁴² Letter from Bill Douglas to George Hoellering, 12 January 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/2, BDCM.

¹⁴³ A trend in the 21st century has led to a director's cut being released. Sometimes this is at the director's own expense but often it is on the encouragement of the studios as it provides further opportunity to make a profit on the film. Arguably, the changes can be detrimental to the film, not enhancing it is but an indulgence of the director.

¹⁴⁴ Two versions of draft letter from Bill Douglas to Michael Relph, late 1973, BDC 1/TRI/1/2.

become all but unemployable'.¹⁴⁵ Douglas repeatedly asserted that he would keep quiet as long as the BFI respectfully did the same, negotiating on a reciprocal basis. This reflects an active shaping by Douglas in the more public-facing documents and supports Caldwell's notion of spin and self-interest in the way film workers actively want to represent their working relationships in a particular way, acknowledging the negative effect it may have on securing future work.

Douglas's shaping of events in the documents suggests fear for his creative agency, which he felt was threatened by crew appointments made by Hassan during the post-production stage. Despite the editing being a turbulent and chaotic time, and Douglas's severe and repeated criticisms of West in the documents, West did agree with Hassan to work with Douglas again later on in his career on Douglas's film, *Justified Sinner*.¹⁴⁶ By this point in West's career, he was directing and making his own documentary films, exemplifying an eagerness as well as a benefit of working with Douglas once again, especially as he did not work as an editor for any other filmmakers. Following the making of *My Ain Folk*, Douglas's relationship with the BFI had become tense and Douglas became increasingly critical of them—at least privately—making repeated comparisons to the callousness of Hollywood. Douglas worked on the editing of the film for over a year, which shows this 'leash' being relatively slack for a long time. The documents evidence that the BFI actually offered Douglas a generous editing period.

The film had received editorial input from Thumin, West, Hassan, and Anderson, as well as the group screenings where wider input and comments were shared with Douglas. By having multiple voices and contributions regarding the editing, combined with Douglas's physical separation from the cutting room and refusal to make amendments, it is understandable that he might infer having more 'stakeholders' involved as a loss of editorial control and agency.

***My Way Home* – Filming in Egypt**

¹⁴⁵ Chris Smith and Alex McKinlay, *Creative Labour: Working in the Creative Industries*, ed., Alex McKinlay, and Chris Smith (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 39-40.

¹⁴⁶ Noble, "Making," 149.

Due to increasingly tense relations between Douglas and the BFI during the post-production of *My Ain Folk*, Douglas began to threaten not to make the final part of the *Trilogy* with the BFI and to look elsewhere for financial support. In light of the fragmented nature of the film industry at the time, it is unlikely that the film would have been able to achieve financial support from other funders in Britain; it is likely the BFI would have assumed that Douglas would be unsuccessful in his endeavour.¹⁴⁷ As mentioned in the previous chapter, despite having negotiated with the Production Board to be paid a script grant of £250 for the final instalment, Douglas was willing to reject this payment to seek financial support elsewhere. However, Douglas did end up submitting a script for the final part of the *Trilogy*. There were some reservations regarding the script, which were expressed by Hassan and the committee, but Douglas did receive funding and filming commenced in 1974. The film sees Jamie leave Scotland and join the RAF in Egypt where he meets Robert, an upper-class Englishman. The focus of this section will be on the Egyptian part of the production of *My Way Home*, the editing period in post-production and Douglas's representation of the financial strain he was under. The materials for the final instalment include a great deal of correspondence between Douglas and the film's second producer, Judy Cottam, with the Production Board. Douglas's correspondence, along with his personal account, discusses some of the main obstacles during the Egyptian sequence and reveals a great deal of frustration towards the Production Board, commenting on their lack of enthusiasm and support repeatedly.¹⁴⁸

My Childhood and *My Ain Folk* were released consecutively in 1972 and 1973. The shooting of the *Trilogy*'s final instalment, *My Way Home*, began in 1974 in Scotland with Richard Craven as producer. Partway through the production, following the Scottish filming, Craven decided to leave the film. In a letter addressed to Douglas dated 2 January 1975, Craven explained his reasons why he was discontinuing as the producer, with Gavin copied in. Specifically, he blamed Douglas's behaviour, highlighting Douglas's decision to stop filming in the

¹⁴⁷ Before filming of *My Way Home* started, Douglas said that he intended to go to Scotland to try and get the money to be able to complete the *Trilogy*. When discussing this, Douglas conveys that he did not expect to be successful not only because of their comments regarding a 'forward-looking country' when he had applied initially, but 'because the fellow quite simply just did not like me,' suggesting that he felt it was personal. See Bill Douglas, Three drafts of a letter with handwritten additions, Undated, Unaddressed, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3, BDCM.

¹⁴⁸ See 'My Way Home' Journals/Personal Papers, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3, BDCM.

middle of the schedule, as well as Douglas's inability to take responsibility for his actions, calling him a 'prima-donna'.¹⁴⁹ It was at the end of 1974, shortly before Craven departed that the production had been halted. According to Noble, the reason for this pause to production (which would last two years) was to allow Archibald to grow so he would look older in stature, and it would be believable that he was in the National Service.¹⁵⁰ Craven refers to this pause to production as a contributing factor to his decision to leave, stating:

[e]ver since you decided to stop filming in the middle of the schedule that you yourself had approved before filming I have been loyal to you. But such loyalty I now see has led you to believe that you can use me and my persuasiveness to get whatever you want, that a director can stop filming when he wants to, and discard his responsibilities to the production when he feels like it. It is just as well you learn now that I will not accept such behaviour, nor do I wish to promote it, nor do I care to be associated with it, for it has a diminishing effect on the effort of everyone who tries to help you.¹⁵¹

It is unclear if there were any other factors that influenced the production's hiatus, however, Craven's comments above indicate that a factor for him in deciding to leave was the potential impact delaying the production would have to his reputation.

Filming then resumed for the Egyptian sequence in 1976 with Cottam as Craven's replacement.¹⁵² In reference to Figure 6 (page 98), the biggest difference in terms of crew and cast numbers was for *My Way Home*. The final film had the largest budget of the three, but the increase in terms of the number of crew is understandable considering the logistical considerations of filming abroad and a need for local knowledge, which led to the employment of more production assistants and local Egyptians.¹⁵³

Before the filming of the Egyptian segment, the documents demonstrate that a vital moment of self-management took place by Douglas when he

¹⁴⁹ Letter from Richard Craven to Bill Douglas, 2 January 1975, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM (hereafter cited as Craven to Douglas, BDC 1/TRI/1/3).

¹⁵⁰ Noble, "Making," 149.

¹⁵¹ Craven to Douglas, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

¹⁵² Cottam lived with Craven (along with three other individuals) in a house share in Hampstead and had no previous experience of working in film. Judy Cottam, Interview with Andrew Noble, BDC 1/XAD/4/2, BDCM.

¹⁵³ Mamoun Hassan was not credited for *My Childhood* or *My Ain Folk* (he was head of production at the BFI Production Board at this time). Other films funded by the Production Board did list Hassan on the credits such as *Loving Memory* (Tony Scott, 1971) and *Winstanley* (Andrew Mollo and Kevin Brownlow, 1975).

expressed that he intended to approach the filming differently. It is unclear what prompted this change in his approach, but Douglas wrote:

I was going to be very nice. I was going to dispel the reputation I had for being difficult. What was it that made me such a monster? Could it be that it was painful resurrecting old memories? Or was it not having enough money or time to shoot? [...] I would stick rigidly with the set-ups (98 in all) and dialogue as planned in the script. What was there to get all het up about? Ten shots a day seemed like luxury and we would even have the weekend free. Enthusiasm, that's [*sic*] all I needed behind me. Yes, the angel in me was about to emerge.¹⁵⁴

It is possible that it was Craven's departure and his inclusion of senior BFI personnel in his correspondence that made Douglas aware that he was gaining a reputation for being 'difficult' with a new head of production in charge, or maybe it was the length of time to reflect on his approach to management that initiated the change. Regardless, what this statement ultimately shows is Douglas's acknowledgement of the importance of reputation in the film industry and a desire to change his by attempting to manage the production differently than he had previously. This led him to actively set the intention to try and change his behaviour, to help shape a new reputation on-set.

Since the first two films, and by the time it came to filming the Egyptian sequence in *My Way Home*, Peter Sainsbury was now in the role of head of production. As demonstrated in Chapter One, the *Trilogy* stood apart from the radical political ideological films and documentary route that the Production Board were taking under Gavin and, later, Sainsbury. By the time Sainsbury came to the position, however, the BFI were already committed to funding Douglas's final film and had filmed the Scottish sequence. Noble argues that Sainsbury—who was going to Egypt on other business shortly before the filming of *My Way Home* would recommence—made minimal effort in assisting in the preparations before the crew would arrive.¹⁵⁵ Although Douglas repeatedly mentions and blames the Production Board's lack of enthusiasm and support as one of the challenges in completing the final film in his correspondence and notes, he does not specify that it was Sainsbury's lack of effort in advance of the filming that is to blame or contributed to the problems they faced in Egypt such as timing constraints and last minute location changes. Douglas's *Trilogy* harked back to Hassan's tenure,

¹⁵⁴ Noble, "Making," 117.

¹⁵⁵ Noble, "Making," 159.

which the Production Board were moving away from. Arguably, the production was already off to a difficult start as the funders were not as ideologically or culturally invested as Hassan was, which may have impacted their enthusiasm and commitment to the project. Furthermore, as *My Way Home* required a considerable sum from the Production Board's annual budget, this would have put further strain on their ability to fund other projects that the head of production or committee were more inclined to support.

Unlike Newcraighall, to which Douglas was able to return, if necessary, for the Egyptian filming, there was an additional pressure as there was a tight schedule of ten days, and the already stretched budget meant there would be no opportunity to return. It was also Douglas's first experience of filming abroad, a challenge he would have to face again during the making of *Comrades*. Douglas intended to film at Abu Sueir, the military base where he and Peter Jewell (who the character of Robert is based on) had carried out their period of service in the RAF. Abu Sueir, however, had since changed hands; now owned by the Egyptian military, it was being used as a major rocket base. The application to film there was denied, so last-minute alternative arrangements to find another location had to be made. According to Cottam, Douglas had to make compromises because of the delay that this caused, such as shooting out of sequence and cutting two scenes.¹⁵⁶ Caught up in Egyptian bureaucracy, the process of having to apply for another location was rather complicated and time-consuming: they were only allowed to put in one application for one location at a time and it had to be denied or accepted before they could proceed with submitting another. Eventually, their application to use a police camp as a substitute filming location was accepted. However, when filming in the police barracks, they were only given 'a two-hour period each day when the men were not noisily present'.¹⁵⁷ They also had to ensure the union jack flag was brought down whenever an Egyptian military aircraft approached for fear of being shot at.¹⁵⁸ Cottam also notes that one of the problems the production had was that the camera attracted people, especially children, which caused further delays to the filming.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Judy Cottam, Report on 'My Way Home' for Peter Sainsbury, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM (hereafter cited as Cottam, Report, BDC 1/TRI/1/3).

¹⁵⁷ Noble, "Making," 161.

¹⁵⁸ Noble, "Making," 161.

¹⁵⁹ Cottam, Report, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

Cottam wrote a report on the filming of *My Way Home* for Sainsbury. She presents the crew and cast as a tight-knit unit, explaining that everyone got involved, working long hours and overtime, taking on different roles and responsibilities, however, she notes that additional support would have greatly helped:

I cannot say enough how hard and well everyone worked in very exacting and difficult circumstances. From the arrival of crew and actors, our hours were 5 a.m. to late evening. Everyone mucked in and helped all round, painting props, Ray [Orton] drawing the billet which was built in the sand, Jo [Blatchley] doing costumes ... continuity sheets which I was responsible for sadly got neglected as I often had to leave shooting to look after other problems. Bill and I were very pushed to get everything done as neither of us had assistants; we would no doubt have been a lot more efficient with more help.¹⁶⁰

Cottam gives a picture of members of the crew taking on a variety of tasks beyond their contracted roles, in order to help manage the significant workload of production while on location abroad. In so doing, she suggests that people were working hard in terms of hours as well as taking on additional responsibilities outside of their roles. This presents an image that the production culture in Egypt was less rigid in terms of roles and responsibilities. Her report shows that both crew and cast all stayed together at The Lotus Hotel.¹⁶¹ By staying together at the same hotel, it presents a temporary family-like unit of 'living under one-roof' together.

In a similar vein, David Mingay, the film's editor, went to Craigmillar to collect Archibald and to ensure he was put on the plane to Egypt, going outside of his responsibilities to help ensure the filming went ahead.¹⁶² Further, both Cottam and Douglas recognised the invaluable support given by local Egyptians, so much so that they both tried to slip them extra money where possible to demonstrate their gratitude.¹⁶³ After the film was complete, Cottam wrote to Sainsbury to suggest that the BFI offer a gesture of appreciation to the Egyptian embassy in London.¹⁶⁴ In spite of facing numerous constraints like locations for shooting being unavailable and having to go through a time-consuming

¹⁶⁰ Cottam, Report, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

¹⁶¹ Cottam, Report, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

¹⁶² Archibald was struggling with family matters at the time, and it was unclear if he would be able to make it.

¹⁶³ Letter from Judy Cottam to Peter Sainsbury, 27 February 1979, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM (hereafter cited as Cottam to Sainsbury, BDC 1/TRI/1/3).

¹⁶⁴ Cottam to Sainsbury, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

bureaucratic processes, the materials on the Egyptian filming presents this time as a fairly peaceful production. Although Cottam's report could simply be presenting the production more positively to Sainsbury as her superior, I would argue that the way in which she presents the involvement of others being willing to get stuck in and take on additional tasks and responsibilities shows a collaborative production culture. Cottam and Douglas worked well together.¹⁶⁵ In her correspondence with Douglas, it is clear she took on the role as a facilitator and did not express any attempts to intervene in Douglas's script or approach to filming.

***My Way Home* – Post-production**

Like the post-production of *My Ain Folk*, *My Way Home* would also see two editors work on the film: David Mingay, a friend of Peter West's who also worked for the BBC, and Mick Audsley. As previously mentioned, Audsley was West's next-door neighbour, but he was also a close friend of Peter Harvey, who had worked on the sound for *My Ain Folk* indicating that there was a network of people who were linked via these connections beyond the production site. In Noble's account he illustrates that, during the making of *My Ain Folk*, Harvey came to blows with Douglas when he accidentally erased the third take of the scene when the social worker comes to take Tommy away.¹⁶⁶ In spite of this error and heated exchange between the two men, Harvey worked on the Scottish section of *My Way Home*. Furthermore, there is correspondence between Harvey and Douglas in which Douglas invited Harvey to work on the Egyptian sequence.¹⁶⁷ Harvey expressed that he was very keen but declined Douglas's offer as he had been offered a well-paid job.¹⁶⁸ In his place, he suggested Mick Audsley. Although Douglas had a conflict with Harvey during the previous film, evidently, there were no hard feelings between them, and, by inviting Harvey to return, it evinces that Douglas

¹⁶⁵ It is unclear of the exact nature of Douglas and Cottam's relationship outside of the production, however, Cottam continues to include a memorial to Douglas in *The Guardian* on the day of his death.

¹⁶⁶ Noble, "Making," 137.

¹⁶⁷ Letter from Peter Harvey to Bill Douglas, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM; Letter from Peter Harvey to Bill Douglas 3 June 1976, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM.

¹⁶⁸ Jewell suggested that Harvey had ambitions to become a cameraman instead and this might have contributed to his decision to turn it down; Peter Jewell, In Discussion with Author, 20 November 2020.

respected Harvey's ability as a sound man enough to not let the prior conflict prevent him from inviting him to return to work on his films. Furthermore, it demonstrates that he appreciated, acknowledged, and respected Harvey's recommendation by then going on to employ Audsley as sound editor when filming the Egyptian sequence.

One of the reasons why two editors worked on *My Way Home* was due to Sainsbury's arrangement of a pre-sale of the film to German television (ZDF) which will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Three when discussing the distribution of the films. The pressures to deliver the film by a certain date, caused tension between Mingay and Douglas. It was after completing this hurried cut that Audsley was formally asked by Sainsbury to take over the editing of the film.¹⁶⁹ Despite Mingay choosing to leave the project, he did return and assisted Douglas later on in the editing process.¹⁷⁰ Noble suggests that Douglas approached Mingay in October 1977 in tears, requesting his help to work on the soundtrack for the film.¹⁷¹ Whether Douglas did so or not is unclear from the materials, however, Mingay not only undercharged for his work,¹⁷² but he agreed to be paid on completion of the film, demonstrating a willingness to help.¹⁷³

Unlike *My Ain Folk*, where Douglas had kept the script from the second editor for an extensive period, during the editing of *My Way Home*, Douglas and Mingay, and later Audsley, worked closely with the script during the editing. Perhaps Douglas had learnt from his experience during the editing of *My Ain Folk* and the challenge of working without the script and so adapted his approach and management of the editing stage.

After having successfully completed the cut for German television, Douglas was assured by Sainsbury that he would be given more time to work on a cut that he would be happy with. In June 1977, Douglas proposed amendments to the film which, according to Sainsbury, would need a further expenditure of

¹⁶⁹ Audsley, Interview, 9 March 2020. Before working on these films, Audsley had trained at the Royal College of Art. After working as the sound editor in Egypt, he then worked as Mingay's assistant with the intention of becoming the dubbing editor.

¹⁷⁰ Letter from Bill Douglas to Ray (Surname unknown), Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3, BDCM; Bill Douglas, Handwritten Note addressed to Pete (Jewell?), Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3, BDCM.

¹⁷¹ Noble, "Making," 169.

¹⁷² Noble, "Making," 171.

¹⁷³ Letter from Bill Douglas to Peter Sainsbury A, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3, BDCM.

approximately £2,500.¹⁷⁴ The required amendments for *My Ain Folk* may have been driven by Douglas's reluctance to give up the film, however, for *My Way Home*, there were obvious technical issues with the cut that needed to be fixed, particularly with the sound. Sainsbury asked Douglas to reconsider the extent of alterations he wished to make.¹⁷⁵ In response to having been turned down repeatedly by the Production to make the amendments he requested, Douglas went around Sainsbury and Relph and contacted the Governors directly on 30 June 1977; it was on Anderson's advice that he decided to contact them.¹⁷⁶ In his letter, Douglas specifically blames the inadequate help he had received from the Production Board, stating '[t]his sad situation is, I feel, due largely to there having been little or no practical help guidance or encouragement from the Production Board'.¹⁷⁷ He then goes on to state that this was not the case during *My Childhood* or *My Ain Folk*, which 'were made in better workaday conditions under the able supervision of Mamoun Hassan', demonstrating Douglas's preference for working under Hassan than Sainsbury.¹⁷⁸ In terms of responsibilities and interpersonal skills a producer needs to deploy, Hassan was often in the cutting room, particularly during *My Childhood*, and he visited the production site for each film—mostly out of necessity after being called by a crew member—this physical presence is indicative of his commitment and support for the film to be realised. In comparison, there is no evidence to suggest Sainsbury visited during the principal photography stages and he did not help towards the arrangements in Egypt, relying, instead, on the reports from Cottam.

From discussing the above-the-line and different approaches to the role of producer, I will move to examining the appointment of the editor. In Douglas's account, he discusses Audsley and says:

"[m]y one criticism of Mick" I said "Is he won't stick up for himself. His loyalties are divided between the film and his friends, [Peter] Harvey and Doug [Turner], he can't bring himself to say what he thinks in case he upsets them and by doing that he neglects his work. I am the one who has to stick up for him. At the mix he said nothing, just waited for me all the time. Mick is a total year man.... He will not criticise his friends."¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ Sainsbury to Douglas, 29 June 1977, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

¹⁷⁵ Sainsbury to Douglas, 29 June 1977, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

¹⁷⁶ Douglas, Twenty-three, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3.

¹⁷⁷ Douglas to BFI Governors, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

¹⁷⁸ Douglas to BFI Governors, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

¹⁷⁹ Douglas, Twenty-three, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3.

Here, Douglas is critical of Audsley's agreeable nature and reluctance to say something that may be interpreted as a criticism. In a way, Douglas could be viewed as echoing his behaviour with West during *My Ain Folk* when in Douglas's account, he increasingly suggested that he did not trust Audsley: 'Mick appeared out of the blue. ... I got the feeling he was spying ... I decided not to help him any. Spoke small talk'.¹⁸⁰ As mentioned, Audsley had never worked as an editor and had originally trained in sound. Given the very early stage in his career, and his lack of experience in editing, it is understandable that someone would be hesitant to be too critical, especially under a director who had proven to be critically successful. Like Douglas's representation of West, this representation also seems to distort the realities of his relationship with Audsley who he worked with again on *Comrades* and became good friends with, which again indicates an ability to separate the work from the personal.

During the post-production, Douglas sought advice from West who suggested that he needed a producer; Douglas agreed and blamed the problems on Sainsbury's lack of interest in the film.¹⁸¹ Sainsbury's approach differed from Hassan, evinced when Douglas complained that he had 'been left to myself'.¹⁸² Thus, despite tensions and antipathies, Douglas did, at some level, acknowledge and appreciate the work of the producer. In the materials there is a sense that he felt he had been abandoned by Sainsbury, and, more broadly, the BFI. This frustration towards the BFI and Douglas's belief that they were not providing enough support is most evident in an undated and unsent, twenty-three-page typed reflection in red ink written by Douglas regarding his displeasure with various aspects of the production of *My Way Home*.¹⁸³ Commenting on the red ink text, Douglas said that 'the colour matched the way I was seing [sic] things'.¹⁸⁴ Douglas recalls that he sent a list of fifty reasons to Sainsbury as to why the film was not as good as it could be, demonstrating the extent of his dissatisfaction.¹⁸⁵ Unfortunately, the list of reasons is not included in the materials, however, the number of reasons alone helps to illustrate the extent of Douglas's satisfaction with the BFI and what state he felt his film was in. There was evidently a growing

¹⁸⁰ Douglas, Twenty-three, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3.

¹⁸¹ Douglas, Twenty-three, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3.

¹⁸² Douglas, Twenty-three, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3.

¹⁸³ Douglas, Twenty-three, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3.

¹⁸⁴ Douglas, Twenty-three, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3.

¹⁸⁵ Douglas, Twenty-three, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3.

frustration felt by Douglas towards the BFI. In his private account in red ink, he states, '[i]t occurs to me to go into the building in the middle of the night and take the film, cutting copy, sound tracks, negative and all. But a friend tells me it is the worst move I can make'.¹⁸⁶ Unlike his actions during the editing of *My Ain Folk* where he took two cans of film, the way in which he sought advice and chose not to act on these desires of retaliation, reflects development and experience of the production process.

Douglas repeatedly stressed to Sainsbury and Relph—two senior figures at the BFI—the difficult financial position he had been put in and his need to find alternative ways to get an income. As a result of this strain, he frequently threatened the Production Board that he wanted to shelve the film so he could 'go and get [himself] a living wage'.¹⁸⁷ In Douglas's account he says he informed Relph of his decision, who 'was not [at] all happy. He had only to remind me about wasting public money and I changed my mind'.¹⁸⁸ Although Douglas may initially appear insensitive to the rising costs and expectant of the BFI to provide money, he acknowledges that he does not wish to waste public money and takes this responsibility seriously.

In terms of taking responsibility, in an undated note, Douglas wrote:

[b]e sure of one thing. I am not saying I am partly to blame for some of the things that went wrong. ~~We are all to blame~~ I do accept that I am ultimately in fact solely accept that responsibility—but it's because I am ultimately responsible for the finished film that I fear unable to let the film go out in its present state.¹⁸⁹

The way in which '[w]e are all to blame' is crossed out suggests he is resistant to sharing the responsibility for the problems. As this was written in a private, unaddressed note, it reveals that he recognises his managerial role and takes responsibility of fault. Similarly, in his account of the production, he states:

I realise that for all my rigid planning there are so many things than can still go wrong in the making of a film. One error in the camera, in the sound, in the continuity or in my choice of cutting point can give me months of headache. One can of course play safe by over shooting but that brings

¹⁸⁶ Douglas, Twenty-three, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3.

¹⁸⁷ Douglas, Twenty-three, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3.

¹⁸⁸ Douglas, Twenty-three, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3.

¹⁸⁹ Bill Douglas, Typed Note A, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3, BDCM (hereafter cited as Typed Note A, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3).

difficulty in the choice of a shot, muddle at the sight of all that unwanted film, not to mention the waste of money involved.¹⁹⁰

This comment and process of self-reflexivity indicates a development and an awareness of his way of working; it is an attempt to understand the reason behind his way of shooting and that some difficulties are unavoidable as they are out of his control despite planning. Moreover, this comment suggests that he is working more effectively within the production hierarchy.

In September 1977, Sainsbury expressed his commitment to the project stating: 'in light of our own determination that one of our most important and, of course, expensive films will not remain uncompleted'.¹⁹¹ Sainsbury repeatedly mentioned the expense of the project reflecting his responsibility as head of production to bring the finished projects that were funded to completion and to budget. Although Sainsbury says it is one of their most important films, he does not specify why. The BFI were dismissive in giving the film extra money, despite the fact that a large majority of the requests Douglas made were due to technical faults out of his control, relating to aspects such as the soundtrack and camera. As illustrated earlier, Douglas was willing to commit his own money to the film and, unlike the editing during *My Ain Folk* where Douglas withheld the script from West which had contributed to the extended time it took to complete the editing of the film, Douglas approached the editing of *My Way Home* differently, ensuring they worked closely with the script.

On Douglas's behalf, Cottam wrote to Sainsbury explaining how Douglas did not want Sainsbury in the mixing theatre, so much so that Douglas said that he would be unable to work to the specified and agreed dates if he was there.¹⁹² In Cottam's correspondence to Sainsbury, she explained that:

[c]ontrary to the popular BFI circulated myth, Bill does want to finish it. In fact, he can't wait to get on with and think about something else. He does, however, feel completely Alienated [*capitalised in document*] by the BFI's attitude towards him and his film. ... he feels he cannot work professionally and creatively with anyone from the BFI present, friend or foe.¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ Douglas, Twenty-three, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3.

¹⁹¹ Letter from Peter Sainsbury CC Michael Relph and Keith Lucas to Bill Douglas, 16 September 1977, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM.

¹⁹² Letter from Judy Cottam to Peter Sainsbury, 4 November 1977, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM (hereafter cited as Cottam to Sainsbury, 4 November 1977, BDC 1/TRI/1/3).

¹⁹³ Cottam to Sainsbury, 4 November 1977, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

Sainsbury responded by noting he had been explicitly instructed by the Production Board committee 'to attend the remix as the Board's representative to try and ensure that nothing goes wrong with this final attempt to finish the film ... If you are unable to accommodate my position, then we shall have to consider the remix cancelled'.¹⁹⁴ For Sainsbury, he was responsible for ensuring a film's delivery and unlike Douglas's working relationship with Hassan who had assisted in the cutting room, Douglas and Sainsbury's working relationship had reached a pressure point which Cottam had to negotiate on Douglas's behalf.

Douglas wanted to make several changes to the film. For example, reel one was out of sync, there was a shot of a football cut from reel four, there were numerous problems with the sound in a number of places, particularly during the Egyptian sequences in which there was a lack of clarity of the two boys' dialogue in the vehicle tracking shot, and there were issues with the grading of the Egyptian footage 'by Rank left much to be desired'.¹⁹⁵ Douglas suggested that Hendersons take over the grading of the film. There was much correspondence between Douglas and the BFI requesting that these changes be made. On 20 June 1978, Sainsbury declared: 'we find ourselves absolutely unable to put any more money into My Way Home except for the cost of distribution prints... further changes you wish to make are not technically necessary, although we appreciate that you consider them to be artistically so'.¹⁹⁶ Sainsbury proceeds to stipulate the conditions of Douglas putting in his own money, that it can only be done if the money is deposited with the BFI first, and that the amount is a sum equal to an agreed estimate of work that would be carried out under the BFI's financial and technical supervision.¹⁹⁷ Later, Douglas authorised costs without BFI's agreement—Jewell paid on Douglas's behalf a cheque for £275.88 to Solus Enterprises (Mingay's company) for the first lot of bills for the redubbing of *My Way Home*.¹⁹⁸ The BFI were not willing to reimburse him for these costs and in an undated and unaddressed note, Douglas says that he will be contacting his solicitor regarding payment of £300 for the corrections.¹⁹⁹ Douglas states that the

¹⁹⁴ Letter from Peter Sainsbury to Bill Douglas, 8 November 1977, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM.

¹⁹⁵ Bill Douglas, Typed Note, Unaddressed, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3, BDCM.

¹⁹⁶ Letter from Peter Sainsbury to Bill Douglas, 20 June 1978, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM.

¹⁹⁷ Letter from Peter Sainsbury to Bill Douglas, 20 June 1978, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM.

¹⁹⁸ Letter from Judy Cottam to Peter Sainsbury, 3 April 1978, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM.

¹⁹⁹ Bill Douglas, Handwritten Note, Undated note, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas, Handwritten Note, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3).

corrections were necessary 'due to bad workmanship', and so had to be resolved.²⁰⁰ The disagreements between Douglas and the BFI regarding the amendments continued; the BFI agreed to printing the film at Hendersons, however they stipulated that they would not 'be responsible for any costs that are incurred by what we may consider to be a result of you [Douglas] changing your mind on this'.²⁰¹ A suitable final print was agreed upon on 14 August 1978.

Douglas and Sainsbury engaged in detailed correspondence concerning securing further payments on behalf of work carried out by Rees (£90) and Cottam (£500). Douglas explained to Sainsbury that when Audsley was unavailable, Charles Rees carried out last-minute editing on *My Way Home* on free equipment made available at the NFS. Following this, Douglas commented that '[t]he work Charles Rees has kindly done now makes the film suitable to me'.²⁰² Douglas advocated on Cottam's behalf, stating:

Judy Cotham [*sic*] fetched and carried the film-cans, which is only one example of the extensive work she did over a long period of time acting as production assistant. This entailed providing all the secretarial help and public relations liaison, much of which resulted in actual savings to the cost of production.²⁰³

Some of the language that he uses here to describe Cottam's work and the tasks she was responsible for suggests that she was working at a lower level than was actually the case, as the vast amount of correspondence in the BDCM between her and the BFI attests. However, he does recognise the value of her administrative support and ability to liaise on his behalf effectively for the benefit of the production. The role title, scope of activity and credit for Cottam are important to note. During Hassan's tenure as head of production he maintained that he had overall production purview, with the title of 'producer' being more aligned to a production manager, however, in my research with the production materials, it is clear that Cottam's role, responsibilities and input ranged far beyond the limits of 'production manager'. Cottam undertook extensive work in helping to produce *My Way Home*, and after the film's completion. Cottam negotiated on Douglas's behalf, particularly with regards to the distribution of the

²⁰⁰ Douglas, Handwritten Note, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3.

²⁰¹ Letter from Peter Sainsbury to Bill Douglas, 1 August 1978, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM.

²⁰² Letter from Bill Douglas to Peter Sainsbury B, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas to Sainsbury B, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3).

²⁰³ Letter from Bill Douglas to Peter Sainsbury, 24 November 1980, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM.

films. Her role and agency in distribution will be analysed more fully in the next chapter. Unfortunately, as it was Douglas and not the BFI who had promised Rees and Cottam payment, their payment was not guaranteed. Douglas contested this and said:

[t]he fact remains that both Charles and Judy were working on a BFI production and have not been paid. Good heavens you would think we were talking of millions rather than £590. Why should the BFI want to spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar? Please let your absolute rule be applied. After all, it's Christmas!²⁰⁴

At this stage, Douglas was quite aware that the BFI were reluctant to put any more money into the film and that payment had not been agreed upon by the BFI in advance. Therefore, his expectation that the BFI should pay Rees and Cottam, regardless of the BFI authorising it, along with his mention of Christmas, is strategic. However, this action demonstrates the good intentions of Douglas, as a manager, he is clearly very supportive of Rees and Cottam's work and eagerly wanted them to receive financial recognition for it.

Towards the final stages of the post-production of *My Way Home*, Douglas frequently stated in his correspondence to key personnel at the BFI that he had received a job offer to teach film at an American University for a year, which he had declined for the good of *My Way Home*.²⁰⁵ Analysis of this correspondence reveals a strategic use of information by Douglas. For instance, Douglas used this as a way to put pressure on the Production Board, suggesting that he had limited time to work on the film before he had to leave for America. Included in the Lindsay Anderson archive is correspondence dated October 1978 from Douglas concerning a referee request for the United States Bicentennial Arts Fellowship in America.²⁰⁶ Although there is no evidence to support that there was a job offer confirmed other than Douglas's insistence to the BFI, in light of Douglas's teaching experience at the NFS along with his filmmaking career thus far, this is certainly possible. Furthermore, as many British filmmakers such as Ridley Scott and Alan Parker were crossing the Atlantic for work due to the lack

²⁰⁴ Letter from Bill Douglas to Peter Sainsbury, 16 December 1980, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM.

²⁰⁵ Typed Note A, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3.

²⁰⁶ Letter from Valerie Beardsmore to Lindsay Anderson, "Request for a reference for Bill Douglas," 11 October 1978, LA/5/01/2/9/5, Lindsay Anderson Collection, University of Stirling; Letter from Lindsay Anderson to Valerie Beardsmore, "Letter of reference for Bill Douglas," 25 October 1978, LA/5/01/2/9/6.

of opportunities available to them in Britain, this would have been a plausible threat.

As has been established, Douglas was aware of the importance of the reputation regarding good working relationships, both for his own career but also for the BFI. In a letter to the Production Board, Douglas stated: 'I have a surprise for you. The Production Board is in for a dose of bad publicity. That is all that concerns me should any reporter approach'.²⁰⁷ Departing from his more diplomatic position on reciprocal confidentiality, outlined in relation to *My Ain Folk*, Douglas's position shifts to threaten to disclose his perceptions of working with the Production Board. This shift in position suggests his increased level of frustration and exasperation with the tensions over editorial control. This is similarly echoed when he says: '[i]f I don't get some financial satisfaction from the Production Board I will publish my diary together with the Production Board[']s complete correspondence and the German contracts'.²⁰⁸ In contrast to *My Ain Folk*, Douglas seems to have less concern about his reputation when he states, '[w]ell, people know from Paris to Bombay that I am not happy with the standard of the work so why should I worry... Don't depend on me to promote My Way Home'.²⁰⁹ In light of the poor state of the film industry, Douglas could have felt like he had nothing to lose at this stage, particularly as the *Trilogy* was in the final stages. Moreover, Douglas felt his reputation would not be damaged by knowledge of dissatisfaction being revealed because it was well-known.

Like West who had advised that Douglas needed a producer figure who demonstrated enthusiasm for the project and more assistance, Douglas himself stated: '[w]ith more interest ... and practical supervision from the BFI Prod[uction] Board the film would have been finished many months ago and all this argument would have been avoided'.²¹⁰ Sainsbury's approach was very different to Hassan and, as yet, Douglas had only made films during Hassan's tenure. The Production Board and the BFI's intervention in film culture was changing greatly and Douglas's *Trilogy* did not quite fit with their output. Although the Production Board provided financial support for the film, they emphasised and focused on the cost

²⁰⁷ Letter from Bill Douglas to various members of the BFI Production Board, Peter Sainsbury, Keith Lucas, Nita Aime, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3, BDCM.

²⁰⁸ Bill Douglas, Typed Note B, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas, Typed Note B, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3).

²⁰⁹ Letter from Bill Douglas to Peter Sainsbury C, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3, BDCM.

²¹⁰ Bill Douglas, Typed Note C, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3, BDCM.

and expense of it in their correspondence with Douglas. In Douglas's account, he suggests that his experience of making *My Way Home* left him deflated and despondent towards the film industry.²¹¹ In a handwritten, undated letter addressed to Hassan, Douglas said:

[n]ow that I have finished this film I can tell you how I really feel. The production board have put me through the worst few years of my life and that is saying something.... In the end I had to pay out of my own pocket and still I can't claim to like the photography or the sound or the mix or even the printing.²¹²

The relationship between Douglas and the Production Board under Sainsbury's leadership had deteriorated. As Douglas explains, '[n]ow I don't mind how I scrape up a living just so long as I don't have ... anything to do with this business'.²¹³ Similarly, he says, '[p]erhaps like so many others in this business you feel my payment is that I got two films out of it'.²¹⁴ These statements exemplify Douglas's frustration at the precarious financial position he was put in. Douglas was unable to take other work, or if he did, then it had to be approved by the BFI. Alan McKinlay and Chris Smith note that due to short-term contracts being typical within the creative industries there are frequent and lengthy periods of idleness.²¹⁵ As a result of these periods of no work or to use McKinlay and Smith's term, 'idleness', Douglas's finances were unstable. Douglas had started working on these films in 1971 and correspondence between Douglas and the BFI regarding outstanding payments continued until 1980. The financial constraints Douglas found himself in personally as a result of working on these films contributed to Douglas's increasing exasperation and willingness to vocalise his discontent with his experience of working with the BFI.

Conclusion

From my analysis of the myriad of documents, the varying accounts, and the multiple agents that constitute the production papers of Douglas's trilogy of films it is possible to pick out shifting status, agency and strategies of Douglas as he

²¹¹ Letter from Bill Douglas to Mamoun Hassan, Undated, Marked Unsent, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas to Hassan, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3).

²¹² Douglas to Hassan, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/2.

²¹³ Douglas to Hassan, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3.

²¹⁴ Typed Note A, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3.

²¹⁵ Smith and McKinlay, *Creative Labour*, 12.

gained experience in filmmaking. Douglas was initially framed as an 'artist' by Hassan, and during the production of *My Childhood*, Douglas repeatedly demonstrated a need to assert his control and authority. In this sense, Douglas conveys the pressure to undertake the cultural performance of 'the director'. During the principal photography of *My Childhood*, tensions arose between Douglas and Crumlish because they were each navigating the production hierarchy with undefined roles as well as inexperience.

Throughout, Douglas demonstrates his need for both crew and above-the-line personnel to have enthusiasm and commitment to the films and is highly critical if he judged this to be inadequate. In the documents, Douglas realised the importance of reputation to both him and the BFI and used this to negotiate during *My Ain Folk*, and later threaten and express his dissatisfaction during *My Way Home*.

Evidently, there were challenges during each of the productions. Noble suggests, '[t]hough [Douglas] did not realise it at the time, Douglas did create a community of fellow spirits'.²¹⁶ Indeed, not only was this on a professional basis, which saw Douglas working with several crew members again during *Comrades*, but also on a more personal level. For example, when I interviewed Audsley in 2020, he commented that he stayed in contact with Stephen Archibald and would visit him when he was in Edinburgh visiting family who lived there.²¹⁷ Similarly, Archibald and his wife would visit Douglas and Jewell in London,²¹⁸ and there are several pieces of correspondence and Christmas cards from Blatchley addressed to Douglas following the completion of the *Trilogy*.²¹⁹ Therefore, whilst the productions of the *Trilogy* are presented by Douglas as possessing moments of fraught tension and conflict, there were also processes of negotiation, continuous working relationships and long-lasting friendships created.

In Douglas's accounts, he demonstrates maturity in taking responsibility for his actions. More specifically, the Working Papers held at the BDCM relating to the production of *My Way Home* illustrate developments in Douglas's skills and approach to management. He did not keep the script from the second editor, and

²¹⁶ Noble, "Making," 118.

²¹⁷ Audsley, Interview, 9 March 2020.

²¹⁸ Jewell, In Discussion. See photographs from this trip BDC 1/XAD/9/1.

²¹⁹ Letter from Joseph Blatchley to Bill Douglas, Undated BDC 1/XAD/5/1, BDCM; Postcard from Joseph Blatchley to Bill Douglas, Undated, BDC 1/XAD/5/1, BDCM.

he tried to actively shape and change his behaviour when approaching the filming of the Egyptian sequence. During an interview with Charles Rees in 1978 after the *Trilogy* was complete, Douglas was asked whether he would have preferred to do everything on his own when making his films. To which he replied:

[a]bsolutely not. I couldn't do everything. I don't want to be a cameraman. I just want to write the script and to make the film. Like [Joan] Littlewood, if you like, I like ensemble playing. *We* are making the film. The best moments in film to me, certainly in my experience, are the ones where we are working to do something together.²²⁰

Douglas outwardly presents himself here as striving to work collaboratively with others, respecting crew members' expertise through his acknowledgement of not being able to do everything. This outward, public-facing representation not only works to further perpetuate representation of making films as collective and collaborative, but he also presents himself as being able to work effectively with others. At this point, his changes in approach by working to the script during editing, and his heated exchange and negotiation with regards to payment for Rees and Cottam's payment, shows a concern for the good of those he is managing. In addition, in spite of the unexpected challenges that occurred during the Egyptian shoot, the production itself appears to have been without incident and this is due to the sound understanding of needs and a collaborative production culture.

The next chapter will explore the distribution, exhibition, and sales of the *Trilogy*. As I have already suggested, the sale of *My Way Home*—coordinated by Sainsbury—led to pressures on the editing and the relationship between Mingay and Douglas, but it also worked to provide additional financial support towards the production.

²²⁰ Charles Rees, Bill Douglas Interview, 1978, on Special Features on *Comrades* Dual DVD and Blu-ray (London: BFI, 2012).

Chapter Three

The *Trilogy*: Contracts, Sales, and Deficiencies in Distribution

In all, the trilogy has taken no less than twelve international prizes . . . why has the BFI persistently neglected the promotion and in particular the selling of the three films, thereby letting them go for next to nothing?

Bill Douglas, Undated letter to Peter Sainsbury, BDC1/TRI/1/4/3.

When writing about the British film industry in the mid-1980s, Nick Roddick stated that 'there is one overwhelming truth which has dominated the situation since the mid-1950s and is likely to go on doing so for the foreseeable future: the real crisis in British cinema is not in the production but in distribution and exhibition'.¹ Similarly, film scholar John Hill argues that although 'diversification of activity' in the British film industry did occur during the 1970s, it was 'largely confined to production and has not extended to distribution and exhibition'.² Through the efforts of institutions like the BFI Production Board, independent producers such as David Puttnam, Michael Klinger and Gavrik Losey, a thriving cooperative and workshop movement, and some significant breakthroughs in experimental filmmaking, Britain did indeed develop and diversify. Moreover, following the closures, restructuring, and streamlining of the major British studios such as Elstree and Shepperton, there was an increasing flexibilisation of labour. In the areas of distribution and exhibition, however, the decade mostly saw the two-circuit duopoly of Rank and EMI (later named Thorn-EMI in 1979) dominate.³ Christophe Dupin notes that this duopoly 'made the distribution and exhibition of British independent, low-budget films extremely difficult', as each organisation held great power and were aligned with particular distributors.⁴ In terms of programming within this two-circuit duopoly, American film proved to be popular and largely dominated the screens.⁵ In the 1970s, steadily declining cinema audiences led exhibitors to turn to films based on popular television shows (like

¹ Nick Roddick, "If the United States Spoke Spanish, We Would Have a Film Industry," in *British Cinema Now*, ed. Martyn Auty and Nick Roddick (London: BFI Publishing, 1985), 8.

² Hill, "British Film Policy," 105.

³ Hanson, *Screening the World*, 93.

⁴ Dupin, "Sponsor," 109.

⁵ Geoffrey Macnab, *Delivering Dreams: A Century of British Film Distribution*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 145.

Dad's Army and *Steptoe and Son*) and sex comedies (such as the *Confessions* series) in an attempt to lure audiences back to the cinemas. Sheila Whittaker highlights that '[t]he narrative film which is not a theatrical feature is ... one of the hardest forms for which to find audiences and distribution for'.⁶ Thus, for the *Trilogy*, a low-budget independent narrative film made up of three shorts, the distributors would be faced with this struggle.

The films funded by the BFI Production Board were an unconventional product for exhibitors to programme; they were not profit-driven mainstream cinema and many of the BFI Production Board films from this decade often failed to secure a theatrical release. Increasingly, the *Trilogy* received a significant portion of the Production Board's annual budget in the 1970s and was also more commercially viable than most Production Board films towards the end of the decade. As evinced in Chapter One, the *Trilogy* was in stark contrast to the post-structuralist or radically political documentary filmmaking that the BFI was moving towards at the beginning of the second half of the decade under Barrie Gavin and Peter Sainsbury's leadership. From 1975 until 1979, many films funded by the Board sought to challenge film form, were politically radical, embraced collective filmmaking or were within the documentary genre. In contrast, although the narrative of the *Trilogy* is elliptical '[w]ith an austere look derived from Russian, Scandinavian and Italian neorealist film', it was, by comparison, a conventional linear narrative and would have had greater potential for obtaining sales and distribution, however, it did not receive a general release.⁷ Together, the *Trilogy* amounts to a long feature film at 175 minutes in length. With this in mind, it would be a difficult product to programme completely or individually in its short film format.⁸ Andrew Noble states that '[t]he basic problem in distributing the *Trilogy*, and comparable British films of creative merit, was not so much the location of an audience but the lack of an infrastructure of cinemas in Britain willing to show such films'.⁹ The Production Board films were associated with a 'specialist' cinema and, as such, would become reliant on film festivals, film societies, independent or 'arthouse' cinemas, and the BFI's affiliated exhibition facilities:

⁶ Sheila Whittaker, "Declarations of Independence," in *British Cinema Now*, ed. Martyn Auty and Nick Roddick (London: BFI Publishing, 1985), 94.

⁷ Patterson, "Films we Forgot".

⁸ *My Childhood* has a running time of 48 minutes, *My Ain Folk* 55 minutes, and *My Way Home* 72 minutes.

⁹ Noble, "Making," 155.

Regional Film Theatres (RFTs) and the National Film Theatre (NFT), for exhibition.

Referring to Douglas's comment at the beginning of this chapter, the *Trilogy* had received numerous prestigious awards as well as significant international critical acclaim. In spite of its success on the festival circuit and the effective international promotion that the film brought the BFI, as well as the large financial contribution the BFI had put into the film, the distribution of the *Trilogy* in Britain had a number of deficiencies. Dupin argues that in the first half of the decade in the early 1970s under Mamoun Hassan's leadership, the major flaw of the Production Board was 'the poor distribution and exhibition of the completed films'.¹⁰ Hassan blamed the poor distribution of films made during his tenure on 'the nonexistent [*sic*] market for short film in Britain, the difficulty distributing 16mm films in commercial cinemas, the lack of expertise of the BFI's Distribution Department and the failure to involve film-makers in the process'.¹¹ In terms of production and filmmaking output, the Production Board was increasingly professionalised and, more broadly, it shifted and repositioned its role within film culture. In the area of distribution, however, it was slow to catch up despite remedying some of the aforementioned factors that Hassan thought to be the reason for the poor distribution of their films.

In terms of legislation and administration, by the mid-1970s, the BFI openly acknowledged that there were problems in the area of distribution of their films, and under Sainsbury, there were some attempts made to try to resolve this. For example, Sainsbury employed Hilary Thompson—who had previously worked at Independent Cinema West—as the BFI film promotions officer in September 1976. Michael Relph said that it was the BFI's hope that the new officer would 'cultivate new audiences for films of a specialised and experimental nature'.¹² This appointment signified a departure from the previous haphazard efforts and form of distribution that had been carried out by the BFI more officially. Soon after Thompson's appointment, in 1977, an assistant—Carole Myer—was employed. Despite these efforts, however, even in the second half of the decade the BFI Production Board films struggled to get a theatrical release. The blame for this

¹⁰ Dupin, "BFI and British Independent Cinema in the 1970s," 164.

¹¹ Dupin, "BFI and British Independent Cinema in the 1970s," 164.

¹² Qtd in Lovell, *BFI Production Board*, 60.

cannot solely be put on the two-circuit duopoly which held power over the mainstream. Writing at the time, film critic, David Robinson notes, the BFI 'even failed to make use of its own exhibition facilities' (the National Film Theatre).¹³

Chapter One of this thesis focused on Bill Douglas securing funding for the *Trilogy*, the early stages of production and working within the framework of the BFI Production Board. Chapter Two then delved deeper into John Thornton Caldwell's notion of self-representation and interrogated the representation of labour and management style put forward by Douglas and his peers in archival materials pertaining to the *Trilogy*. This chapter will shift to examine an often-overlooked area within film studies, and that is distribution. In so doing, this chapter extends further into the arena of Media Industry Studies and engages with the growing sub-field of Distribution Studies. In the process of self-representation and cultivation of the image of a production, audiences are often 'shielded from many of the business dealings that constitute the contractual history of the distribution industry'.¹⁴ Justin O'Connor states, although 'the production of films—both as a cultural artefact and as an industry project—has received a lot of attention, how they are distributed has not'.¹⁵ Similarly, Neil Coe and Jennifer Johns observe that the areas of distribution and exhibition and the complexity of their interrelationships with the production of a film have historically been overlooked in film research, so much so that 'key functions of finance, distribution and exhibition' have been obscured.¹⁶ Coe and Johns further emphasise that there is a 'need to look beyond *production* to understand the inherent power relations underlying the whole production system'.¹⁷ For example, if a film is shown to be financially successful, then this may, in turn, influence future film productions and film cycles. Roderik Smits argues that 'distribution is situated at the heart of film business, representing a powerful gatekeeping

¹³ Robinson, "British and Proud".

¹⁴ Richard Maltby, "New Cinema Histories," in *Explorations in New cinema History*, eds., Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst and Philippe Meers, (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 16.

¹⁵ Justin O'Connor, "Foreword," in *Philippine Cinema and the Cultural Economy of Distribution*, Michael Kho Lim, (Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2019), ix.

¹⁶ Neil Coe and Jennifer Johns, "Beyond Production Clusters: Towards a Critical Political Economy of Networks in the Film and Television Industries," in *Cultural Industries and the Production of Culture*, eds., Dominic Power, and Allen Scott, (Oxon: Routledge, 2004), 189.

¹⁷ Coe and Johns, "Beyond Production Clusters," 202.

function in connecting the structures of production and consumption'.¹⁸ This gatekeeping function means that the successful distribution of a film will inevitably impact an audience's knowledge of, or accessibility to a film. Moreover, Ian Christie has stressed, that much of 'our understanding of film history has been dictated by those films that have been distributed—unless films are seen, they do not get written about'.¹⁹ Thus, poor distribution then has a further impact not only on the bottom line, but on the study of film and film history.

Based upon my historiographical approach in the study of the *Trilogy's* distribution, this chapter is situated in the field of New Cinema History: an interdisciplinary field that engages not only with film and media studies, but has been profoundly influenced by and traverses many different disciplines such as economic history, geography, social anthropology, cultural and memory studies, business, architecture, etc.²⁰ The field focuses on the *social experience* of cinema, and as Daniel Biltereyst et al., argue, 'New cinema history's umbrella covers studies of exhibition as well as work on the circulation and consumption of films and on the cinema as a site of social and cultural exchange'.²¹ Work in this field has explored how the film is made available to audiences by examining distribution patterns of film circulation and strategies both on a micro and macro-level.²² Richard Maltby notes that '[s]tructurally as well as procedurally, distribution connected production to exhibition as the point of intersection and communication between manufacture and retail'.²³ In the study of distribution,

¹⁸ Roderik Smits, *Gatekeeping in the Evolving Business of Independent Film Distribution*, Palgrave Global Media Policy and Business (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 1.

¹⁹ Paraphrase of Ian Christie, in Julia Knight and Peter Thomas, *Reaching Audiences: Distribution and Promotion of Alternative Moving Image*, (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect Ltd., 2011), 14. Original observation made by Christie in Christie, 'BFI Involvement in Distribution', 10 April 1981: 4. Source: British Film Institute Archive (Library, Box 32, Distribution Division 1980-1987).

²⁰ Daniel Biltereyst, Richard Maltby, and Philippe Meers, "Introduction: The Scope of New Cinema History," in *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History* eds., Daniel Biltereyst, Richard Maltby, and Philippe Meers (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 3.

²¹ Biltereyst, Maltby, and Meers, "Introduction," 4.

²² Large datasets have been employed in research of this kind, for example, see Karel Dibbets, "Cinema Context and the Genes of Film History," *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 8:3, 2010, 331-342.

²³ Richard Maltby, "Perhaps Everyone Has Forgotten Just How Pictures Are Shown to The Public": Continuous Performances and Double Billings in the 1930s,' in *Routledge Guide to New Cinema History* eds., Daniel Biltereyst, Richard Maltby, and Philippe Meers (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 161.

there is often the presentation of distribution as a link in the 'supply chain' and, as such, whoever has power and influence over distribution, has greater power in shaping film culture.²⁴ It is this intersection that brings a product to the consumer, the film to an audience.

Of special interest here, then, is the distribution of the *Trilogy*, which is both an example of distribution success as well as failure. Arguably, it had better distribution than many of the other BFI Production Board films during the period. The films were screened at the London Film Festival (LFF), the Academy Cinema in London, some film societies, a small number of RFTs and a television screening on BBC Two later in 1981. As this chapter will demonstrate, however, there were a number of deficiencies in the films' distribution, including poor business decisions, negotiations, and deals. My methodology is to use Douglas's *Trilogy* as a case study to examine the negotiations and sales agreements of the films and to analyse and uncover the work of individuals behind the activities of film sales, distribution, and exhibition of the *Trilogy*.

There are several reasons why the focus of this chapter moves to the sales, contracts, and distribution of the films. The first is pragmatic as the materials available to me as part of Douglas's Working Papers held in the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum includes a wealth of unexplored correspondence which through a process of close analysis illustrate the negotiation processes and logistical considerations of the films' distribution. Other materials include Douglas's royalty statements which show the sales of the films and demonstrate both his and the BFI's financial gain (however minimal) from the *Trilogy*. Secondly, there has been no in-depth exploration of the sales, distribution, and exhibition of the *Trilogy*, and this is a vital element of considering a film's life; it is not made simply for it not to be seen. Thirdly, this follows on effectively and logically from Chapters One and Two in terms of the stages of production. I will investigate the work taking place behind the scenes to make a film available and the various constraints and 'power relations' that limited the distribution of the films, thereby making the films less accessible to audiences.

As a case study, the *Trilogy* has a great deal to tell us regarding the distribution lines, various fracture points and the limitations that made films

²⁴ Knight and Thomas, *Reaching Audiences*, 139.

unviewable due to the infrastructure of film exhibition in the 1970s. Importantly, this also allows an opportunity to analyse the negotiations that took place with those who were external to the BFI, such as film festival directors and cinema owners, examining further 'the negotiations between people within media industries' in various capacities and sectors.²⁵ As well as analysing where the film was distributed in Britain, this chapter will argue that for the *Trilogy*, international festivals would prove to be a vital outlet and enabled opportunities for securing potential sales for European television. Finally, as I demonstrated at the start of this chapter, British film scholars have considered distribution and exhibition from the mid-1950s until the mid-1980s to be deficient, and an area of failure and decline. Ultimately, a filmmaker is unable to build a reputation if their films are not being seen. Therefore, the examination of the *Trilogy's* distribution and exhibition is germane to my research as it was an important constraint on filmmakers working during the period.

To explore the area of distribution and sales effectively, firstly, I closely examine the contractual agreements and correspondence regarding the terms and sales of the films. I analyse correspondence between Douglas, Judy Cottam (*My Way Home's* second producer who took an active role in the distribution of the film(s)) and the BFI's distribution department which was established and grew under Sainsbury. In so doing, I examine Douglas's agency within the distribution and exhibition of his films and how this shifted. Not only have I consulted and made use of a large amount of correspondence between Douglas, Cottam, and the BFI distribution department, but I have also researched the BFI Production Board Catalogues and Press Book of the *Trilogy*.²⁶ As such, I examine the BFI's view of the distribution process and the way in which they have framed this stage in the BFI Production Board catalogues, as well as their presentation of the *Trilogy*. I employ Douglas's royalty statements to analyse the financial conditions and negotiations made for the various films and their sales. I have consulted the royalty statements for the three films across a ten-year period between March 1973 to September 1983 to comprehensively examine the financial arrangements

²⁵ Mayer, Banks, and Caldwell, "Roots and Routes," 7.

²⁶ *British Film Institute Productions 1951-1976; Catalogue: British Film Institute Productions 1977-1978*, ed., Elizabeth Cowie, (London: BFI Publishing, 1978); *The New Social Function of Cinema - Catalogue: British Film Institute Productions '79/80*, eds., Rod Stoneman, and Hilary Thompson, (London: BFI Publishing, 1981).

following the release of *My Childhood*, *My Ain Folk* to *My Way Home*, when the films were released as one package in 1979, and to include television sales.

There is no correspondence held at the BDCM that concerns the distribution and exhibition of *My Childhood* or *My Ain Folk* following their completion in 1972 and 1973, respectively. On the one hand, this absence in materials concerning the distribution of the first two instalments of the *Trilogy* immediately after their completion could reflect the poor distribution of these early BFI Production Board films and the less established procedures that were in place under Hassan. On the other hand, this could reflect that Douglas was not as involved in the process as he would come to be by the final film; it could be inferred that the distribution of the films was less of a concern to Douglas until the completion of all three films. *My Childhood* and *My Ain Folk* followed shortly one after another in 1972 and 1973, whereas the gap between *My Ain Folk* and the release of *My Way Home* (1978) of five years led to long-term financial constraints on Douglas. As discovered in the previous chapter, the long-term, financially precarious conditions put Douglas in an unstable position, leading him to eke 'out a living from... occasional odd jobs' and a temporary teaching position at the National Film School.²⁷ It could be assumed, then, that the financial terms and agreements may have become a greater priority and concern to Douglas as not only had he endured being in a financially precarious and strained position for a long-time, but he had also had longer to reflect on the agreement and its terms. In this chapter, although I refer to all three films, I chiefly focus on the final instalment of the *Trilogy*, *My Way Home*, and the three films as one package, as the BDCM holds a large dossier on this.

By using Douglas's *Trilogy* as a case study, this chapter will address the following questions. Firstly, what were Douglas's financial terms when entering into a contract with the BFI Production Board and how did this change when the contracts were altered during Sainsbury's tenure? Secondly, how did the collaborative efforts of the BFI and Douglas to carry out the distribution and exhibition of the *Trilogy* manifest? Finally, more broadly, what suitable circuits were available for the exhibition of the BFI Production Board films during this period? As mentioned, the areas of distribution and exhibition were felt to be in

²⁷ James Park, *British Cinema: The Lights That Failed*, (London: B.T. Batesford Ltd., 1990), 132.

'real crisis' in Britain in the 1970s; outside of the duopoly-owned spaces of Rank and EMI, what spaces were available to the BFI Production Board and the films they produced?

Contracts

The contractual agreement demonstrates the financial conditions and potential gains both the BFI and Douglas could receive from any film sales and also worked as a way for the BFI to establish and 'set the context and targets of work'.²⁸ The BDCM materials do not include copies of the contracts and the BFI have been unable to find the original production agreements for the three titles, however, the correspondence between Douglas and the BFI, along with the royalty statements, help to illuminate the negotiation processes that took place behind the terms of agreement and the fiscal arrangement that was agreed upon.²⁹

There were several contractual shifts across the decade between the BFI and filmmakers that were in receipt of Production Board grants. In correspondence with Peter Jewell, Jim Dempster, the Royalties Manager at the BFI explained:

[w]hen "My Childhood" was made in 1972, the standard terms of the BFI Production contracts at that time were agreed. By the time "My Ain Folk" was made in 1973 the terms had been revised and slightly different terms were agreed for that contract. When "My Way Home" was made in 1978 yet another set of terms were agreed.³⁰

Although it is not exactly clear what Dempster means when he states that there were 'slightly different terms' in Douglas's contract for *My Ain Folk* contract, from the royalty statements and correspondence, one can deduce that before 1977,

²⁸ Helen Blair, "'You're Only as Good as Your Last Job': The Labour Process and Labour Market in the British Film Industry," *Work, Employment & Society* 15, no. 1 (2001): 149.

²⁹ Peter Jewell wrote to the BFI (Jim Dempster, Royalty Manager) in June 2010 enquiring if they held copies of the production agreements, however, Annabelle Shaw, Rights Database Manager BFI, replied saying that they did not have copies in their records; Letter from Peter Jewell to Jim Dempster, Royalty Manager, BFI, June 2010, BDC 1/TRI/2/2, BDCM; Letter from Annabelle Shaw, Rights Database Manager, BFI, to Peter Jewell, 7 June 2010, BDC 1/TRI/2/2, BDCM.

³⁰ Letter from Jim Dempster, Royalty Manager, BFI to Peter Jewell, 9 June 2010, BDC 1/TRI/2/2, BDCM (hereafter cited as Dempster to Jewell, BDC 1/TRI/2/2).

the contracts signed ‘provided the BFI to retain the revenues from the films until the production costs had been recovered’.³¹

It was then part-way through the process of making the final instalment of the *Trilogy*, *My Way Home*, that the standardised contractual agreements between the BFI and its filmmakers were renegotiated more extensively. The crucial change was that no longer did the BFI seek to recover all production costs through distribution first.³² During these renegotiations, the terms changed so that instead of Douglas receiving 25 per cent of the revenue, it was agreed that from 1 January 1977, Douglas was to receive half of all gross sales on *My Way Home* for cinema and television. Based on the royalty statements, the revenue was set against the distribution costs which were incurred by the BFI. It was only once all three films were complete, that they were to be considered as one single film; before this, they were treated as three separate and unrelated films with their own individual agreements. Following the final film’s completion, the terms were unified and there was an amendment letter sent to account for this, acknowledging that the distribution of all three films and the terms agreed to were to be consistent at 50 per cent.³³ The terms were not applied retroactively but would be accounted for henceforth from 1 April 1977, the beginning of the Production Board’s financial year. In the final agreement, the BFI could then take ‘15% commission from all revenues, then recoup any costs, and the balance [was then] divided equally between the BFI and Bill’.³⁴

It was during this process of renegotiation—when Douglas was completing *My Way Home*—that the aspect of underselling the films to television providers evidently became a top priority and concern of Douglas, and he frequently declared this error to both key individuals at the BFI as well as external television broadcasters. In Douglas’s correspondence with the BFI, he increasingly paid attention to and queried the price of prints that had previously been negotiated on his films’ behalf. For example, in a letter to Sainsbury, Douglas discussed the low costs of prints that had been agreed upon for his first two films:

³¹ Letter from Peter Sainsbury to Bill Douglas, 2 December 1977, Photocopy, BDC 1/TRI/2/2, BDCM (hereafter cited as Sainsbury to Douglas, 2 December 1977, BDC 1/TRI/2/2).

³² Sainsbury to Douglas, 2 December 1977, BDC 1/TRI/2/2.

³³ Dempster to Jewell, BDC 1/TRI/2/2.

³⁴ Dempster to Jewell, BDC 1/TRI/2/2.

[s]ince when was it wise to pay in the case of MC [*My Childhood*] £558.56 in print cost and then to charge Films Inc the low price of £210.70? making a loss to revenue of £347.86. There is a similar case with MAF [*My Ain Folk*] where 8 prints sold to Films Inc for the amazing price of £189.29. Is it any wonder I was forced to eat HP sauce on bread? ³⁵

Here, Douglas criticises the Board for underselling *My Childhood* to Films Inc. an American distributor. The royalties statement concurs with Douglas's accusations of the sale losing revenue; however, the statement differs to Douglas's claim as it details a sale of five 16mm prints of *My Childhood* to Films Inc. for £176.63 that cost the BFI £386.55 to print, resulting in a loss of £209.92.³⁶ In an undated and unaddressed note written by Douglas, he specified, '[i]n no way must films inc [*sic*] be handed My Way Home'.³⁷

In John Ellis's critical piece on the Production Board, he explains that this American distribution company had 'no interest or expertise in many areas of the Board's work', and yet the 'BFI renewed this contract in May 1975 without consulting the Board'.³⁸ The BFI's exclusive contract with Films Inc., then, was a limiting factor, not only in terms of the financial circumstances and the beneficially low rates to Films Inc. and what this meant for filmmakers working with the BFI such as Douglas, but also the impact this may have had on the successful distribution in America. Arguably, the potential American market could have been utilised further and may have been impacted by Films Inc.'s lack of 'expertise' and 'interest' in the output by the Board. For instance, in March 1976, Ismail Merchant—who would later work with Douglas as producer on his feature film *Comrades*—contacted Sainsbury to enquire if *My Childhood* could accompany his film, *Autobiography of a Princess* (1975), in its American general release.³⁹ In response, Sainsbury told him to contact Films Inc. who held the rights in North America.⁴⁰ From the materials I have consulted, it is unclear if Films Inc. ever arranged this, however, based on later correspondence between Douglas and Merchant, this was never mentioned, and the royalties received from Films Inc. were negligible, small sums that trickled in across the decade for all three of the

³⁵ Letter from Bill Douglas to Peter Sainsbury, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3, BDCM.

³⁶ Royalty Statement to 30 September 1974: *My Childhood*, BDC 1/TRI/2/1, BDCM.

³⁷ Douglas, Typed Note B, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3.

³⁸ Ellis, "Production Board Policies," 13.

³⁹ Letter from Peter Sainsbury to Ismail Merchant, 24 March 1976, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM (hereafter cited as Sainsbury to Merchant, BDC 1/TRI/1/2).

⁴⁰ Sainsbury Merchant, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

films, that it seems that the American distribution of the film was extremely poor.⁴¹ The meagre and inadequate distribution of the films in America was commented on by the American Press. For example, in Kevin Thomas's review in the *Los Angeles Times* heralding a screening of the *Trilogy* at UCLA in 1983, he notes that: 'Bill Douglas's autobiographical three-hour trilogy is arguably the finest achievement of the British cinema in the '70s, yet had been shown locally only in its entirety at the 1979 Filmex',—an annual film festival and predecessor of the American Film Institute's Los Angeles International Film Festival.⁴² Thomas's comment suggests that the ability to see the *Trilogy* in California was difficult, limited to only one film festival in 1979 and was not shown again until 1983.⁴³

This process of reappraisal and renegotiation of the contracts led Douglas to query and intensely scrutinise his contract. Douglas also discussed the contracts and terms agreed to by other filmmakers working with the BFI Production Board and suggested that he was not alone in enduring a negative financial impact by working with the Production Board when he states: 'I have yet to find one working for the board who did not land in debt. Mine alone has been £20 a week for the eight years I was with the BFI'.⁴⁴ As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, Douglas frequently criticised the Board's activities and the personal financial implication that it meant for him. Throughout his correspondence with the Board, he repeatedly expressed the financial strain he was under as a result of working on these films. Douglas calculated that 'in all the eight years [*sic*] work I did for the Board it paid me no more than £5 per week'.⁴⁵ Not only did Douglas suggest his weekly payment average was low, but he also stated that he was in at least £5,000 in debt because of them.⁴⁶ Due to the personal financial implication Douglas faced from working on the films, it is understandable why he would become increasingly concerned with the terms of agreement and begin to compare his circumstances with other filmmakers who were also being funded by the Board, especially when he realised that an

⁴¹ See Royalty Statements, 'Trilogy' Finances 1973-1991, BDC 1/TRI/2/1, BDCM.

⁴² Thomas, "Heralded Trilogy".

⁴³ The films were included as part of *British Film Now Series* at the Paramount Theater in New York in 1980 as well as the British Council Series.

⁴⁴ Douglas, Typed Note B, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3.

⁴⁵ Letter from Bill Douglas to Carole Myer, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3, BDCM.

⁴⁶ Douglas, Typed Note B, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3.

agreement made on his behalf such as the one with Films Inc. was to make a loss.

The BFI's relationship with the filmmaker and the need to have them involved with the distribution was noted by Hassan as a contributing factor to the poor distribution during his tenure.⁴⁷ When it came to the sales of the *Trilogy*, Douglas repeatedly expressed in his correspondence with the BFI that he was not given copies of the contracts and criticised that the BFI were slow to produce them following his request.⁴⁸ Douglas explained that he had not seen the Wagner-Hallig contract which concerned the films' German television sale, expressing that 'back in 1974 I was refused with the answer that this was confidential. It is only now due to Judy Cottam's insistence that in 1979 I was able to see a photostat of the contracts'.⁴⁹ Similarly, Douglas was shown the contracts that had been negotiated on behalf of *My Childhood* and *My Ain Folk* between the BFI and the Australian Film Institute (AFI) long after, and he commented that they were 'a disappointment to me'.⁵⁰ It is not surprising that the BFI's agreement with the AFI was dissatisfying to Douglas; the royalty statement evinces that one 16mm copy of *My Childhood* was sold to the AFI in March 1976 for £96.13, the same amount that it had cost the BFI to produce, therefore no profit was received from the sale.⁵¹ Over a ten year period, from the point of sale in March 1976, until 31 March 1976, the BFI received a disappointing total of £214.65 in revenue from the AFI.⁵²

⁴⁷ Dupin, "BFI and British Independent Cinema in the 1970s," 164.

⁴⁸ Letter from Bill Douglas to Tom Wagner, 8 March 1979, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM.

⁴⁹ Typed Note B, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3.

⁵⁰ Letter from Bill Douglas to Peter Sainsbury and Hilary Thompson, 3 April 1979, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM.

⁵¹ Royalty Statement to 30 September 1975: *My Childhood*, 15 November 1975, BDC 1/TRI/1/2/1, BDCM; Royalty Statement to 31 March 1976: *My Childhood*, 21 May 1976, BDC 1/TRI/1/2/1, BDCM.

⁵² This is calculated using the Royalty statements from 31 March 1976-31 March 1986, BDC 1/TRI/1/2/1. Revenue was received from the AFI in this period in the following amounts: £127.40 in Royalties from AFI, Royalty Statement to 30 September 1979: *My Childhood*, 29 November 1979, BDC 1/TRI/1/2/1, BDCM; £26.94 in Royalties from AFI, Royalty Statement to 31 March 1980: *My Childhood*, BDC 1/TRI/1/2/1, 6 June 1980, BDCM. £12.12 in Royalties from AFI, Royalty Statement to 31 December 1980: *My Childhood*, 9 February 1981, BDC 1/TRI/1/2/1, BDCM. £9.00 in Royalties from AFI, Royalty Statement to 31 March 1981: *My Childhood*, 4 June 1981, BDC 1/TRI/1/2/1, BDCM. £30.90 in Royalties from AFI, Royalty Statement to 30 September 1981: *My Childhood*, 11 November 1981, BDC 1/TRI/1/2/1, BDCM, £8.29 in Royalties from AFI, Royalty Statement to 31 December 1982: *My Childhood*, 28 February 1983, BDC 1/TRI/1/2/1, BDCM.

This raises a critical question as to whether the films could have sold for more and, as a not-for-profit organisation, was it more important to the BFI to at least secure a sale to break-even to ensure the films were seen than to make some kind of profit? From the position of the filmmaker, however, these business decisions had a severe financial implication and impact on personal finances. Douglas commented on this arrangement in his correspondence to Sainsbury and Thompson, stating that 'I don't feel either Institute had my interests at heart'.⁵³ The notable absence in materials concerning the distribution of Douglas's first two films as well as his lack of access to the sales contracts, suggests that this was negotiated on Douglas's behalf; he had little agency or involvement in the distribution of his first two films. In contrast, it seems that Douglas's agency and involvement developed considerably during *My Way Home*, as the following sections which look at various areas of distribution of the films will demonstrate.

Theatrical Exhibition

The two-circuit duopoly of Rank and EMI 'effectively dominated [the exhibition industry in Britain throughout the decade] up until the opening of Britain's first multiplex'.⁵⁴ The importance of a theatrical release into a conventional cinema helps to give a film visibility and raises the profile of the filmmaker as well as the production company.⁵⁵ Julia Knight and Peter Thomas highlight that a theatrical release works to 'develop a film culture, and indeed to survive, distributors have to ensure their films are seen, and hence access to exhibition outlets is of crucial importance'.⁵⁶ Essentially, then, there is no good making a film for it not to be seen. So, for a low-budget independent film, being able to secure a theatrical release into a conventional cinema would be incredibly beneficial for many of its stakeholders.

Cinema audience numbers had long since been in decline in Britain, and from the early 1960s, cinemagoing had come to be viewed as suffering a 'slow death' and thought to be in 'terminal decline'.⁵⁷ In terms of the number of cinema

⁵³ Letter from Bill Douglas to Peter Sainsbury and Hilary Thompson, 3 April 1979, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM.

⁵⁴ Hanson, *Screening the World*, 93.

⁵⁵ Knight and Thomas, *Reaching Audiences*, 71.

⁵⁶ Knight and Thomas, *Reaching Audiences*, 71.

⁵⁷ Hanson, *Screening the World*, 90.

admissions, in 1972 this was 163 million, but by the end of the decade in 1980, it had dropped to 102 million.⁵⁸ John Hill highlights that ‘television is often blamed for the demise of cinema’, however, several other factors ought to be considered.⁵⁹ Firstly, the cinemas themselves were in a poor state. The first ‘purpose-built multiplex cinema’ would not arrive in Britain until the following decade in 1985; however, makeshift multi-screen venues were already fairly common in Britain in the 1970s.⁶⁰ Both Rank and EMI were reluctant to extensively invest in renovating their cinemas and so they carried out a process of ‘twinning’ and ‘tripling’.⁶¹ Essentially, these were semi-makeshift cheap redevelopments to change their existing cinemas into multi-screen venues. Although this would allow programmers a greater number of screening options, the consequence of such badly executed makeovers led to poor sightlines, sound transfer and penetration between screens, and smaller screens; ultimately, audiences in the 1970s experienced very poor conditions of viewing. The lack of investment by the chain cinemas resulted in declining conditions for viewers and this was further highlighted to audiences as living standards in the home and domestic space rose.⁶² Secondly, the decade saw diminishing site numbers and the ‘number of cinema closures continued to increase during the decade’.⁶³ Justin Smith remains fairly positive regarding the decline in cinema numbers and argues

Linda Wood rightly contests that there is no evidence to say that audiences expressed a disinterest in films, rather that viewing habits and conditions were changing and that audiences were choosing to watch them at home instead. See Linda Wood, *British Films 1971-1981*, (London: BFI, 2005), Reproduction of 1983 document, <https://www2.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/bfi-british-films-1971-1981.pdf>, 5.

⁵⁸ Justin Smith, "Glam, Spam and Uncle Sam: Funding Diversity in 1970s British Film Production," in *Seventies British Cinema*, ed. Robert Shail (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 67–80.

⁵⁹ John Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s: Issues and Themes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 69.

⁶⁰ Hanson, *Screening the World*, 89.

See also Phil Hoad, "How Multiplex Cinemas Saved the British Film Industry 25 Years Ago," *The Guardian*, 11 November 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2010/nov/11/multiplex-cinemas-the-point-milton-keynes>.

⁶¹ Hanson, *Screening the World*, 92.

⁶² Steve Presence, "'Britain's First Media Centre': A History of Bristol's Watershed Cinema, 1964-1998," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 39, no. 4 (2019), 807.

⁶³ Justin Smith, *Withnail and Us: Cult Films and Cults in British Cinema*, (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 172.

that despite the cinema closures, 'the number of screens remained buoyant due to the practice of doubling or tripling'.⁶⁴ However, as Stuart Hanson states:

[b]etween 1952 and 1964, the total seating capacity of all cinemas halved from 4.2 million to 2.1 million and by 1974 it had more than halved again to 973,000. In 1984, on the eve of the multiplex, seating capacity had shrunk yet further to 459,000.⁶⁵

In addition, Hanson argues that '[b]y 1984, Thorn-EMI's ABC circuit had shrunk to 107 sites and 287 screens, and the Rank circuit to 75 sites with 194 screens'.⁶⁶ Therefore, the result of the number of sites shrinking meant there were fewer seats in total, and although there were more screens based at one site, the quality of the conversions were inadequate and cheap which led to poor viewing experiences. Film scholar, Robert Shail comments that for those who remember the experience, these conversions 'were a painful blight on filmgoing in the period'.⁶⁷

The 1970s was a period of deep economic instability that resulted in a rise in inflation which 'peaked at 24.2% in 1975'.⁶⁸ In terms of revenue received from cinema admissions, it increased.⁶⁹ Smith explains that 'while admissions and per capita visits fell, and cinemas did close ... box-office receipts (by dint of increased ticket prices) actually grew. So there was no shortage of ... exhibition revenue across the decade'.⁷⁰ Sue Harper and Justin Smith build on this further in their publication *British Film Culture in the 1970s* when they state that 'if one takes inflation into account, their real value fell from £213 million in 1970 to £135.7 million in 1980 (1980 prices)'.⁷¹ In terms of accessibility, the rising ticket prices may have been limiting and restrictive for some, especially in light of the rising rates of unemployment. The decade saw leisure and entertainment activities change in Britain. Not only was there an increase in British television ownership, but as Harper and Smith highlight there was a rise in owners of home video

⁶⁴ Smith, *Withnail and Us*, 172.

⁶⁵ Hanson, *Screening the World*, 92.

⁶⁶ Hanson, *Screening the World*, 92.

⁶⁷ Shail, *Seventies British Cinema*, xiv.

⁶⁸ Barber, *British Film Industry in the 1970s*, 15.

⁶⁹ Smith, "Glam, Spam and Uncle Sam", 67.

⁷⁰ Smith, "Glam, Spam and Uncle Sam", 67.

⁷¹ Harper, and Smith, *British Film Culture in the 1970s*, 209.

recorders.⁷² Writing in 1983, Linda Wood states that '[a] recent survey put feature films second only to sport as the most popular form of entertainment on TV'.⁷³ Thus, it was not the case that the British public were no longer watching films, but *where* and *how* they were watching them was changing.

To tackle the issue of declining domestic theatrical exhibition, in 1977 the newly formed Association of Independent Producers (AIP) created a committee consisting of seventeen trade bodies who were tasked with writing a report concerning the issue.⁷⁴ The report very plainly called for more Governmental support: 'British cinema will die, unless the government is prepared to give aid to film exhibitors'.⁷⁵ Although the AIP noted that the popularity of television was the principal reason that impacted cinema closures, they also mentioned 'unattractive physical conditions' and 'insufficiency of choice'.⁷⁶ In spite of there being a greater number of venues that had multi-screen capacity, in terms of programming, there was still thought to be limited choice and viewing options for audiences.

Despite the BFI having their exhibition facilities on the South Bank in London, they failed to make effective use of the NFT to exhibit their Production Board films. Dupin notes that at the beginning of the decade, '[s]creenings of BFI productions at the National Film Theatre, . . . [which] were once the only chance for most film-makers to have their film shown to the press and to London audiences, were discontinued under Hassan, who failed to implement a more dynamic scheme'.⁷⁷ Writing in 1976, Robinson criticised the BFI's inability to utilise the NFT effectively when he stated that '[a]part from a few screenings in the London Film Festival the NFT has given no screen time to the production board for years'.⁷⁸ Indeed, Douglas's films were one of the limited number of BFI Production Board films shown part of the London Film Festival (LFF) that Robinson refers to; *My Childhood* was shown as part of the LFF 1972 as a double bill with *The Phoenix and the Turtle* (Luigi V.R. Chiapini), *My Ain Folk* part of LFF

⁷² See Appendix Table 4 and Table 5 which shows UK Television deliveries, 1971-1975 and UK video recorder imports, 1975-1979, in Harper, and Smith, *British Film Culture in the 1970s*, 262.

⁷³ Wood, *British Films 1971-1981*, 5.

⁷⁴ Hanson, *Screening the World*, 90.

⁷⁵ Hanson, *Screening the World*, 90.

⁷⁶ Hanson, *Screening the World*, 90.

⁷⁷ Dupin, "BFI and British Independent Cinema in the 1970s," 164.

⁷⁸ Robinson, "British and Proud".

1973, and *My Way Home* in 1978.⁷⁹ Aside from the few screenings that were part of the LFF, Bill Grantham notes that '[n]o BFI-funded films were screened at the NFT in the five-and-a-half years after March 1971'.⁸⁰ It was only in response to the adverse publicity after the *Juvenile Liaison* affair during Barrie Gavin's tenure as head of production discussed in Chapter One, that these five-and-a-half years came to an end when Alan Lovell programmed a season of BFI Production Board Films in 1976—which included a screening of Douglas's *My Childhood*.⁸¹ Lovell produced an accompanying booklet for the event, which included interviews with filmmakers who had received grant money under the auspices of the Experimental Film Fund or the Production Board.⁸² Although these filmmakers were recipients of varying grant levels and had differing filmmaking styles, the vast majority of the interviewees note that they were extremely dissatisfied with the distribution of their films. Filmmaker, John Beech (*Postal Delivery*, 1971) criticised the BFI's diligence and care for the films they were distributing, commenting:

when 16 mm prints were ordered and sold in bulk, they were not checked by anyone. Consequently, when I borrowed one[,] I found that one side of the image had been printed out of focus throughout the reel. I checked further and found another print which was printed way out of synch [*sic*], and another where the dissolves had failed to print through!⁸³

A key ambition for the BFI was to expand the reach of its exhibition outside of London and they had received funding to embark on this endeavour from the Labour government in 1964; the Arts Minister—Jennie Lee—was especially eager for there to be greater regional reach.⁸⁴ The RFTs had been set up under the auspices of the BFI and were positioned as the primary alternative to commercial cinema. The RFTs scheme ran from 'the mid-1960s—up until the late 1990s' and 'was the first attempt to coordinate access to cultural cinema on a

⁷⁹ Bill Grantham, "In for A Downer? Notes on Some British Film Institute Feature Film Productions of the 1980s," *Cinema Journal* 47, no. 4 (Summer 2008): 3; London Film Festival Programme, 1972, 49, BDC 1/TRI/4/5, BDCM.

Douglas' graduation film from the LFS, *Come Dancing*, was screened at the NFT as part of his graduation programme; "New Work from the LFS," NFT Programme Notes, BDC 1/XAD/2, BDCM.

⁸⁰ Grantham, "In for a Downer?" 3.

⁸¹ Ellis, "Production Board Policies," 9.

⁸² Lovell, *BFI Production Board*, 33-56.

⁸³ Lovell, *BFI Production Board*, 37.

⁸⁴ Nowell-Smith, "Diamonds are Forever," 43.

national scale outside London'.⁸⁵ Dupin notes that '[b]y the end of 1970, there was a network of 35 RFTs, 2 of which were run directly by the Institute'.⁸⁶ These RFTs were positioned as 'Regional branches of the NFT' and were an attempt to bring 'NFT programming' to towns and cities across the country'.⁸⁷ On paper, this sounds like an expansive exhibition network with the promise that these screening facilities would provide a great opportunity for the BFI, not only to screen their Production Board films but to have a further opportunity to help shape British film culture. Unfortunately, this exhibition framework was 'rather ineffectual', at least initially.⁸⁸ Geoffrey Nowell-Smith suggests, at their advent, these regional theatres were not like the NFT; they were often run part-time, sometimes open only for one day a week and had inadequate facilities to support their film programming.⁸⁹ It is wrong to assume that the RFTs worked as one cohesive circuit, as Ian Christie, then head of distribution at the BFI notes:

[there were] considerable variations within the RFTS: some are part time, some are full time; some receive considerable subsidy from the BFI, some do not; some have a high level of local authority involvement, some very little; some suffer more than others from trade circumstances, especially in the cities; some pay the majority of their staff, some are heavily dependent on voluntary labour. It is clear the RFTs are not a chain or a circuit.⁹⁰

Due to these variables, there were significant time constraints placed on RFTs which would, in turn, impact their programming choices. Christie explains that 'many [RFTs] were located in new repertory theatres and campus arts centres'.⁹¹ Consequently, the use of multi-purpose spaces impacted the ability to hold screenings; availability varied between venues from a couple of days a week to once a month, with availability particularly constrained at the RFTs based in Repertory Theatres. It would be very unlikely for an RFT with such operational

⁸⁵ Presence, "'Britain's First Media Centre,'" 804, 806.

⁸⁶ Dupin, "Sponsor," 114.

⁸⁷ Jon Barrenchea, "British Arthouse Cinema," in *Directory of World Cinema: Britain*, eds., Emma Bell, and Neil Mitchell (Bristol: Intellect Ltd., 2012), 185; Nowell-Smith, "Diamonds are Forever," 43.

⁸⁸ Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "The British Film Institute," *Cinema Journal*, 47, No. 4, (Summer 2008): 127.

⁸⁹ Nowell-Smith, "Diamonds are Forever," 42–43.

⁹⁰ Ian Christie, "Regional Film Theatres: Case Studies in the subsidised exhibition sector," in *The New Social Function of Cinema - Catalogue: British Film Institute Productions '79/80*, eds., Rod Stoneman, and Hilary Thompson, (London: BFI Publishing, 1981), 58.

⁹¹ Christie, "Regional Film Theatres," 61.

limitations to willingly programme a screening of the *Trilogy* with almost three-hour running time (175-minutes).

Not only did the RFTs have time and access constraints, but they also were under a considerable amount of pressure financially. In terms of financial support, 'most RFTs receive[d] only a small contribution towards their revenue deficit from the BFI'.⁹² As such, they were under similar pressures to most other exhibitors of the time, facing the impact of declining cinema audiences and rising inflation; there was a need to survive, and so the RFTs did not have the ability to greatly innovate or experiment with their programming, nor did they have the capacity to spend time working to grow and develop their audiences. Instead, 'half of the films shown were from 'major' (i.e. American-owned) distributors, while the proportion from 'independent' distributors relied heavily on established European art cinema names'.⁹³ Christie highlights that the RFTs programmes 'included only a token of 'independent' British representation' and lists Barney Platts-Mills, Kevin Brownlow, Bill Douglas, and Mike Leigh as his examples.⁹⁴ Douglas's *Trilogy* was screened at a handful of RFTs including Cinema City, Norwich; Glasgow Film Theatre; Newcastle Tyneside Cinema and Queen's Film Theatre, Belfast.⁹⁵ Douglas attended some of these events and following the screening of the *Trilogy* at Newcastle Tyneside Cinema, Nina Hibbin, the cinema's programme director wrote to Douglas and said, '[p]eople enjoyed the films very much and were delighted with your talk and the way you answered their questions. They especially appreciated the way you made yourself available to them afterwards', further demonstrating the value having a filmmaker involved within this process which the BFI increasingly sought to do.⁹⁶

The local authority's involvement with the RFTs varied between venues. RFTs would often be directed by the 'expertise' of London, and would have very little say on programming for their own cinemas.⁹⁷ In so doing, this London-centric management and overseeing of programming neglected local knowledge and the understanding of local audiences from those who worked at the individual RFTs.

⁹² Christie, "Regional Film Theatres," 60.

⁹³ Christie, "Regional Film Theatres," 61.

⁹⁴ Christie, "Regional Film Theatres," 61.

⁹⁵ List compiled using a number of sources including correspondence, newspaper listings and royalty statements.

⁹⁶ Letter from Nina Hibbin to Bill Douglas, 21 May 1979, BDC 1/TRI/3/3, BDCM.

⁹⁷ Sheila Whitaker, "Declarations of Independence," 94–95.

In his comprehensive history of Bristol's Watershed Cinema, Steve Presence notes that 'film societies represented a large proportion of the first wave of RFTs'.⁹⁸ The RFTs differed in their approach to screenings in that they centralised the film text over its context, whereas the BFI Education Department were striving to situate films in their social and political context and were 'keen to persuade its RFTs to show programmes of films that addressed particular issues or themes—the so-called "structured programming"'.⁹⁹ Despite the London-centred management and intention to influence regional programming to be modelled on the NFT, the BFI were unable to utilise this network fully to screen BFI Production Board films because it was not centrally organised and cohesive, rather it was made up of very different scales of audience, availability, financial concerns and pressures as well as approaches to the framing and presentation of the film text. Nowell-Smith suggests that was not until the end of the decade that the BFI had established a more 'viable network of regional venues in most major cities'.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, this is reflected and reinforced in the BFI's third edition of their Production Catalogue, which was published in 1980, concentrating its focus to distribution and development of the RFTs.¹⁰¹

In terms of exhibitors outside of the BFI RFT Network and of mainstream cinema, where Douglas's films might be more likely to be screened, the decade saw several initiatives and innovative distribution practices. The Other Cinema (TOC) was co-founded in 1969 by Sainsbury (before he joined the BBC and later the BFI).¹⁰² Significantly, TOC were free from some of the constraints that other exhibitors faced. For example, according to Nick Hart-Williams, co-founder of TOC, their 'selection of films is never based on financial criteria . . . nor even on an estimate of "audience potential"', rather their selection was based on films they deemed were important to receive distribution in Britain.¹⁰³ Although organisations like TOC intended 'to bring more independent films into distribution in Britain,' they were like the BFI's Education Department in that they were

⁹⁸ Presence, "Britain's First Media Centre," 808.

⁹⁹ Presence, "Britain's First Media Centre," 808.

¹⁰⁰ Nowell-Smith, "Diamonds are Forever," 44.

¹⁰¹ See *The New Social Function of Cinema*.

¹⁰² TOC was a specialist distributor of avant-garde and political independent filmmaking. Spurred on by the events of May 1968 as well as the Vietnam War.

¹⁰³ "Other and Essential: A Survey of Independent Distributors/Exhibitors," *Sight & Sound*, 45: 4, Fall 1976, 208.

working to cultivate discursive practices around film and often programmed European filmmakers or films by cooperatives.¹⁰⁴

In the 1970s, there were two other crucial independent exhibition spaces in London which were the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) and the aforementioned, the Academy. The ICA were very interested in programming the *Trilogy* to tie in with a season provisionally titled 'Representations of Children' in July 1979.¹⁰⁵ The ICA proposed that the *Trilogy* would be screened 'for two weeks on all slots and then for another two weeks with other contextualising material on one slot in the evening'.¹⁰⁶ However, when discussing the London opening and launch of the films, Douglas expressed that he felt that the Academy would be 'more prestigious', and that if a screening were to take place there, then it would bring the event 'full press coverage'.¹⁰⁷ The Academy cinema had three screens in total and 'always insisted on exclusive runs, refusing to allow its films to be shown anywhere else at the same time in the UK'.¹⁰⁸ All of Douglas's films when released individually and as a trilogy were shown in Academy Three,¹⁰⁹ a former office space that was initially converted into a Cinema Club in 1964 and later became a public cinema in 1967.¹¹⁰ The Academy Cinema Three had 96 seats

¹⁰⁴ Nick-Hart Williams, *The Other Cinema*, *Sight & Sound*, 45:4, Fall 1976, 207–208.

¹⁰⁵ Letter from Hilary Thompson to Bill Douglas, 5 April 1979, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM (hereafter cited as Thompson to Douglas, 5 April 1979, BDC 1/TRI/1/3).

¹⁰⁶ Thompson to Douglas, 5 April 1979, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

¹⁰⁷ Letter from Bill Douglas to Hilary Thompson, 12 April 1979, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM. The ICA did programme *The Bill Douglas Trilogy* in October 1981, see "Independents," *Marylebone Mercury*, Friday 2 October 1981, 12.

¹⁰⁸ Eyles, *London's West End Cinemas*, 54. See pages 52–54 for a history of The Academy Cinema.

¹⁰⁹ Royalty Statement to 30 June 1973: *My Childhood*, 7 September 1973 shows that there was an eight-week run at the Academy Cinema from 22 February to 18 April 1973 which totalled £197.41 in revenue. There was a double-bill of *My Childhood* and *My Ain Folk* in March 1975. See: Royalty Statement to 31 March 1975: *My Childhood*, 30 May 1975, BDC 1/TRI/2/1: shows that in March 1975 received £31.67 in revenue from the Academy Cinema, from screenings 12–18 December 1974. Royalty Statement to 31 March 1975: *My Ain Folk*, 23 May 1975 shows that in March 1975 the BFI received £31.66 in revenue for screenings 12–18 December 1974. The Royalty statements show that for the release of *My Way Home*, revenue was received for each of the three films Academy at the same time in November–December 1979 (see Royalty Statement to 31 December 1979: *My Childhood*, 22 February 1980, Royalty Statement to 31 December 1979: *My Ain Folk*, 11 February 1980; Royalty Statement 31 December 1979: *My Way Home*, 22 February 1980) into the new year from January to March 1980 (see Royalty Statement to 31 March 1980: *My Childhood*, 6 June 1980, Royalty Statement to 31 March 1980: *My Ain Folk*, 30 May 1980, and Royalty Statement 31 March 1980: *My Way Home*, 16 May 1980, BDC 1/TRI/2/1).

¹¹⁰ Eyles, *London's West End Cinemas*, 54.

and a bar.¹¹¹ When planning the London launch of the films, the BFI included Douglas in the discussions. All three films had their first run at the Academy Cinema; *My Childhood* was shown as a double bill alongside fellow BFI Production Board film, *Skinflicker* (1973), directed by Tony Bicat for eight weeks and *My Ain Folk* was shown with *My Childhood* as a double bill.¹¹² The Academy had bought a 16mm print of *My Childhood*, but for *My Ain Folk* and *My Way Home*, a print was rented.¹¹³ It could be inferred that by holding all of the films' first runs there, there was a sense of familiarity and comfort as well as a sense of how the film may likely do financially. Moreover, as Allen Eyles highlights:

[t]he Academy pioneered the work of new directors and a list of its presentations would include many films that are now classics but which were daring choices in their time. In particular, the Academy showed all the early Ingmar Bergman films, and established [Andrzej] Wajda, Satyajit Ray, [Jean-Luc] Godard and [Miklós] Jancsó, as important directors.¹¹⁴

In addition, the cinema screened 'off-beat and unwanted British films' such as *The Caretaker* (Clive Donner, 1963) and *Kes* (Ken Loach, 1969).¹¹⁵ Thus, the innovative programming and curation of art house, independent and world films at the cinema and its history may have been an influence for Douglas, who not only greatly admired Ray but also might have hoped to similarly replicate the success of Loach's *Kes*, a film that similarly explores a working-class boy's childhood and subjection to poverty and abuse.¹¹⁶ Critic, Harry Eyres, discusses an interaction between the owner of the Academy, George Hoellering, and Douglas. According to Eyres, 'Hollering once complained to Douglas's stating '[y]ou're tough on the audience' with which Douglas retorted, '[t]hey only have to put up with it for an hour or so. I had to endure it for a lifetime'.¹¹⁷ Although Hoellering as an exhibitor recognised that Douglas's films were challenging for audiences, his willingness to repeatedly programme Douglas's films displays an enthusiasm and commitment to them.¹¹⁸

¹¹¹ Eyles, *London's West End Cinemas*, 54.

¹¹² "What's On," *County Times and Gazette* (Middlesex), Friday 23 February 1973, 9.

¹¹³ Royalty Statement to 31 March 1973: *My Childhood*, 29 May 1973, BDC 1/TRI/2/1.

¹¹⁴ Eyles, *London's West End Cinemas*, 54.

¹¹⁵ Eyles, *London's West End Cinemas*, 54.

¹¹⁶ Interview with Peter Jewell discussed Douglas meeting Ray.

¹¹⁷ Harry Eyres, "Cinematic Poetry," *Financial Times*, 5 September 2009, n.pag., BDC 1/XAD/4, BDCM.

¹¹⁸ Noble speculates that if Hoellering's enthusiasm was replicated across Britain in its major cities, then potentially, the problem of poor distribution could have been solved Noble, "Making," 155.

Douglas's decision to have the London launch of the *Trilogy* at the Academy did produce some complications. Due to the success of *The Lacemaker* (Claude Goretta, 1977), the Academy was not available for the launch pre-summer of 1979 when the BFI had hoped they would secure it. Thompson spoke with Coopers in Berlin—who held the distribution rights to *The Lacemaker*—to negotiate an alternative arrangement, but as she explained to Douglas:

they made it quite clear that they would not entertain the idea of pulling the film off for a month as it was still making money and infact [sic] takings were up on January due to the opening of the other Huppert film in Academy 2.¹¹⁹

As such, the London launch of Douglas's *Trilogy* had to be delayed. The impact of this meant the transmission of the film on BBC Two also had to be delayed until the Academy had finished its run of the *Trilogy*. Initially, Thompson did express her concern over having to delay the London launch of the films, however, Douglas was ultimately given autonomy by her to go with the launch he preferred.

The exclusive distribution rights to Douglas's *Trilogy* were held by the BFI Board of Governors, not to the Production Board Committee nor the filmmaker. The impact of this is made clear when examining the distribution of Horace Ové's film *Pressure* (1975), to which the BFI Board also held the rights. Peter Thomas argues that because of Ové's lack of control and access to his film the film remained 'all but unavailable from BFI Distribution'¹²⁰. Moreover, *Pressure* was filmed on 16mm, which was a further impediment to wide distribution, and although there was a vote by the Board whether it should be given the funds for it to be printed on 35mm, even Board member Alan Cumner-Price (who had worked on the film) voted against it because:

the amount of money required to blow it up came off somebody else's budget, and that means another film-maker couldn't make his film... when I saw the amount of money that we had to give out, I was absolutely shaken rigid. I thought it was somewhere in the region of £500,000. It was a piddling £72,000.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Referring here to *Violette Nozière* (dir. Claude Chabrol, 1978).

Letter from Hilary Thompson to Bill Douglas, 7 March 1979, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM.

¹²⁰ Peter Thomas, "The British Workshop Movement and Amber Film," *Studies in European Cinema* 8, No. 3 (December 2011): 198–99.

¹²¹ Lovell, *BFI Production Board*, 22.

Having available prints on 35mm gave films independent films, to use Ellis's phrase, greater 'commercial currency' making them more distributable.¹²² Due to the limitations of the Production Board's budget, however, very few films were made on 35mm and, as Board member Cumner-Price, cited above, points out, the considerable costs of blowing up a 16mm film would divert funds to a smaller number of film projects. Compared to Ové, then, Douglas was in the fortunate position that both *My Ain Folk* and *My Way Home* were filmed on 35mm, although *My Childhood* was filmed on 16mm. However, in spite of the films being available in the preferred format of exhibitors, Douglas's films still received minimal distribution in cinemas.

The BFI's RFT network did not work as a cohesive unit, and they were under the same financial pressures as other exhibitors during the period. As such, the BFI were unable to benefit from this network to programme the BFI Production Board films throughout the network. Significantly, the BFI did give Douglas autonomy over the location of the London launch of the films, but his decision to launch the first two films at the Academy resulted in a delay of the BBC Two telecast. More broadly, there was considerable activity taking place for the exhibition of the 'intense' experimental and avant-garde filmmaking activity. Organisations such as TOC and filmmaking cooperatives endeavoured to show films that they felt were deserving of exhibition, however, Douglas's *Trilogy* did not fall inside this area of avant-garde filmmaking. As such, it would be the festivals that would prove more beneficial for the screening of the *Trilogy*.

Film Festivals

During the 1970s, the world of film festivals expanded substantially.¹²³ Peter Stanfield argues that '[t]he 1960s and 1970s were the high point of international film culture, and that the EIFF [Edinburgh International Film Festival] played a

¹²² Ellis, "Production Board Policies," 13.

¹²³ This growth was evident both in terms of the proliferation of North American festivals such as Toronto which was established in 1976 and launched as the 'Festival of Festivals', later changing its name in 1978 to Toronto International Film Festival, smaller festivals that had a specific genre focus, or established festivals working to broaden its representation; Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong, *Film Festivals: Culture, People, and Power on the Global Screen*, (New Jersey, Rutgers University Press: 2011), 48.

vital part in broadening and deepening our understanding of film's potential'.¹²⁴ Indeed, EIFF became known for its provocative American exploitation programming which attracted a youthful demographic, it programmed the world's first women's cinema retrospective and was the first international film festival to be run by a woman.¹²⁵

For many independent films, a film festival can be the only opportunity for a public screening. As exhibition sites, 'film festivals brought cinema away from its roots as a mass medium and endowed it with the "distinction" of serious art'.¹²⁶ As such, by being selected by film festival it connotes a quality or importance to the film. Moreover, Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong argues:

[f]ilm festivals function as alternative sites for the production, distribution, and exhibition of independent films from all over the world ... they form a complicated, competitive global network, spatially as well as temporally in an annual calendar that very much controls the lives of alternative, independent cinema.¹²⁷

Crucially, Wong suggests that not only does a film festival function as an alternative site for the exhibition of independent films, but also for production and distribution of them. Thus, as a space, the important opportunities they can offer are multiple.

Wong indicates that the annual film festival calendar impacts the temporal organisation of independent cinema.¹²⁸ Indeed, this is certainly evident during several junctures during the production and post-production stages of making the *Trilogy* and contributed to additional pressures felt to ensure that the films were ready in time to be submitted to prestigious festivals. For instance, in Douglas's correspondence to George Hoellering, he commented, '[t]here was an awful rush to get the film done for the festival'.¹²⁹ As previously mentioned, in 1972, *My Childhood* had proved to be successful at the Venice International Film Festival

¹²⁴ Peter Stanfield, "Notes Toward a History of the Edinburgh International Film Festival 1966-77," *Film International* 6, No. 4, (2008): 70.

¹²⁵ Stanfield, "Notes," 67. See also Antoine Damiens, "Film Festivals of the 1970s and the Subject of Feminist Film Studies: Collaborations and Regimes of Knowledge Production," *Journal of Film and Video* 72, No. 1-2, (Spring/Summer 2020): 22-25, which looks at the EIFF Women's Event, the first European retrospective on women's cinema.

¹²⁶ Wong, *Film Festivals*, 29.

¹²⁷ Wong, *Film Festivals*, 5.

¹²⁸ Wong, *Film Festivals*, 5.

¹²⁹ Letter from Bill Douglas to George Hoellering, 12 January 1974, BDC 1/TRI/1/2.

winning the Silver Lion. Hassan zealously tried to replicate the success of *My Childhood* at Venice by ensuring that *My Ain Folk* was completed in time so it could be submitted as well.¹³⁰ Similarly, there were time pressures felt during the post-production of *My Way Home* so that it could be submitted to Cannes in 1978. The ‘Big Three’ festivals are considered to be: Cannes, Venice, and Berlin.¹³¹ Although there are other ‘A-list’ festivals, it is these three that are especially important in terms of prestige and industry attraction, so the pressure on Douglas as well as on the BFI to submit and be accepted by these particular festivals would be substantial.

Douglas’s films had proven to be successful on the international festival circuit as evinced by the number of prestigious awards the films won (See Figure 7 below).¹³² There is an increased sense of honour or cultural legitimisation if a film achieves an award at a festival. Marijke de Valck explains that when festivals promote themselves as an ‘international’ festival, it means that ‘they cater not only to local or national audiences, but specifically aim to attract international visitors and guests’.¹³³ The success at these international festivals and the prestigious awards won evinces the films’ popularity abroad. By comparison, as shown in Figure 7, Douglas received only one award in Britain which was the Writers’ Guild Award in 1972 for *My Childhood*. In terms of award success, then, the *Trilogy* proved much more popular at international festivals than in Britain as the table below demonstrates.

***My Childhood* Prizes**

Year	Festival	Prize
1972	Chicago International Film Festival	Silver Hugo for Best Student Film
1972	International Filmfestival Mannheim-Heidelberg	Des Preis der Katholischen Filmarbeit (Catholic Filmmaking Prize)
1972	International Film Festival Nyon	Best Short Film
1972	Venice International Film Festival	Silver Lion Award

¹³⁰ Thumin, Interview, BDC 1/XAD/4/2.

¹³¹ Wong, *Film Festivals*, 5.

¹³² Data compiled from materials held at the BDCM including certificates of awards, “My Ain Folk,” *MUBI*, accessed 2 April 2021, www.mubi.com/films/my-ain-folk/awards, and the list of Professional Works in Dick et al., *A Lanternist’s Account*, 234-235.

¹³³ Marijke de Valck, “What is a Film Festival? How to Study Festivals and why you should,” in *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method and Practice*, eds., Marijke de Valck, Brendan Kredell, and Skadi Loist, (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 2.

1972	Writers' Guild of Great Britain	Best British Original Screenplay
1973	Montreal Film Festival	Diplome d'Excellence
1973	Tehran International Festival of film for Children	Special Prize, Film Critics of Tehran Publications, Best Short Film, Extra Gold Plaque of the Jury.

My Ain Folk Prizes

Year	Festival	Prize
1974	Cork International Film Festival*	Silver Medal Craft Award for Best Cinematography
1974	Edinburgh International Film Festival*	Interfilm Jury Recommendation
1974	International Film Festival Nyon	Prix spécial du Jury des Jeunes (Special Youth Jury Prize)
1974	Berlin International Film Festival	Interfilm Award (Forum of New Cinema); Organisation Catholique Internale Cinema (OCIC) Award
1975	** Cannes Film Festival	Georges-Sadoul Prize
1976	Festival of Films International, Bombay	Silver Medal***

My Way Home Prizes

Year	Festival	Prize
1978	Chicago International Film Festival	Bronze Hugo
1979	Berlin International Film Festival	Fipresci Prize

The Bill Douglas Trilogy Prizes

Year	Festival	Prize
1979	Antwerp Film Festival*	Critics Prize
1979	Berlin International Film Festival*	Interfilm Jury Special Prize

Figure 7. Awards for My Childhood, My Ain Folk, My Way Home, and the Trilogy. Compiled using certificates, medals and awards held at the BDCM.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Key: *included in list from 'Professional Works as Writer/Director', in A Lanternist's Account; **Based on correspondence between Douglas, Cottam and the BFI, there is confusion as to whether *My Ain Folk* actually won the Georges-Sadoul prize. After the press claimed that Douglas's film had won the prize, he queried this with the BFI, the

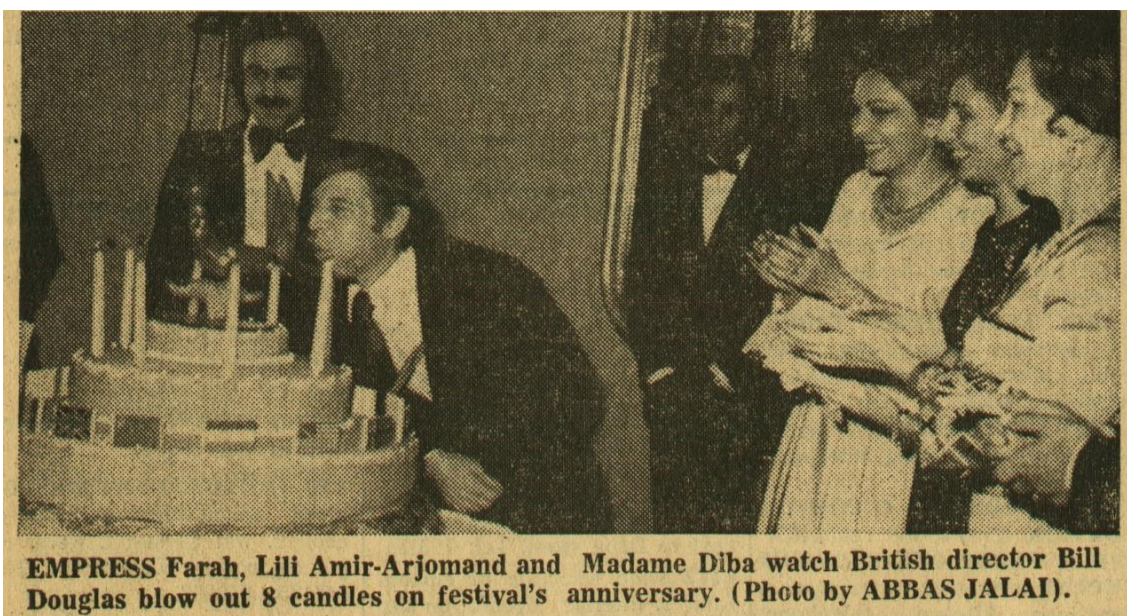


Figure 8. Douglas is shown here blowing out the candles to celebrate the festival's eighth anniversary. Front Page of the Tehran Journal, Thursday November 8, 1972, BDC 1/TRI/3/1, BDCM.

An award from a festival not only brought with it prestige but could also come with a prize and publicity. For example, *My Childhood's* award success at Tehran brought with it a monetary prize of 100,000 rials (See Figure 8 above). Douglas used this prize as a negotiating tool with the BFI to put it towards additional production costs of *My Way Home*.¹³⁵ Therefore, festivals were not only helpful in terms of the opportunity to screen their films to an audience that attracted important industry figures, reputation that they could bring and cultural worth, but if a filmmaker was successful in receiving an award and if that prize came with a monetary prize, then a festival could also be financially fruitful to a filmmaker. Depending on how that sum of money was used, a prize could even be beneficial to a production.

The cost to attend these festivals has to be accounted for as well; costs would include transportation, accommodation, food expenses etc. and this became quite a concern for Douglas. As Douglas expressed in correspondence to Myer:

BFI responded stating that they had no record of the win. However, in the Trilogy's pressbook produced by the BFI (S5075 *My Way Home*, BFI) the prize is included; ***A small silver medal is held at the BDCM, Item no. #5702 that is presented in a small blue box 'with compliments, Festival of Films International 1976, Bombay, India'.

¹³⁵ Front Page, *The Tehran Journal*, Thursday 8 November 1972, BDC 1/TRI/3, BDCM.

[i]f anyone at the BFI was to sit down for one moment and use their imagination they would work out that the visits this year to Delhi, Berlin, Rotterdam and San Remo had me digging into my own pocket (money I can ill afford) before I even stepped on the plane. If I was to present myself as a reasonable spokesman for the British Film Institute i.e.[,] not to look like something out of my childhood it meant - over the eight festivals - either buying clothes or having them cleaned time and time again. This year alone I returned from each of the festivals paying £6 a time for cleaning, £8 for shoe repairs and £11 for a passport which because of my financial circumstances I would normally not renew. In all £43.¹³⁶

Douglas attended many festivals to promote *My Way Home* and as he suggests above, there were personal costs he had to account for in advance for his attire and passport. Furthermore, although the freight costs of the films were covered within the BFI's distribution costs, only two travel expenses were refunded to Douglas by the BFI and these were for his travels costs for the screening of *My Childhood* at Venice in 1972 and a premiere screening of the *Trilogy* at San Remo Festival in March 1979.¹³⁷ Douglas would have been in no financial position to cover his travel costs to all of the festivals he attended so it is likely that the festivals covered most of his travel and accommodation costs, but there would have still been other expenses that would have occurred when attending these events. Significantly, the BFI paid for Douglas's travel expenses for Venice which shows further financial backing and support for him in the early stages of his career. For the San Remo costs, it was Cottam who negotiated with the BFI on Douglas's behalf that the BFI should finance Douglas's travel and expenses for San Remo, stressing that the event would include an evening 'dedicated to a viewing of the Trilogy and discussions' and would provide an opportunity to 'make contacts with Italian distributors and Italian television'.¹³⁸ As a result of Douglas's attendance at numerous film festivals to promote the film, he was unable to continue working at the National Film School, consequently, this meant he

¹³⁶ Letter from Bill Douglas to Carole Myer, 12 April 1979, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM.

¹³⁷ Air Fare (in name of Douglas) London-Venice-London listed under a Distribution cost on Royalty Statement to 30 September 1973: *My Childhood*, 11 December 1973, BDC 1/TRI/2/1; Bill Douglas, Production Expenses Claim Form Trip to San Remo Festival, March 1979, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM.

¹³⁸ Letter from Judy Cottam to Peter Sainsbury, 31 March 1978, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM; Letter from Judy Cottam to Hilary Thompson, 21 February 1979, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM. Cottam also explained that they were particularly keen to premiere the film following the success of *Padre Padrone* (Vittorio and Paolo Taviani, 1977). Like the *Trilogy*, the film is autobiographical and is based on the childhood of linguist Gavino Ledda in Sardinia and the brutality of his father or 'master' as he calls himself. The film is similar in its sparse use of dialogue and focus on the image.

suffered a loss of income in the meantime. The BFI had now remedied Hassan's complaint that filmmakers were not involved in the distribution and exhibition of their film. However, the filmmaker had to justify and negotiate the value of attending different festivals whilst incurring unavoidable additional costs to themselves. Douglas himself recognised that the personal financial impact was not exclusive to him, commenting 'I am yet to find [a filmmaker] working for the board who did not land in debt'.¹³⁹ Not only did attendance at the festivals incur personal financial commitment from the filmmaker, but as the director, there would be additional labour required to promote the film, attend Q&A sessions, and introduce film screenings. It is unclear whether Douglas was contractually obliged to attend these events, however, the potential sales and further distribution of films would be an additional pressure to carry out this labour.

The importance of film festivals is not only for the competition and opportunity of securing prizes, but there is also the hugely important business side to film festivals. At film festivals, particularly large, international film festivals, there will be many distributors and sales agents in attendance; a large part of attending a film festival is the opportunity to network and negotiate, to be able to sell or secure future work. Douglas's concern to be presentable is then even more understandable due to the very nature of these industry events and the opportunities that could arise from them. In his correspondence with the BFI, Douglas repeatedly expressed that he was embittered that there often were no representatives from the BFI in attendance at the festivals and that he had to take on the responsibility of representing the organisation.¹⁴⁰ Although Thompson attended Cannes, so too did Cottam who similarly criticised the BFIs 'low-profile' and lack of presence there.¹⁴¹

Unlike cinema programmers, film festival programmers are in quite a unique position where they are, to an extent, allowed to take greater risks in their selection of films; not only are most festivals not-for-profit, but they also do not earn or receive a cut if a film achieves a sale.¹⁴² In addition, they aim to show

¹³⁹ Three-page letter from Bill Douglas to Peter Sainsbury, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3, BDCM.

¹⁴⁰ 'My Way Home' Production, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM.

¹⁴¹ Letter from Judy Cottam to Peter Sainsbury, 5 June 1978, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM (hereafter cited as Cottam to Sainsbury, 1978, BDC 1/TRI/1/3).

¹⁴² Roya Rastegar, "Seeing Differently: The Curatorial Potential of Film Festival Programming," in *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method and Practice*, eds., Marijke

films that have not been seen elsewhere, so much so that often a festival requires the film not to have been screened anywhere else or at least within that region or country so the festival has the prestige of offering a world or national premiere. Although there was some experimentation in terms of the conditions of exhibition and the viewing of films at festivals, typically, screenings tend to be held in a wide variety of local cinemas and spaces across a host city.

For some films, their primary exhibition site and window of release is limited to the festival, if it fails to secure a distributor. Moreover, even if a film achieves award success, this does not necessarily translate into a national theatrical run in commercial cinemas. When writing in 1976, film critic David Robinson commented that *Winstanley* (which was funded by the BFI Production Board), 'has collected an enviable reputation at international festivals, but has had to wait a couple of years to get a run at The Other Cinema's newly opened theatre'.¹⁴³

Evidently, there were poor business decisions that had taken place for the agreed cost per print as the BFI made no profit from the sale of Douglas's films and were only able to break even. In addition, there were also a low number of prints produced for *My Way Home*. On 25 August 1978, Sainsbury agreed with Thompson to produce three 35mm prints for distribution purposes.¹⁴⁴ Douglas felt that the BFI failed in the selling of the films by allowing them to go for a cheap price and there being a lack of prints made available for exhibitors, as his comments, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, demonstrate. The 35mm prints were more costly to produce which would have deterred them but by comparison, there were thirty-nine 16mm prints produced of *My Childhood* between 1973 and 1983.¹⁴⁵ The effect of this was that by the time *My Way Home* was released, Douglas was expected to carry the 35mm film print from festival to festival which undermined a professional image. Moreover, the lack of prints

de Valck, Brendan Kredell, and Skadi Loist, (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 183.

¹⁴³ David Robinson, "The Naked Truth About a Saint?" *The Times*, 29 October 1976, Times Newspapers Limited.

¹⁴⁴ A fourth print was produced for the German TV sale, however, the BFI would only fund this when the German distributor (Wagner-Hallig) returned the early slash dupe which delayed the production of the fourth print, Bill Douglas, Short Note to Peter Sainsbury, Hilary Thompson cc'd, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3, BDCM.

¹⁴⁵ Figure calculated using Royalty statements from March 1973 to September 1983, BDC 1/TRI/2/1, BDCM.

available made the exhibition of the films and the logistical navigation of festival circuit attendance and screenings harder to coordinate.

Several film societies had to delay their screenings of the full *Trilogy* as they found it to be difficult to coordinate with the BFI when prints of all three of the films would be available. For instance, Mary Wood from Bridport and District Film Society wrote to Douglas on 8 October 1979 regarding whether he would be able to introduce the films at their screening on 17 May 1980, commenting that '[i]t seems a long way ahead, but this was the earlie[st] date on which we could book all three films together'.¹⁴⁶ Douglas repeatedly requested in his correspondence with the BFI that they should show their support for the *Trilogy* by making the 'maximum number of prints available' of the film.¹⁴⁷ It is not possible to know what this 'maximum' number would be that Douglas requests, however, both he and Judy repeatedly expressed in their correspondence with the BFI during the distribution of the film that they felt the organisation was not doing enough to support the film. Although many of these letters in which he expressed his dissatisfaction were not actually sent, they provide insight into how Douglas conceived the BFI could and should be demonstrating their support for his films and where he felt this support was lacking which Cottam then expressed directly on his behalf.

Cottam was quite clear and strategic in her approach to festival attendance. For example, she purposefully targeted festivals in countries where Douglas and Cottam had not yet secured a distributor. Cottam advised Douglas that it was up to him whether he attend Berlin and Los Angeles, as a German television sale (ZDF) had been secured and the Production Board were already in negotiations with Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) for an American television package deal.¹⁴⁸ Similarly, Cottam's strategic approach is further demonstrated when she notes that in the materials being circulated with distributors she 'deliberately included reviews in several languages with an eye to international sales of the trilogy, but also having in mind that Bill's next film might involve some sort of co-production with other European countries'.¹⁴⁹ Skadi Loist argues 'when

¹⁴⁶ Letter from Mary Wood, Bridport and District Film Society to Bill Douglas, 8 October 1979, BDC 1/TRI/3/3, BDCM (hereafter cited as Wood to Douglas, BDC 1/TRI/3/3).

¹⁴⁷ Draft letter by Bill Douglas to Peter Sainsbury, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3, BDCM.

¹⁴⁸ Letter from Judy Cottam to Bill Douglas, 4 December 1978, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM.

¹⁴⁹ Letter from Judy Cottam to Mamoun Hassan, 10 June 1980, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM.

speaking about a specific film or project the term [film festival] circuit becomes relational, referring to the trajectory of a specific product through a global network of festivals'.¹⁵⁰ This idea of a trajectory is made evident through certain decision-making strategies, ensuring that the film is placed where would be most beneficial for potential sales. Evidently, then, Cottam is not only aware of the *Trilogy's* current trajectory, but she is also thinking ahead to Douglas's next film project and potential partnerships that could be cultivated; Cottam uses this opportunity to make networks and connections in advance on Douglas's behalf. This approach also reflects the wider trend taking place in the British film industry towards the end of the decade which saw producers increasingly move towards Europe for funding and embarking on co-production agreements. Additionally, it further shows that Cottam was a key agent in communicating with potential distributors and had a forward-thinking approach on Douglas's behalf.

When it came to the materials that were to be circulated at festivals, there were some disagreements between Douglas and the BFI on the copy produced, and Douglas was disgruntled when the organisation did not involve him fully. For example, Thompson sent a copy of the material that was to be included in promotional materials for the film, however, Douglas's suggested changes were refused. The BFI were misleading in their communication with Douglas as they did not intend to make any of his changes, rather, they were sharing the promotional material that would be going ahead rather than sharing it with Douglas for advice. Similarly, before the EIFF, Douglas requested:

if a synopsis is prepared for Edinburgh, I would like to approve it. ... Since I am going up to the festival I prefer not to be put in the embarrassing position of not having the necessary information with me. (It has happened at every foreign festival to date).¹⁵¹

Hing-Yuk Wong argues, 'publicity is one of the major functions in film festivals'.¹⁵² This lack of communication and poor preparation suggests a lack of professionalism on the part of the BFI, suggesting a deficiency in their efforts to include filmmakers in the process of distributing their films adequately. Cottam asked Sainsbury on 5 June 1978 to seek outside help for the 'attention and

¹⁵⁰ Skadi Loist, "The Film Festival Circuit: Networks, Hierarchies, and Circulation," in *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method and Practice*, eds., Marijke de Valck, Brendan Kredell, and Skadi Loist, (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 49.

¹⁵¹ Douglas to Sainsbury B, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3.

¹⁵² Wong, *Film Festivals*, 25.

distribution that Bill's films deserve', but was told that there was no money to seek additional external support, and this was to be handled in-house.¹⁵³ Cottam expressed that she did not consider their small budget or team a worthwhile excuse as 'there are ways of making a lot of noise on a shoestring'.¹⁵⁴ Additionally, she conveyed that Douglas was not an exception in his situation: '[n]ot just Bill, but all filmmakers who have worked with the BFI suffer here'.¹⁵⁵ Thus, it was recognised by Cottam that it was not personal or directed at Douglas, rather that it was an institutionally-wide problem for any filmmaker that received BFI Production Board funding.

Fortunately, following film festival screenings and international events, the press coverage of the *Trilogy* was full of high praise and admiration. For example, in the *Sunday Independent* (Dublin) Newspaper when reviewing the Cork Film Festival, they note that Douglas's film *My Ain Folk* 'save[s] the feature part of the festival from mediocrity'.¹⁵⁶ In his review on the EIFF 1978, film critic Philip French commented that he believed 'that this trilogy will come to be regarded not just as a mile-stone, but as one of the heroic achievements of British cinema'.¹⁵⁷

After receiving high critical praise from established critics, the next approach would be to make sure the film was available to exhibitors to purchase and to access the film. The BFI began producing catalogues of films made by the BFI Production Board as well as a number of essays to assist with the distribution of their films and assert their position.¹⁵⁸ The BFI Board's second catalogue—the 1977-78 edition which includes details on *My Way Home*, lists in the contents that the details of 'Booking and Prices' for the Production Board films will be included on page 95.¹⁵⁹ However, not only is there no page 95, but on the final back inside sleeve it only includes a small note: '[a]ll enquires to Promotions Office,

¹⁵³ Cottam to Sainsbury, 1978, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

¹⁵⁴ Cottam to Sainsbury, 1978, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

¹⁵⁵ Cottam to Sainsbury, 1978, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

¹⁵⁶ Author Unknown, "Taking Western for a Ride," *Sunday Independent* (Dublin), Sunday 16 June 1974.

¹⁵⁷ Philip French, *The Observer*, Edinburgh International Film Festival Press Digest, 16, BDC 1/TRI/4/5, BDCM.

¹⁵⁸ The first catalogue produced by the BFI Production Board covered the period 1951-1976, see *British Film Institute Productions 1951-1976*.

¹⁵⁹ *Catalogue: British Film Institute Productions 1977-1978*, 3.

Production Department', followed by the address, no telephone or direct communication with the Distribution Department.¹⁶⁰

Cottam was a key agent in recognising the importance of Douglas's attendance at festivals and demonstrated a strategic approach when deciding which festivals it would be best that he attend, not only for further potential sales of the *Trilogy* which he was currently promoting, but for making connections for his next project. Although the BFI's distribution department had grown and they suggest in their catalogues a concerted effort to address this, there were deficiencies in the materials they produced such as catalogue which failed to include distribution details on the films until their third publication. Both Douglas and Cottam voiced their concern over the BFI's absence at the festivals, with Douglas in particular expressing his disdain of having to work as a representative for the Board.

Distribution - Television Sales

The BFI Production Board recognised the importance of television sales further supporting production or helping recoup costs. As Thompson openly acknowledged in the BFI Production Catalogue 1977-78, 'a TV sale can dramatically help us to balance our books at the end of each financial year'.¹⁶¹ As I discussed in the previous chapter, due to an arrangement with German public-service television broadcaster, ZDF, editor, Mick Audsley and Douglas were put under considerable pressure to deliver a version of *My Way Home* by 1 October 1976.¹⁶² As a result of their efforts and hard work, the ZDF were happy with what they had achieved and this version was broadcast on October 28 1976.¹⁶³ Douglas ensured a contractual agreement with the German distributors that the version he and Audsley had cut was solely for German broadcast and that it

¹⁶⁰ *Catalogue: British Film Institute Productions 1977–1978*, n.pag.

¹⁶¹ Hilary Thompson, "Production and Independence 1: Marketing," in *Catalogue: British Film Institute Productions 1977-1978*, ed., Elizabeth Cowie, (London, BFI Publishing, 1978), 6.

¹⁶² Letter from Peter Sainsbury to Bill Douglas, 18 August 1976, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM. Noble states that the transmission date was 24 October 1976. See Noble, "Making," 167.

¹⁶³ Letter from Edith Wagner (Wagner-Hallig Film GmbH) to Bill Douglas, 5 November 1976, BDC 1/TRI/1/3 BDCM.

would not be seen or used elsewhere.¹⁶⁴ Although Douglas was not satisfied with the print and considered it to still be incomplete—the project would undergo another two years of work—the response to the German broadcast was positive. The *Frankfurter Rundschau* praised the film and said it was a ‘small masterpiece’.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, in their review of the telecast, they noted the ‘courage’ of the ZDF to broadcast ‘Douglas’s bare, gloomy, beautiful Scottish trilogy in the original with subtitles’, but that the decision had been made to depart from this practice for *My Way Home* and to dub that instead.¹⁶⁶ Due to the film’s ongoing sound problems, it is likely that the decision to dub was preferable at this stage, however, the review considered this ‘effort to be more manageable’ to be ‘unnecessary’.¹⁶⁷

Douglas was extremely displeased by the arrangement that had been made by the BFI and Wagner-Hallig—the German distributors. In Douglas’s private and unsent journal of notes, he conveyed his dissatisfaction with the money that he received. He states:

[i]t has come to my notice that the sum of £4.000 pounds [*sic*] was paid to the maker of “Children” as a result of a sale to Haleg [*sic*]. That means on a first per cent basis the total payment from Haleg [*sic*] was £8.000. I would as a matter of interest like to know why My Childhood sold to Haleg [*sic*] for a period of 7 years for a total of only £2475.25 in the case of Childhood and even less at £2.707.58 for My Ain Folk. This is underselling if ever I saw it. It is also interesting to note that My Way Home went for even less than ‘Children’. I am not suggesting My Way Home is better than Children. I am complaining about the lack of consistency in selling the product on a scale basis considering that as the distribution department new [*sic*] full well there was to be two other follow ups. I know of no business man who would make the same amateur mistake. I have also always resented not being paid my percentage as contracted. But as you may have guessed by now I have every intention of challenging the Production Board with irresponsibility. I also think it is too neat . . . that the new 50% just misses the sale of My Way Home to Haleg [*sic*]. I think here the BFI can take top marks as the scheming capitalist.¹⁶⁸

Here, Douglas makes a significant comparison to Terence Davies’s film *Children* (1976), which is also part one of an autobiographical trilogy (*The Terence Davies*

¹⁶⁴ Letter from Tom Wagner to Bill Douglas, 18 August 1979, BDC1/TRI/1/3, BDCM.

¹⁶⁵ Author Unknown, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 1 November 1976, n. pag., BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM (hereafter cited as *Frankfurter Runschau*, BDC 1/TRI/1/3).

¹⁶⁶ *Frankfurter Runschau*, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

¹⁶⁷ *Frankfurter Runschau*, BDC 1/TRI/1/3.

¹⁶⁸ Bill Douglas, Page of Notes, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3, BDCM.

Trilogy).¹⁶⁹ Douglas is critical not only of the amount that Wagner-Hallig paid for Davies's film (£8,000), which, as the filmmaker under the new contractual terms, would have entitled Davies to 50 per cent, but also the lack of consistency by the distribution department in their negotiations. The royalty statements concur with Douglas's figures above which show that the BFI received £2,475.25 in March 1974 and received £2,707.58 in January 1975 for *My Ain Folk*. Why Douglas suggests that the *My Ain Folk* total revenue from the sale was less than *My Childhood* is unclear as it slightly exceeds what *My Childhood* was sold for, but both film sales were similarly agreed to for a period of seven years.

Sainsbury had convinced Douglas to go through with the ZDF sale by suggesting that if Douglas did then it would be an 'important step towards the possibility of reshooting the Egyptian material' that Douglas was profoundly dissatisfied with.¹⁷⁰ Financially, however, this sale did not greatly benefit Douglas as the ZDF sale took place before 1 April 1977, and therefore it came under the old contract's terms.¹⁷¹ As such, it meant that from the sale, Douglas would have received 25 per cent rather than the new contractual terms of 50 per cent.

This was not the only European television sale that was negotiated for Douglas's films. Figure 9 on page 184 shows data on television sales of the films from 1974 to 1983 which I have compiled using the Royalty Statements held at the BDCM. Along with the Wagner-Hallig sale in Germany, which was agreed for a period of seven years, the BFI also secured television sales for the films in Denmark, Hungary, Finland, Holland, and Sweden. Cottam thought a French TV sale looked promising, however, there is no evidence to suggest that this was achieved.¹⁷² The best sale that was negotiated in Europe was with Holland in which the total sale of the *Trilogy* came to £5,561.44.¹⁷³ As each of these sales took place after the new contracts had been implemented, the new terms of 50

¹⁶⁹ *The Terence Davies Trilogy* consist of the following films: *Children, Madonna and the Child* (1980) and *Death and Transfiguration* (1983), and the full trilogy was released as one package in 1984.

¹⁷⁰ Letter from Peter Sainsbury to Bill Douglas 16 August 1976, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM.

¹⁷¹ Draft letter from Bill Douglas to Mr Paul, Undated, BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3, BDCM.

¹⁷² Minutes from Meeting with Hilary Thompson, Bill Douglas, Judy Cottam, 17 January 1979, BDC 1/TRI/1/3, BDCM.

¹⁷³ £1,525.42 received in revenue from Dutch TV Fee for *My Childhood* Royalty Statement to 31 March 1982, 28 May 1982. £1,747.88 received in revenue from Dutch TV Fee for *My Ain Folk*, Royalty Statement to 31 March 1982, 28 May 1982. £2,288.14 received in revenue from Dutch TV Fee, 28 May 1982, BDC 1/TRI/2/1.

per cent were applied and Douglas and the BFI received half of the revenue from these sales.

Film	Date	Country	Price
<i>My Childhood</i>	March 1974	Germany	£2,475.25
<i>My Ain Folk</i>	January 1975	Germany	£2,707.58
<i>My Way Home</i>	October 1979	Denmark	£1250.00
<i>My Childhood</i>	May 1980	Britain	£3,333.34
<i>My Ain Folk</i>	May 1980	Britain	£3,333.33
<i>My Way Home</i>	May 1980	Britain	£3,333.33
<i>My Ain Folk</i>	June 1980	Hungary	£213.68
<i>My Way Home</i>	June 1980	Hungary	£213.68
<i>My Childhood</i>	February 1981	Finland	£362.65
<i>My Ain Folk</i>	February 1981	Finland	£362.65
<i>My Way Home</i>	February 1981	Finland	£362.65
<i>My Childhood</i>	January 1982	Holland	£1525.42
<i>My Ain Folk</i>	January 1982	Holland	£1747.88
<i>My Way Home</i>	January 1982	Holland	£2,288.14
<i>My Childhood</i>	February 1983	Sweden	£153.31
<i>My Way Home</i>	February 1983	Sweden	£153.30

Figure 9. *My Childhood*, *My Ain Folk* and *My Way Home* Television sales from 1974-1983. Surprisingly, the statement includes no details for a transmission of *My Childhood* in Hungary, nor *My Ain Folk* for Sweden.¹⁷⁴

In terms of British television sales negotiated, however, before working at the BFI, Sainsbury worked in an administrative capacity buying television programmes at the BBC. Sainsbury was in his role at the BBC for eighteen months and whilst there he had attempted to buy *My Childhood* in 1972, however, he failed 'because the BBC's price wasn't sufficient'.¹⁷⁵ This demonstrates that there were some earlier attempts made by Sainsbury when he worked for a different organisation to engage with and make available the output of the Board's films prior to joining the BFI. In a similar way to Gavin—who had previously worked at the BBC—Sainsbury brought with him the relationship having previously worked there, so it was hopeful that he would be able to assist in

¹⁷⁴ A useful point of comparison would be to show details of other European TV distribution deals, to the Trilogy, however, due to COVID-19, I was unable to return to the BFI archives to investigate if they held records on this for other films from the period.

¹⁷⁵ "Peter Sainsbury Interview," *BFI Production Board*, ed., Alan Lovell (London: BFI, 1976), 12.

improving the distribution of the Production Board films with the BBC. Dupin states:

[b]etween 1977 and 1979 a dozen new BFI films had a London theatrical release followed by screenings in RFTs, six of them being bought by the BBC for transmission. For the first time, every new BFI film was also automatically added to the Institute's distribution catalogue and advertised to a wide range of non-theatrical venues.¹⁷⁶

Douglas was one of the filmmakers who had his films bought by the BBC for transmission and the sale of the *Trilogy* for broadcasting in 1981 was secured for £10,000. The table I have compiled of BBC televised broadcasts of the *Trilogy* and radio pieces between 1973 and 1981 (Figure 10 on page 186) demonstrates that the *Trilogy* was shown on BBC Two in September 1981. The screening of *My Childhood* took place on Saturday 26 September and was introduced by film critic, Gavin Miller. Significantly, the film was shown at 10.50 p.m. Viewing figures for these telecasts are unknown, however, the consequence of this late programming of the film could impede on the potential audience and may only attract those intentionally staying up late and the dedicated cinephile audience. The second instalment, *My Ain Folk*, which was described by Madeline Harmsworth in *The Sunday Mirror* as '[a]n unforgettable experience', was then shown the following evening at the earlier time of 9.05 pm, and the final instalment of the *Trilogy*, *My Way Home*, was not broadcast until a week later on Saturday 3 October at 10.05 pm, a considerable gap between the first two transmissions.¹⁷⁷ On the one hand, this gap could potentially contribute to greater momentum and anticipation for the final instalment. For instance, following the telecast of *My Childhood* and *My Ain Folk*, *Liverpool Echo* TV listings state, '[i]f you watched parts one and two of the Bill Douglas trilogy last weekend, you won't want to miss this concluding episode'.¹⁷⁸ On the other, this programming may have hindered potential audiences because it does not effectively allow for a sense of condensed, must-see viewing. Furthermore, this spacing between the films

¹⁷⁶ Christophe Dupin, "The BFI and Film Production: Half a Century of Innovative Independent Film-Making," in *The British Film Institute, the Government and Film Culture, 1933-2000*, eds., Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Christophe Dupin, (Manchester University Press: 2012), 207.

¹⁷⁷ Madeline Harmsworth, "Your Armchair Film Show," *The Sunday Mirror*, Sunday 27 September 1981, n.pag.

¹⁷⁸ Author Unknown, TV Listings, *Liverpool Echo*, Saturday 3 October 1981, 6.

increases the chance of audiences missing one of the parts which may also deter people from tuning in.

Title/Film	Description	Channel	Date	Time
Cinema Now	Trevor Peters' documentary on the making of My Ain Folk	BBC Two	Thursday 22 March 1973	14:50
Arena: Cinema	Part of the Francois Truffaut season on BBC Two.	BBC Two	Wednesday 11 October 1978	23:00
Arena: Cinema	Repeat of above	BBC Two	Sunday 15 October 1978	14:40
Critics' Forum		BBC Radio Three	Saturday 17 November 1979	17:45
The Bill Douglas Trilogy: Gavin Miller Intro		BBC Two	Saturday 26 September 1981	22:40
The Bill Douglas Trilogy: My Childhood		BBC Two	Saturday 26 September 1981	22:50
The Bill Douglas Trilogy: My Ain Folk		BBC Two	Saturday 27 September 1981	21.05
The Bill Douglas Trilogy: My Way Home		BBC Two	Sunday 27 September 1981	22.05

Figure 10. British Telecasts and Radio Pieces, March 1973-September 1981.

This section has demonstrated that a television sale can not only be beneficial in securing additional funding for a film production, like the ZDF sale, but that it has the opportunity to reach a much wider audience as well. As mentioned, during the 1970s there was an increase in domestic viewing, therefore, securing a BBC Two screening for the *Trilogy* would be incredibly beneficial to further developing a filmmaker's and production company's reputation, especially if the films have had poor theatrical distribution. An alternative exhibition space to screen films in Britain was film societies.

Film Societies

Film societies expanded rapidly after World War II and were there to fill a gap, to offer a space for alternative film screenings when the local cinemas failed to do so. They offered an opportunity to share in the appreciation of film with like-minded individuals, as well as providing a community and chance to socialise. By the 1970s, however, as Vincent Porter notes, ‘many of Britain’s 700 film societies struggled to survive’.¹⁷⁹ From 1973-1980, the BFI gave the British Federation of Film Societies (BFFS) an average of £36,000 per annum, however each individual society had to support itself, and with rising inflation and costs, this proved increasingly difficult.¹⁸⁰ As I discussed in Chapter One, in the 1970s, the first National Film School was established in Britain and this coincided with the expansion of Film Studies being taught in the formal education sector at universities and polytechnics. Richard Lowell MacDonald argues that this ‘expansion of university film studies was accompanied by a marked decline in organised film study activity within film societies’ and that by the late 1970s ‘few film societies engaged in educational activity’.¹⁸¹ However, MacDonald also notes that ‘university film studies had actually contributed to a resurgence of film society activism. It had fostered student film societies and indirectly encouraged these to undertake both adventurous programming’.¹⁸² Of the film societies that the *Trilogy* was screened, it only included one university film society: Oxford, in February 1981.¹⁸³

The *Trilogy* was programmed by a small number of film societies, and, where possible, Douglas would attend the events, asking for a small fee of £25 in addition to travel expenses.¹⁸⁴ The film societies offered Douglas a place to stay for the night following the event in which he would introduce the films and

¹⁷⁹ Vincent Porter, “Alternative Film Exhibition in the English Regions during the 1970s,” in *Don’t Look Now: British Cinema in the 1970s*, Paul Newland ed., (Bristol: Intellect Ltd., 2010), 67.

¹⁸⁰ Porter, “Alternative Film Exhibition,” 66.

¹⁸¹ Richard Lowell MacDonald, *The Appreciation of Film: The Postwar Film Society Movement and Film Culture in Britain*, (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2016), 189.

¹⁸² MacDonald, *Appreciation*, 191.

¹⁸³ Letter from Peter Jewell to Keith Rhodes, Secretary of Oxford University Film Society, 23 May 1980, BDC 1/TRI/3/3.

¹⁸⁴ See Wood to Douglas, BDC 1/TRI/3/3; Letter from Dick Catt, Administrator, Cinema City, Norwich to Bill Douglas, BDC 1/TRI/3/3, BDCM. By November 1980 this fee seems to have increased to £30 plus travel expenses. See Letter from Bernard Samuels, Plymouth Arts Centre to Bill Douglas, 21 November 1980, BDC 1/TRI/3/3, BDCM; Letter from Anne Searle, Exeter Film Society to Bill Douglas, 2 December 1980, BDC 1/TRI/3/3, BDCM; Letter from Peter Jewell to Malcolm Allen, East Midlands Arts, 15 January 1981, BDC 1/TRI/3/3, BDCM.

stay after the film to discuss them with the audience. The *Trilogy* was screened in full by Scarborough Film Society, Exeter, Bridport and District, Oxford University Film Society, East Midlands Art, and Plymouth Arts Centre.¹⁸⁵ The Scarborough Evening News included details about the Scarborough film society event, explaining that it is one of the first opportunities to be able see all three films together, and that the organisers were hopeful that people would be willing to travel across Yorkshire for the opportunity.¹⁸⁶ This demonstrates how the film was not widely available across Britain and that film societies provided an important opportunity to see films regionally. In turn, this may have further limited audiences. For example, in the case of Scarborough, in light of the travel required, they had to try to encourage audiences to commit additional time and expense to attend.

Like the RFTs, film societies were also restricted by the availability of their venue, as well as pressures to manage financially. Porter explains that inflation impacted the hire costs of new films and although the flat-rate rental system was changed towards a variable pricing structure depending on the number of attendees, this would have been particularly debilitating for the large film societies.¹⁸⁷ For example, 'the treasurer of the Scottish Office Film Society revealed that between 1967 and 1977, the costs of film hire in his society had risen ten-fold, jumping from £67.75 to over £700'.¹⁸⁸ For a voluntary led organisation, these were additional pressures and struggles to contend with. Due to the lack of prints available of *My Way Home*, when programming the *Trilogy*, a number of film societies found it logistically difficult to obtain prints of all three films and this often contributed to delaying their events until 1980 and 1981.¹⁸⁹ Therefore, although there were film societies around the country that expressed their enthusiasm to screen the *Trilogy* in full to their members as well as the public, the difficulty to secure the three films together from the BFI was a further constraint on the ability to exhibit the film.

¹⁸⁵ See 'Trilogy' Premiere/Publicity, BDC 1/TRI/3/3, BDCM. The Bridport and Dorset event would prove to be very important for Douglas as it was this event in which he first encountered the story of Tolpuddle Martyrs which would be the topic of his next film, *Comrades*.

¹⁸⁶ Author Unknown, "Film Society New Move," *Scarborough Evening News*, 11 September 1979, 3, BDC 1/TRI/3/1, BDCM.

¹⁸⁷ Porter, "Alternative Film Exhibition," 66-68.

¹⁸⁸ Porter, 'Alternative Film Exhibition,' 67.

¹⁸⁹ Wood to Douglas, BDC 1/TRI/3/3.

New technologies

In 1978 Britain saw a rise of video entertainments, and a range of new technologies developed like Betamax and VHS that forced distribution models to change and adapt quite quickly. Exhibitors were quite rightly concerned and wary of these new technologies in taking their already dwindling audiences. As a result of these new video entertainment and home technologies, audiences were now able to rewatch films with ease which would affect their relationship with film and lead their interactions with the medium to change and evolve. Writing in 1985, John Walker pondered whether 'it might have been more sensible for them to take advantage of the new technology, by selling and hiring video cassettes, in the same way as they have become purveyors of hot dogs and ice cream'.¹⁹⁰ Indeed, it was the ancillary markets such as VHS sales which allowed the distributors to receive additional income outside of cinema screenings and ticket sales. Knight and Thomas highlight the value new technologies brought, that they helped to make available '[f]ilms that in the past were virtually impossible to see unless you lived within easy reach of a "progressive" film society, or in a metropolitan centre like London or New York'.¹⁹¹ As discussed above, the Scarborough screening of *My Childhood* and *My Ain Folk* in 1979, audiences needed to have the means to travel to be able to see these films and although there were a number of screenings across Britain at RFTs and Film Societies, the films were available most consistently at The Academy Cinema, a London venue.

The BFI had obtained an upfront royalty for the films from Connoisseur Video (an independent distributor) for £2,000.¹⁹² The arrangement was such that Connoisseur would then pay a percentage of royalties to the BFI, which they then held against the advance that they had paid.¹⁹³ Due to video cassette tape length limitations, *My Childhood* and *My Ain Folk* were packaged as one cassette and *My Way Home* was released as a separate video cassette in 1992. Video circulation was important, ensuring that the films still remained available to

¹⁹⁰ John Walker, *The Once & Future Film: British Cinema in the Seventies and Eighties*, (London: Methuen, 1985), 156.

¹⁹¹ Knight and Thomas, *Reaching Audiences*, 16.

¹⁹² Letter from John Flahive, Assistant Accountant, BFI to Peter Jewell, 22 January 1992, BDC 1/TRI/2/2, BDCM (hereafter cited as Flahive to Jewell, BDC 1/TRI/2/2).

¹⁹³ The BFI did not disclose what this percentage that they received from Connoisseur and is not included on the Royalty Statements that Douglas received.

audiences, however, sales were disappointing of the film.¹⁹⁴ In 1993, Peter Jewell wrote to the BFI to clarify details concerning the engagement with which the BFI replied, '[u]nfortunately sales have been disappointing and we are unlikely to ever receive any royalties in excess of the advance. The MY CHILDHOOD/MY AIN FOLK cassette sold 376 copies and the MY WAY HOME cassette sold 324 copies'.¹⁹⁵ The films continued to be available to hire via the BFI for repertory theatre programming. These subsequent packages are beyond the scope of the thesis as they fall outside of the period of 1970s and 1980s which is the period of study, but do suggest a continued interest in the *Trilogy*, with subsequent releases on DVD and later Blu-Ray formats in Britain, France, and the USA. These releases have not only allowed for new audiences to rediscover these films as well as allow for further sales and financial income for the BFI and Douglas's estate, but these releases have initiated the films to be screened publicly again. For instance, prior to the 2013-2014 DVD release in France by UFO, both the *Trilogy* and *Comrades* were screened in cinemas in France.

Conclusion

During the 1970s, the BFI Production Board's filmmaking activities and their role within British film culture was renegotiated and repositioned. However, in the area of distribution, their haphazard efforts continued to the middle of the decade with poor business choices being made frequently. Although there were some attempts under Sainsbury to remedy some of the issues and to reevaluate their distribution activities—which was heavily criticised both internally and externally—this was not achieved until the end of the decade with *Radio On*.¹⁹⁶

The distribution of Douglas's *Trilogy* is a valuable case study for examination of bigger trends in film exhibition—at least in part because of the shortcomings constraining its availability and circulation. Evidently, Douglas's film found much success at film festivals in terms of being selected, the numerous prestigious awards it won as well as the press features that followed. However, although it secured several European television sales, it did not secure a general theatrical release in cinemas, which were at the time dominated by the Rank/EMI

¹⁹⁴ Flahive to Jewell, BDC 1/TRI/2/2.

¹⁹⁵ Flahive to Jewell, BDC 1/TRI/2/2.

¹⁹⁶ Hoyle, "Radio On," 410-411.

duopoly. The BFI were unable to fully utilise the RFTs in Britain as they were not a cohesive network in which they could programme its own BFI Production Board films; the RFTs were under the same pressures that other exhibitors of the decade faced and were limited by the availability of space and local authority involvement.

Much like other BFI films, Douglas's *Trilogy* helped to sustain the critical prestige of British cinema abroad. Based on the materials pertaining to Douglas's *Trilogy*, however, this was less a result of the BFI's efforts which were felt to be lacking, but rather Douglas and Cottam working as interim representatives and being especially active in the distribution of the films, despite facing personal financial costs. As a public government funded institution, the BFI were required to evidence success. Douglas attributed the Board's lack of effort and enthusiasm in distributing his films successfully and not wanting to receive too much money from a film because they were concerned that it might affect their government grant.¹⁹⁷

Douglas's films were far better distributed than the majority of Production Board films during this period: securing a national television screening on BBC Two and several European Television sales. Noble argues that there was a lack of an established infrastructure in Britain in place for the viewing of films such as Douglas's *Trilogy*.¹⁹⁸ Indeed, there were a number of problems for independent films that constrained their distribution. These constraints included availability and access to exhibition spaces, increasing quality of living allowing for growth in TV and VCR ownership, and a lack of independent exhibitors willing to commit due to their own pressures of revenue. Ultimately, however, there were deficiencies in the BFI's distribution as a result of both external macro forces as well as poor business decisions made internally. The *Trilogy* proved more successful in Europe than in Britain, securing television sales, and winning notable prizes at several international film festivals, helping to bring much needed critical prestige to British cinema which was severely lacking during this period.

¹⁹⁷ Bill Douglas, "Note 1," BDC 1/TRI/1/4/3, BDCM.

¹⁹⁸ Noble, "Making," 155.

Chapter Four

Creativity versus Business: Conflicting Priorities and Pressures of Commerce during the pre-production of *Comrades*

Governments should subsidise sections of the film industry, investing in and even accepting production losses, because by doing so they create income as well as culturally valuable films.

Simon Relph, 19 April 2013¹

During the 1980s, the British film industry experienced a growth of independent production companies. Richard Paterson states that across the decade '454 'British' feature films were produced with the participation of no less than 342 companies'.² John Hill expands on this, noting that of these 342 companies, '250 participated in only one film'.³ Therefore, although there was significant growth in the independent sector, the fact that over two-thirds of the 342 companies were able to make just one film across the whole decade is indicative of the industry's instability at this time. Hill argues:

from the 1950s onwards responsibility for actual production was increasingly devolved on to independent producers. This process reached its conclusion in the mid-1980s when the withdrawal of Rank and Thorn-EMI from production led to an almost complete divorce within the industry between producers on the one hand and distributors and exhibitors (primarily devoted to showing Hollywood films) on the other.⁴

Increasingly, the British film industry was moving further away from an integrated system towards a more independent one. It was not just Rank and Thorn-EMI's withdrawal from production and the slimming down of studios that initiated this structural development within the industry; it was the dogged unwillingness of the government to provide support. This lack of governmental support led producers, development executives, heads of funding bodies and television channels to

¹ Andrew Spicer, "The Art and Craft of Producing Films: Simon Relph," *Journal of British Cinema And Television* 11, no. 2–3 (2014): 249.

² Richard Patterson, "Changing Conditions of Independent Production in the UK," in *New Questions of British Cinema*, ed. Duncan Petrie (London: BFI Publishing, 1992), 47.

³ Hill, "British Film Policy," 105.

⁴ Hill, "British Film Policy," 105.

become increasingly important decision-makers and cultural gatekeepers; power was progressively devolved to the independent sector.

Economically, the British film industry was in an impecunious state in the 1980s. Lester D. Friedman explains that the Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher's leadership—whose premiership lasted three terms from 1979 to 1990—deplored any policy with a hint of subsidy, and 'consistently sought to eliminate what she deemed as governmental 'interference' within the economic sphere'.⁵ Hill summarises that the Conservative government had a similar 'aggressive non-intervention' stance to the film industry and perceived it to be a commercial enterprise responsible for its own survival.⁶ The Conservative government demonstrated little interest in the film industry evinced by the only Film White Paper produced during Thatcher's premiership—the 1985 Films Act—which abolished the Quota and the Eady Levy, providing no alternative initiatives to replace these schemes.⁷

Key British funders during this period were the newly established fourth television broadcaster Channel 4, (November 1982),⁸ the National Film Finance Corporation (NFFC) which was effectively privatised in 1986 following the aforementioned White Paper when it became the British Screen Finance Consortium with Simon Relph (producer of *Comrades*) as its chief executive,⁹ and the BFI Production Board. Each organisation had differing priorities and remits for their direction of support and varying levels of resources that were

⁵ Lester D. Friedman, *Fires Were Started: British Cinema and Thatcherism*, (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2006), xii.

⁶ Hill, "British Film Policy," 107. See also Samantha Lay, *British Social Realism: From Documentary to Brit-Grit*, (London: Wallflower Press, 2002), 83, where she refers to and discusses Hill's work.

⁷ See Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s*, 34–39, where he discuss government policy and the history of these initiatives in detail.

⁸ The new fourth terrestrial television channel, Channel 4, was an outcome of the 1977 Annan Report, a crucial piece of research that led to the Channel's creation. The fourth channel had been initiated under the Labour Government, not the Conservatives. Gabrielle Bock and Siegfried Zielinski highlight that a fourth channel had been possible since the 1960s, however, with the BBC having already been awarded a second channel (BBC2), there was a disagreement and a long series of discussions between the BBC, ITV, and parliament. See: Gabriele Bock and Siegfried Zielinski, "Britain's Channel 4: A TV Provider Caught Between Private Sector Funding and Its Cultural Mission," trans. Corina Holzherr, *Journal of British Cinema And Television* 11, no. 4 (2014): 421, <https://doi-org.uoelibrary.idm.oclc.org/10.3366/jbctv.2014.0227>.

⁹ British Screen Finance Consortium later became British Screen Finance Limited. See Hill, "British Film Policy," 100-101 for more details about the NFFC being replaced by the British Screen Finance Consortium.

available to them. In light of the lack of support by the Conservative government, these institutions' remits were of great importance as they helped to shape the cultural landscape of Britain during this time.

Due to the chronic lack of film finance available, films were frequently funded on a piecemeal structure out of necessity. Instead of one of several major funders to approach, there was a labyrinthine structure of financial agreements and negotiations to navigate with greater competition due to a larger number of small-scale independent production companies. Jennifer Holt and Alisa Perren propose an approach to the study of media industries that 'perceives culture and cultural production as sites of struggle, contestation, and negotiation between a broad range of stakeholders'.¹⁰ To use Holt and Perren's phrasing, this meant that there were a greater number of 'stakeholders' involved, each with their own intentions and priorities for a film project. For Douglas, a filmmaker with one trilogy of short films behind him which had been funded by one institution, adjusting to navigating this piecemeal financial structure, and greater number of stakeholders was necessary. Helping to navigate, between Douglas, the director, and Channel 4, the NFFC and Curzon, the funders, there is the producer.

Andrew Spicer discusses the concept of the 'producer as a mediator and facilitator with an overview of the whole production'.¹¹ In his discussion on the art of the producer, Vincent Porter argues:

[it] lies in his or her ability to manipulate creatively the complex and interlocking relationship between four key factors: an understanding of public taste, and what subjects and genres could attract a broad audience; the ability to obtain adequate production finance; the understanding of who to use in the key creative roles and on what terms; and the effectiveness of her or his overall control of the production process.¹²

As an object of study, the producer figure has typically been overlooked and neglected in film studies in preference for directors or stars.¹³ Spicer explains that '[t]here are two main reasons for this neglect: the negative image of the producer

¹⁰ Holt and Perren, *History, Theory, and Method*, 24.

¹¹ Andrew Spicer, *Sydney Box*, (Manchester University Press: 2006) 3.

¹² Andrew Spicer, "The Precariousness of Production: Michael Klinger and the Role of the Film Producer in the British Film Industry during the 1970s," in *British Culture and Society in the 1970s: The Lost Decade*, eds. Laurel Forster and Sue Harper, (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010) 188.

¹³ Meir, "Industry and/of the Auteur," 16.

and the difficulties in defining the role'.¹⁴ Spicer advocates that the producer is an important focal point of analysis because 'the producer is involved in the whole production process'.¹⁵ In the study of production, the director and producer have often been positioned as working against one another. Brian Hoyle highlights that there is a wide 'prejudice in film studies, which often stereotypes producers as the enemy of directorial creativity, mere managers [and] supervisors, all about the bottom line'.¹⁶ Despite a producer's work and contribution often being vitally important to the films, they are frequently overlooked.

For *Comrades*, there were two producers associated the project: Ismail Merchant and Simon Relph. More broadly, during the 1980s in Britain, there was an increase of independent producers; these individuals were able to get projects made during an economically strained time. Spicer argues that '[i]t has been these enterprising, imaginative producers, passionate about film, who have been best placed to exploit the confined spaces that have occasionally opened up in the British film industry'.¹⁷ As a case study, *Comrades* offers a valuable opportunity here to weigh up and examine different approaches to the role of producer, not only in their ability to secure funding for the project, but their understanding and approach to the production process and their working with Douglas. The case study is particularly rich as, under Merchant, the production was aborted in 1984 and so can be viewed as a case of failure in working relationships. Spicer argues that 'Merchant had left the production because he was preoccupied with other projects but also because he and Douglas were incompatible personalities'.¹⁸ This chapter works to expand on the 'incompatibility' of the two men and investigate further details regarding the lead up to and impact of the aborted production. In contrast, under Relph the production went ahead, and although Relph and Douglas's working relationship

¹⁴ Andrew Spicer, "The Production Line: Reflections on the Role of the Film Producer in British Cinema," *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 1, no. 1 (2008): 34.

¹⁵ Andrew Spicer, "The Creative Producer: The Michael Clinger Papers," Conference Paper, *Archives and Auteurs Conference*, 1 September 2009, 3, accessed 10 October 2021, https://www.academia.edu/6496226/The_Creative_Producer_Michael_Klinger.

¹⁶ Brian Hoyle, "Producing as a Creative Endeavour: The Case of Don Boyd's *Aria*," *Journal of British Cinema And Television* 9, no. 1 (2012): 78.

¹⁷ Andrew Spicer, "The Independent Producer and the State: Simon Relph, Government Policy and the British Film Industry, 1980-2005," in *Beyond the Bottom Line: The Producer in Film and Television Studies*, eds., Andrew Spicer, A. T. McKenna, and Christopher Meir (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 67.

¹⁸ Spicer, "Independent Producer," 73.

was not without its issues, as this chapter will demonstrate, Relph's contribution and work during the project cannot be overlooked.

My methodology is to analyse the pre-production stage of *Comrades* and examine the process of securing funding, the difficult and time-consuming challenge in securing a producer, the navigation of different stakeholders and their sometimes divergent requirements, and the different approaches taken by Merchant and Relph. As such, this chapter focuses on the mid-level negotiations that took place, particularly between the director, the producers, and funders, and closely examines certain decision-making processes. *Comrades* received funding from both Channel 4 and the NFFC, who were later joined by Curzon (originally the third funder was Rank, but they pulled out shortly after Merchant was no longer associated with the project). *Comrades* is best known for its lengthy production period of eight years and its unconventional choice of casting, where well-known British actors such as Vanessa Redgrave and Freddie Jones played minor cameo roles and relatively unknown actors were cast as the lead characters.

This chapter demonstrates that the extensive production time was in large part due to the difficulty in securing a producer as well as funding, reflecting the wider macro context of the industry. By examining the pre-production stage, particularly the aborted production under Merchant, I will investigate what the main pressure points were during this early stage of the process, not just in the difficulty in securing funding for the project, nor the personal impact this had on Douglas. Rather, I will analyse how other individuals associated with the project such as Robin Soans (who plays George Loveless) were affected as they, too, were committed and had expectations that were not fulfilled after the project was aborted.

To investigate the pre-production stage of *Comrades*, I have closely examined a wide volume of correspondence that was received or written by Douglas during this time, between 1979 when Douglas first began writing the script and 1985 when principal photography commenced. In so doing, I uncover greater understanding regarding the working relationships between Douglas and Hassan (who was now managing director at the NFFC), and the producers, Merchant and Relph. The analysis of Merchant and Relph's working materials has allowed me to investigate and reveal their differing working methods and

approaches to the project. The BDCM holds several different iterations of the script which I have closely examined, including a returned script from Merchant to Douglas annotated with his comments, which evidences his specific concerns and criticisms of the script.¹⁹ I have also examined previously unseen working documents held at the Film Finances Archive, London, concerning the film. These materials include correspondence between Channel 4 and Merchant, production unit lists, budgets, minutes taken during meetings, reports written by Relph, and correspondence between Relph and Roger Wingate from Curzon discussing the terms of their financial support. When analysed and scrutinised in detail, these documents provide crucial insight into negotiations that took place between funders, the producer, and Film Finance who were completion guarantors, as well as differences between Merchant's and Relph's expectations and understanding of the needs of the project.²⁰ The materials also include correspondence referring to the draft schedules which, when analysed, provide vital insight into the prospects in being able to deliver the project, as well as the different approaches taken by the producers in terms of deadlines and number of crew needed.

In this chapter, I evaluate the early stage of the pre-production process as well as the producers' actions and situate their decision-making process in the industrial context in which they are operating. From a potential funder or producer's perspective, Douglas posed a risk. Douglas had not yet made a film that had proved to be profitable, nor did he have a typical scriptwriting style, which impacted the process of script-timing and compiling a shooting schedule. As the materials evidence, Douglas had shown concern for his reputation following the success of *My Childhood*; Hoyle proposes that after the *Trilogy* 'because of his reputation as a difficult and uncompromising figure, Douglas found it almost impossible to find support for subsequent projects'.²¹ It is the period between completing the *Trilogy* and beginning the principal photography of *Comrades* starting that will be examined here.

¹⁹ Ismail Merchant Copy of *Comrades* Script, BDC 1/COM/2/2, BDCM (hereafter cited as Merchant Script, BDC 1/COM/2/2).

²⁰ For further details about the history of Film Finances, see Charles Drazin, "Introduction," in *A Bond for Bond: Film Finances and Dr No*, (London: Film Finances Ltd., 2014), 1-5.

²¹ Hoyle, "Bill Douglas Trilogy," 230.

Genesis, Scriptwriting and Securing Funding

Following the completion of the *Trilogy*, Douglas went on to work at the National Film and Television School between 1978 and 1979. It was during this time that he began looking for a new project and he had several in mind that he wanted to pursue. More broadly, the British film industry was struggling at this time. Spicer notes that 'in 1979 only 45 feature films were made and released'²² and, this fell even further and 'dwindled to a meagre 24 in 1981'.²³ Douglas, however, was not deterred and continued to pursue ideas for his next project; ideas included: a Life of Robert Burns, an adaptation of James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, a film based on Scottish biographer James Boswell's journals, the life of the playwright Joe Orton, and a project on the Tolpuddle Martyrs.²⁴ Douglas also considered adapting *Who is Eddie Linden?*, 'a book by Sebastian Barker [...] an 'autobiography' based on letters and tape-recorded conversation with the real-life Eddie Linden, a contemporary of Bill's who had grown up in Scotland. He has been dubbed as an Illegitimate, Illiterate, Catholic, Communist, Homosexual and Poet!'²⁵ Jewell comments: '[i]t was a black comedy, whose setting was a television programme—a sort of spoof THIS IS YOUR LIFE—in which figures from our hero's past, who feature in Sebastian Barker's book, confront him'.²⁶ It was, however, the Tolpuddle Martyrs project that would take hold, and which went on to be developed into *Comrades*.

According to Petrie, Douglas's 'major source of inspiration' for the film script came from a Trades Union Congress (TUC) publication entitled *The Martyrs of Tolpuddle 1884-1934*.²⁷ Petrie notes that the volume was 'published by the TUC in 1934 to commemorate the centenary of the arrest and transportation of the men'.²⁸ During an interview in August 1987, Douglas recalled

²² Lay, *British Social Realism*, 78.

²³ Spicer, "Independent Producer," 72.

²⁴ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 174.

Jewell notes that Douglas also wrote a novel: *The Diary of Mildred Harris* (unpublished and lost), *The Widow*, and *A Travelling Showman and His Peep Show* (a five-part television series). See Jewell, "Comrades-in-Waiting," BDC 1/COM/1/4, 1.

²⁵ Jewell, "Comrades-in-Waiting," BDC 1/COM/1/4, 2.

²⁶ Jewell, "Comrades-in-Waiting," BDC 1/COM/1/4, 2.

²⁷ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 174; *The Martyrs of Tolpuddle 1884-1934*, Trades Union Congress, BDC 1/COM/1/2/1.

²⁸ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 174.

how he was first inspired to make a film about the Tolpuddle Martyrs following a trip with his friend, Peter Jewell, to Dorchester museum.²⁹ Douglas explains that:

[t]here were a few items on display about the Martyrs. And when he [Peter] suggested that I do a film about them, and I asked who they were, he gave me to understand that only the barest details are actually known about their lives, and that I would have to do a lot of work on the story myself. So I said, “look, I’m not good at research—you do it for me and tell me only what I need to know”.³⁰

Here, he conveys how it was Jewell who first proposed that he work on a film about the Martyrs and that it was Jewell who took on the bulk of the historical research. Jewell’s contribution and various areas of work is an aspect I will return to in much greater detail in Chapter Five, however, this demonstrates that Jewell was the catalyst that instigated the project. In another interview, Douglas suggested that the lack of knowledge about the Martyrs gave him greater agency, when he stated:

[t]here wasn’t anything at all about their home lives, and that kind of freedom interested me. If it had all been documented I would have felt too constrained. I liked the idea of reinventing their lives.³¹

Each of these excerpts reveal that the lack of detail known about the Martyrs and their lives was an appealing quality for Douglas, in that it would allow him to have a greater degree of creative agency with regards to the formation of the script. This freedom from constraint with regards to the writing stage of a film is discussed by Petrie, who argues:

[t]he writing stage is ... in many respects the least constrained part of the process, where a writer is free from the various problems of budgets, schedules, technology and working relationships and can let his or her imagination take over.³²

Although Douglas received encouragement from his close friend, Jewell, and guidance in Jewell’s role as researcher and script editor, he was not receiving commentary or guidance from other ‘stakeholders’ during this early development stage. As Jewell recalls:

[t]he bare facts of history were a scaffolding on which Bill was free to weave his own interpretations of the emotions, motives and actions of his

²⁹ Andrew, “Releases,” 15.

³⁰ Andrew, “Releases,” 15.

³¹ Graham Fuller, “On Location: Comrades,” *Stills*, November 1985, 29, BDC1/COM/5/1, BDCM.

³² Duncan Petrie, *Creativity and Constraint in the British Film Industry* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), 176.

characters. He hated to be subservient to the facts and often repeated, in relation to this and other scripts, that he wasn't making a documentary.³³

At this point during the pre-production process, before Douglas had received any funding or script-development money, he was not asked to provide a shooting schedule, a budget, or to give much consideration to the technology and skill required, there was great freedom.

Initial Funding

In January 1980, under Hassan's leadership, the NFFC granted Douglas a modest commission of £7,500 which was to help fund the writing stage (which was already in motion) as well as initial location spotting.³⁴ According to Petrie, this early capital was secured based on the strength of the first twenty pages of the script.³⁵ The NFFC's protocol to grant funding was for a story outline to be supplied, therefore Douglas's lack of provision of a film treatment was untypical for NFFC. Petrie claims that Douglas resolutely refused to produce a script treatment during his career, however, as I demonstrated in Chapter One, as part of the BFI application for *My Childhood/Jamie*, Douglas submitted a script treatment as part of his application.³⁶ In spite of the difficulties that Hassan encountered when working with Douglas during the making of *My Childhood*, particularly the editing of *My Ain Folk*, Hassan saw the necessity for Douglas to have financial support to continue making films and recognised that he was in a position to provide this. Moreover, Hassan was prepared to overlook the administrative requirements of the NFFC when assessing Douglas's application. Thus, Hassan accommodated the typical NFFC procedures on behalf of his continuous support for Douglas's work and conveys his position in that he feels the film had to be made. The willingness of Hassan to overlook both the administrative requirements as well as the potential risk of working with Douglas again in spite of their difficulties evinces an entrepreneurial spirit and a risk-taking approach.

³³ Peter Jewell, Chapter One, *Long-Awaited Comrades*, BDC 1/COM/1/4, BDCM, 4 (hereafter cited as Jewell, *Long-Awaited Comrades*, BDC 1/COM/1/4).

³⁴ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 175.

³⁵ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 175.

³⁶ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 175; Douglas, Application, BDC 1/TRI/1/1.

The NFFC's brief was to fund films that 'had a reasonable chance of commercial success'.³⁷ The structure of the NFFC was such that they 'made decisions through its board guided by the managing director'.³⁸ When Hassan worked at the BFI Production Board, it was necessary for him to secure an agreement from a Board before funding could be committed. During Hassan's tenure, in light of the NFFC's brief, some surprising funding choices were made. For instance, the NFFC supported fellow Scottish filmmaker Bill Forsyth's *Gregory's Girl* (1980), which had no stars. The NFFC also backed a significant 83 per cent of the budget for *Babylon* (1980), a film about Black British youth and a debut film for director Franco Rosso,³⁹ along with *Comrades*.

In Jewell's unpublished biography on Douglas, he recalls that '[t]he title [of *Comrades*] was altered to HEROES because [Hassan] said he had some right-wingers on his board and they might take to HEROES better'.⁴⁰ Both Reed and the third script evaluator expressed their concerns regarding the film's title: Heroes.⁴¹ Reed commented that 'the word is so variously used and has become debased. It is often used ironically today'.⁴² Similarly, the other evaluator queried the choice, stating, 'I was left wondering if HEROES was the wrong title'.⁴³ In Merchant's correspondence with David Korda at Film Finances in April 1984, he refers to the project by the title *Comrades*,⁴⁴ however, this is followed in brackets as a "(working title)". In Douglas's early second draft of the script dated May 1980, four years earlier, it is titled *Comrades*.⁴⁵ Merchant's lack of commitment to the title four years later in his correspondence with Film Finance may simply suggest that discussions between himself and Douglas regarding the title were on-going. Alternatively, it may reflect that there was resistance on Merchant's part due to

³⁷ Phil Wickham and Erinna Mettler, "Back to the Future: The Fall and Rise of the British Film Industry in the 1980s" (BFI Information Services, 2018), 2, <https://www.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/bfi-back-to-the-future-the-fall-and-rise-of-the-british-film-industry-in-the-1980s.pdf>.

³⁸ Spicer, "Art and Craft of Producing," 241.

³⁹ 'Heroes' is capitalised in the original document: Mamoun Hassan, "BABYLON is released in the US this March," *Movie Masterclass*, accessed 17 April 2020, <http://moviemasterclass.com/babylon-is-released-in-the-us-this-march>.

⁴⁰ Jewell, *Long-Awaited Comrades*, BDC 1/COM/1/4, 10-11.

⁴¹ Blind Evaluations, BDC 1/COM/2/1; Reed, Evaluation, Undated, BDC 1/COM/2/1.

⁴² Reed, Evaluation, Undated, BDC 1/COM/2/1.

⁴³ Blind Evaluations, BDC 1/COM/2/1.

⁴⁴ Letter from Ismail Merchant to David Korda, 17 April 1984, K74G721 F16, Film Finances Archive (hereafter cited as Merchant to Korda, K74G721 F16).

⁴⁵ See Bill Douglas, Second Draft of *Comrades* Script, May 1980, BDC 1/COM/2/1, BDCM.

its left-wing connotations and appeal. When interviewed by Jill Forbes, Relph explained that:

Bill called it 'Comrades' because it is a story about friends, and that word has now become a dirty word which most of the world and most of the press understand as meaning some sort of subversive, anti-patriot person who is plotting to overthrow the realm.⁴⁶

It may not have been Douglas's intention from the outset to choose a title with socialist connotations, however, the way in which the project was titled *Heroes* to appease the NFFC board's conservative sensibilities shows a strategic ploy initiated by Hassan to secure initial funding for the project. Clearly, however, the project did not need to be held to this condition.

Under Hassan, the NFFC would often commit funds at an early stage, frequently being the first to commit to a project or to commission a script.⁴⁷ In so doing, the project had a greater chance of securing further funding as media makers had some initial capital behind the project. The problem of doing this, as Relph explains is that 'this had the effect of building up unspent resources. At the time British Screen took over from the NFFC there was a significant surplus of funds waiting to be invested'.⁴⁸ The irony is that had Relph been in his position at British Screen, then he would not have granted *Comrades* funding as he adopted 'a more commercial approach than Hassan' and was reluctant to 'be the first to commit to a project'.⁴⁹ The first instalment of capital from the NFFC allowed Douglas to begin location research in Australia and Britain for *Comrades*.⁵⁰ According to Jewell, Douglas's journey whilst carrying out the location research in Australia was as follows:

[Douglas] started in Perth, and made the famous railway crossing of the Nullarbor Plain. On the train he met a family with a beautiful young daughter whom he hoped to cast as Flower, the governor's daughter, but by the time the film was shot, 5 years later, she was grown up!⁵¹

⁴⁶ Forbes, "Dark Side," 35.

⁴⁷ See Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s*, 38-39 for further details about the differences between the NFFC and British Screen.

⁴⁸ Spicer, "Art and Craft of Producing," 241-242.

⁴⁹ Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s*, 38.

⁵⁰ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 175.

⁵¹ Jewell, *Long-Awaited Comrades*, BDC 1/COM/1/4, 15

After extensive research in Britain between 1980 and 1981—visiting over a hundred villages—Douglas settled on the abandoned village of Tyneham, Dorset.⁵²

Script Development and Evaluators' Feedback

It was during this time, between 1980 and 1981 when Douglas was carrying out extensive location spotting that the script was sent to industry professionals to evaluate and critique, to give their informed opinion on how the script could be improved. There are three evaluators' reports held in the BDCM, including one by Stanley Reed in 1980,⁵³ and two reports where the authors are unspecified.⁵⁴ In addition, there is also a revised report by Reed in 1981 after he had read Douglas's second draft.⁵⁵ Although they were supposedly blind evaluations, each of the critiques mention Douglas by name, so they were demonstrably aware of the script's author. One critique was quite unsympathetic to the plight of the martyrs, asking:

what is their problem? ... Allright [*sic*], their roofs leak; so why don't they mend them? Presumably, because they're too tired and demoralised after a day's hard labour in the fields with not enough to eat. But I did not see it. ...Their sentences were cute, and they all married, and emigrated and

⁵² The number of villages Douglas visited has varied in different publications and there were different people involved at different stages including Peter Jewell, Ian Scott, Richard Craven and Ann Westbrooke. For example, in Matthew Reisz, "Comrade Douglas," *The Guardian*, August 29, 1987, he suggests it was as many as one hundred and sixty villages. Petrie suggests it was one hundred and thirty until Douglas settled on Tyneham (Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 177). In Jewell, *Long-Awaited Comrades*, BDC 1/COM/1/1, he states that Tyneham was the sixty-first village Douglas visited out of a hundred and two between 1980 and 1981. Bill Douglas, "Locations List," BDC 1/COM/1/2/2 which details the Dorset villages visited in 1980-1981, although there are a couple of duplicates on the list, there is a total of one-hundred and one villages included. The way in which the number of villages that Douglas visited has been inflated in various publications suggests how popular press can place greater labour efforts on the director figure and exaggerate conditions of production. It was Mary Wood, secretary of Bridport Film Society, who suggested Tyneham; "Bill Douglas on 'Comrades'," Transcript from Bridport Screening, 31 October 1987, BDC 1/COM/5/3, BDCM.

⁵³ Reed had been in the role of director at the BFI from 1964-1972 until he retired. See Brian Baxter, "Obituary: Stanley Reed," *The Independent*, accessed 18 January 2022 <https://www.independent.co.uk/incoming/obituary-stanley-reed-5615958.html>.

⁵⁴ Authors Unknown, Blind Evaluations, BDC 1/COM/2/1, BDCM (hereafter cited as Blind Evaluation, BDC 1/COM/2/1).

⁵⁵ Blind Evaluations, BDC 1/COM/2/1.

grew to a ripe old age, so what was all the fuss about? I do not know, and I believe that Bill Douglas could tell me, but he hasn't in this first draft.⁵⁶

In contrast, the other two critiques, one being from Reed, the other unknown, are both very positive about the draft script.

Reed was the only evaluator that considered and commented on the film's potential distribution at this early stage. On the first draft he commented:

it is unlikely that the film would achieve wide popular distribution. On the other hand, its English origins would be no bar to its international appeal and the political implications of the story have a specialist and permanent interest which should prolong its commercial life. The predominantly visual style of the film should also strengthen its international prospects.⁵⁷

Recognising that there was potential for its international appeal and, at the time of its writing in 1980, that potential political implications of the story would have been recognisable at the time. Following the second draft in 1981, in which Douglas had adopted the title of *Comrades*, Reed commented:

[i]f realised as I anticipate it cannot but make a powerful film with a certain appeal to an international audience of intelligent and discriminating filmgoers. But in contrast to Douglas's earlier work the present film, though complex and subtle, and with overtones of the sort I have indicated, is in no way obscure or difficult; it has a strong narrative line, sympathetic characters, great variety of action, and humour and there is nothing to stand between it and a wider audience.⁵⁸

Again, Reed comments on its potential of attracting an international audience. Reed's repetition of 'international' could be inferred that he recognised immediately that it would be unlikely to find an audience in Britain. Indeed, in an earlier observation, Reed noted: '[t]he script promises a film of deep humanity and high imagination, powerfully felt but controlled by a rigorous mind; few filmmakers attain this degree of concentration—one thinks of Dreyer, Bunuel and Bresson'.⁵⁹ Reed's comparisons to several notable European arthouse directors significantly echoes the repeated issue that has been raised by critics as an explanation for the neglect of Douglas, both contemporaneously as well as neglect that continues still, that because of the 'European aesthetic', he did not

⁵⁶ Blind Evaluations, BDC 1/COM/2/1.

⁵⁷ Stanley Reed, Blind Evaluation, Undated, BDC 1/COM/2/1, BDCM (hereafter cited as Reed, Evaluation, Undated, BDC 1/COM/2/1).

⁵⁸ Stanley Reed, Blind Evaluation, 25 July 1981, BDC 1/COM/2/1, BDCM (hereafter cited as Reed, Evaluation, 25 July 1981, BDC 1/COM/2/1).

⁵⁹ Reed, Evaluation, 25 July 1981, BDC 1/COM/2/1.

fit with British cinema during the 1980s. For instance, film critic, Philip French, was led to ponder in 2006: 'what longer career this true poet of cinema might have had, had he been born in France rather than Newcraighall'.⁶⁰ More broadly in the British film industry, a crucial film funding source would arrive in 1982 that would contribute to a greater convergence of the film and television mediums.

Channel 4 joins the project

In the latter half of 1983, Britain's new fourth television channel, Channel 4 came to the project as a funder, a year after the Channel 'began broadcasting in November 1982'.⁶¹ It is unclear how this was first negotiated or secured, however, in Douglas's notes on the production, he writes: 'Jeremy Isaacs thought highly of the script and supported me all the way through since 1980'.⁶² In 1983, Channel 4 had agreed to a 25 per cent commitment,⁶³ which increased to £750,000 in 1984,⁶⁴ £800,000 in 1985,⁶⁵ and by the end of the project, they had committed £1 million—the highest contribution Channel 4 had given to any single film at that point.⁶⁶ It was the channel's first chief executive, Jeremy Isaacs, who had persuaded the Channel 4 Board to commit to these monies, as Board approval was required on expenditure over half a million pounds.⁶⁷

In scholarly research on this period in British film history, Channel 4 has repeatedly been referred to as a vital resource and a 'lifeline' for British cinema.⁶⁸ One of the reasons that television came to play such a significant role for the

⁶⁰ Philip French, "Review," *The Observer*, 17 December 2006. n.pag., BDC 1/COM/5/2, BDCM. In French's review, he provides a list of fifty movies that 'missed the commercial boat'. At number twenty-six, he lists *The Bill Douglas Trilogy*. French suggests watching *Ratcatcher* (dir. Lynne Ramsay, 1999) or *The 400 Blows* (dir. François Truffaut), if they enjoyed the *Trilogy*.

⁶¹ Whitaker, "Declarations of Independence," 88-89.

⁶² Douglas, "Deliberate Delays," BDC 1/COM/1/4.

⁶³ Letter from Mamoun Hassan to Peter Jewell, 7 April 1983, BDC 1/COM/1/1, BDCM (hereafter cited as Hassan to Jewell, BDC 1/COM/1/1).

⁶⁴ Letter from Tim Corrie to Bill Douglas, 27 February 1984, BDC 1/COM/1/1, BDCM.

⁶⁵ Letter from Colin Leventhal to Simon Relph, 19 April 1985, K74G721 F16, Film Finances Archive (hereafter cited as Letter, Leventhal to Relph, Film Finances).

⁶⁶ Hassan to Jewell, BDC 1/COM/1/1; Draft Agreement between Skreba Productions Ltd, Channel Four Television Company Ltd, National Film Finance Corporation, Curzon Film Distributors Ltd, 20 August 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/4, BDCM (hereafter cited as Draft Agreement, BDC 1/COM/3/4); Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 177.

⁶⁷ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 177.

⁶⁸ John Hill, "Contemporary British Cinema, Industry, Policy, Identity," *Cinéaste*, 2001, 31.

British film industry during the early 1980s was due to the reluctance of the government to provide support for the industry.⁶⁹ Charles Gormley suggests that in its infancy the Channel was perfect for the independent companies and filmmakers as it was essentially '[a] publishing house with no studios to fill and no tradition of how and where to spend its money'.⁷⁰ Unlike the other three British terrestrial channels at the time (BBC, BBC Two and ITV), Channel 4 did not produce its own content but instead commissioned or acquired content from outside companies and sources.⁷¹ Spicer explains that under Isaacs's administration, 'Channel 4 was committed to playing an actively interventionist role in the British film industry along the lines of the television industries in France and Germany'.⁷² The film policy of the new channel was such that it committed 6-7 per cent of its budget to feature film investment.⁷³ Indeed, '[b]etween 1982 and 1992 Film on Four directly funded 136 features' and despite being a television broadcaster, many of the films received a theatrical release.⁷⁴ As I explored in Chapter Three, until the arrival of the multiplex cinema in 1985, the exhibition sector was in a 'parlous state',⁷⁵ and audiences continued to decline 'from 101 million admissions in 1980 to an all-time low of 54 million in 1984'.⁷⁶ In light of this, 'when the average Briton was watching 25 hours of television per week', the channel provided an extremely vital platform for filmmakers.⁷⁷

Having a Television Broadcaster as one of the film's main funders created a significant limitation for Douglas early in the project; Douglas had planned to film the Australian section of the film on Panavision.⁷⁸ He envisioned the screen opening out to a wider screen ratio as the martyrs reached Australia, the wider

⁶⁹ Hill, "Contemporary British Cinema," 31.

⁷⁰ Charles Gormley, "The Impact of Channel Four," in *From Limelight to Satellite: A Scottish Film Book*, ed. Eddie Dick (BFI Publishing and Scottish Film Council, 1990), 187.

⁷¹ Dorothy Hobson, *Channel 4: The Early Years and the Jeremy Isaacs Legacy* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 19.

⁷² Spicer, "Independent Producer," 73.

⁷³ Hill, "British Film Policy," 104.

⁷⁴ "The Channel 4 Films of the 1980s: 'A Worrying New Category'," *British Universities Film & Video Council*, accessed 8 September 2021, <http://bufvc.ac.uk/2010/11/09/the-channel-4-films-of-the-1980s-a-worrying-new-category>.

⁷⁵ Hanson, *Screening the World*, 89.

⁷⁶ Michael Brooke, "British Film in the 1980s," *Screen Online*, accessed 9 September 2021, <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1394354/index.html>.

⁷⁷ "Channel 4 Films of the 1980s," *BUFVC*.

⁷⁸ "The Film Poet's Comrades," *Screen International*, 14021 February 1987, No. 587, 20, BDC 1/COM/5, BDCM.

screen was designed to work in visual juxtaposition to the Dorset sequences. In so doing, the ratio of the screen would reflect how the men had once been trapped in Dorset but were ironically freer in their roles as convicts in the wide-screen open landscape of Australia. However, Panavision would not have been a justifiable expense for the small screen, and so while the funding from Channel 4 was welcome, it brought with it some constraints. Douglas was, however, able to carry this idea through choices in sound design. Petrie notes:

Douglas did attempt to signify the sense of freedom and space represented by the Antipodes by utilising off-screen sounds for the first time in the film, alluding to space beyond the frame. In Dorset all natural sounds had been constrained within the frame.⁷⁹

Thus, an alternative scheme was developed which used Dolby stereo for the expansive scenes of Australia and mono for the Tolpuddle scenes. Therefore, what was intended initially as an aesthetic choice was developed into an auditory choice in an attempt to convey a similar message. This demonstrates the impact of the financial conditions set by funders to think creatively for a similar but different impact and process of meaning making.

Douglas expressed his relief after Channel 4 had agreed to give their financial support stating in his correspondence with Isaacs on 10 November 1983 that 'if it wasn't for your intervention, we still wouldn't be anywhere'.⁸⁰ Petrie suggests that the reason why Channel 4 agreed to commit funds to the project was because Isaacs felt that the film's material and reflection on the origins of the foundations of the TUC 'was appropriate material for Channel 4'.⁸¹ Further, Isaacs commented: 'I thought that the values the Trade Union movement had stood for at its best and noblest, the values that informed a more humane and just society than Margaret Thatcher stood for, were the values we should espouse in our films'.⁸² Similarly, Spicer notes that Isaacs felt that the channel's films and television programmes 'should have a "socio-cultural provenance and purpose" that went beyond their financial returns or their importance to ratings'.⁸³ Although Douglas was adamant when interviewed that he did not intend to create a political

⁷⁹ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 192.

⁸⁰ Letter from Bill Douglas to Jeremy Isaacs, 10 November 1983, BDC 1/COM1/1/1, BDCM.

⁸¹ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 177.

⁸² Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 177.

⁸³ Spicer, "Independent Producer," 73.

film, it was this presentation of a humane and just society—unlike the one under Thatcher—that appealed to the channel and led them to fund it.⁸⁴

Securing a Producer

Richard Craven (the ‘producer’/production manager during the Scottish filming of *My Way Home*, later replaced by Judy Cottam) was briefly associated with *Comrades* in 1981.⁸⁵ Craven and Douglas visited locations in Dorset together. In November 1981, however, a letter from Craven to Douglas demonstrates that there were irreconcilable differences between the two men due to differing approaches to the project. Craven wrote to Douglas stating:

[i]f you had originally asked me to be your production manager on your film, my reaction would have been totally different. I would not have questioned the script or the budget, this would be the responsibility of the producer who employed me ... I think you still cherish the BFI structure, and wish that Mamoun could be Executive Producer on your picture.⁸⁶

Further, Craven claims that Douglas was critical of his interest in the script which Douglas had said was ‘none of [his] business’ and to ‘not waste [his] time reading background material’.⁸⁷ Craven’s criticism suggests that Douglas’s perception and expectations of Craven in his role as producer aligned more to that of a production manager. Thus, Douglas had to navigate new expectations of the roles and the hierarchy within this larger scale production.⁸⁸ In a draft letter to Hassan Douglas said: ‘[i]t surprises me you let me even consider Craven when, as you told me afterwards, he had walked out on BABYLON’.⁸⁹ In spite of having worked with Craven previously, Douglas does not accept Craven’s choice to leave the project, but suggests it is a character flaw or repetition of behaviour. It was this long process to secure a producer which put further strain on Hassan and Douglas’s working relationship.

Craven departed from the project, which meant that the problem of securing a producer returned. The correspondence in the Working Papers from

⁸⁴ Andrew, “Releases,” BDC 1/COM/5.

⁸⁵ Letter from Richard Craven to Bill Douglas, 5 November 1981, BDC 1/COM/1/1, BDCM (hereafter cited as Craven to Douglas, BDC 1/COM/1/1).

⁸⁶ Craven to Douglas, BDC 1/COM/1/1.

⁸⁷ Craven to Douglas, BDC 1/COM/1/1.

⁸⁸ Craven to Douglas, BDC 1/COM/1/1.

⁸⁹ *Babylon* is capitalised in the original document: Bill Douglas qtd in Jewell, *Long-Awaited Comrades*, BDC 1/COM/1/4, 17.

this stage of the pre-production process demonstrate that tension was growing between Douglas and Hassan. Douglas frequently questioned Hassan's attempts to contact producers and commented that he had not heard from Hassan for long periods of time.⁹⁰ Hassan explained he had attempted to secure a producer but commented that 'there were others who on reading it said it was not financeable as a commercial venture'.⁹¹ This suggests that the chances of securing a producer for a project was largely dependent on its commercial potential, not its cultural or artistic value. Hassan goes on to state: '[w]hat you do not realise is that nothing kills a project so much as it being circulated widely—the fragrance escapes'.⁹² This is indicative of the thought process behind securing a producer for the project: Spicer et al. discuss multiple dimensions of a producer's creativity, and that the role necessitates 'the ability, so necessary for independent producers, of securing funds for a project be manipulating markets, negotiating deals, pre-selling and all the other elements of a complex financial package without which a film could not be made'.⁹³ Hassan's comments highlights this creative approach to his strategy of securing a producer: Hassan wants to at least appear that he is being selective in who he approaches, suggesting that there would be an impact on the film's potential success if the project was circulated too much, or rather, rejected by too many.

In spite of Douglas's accusation, Hassan had approached a number of notable producers from early 1981, including Otto Plaschkes, Clive Parsons, Ian Warren and David Puttnam, but all had declined.⁹⁴ In response to Douglas's allegations, Hassan states that '[f]or your information there are very few producers able to raise finance in this country'.⁹⁵ Crucially, this further reflects the importance of the independent producers in Britain, not only their struggle to raise

⁹⁰ Letter from Mamoun Hassan to Bill Douglas, 10 August 1983, BDC 1/COM/1/1, BDCM (hereafter cited as Hassan to Douglas, BDC 1/COM/1/1).

⁹¹ Hassan to Douglas, BDC 1/COM/1/1.

⁹² Hassan to Douglas, BDC 1/COM/1/1.

⁹³ Spicer, McKenna and Meir, "Introduction," 13.

⁹⁴ Otto Plaschkes' Executive Producer credits include: *Butley* (Harold Pinter, 1974), *Galileo* (Joseph Losey, 1975), *Hopscotch* (Ronald Neame, 1980); Clive Parsons producer credits include: *Scum* (Alan Clarke, 1979), *Gregory's Girl* (Bill Forsyth, 1980) and *Britannia Hospital* (Lindsay Anderson, 1982). David Puttnam producer credits include *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981) *Local Hero* (Bill Forsyth, 1983), *The Killing Fields* (Roland Joffé, 1984).

Producers who had also seen the script included: Richard Craven, Simon Perry; Mamoun to Douglas, BDC 1/COM/1/1.

⁹⁵ Mamoun to Douglas, BDC 1/COM/1/1.

finance but also that it understood that the ability to do so was restricted to a few select individuals. Indeed, as Petrie remarks: 'the extreme difficulties associated with raising production finance place a great deal of importance on the contribution of producers, whose role in most cases includes getting the project off the ground in the first place'.⁹⁶ Therefore, although there may have been a large quantity of new independent producers, there were only some who were known to be repeatedly successful in being able to raise finance for a project and it was at this very early stage that it was vital to secure a producer who would be able to get 'the project off the ground'.⁹⁷ As such, due to this power dynamic in which there were only select individuals able to raise finance, there is a demonstrable barrier to overcome.

One of the producers Hassan approached earlier on in April 1981, but who chose to decline the project was Otto Plaschkes. Plaschkes's correspondence with Douglas reveals his reason why he turned down the project. He states:

I think you need a Producer who is much closer to your modus operandi than I am. I suppose what I am trying to say is you need somebody who is younger than I am and who has been less seduced than I have by the commercial cinema.⁹⁸

Due to the Brechtian style adopted in *Comrades*, Douglas may have been especially eager for Plaschkes to be involved in the project as a result of his earlier executive producer role on Joseph Losey's film, *Galileo* (1975), an adaptation of Bertolt Brecht's 1943 play of the same name. At this point in Plaschkes's career, however, he had just worked on his most commercial film to date, the American spy comedy *Hopscotch* (1980), starring Walter Matthau and Glenda Jackson. Thus, by the time Plaschkes is being approached in 1981 to work as a producer on *Comrades*, he is turning towards commercial and American cinema rather than British and independent.

In Douglas's correspondence with Plaschkes, Douglas mentioned that at one point the producer Ian Warren was committed to the project.⁹⁹ It is unclear from the archival materials when Warren was associated with the project exactly,

⁹⁶ Petrie, *Creativity and Constraint*, 183.

⁹⁷ Petrie, *Creativity and Constraint*, 183.

⁹⁸ Letter from Otto Plaschkes at Ariel Productions Ltd. to Bill Douglas, 28 April 1981, BDC 1/COM1/1, BDCM.

⁹⁹ Letter from Otto Plaschkes to Bill Douglas, 16 September 1983, BDC 1/COM/1/1, BDCM.

however, Douglas stated: 'Ian Warren doesn't trust a soul where money is concerned. He is totally unsure about me, and doesn't know what I can do for him. In a panic, he suggests bringing in another writer, Eric Paice'.¹⁰⁰ Throughout this early stage of the production there were various people or organisations in on-going discussions and securing a producer for this project was both laborious and time-consuming. Eventually, however, in late 1983 a producer for the project was secured: Ismail Merchant.

Douglas and Ismail Merchant's Working Relationship

The Merchant-Ivory-Jhabvala triumvirate are now known for their 'sumptuous literary adaptations'¹⁰¹ by Henry James and E.M. Forster, such as *The Europeans* (1979), *The Bostonians* (1984) and *A Room with a View* (1985), however, at the time that Merchant became involved with *Comrades* the company's reputation was not yet fully secured.¹⁰² Merchant's comfortable middle-class and deeply conservative Muslim background is at odds with Douglas's working-class roots. This is not to say that differences in backgrounds necessarily prevent successful working relationships, however, due to the film's retelling of the history of the first trade union, it does raise questions of motivations and intention of Merchant to be involved with the project. In terms of filmmaking style, there is a similar incongruity. Tom Charity comments:

Comrades owes precisely nothing to the literary "heritage cinema" Merchant traded in. With its Brecht-Bressonian delineation of space (emphatic close ups interrogate the predominant medium shots, while key events occur offscreen) and sound (the score is by Hans Werner Henze), its elliptical way with narrative and especially the playful series of trompe l'oeil optical effects and pre-cinematic tableaux that punctuate the action, *Comrades* might be the antithesis of this tradition.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Douglas qtd in Jewell, *Long-Awaited Comrades*, BDC 1/COM/1/4, 24.

¹⁰¹ Peter Bradshaw, "Obituary: Ismail Merchant," *The Guardian*, accessed 16 March 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2005/may/26/guardianobituaries.film>.

¹⁰² For further details about Merchant-Ivory see James Ivory, *Solid Ivory*, (London: Corsair, 2021); Lawrence Raw ed., *Merchant-Ivory: Interviews*, (University Press of Mississippi, 2012); John Pym, *Merchant Ivory's English Landscape: Rooms, Views and Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*, (London: Pavilion Books, 2006).

¹⁰³ Tom Charity, "Light Show: Bill Douglas' *Comrades*," *Cinemascope*, accessed 5 March 2021, <https://cinema-scope.com/cinema-scope-magazine/columns-dvd-bonus-light-show-bill-douglas%E2%80%99-comrades/>.

In contrast to the opulent and detailed-orientated literary adaptations that the Merchant-Ivory became known for, early on in Merchant's career during the 1960s, Merchant-Ivory's films such as *The Householder*, *Shakespeare Wallah*, *The Guru* and *Bombay Talkie* were heavily inspired by and even had musical scores by Satyajit Ray,¹⁰⁴ a filmmaker who was both an inspiration and friend to Douglas. As I demonstrated in Chapter One, Ray was also used as a point of comparison by Hassan to secure funding for Douglas's *Trilogy*. Merchant also directed films which Ivory commented in an interview 'are almost always about poor, struggling people, often living on the edge'.¹⁰⁵ For example, the first film Merchant directed, *Mahatma and the Mad Boy* (1974), tells the story of an outcast and impoverished Indian boy scavenging for food with his monkey companion.¹⁰⁶

Merchant was well-known for being able to raise finance and for making films on a much smaller budget than expected. Petrie argues that Isaacs saw this a positive attribute and a necessity for the project, stating:

[i]t was apparent that even with a budget of £2 million it was going to be extremely difficult to bring the thing in on budget. Ismail was pretty good at cutting corners in film-making – enabling him and James Ivory to make the movies they did for budgets that astonished other people.¹⁰⁷

Very soon into working together, however, Douglas and Merchant's working relationship became very tense and fraught with heated negotiations, and this came to light on a number of production issues. The main points of contention between Merchant and Douglas were the script, the shooting schedule, the sacking of Alan Barrett (the film's original designer), and Douglas's request to have Hans Werner Henze work as the composer when Merchant wanted Richard Robbins. The sheer quantity of correspondence materials held at the BDCM from the time when Douglas worked with Merchant is indicative of Douglas's increasing exasperation towards him and his approach, especially regarding Barrett's appointment. These materials vary from lengthy reports to accounts of

¹⁰⁴ Peter C. Kunze, "Book reviews: *Merchant-Ivory: Interviews* edited by Laurence Raw," *Transnational Literature* 5, No. 1, November 2012, <http://fhrc.flinders.edu.au/transnational/home.html>. A number of Ray's crew worked with the Merchant-Ivory team, for example, Subrata Mitra—who had been Ray's cinematographer—worked on *The Householder*.

¹⁰⁵ Robert Long, *James Ivory in Conversation: How Merchant Ivory makes its movies*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 6.

¹⁰⁶ For further details see: "Mahatma and the Mad Boy," *Merchant Ivory*, accessed 2 November 2021, <https://www.merchantivory.com/film/mahatmaandthemadboy>.

¹⁰⁷ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 178.

conversations or unsent letters in Douglas's Working Papers. Arguably, materials such as these capture Douglas's immediate reactions and thoughts, and provide insight into his perceptions at that moment, emotions he may have otherwise kept private during formal interviews and discussions about the production process.

Douglas's choice of production designer from the outset was Barrett, who had worked as the costume designer on *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1967) for which he had received a BAFTA nomination for Best British Costume in 1968. Before Merchant came to the project, Douglas had been working closely with Barrett who thought that the work of British rural landscape artist, Samuel Palmer, could be used as a key influence on the design of *Comrades*.¹⁰⁸ Despite not having worked as a production designer before, Douglas was keen to give Barrett his first opportunity, writing '[i]t was true Allan [*sic*] was an experienced costume designer and I was wanting to give him his first go at design'.¹⁰⁹ Securing work due to a personal recommendation is not unusual within the film industry as Helen Blair notes: '[t]he majority of those working in the film industry, as well as those attempting to gain access to it, hear of and secure work through a variety of types of personal contacts who perform functions such as providing recommendations'.¹¹⁰ Merchant had not seen any of Barrett's work, designs, nor had he spoken to him about his ideas and according to Douglas, '[Merchant] said he didn't think Allan [*sic*] had the necessary talent for the job of designer'.¹¹¹ Merchant's preference was Jonathan Amberston, who had more experience; Amberston had worked in the art department for *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979) and *Bad Timing* (Nicolas Roeg, 1980), and had one credit as art director behind him for his work on *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981).¹¹² Jane Barnwell argues that '[d]esign can do much more than give assurances of time or place, contributing to the texture, mood and meaning of the work'.¹¹³ Merchant-Ivory adaptations in particular became synonymous with very detailed period picturesque designs: '[t]he mention of Merchant and Ivory implied key

¹⁰⁸ Peter Jewell, In Discussion with Author, July 2021.

¹⁰⁹ Bill Douglas, "Deliberate Delays to the Film?" 43 page document, BDC 1/COM/1/4, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas, "Deliberate Delays," BDC 1/COM/1/4), n.pag.

¹¹⁰ Blair, "Last Job," 152.

¹¹¹ Douglas, "Deliberate Delays," BDC 1/COM/1/4, n.pag.

¹¹² Letter from Bill Douglas to Ismail Merchant, Undated, Marked Unsent, BDC 1/COM/1/1, BDCM.

¹¹³ Jane Barnwell, *Production Design: Architects of the Screen* (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), 2.

characteristics of English houses, gardens and landscapes, afternoon tea, picnics and boating. The setting is given prominence and there is pleasure in these details; the audience is wrapped in the comfort of the past'.¹¹⁴ It is unclear from the materials why Merchant preferred Amberston. For instance, he does not explicitly explain to Douglas his position on the role of production design and/or costume, however, in Douglas's aforementioned document he claims it is because Amberston was 'Ismail[']s friend'.¹¹⁵ Alternatively, design was very important in Merchant-Ivory films, and for any producer, it is understandable to want to use a more experienced designer, as using an untried designer would bring a greater element of risk.

Another point of contention was how much Barrett would be paid for his work. In an unsent document titled 'Conversations with my producer', Douglas relays some of the negotiations that took place between himself and Merchant; the document mostly follows a question and answer format.¹¹⁶ Douglas represents Merchant here as trying to pay Barrett less than the equity minimum of £500 per week and recalls that in return for £1,000, Merchant wanted 'the full treatment with costs'.¹¹⁷ According to Douglas, Merchant said that Barrett could 'take five weeks or ten weeks but I want a full lay out, for £1,000'.¹¹⁸ Douglas repeatedly conveys Merchant's reluctance to hire Barrett was because he had an agent.¹¹⁹ An agent would be able to negotiate forcefully on their client's behalf and advise their client to avoid being exploited. Indeed, this is evidenced later on in the document when Douglas explains how Barrett's agent was willing to accept 'a figure slightly beneath the union minimum of £500 per week, [for the] one week... [of] work done and one to come', and that Merchant's demands of a full lay out with costs would take much longer.¹²⁰ Merchant's expectations of Barrett to produce full designs for £1,000 regardless of the amount of time it would take him to produce them ultimately demonstrates that he was looking to get the most work out of Barratt for as little pay as possible. Therefore, Merchant's motivations behind his dismissal of what Barratt could bring to the project, was not because

¹¹⁴ Barnwell, *Production Design*, 83

¹¹⁵ Douglas, "Deliberate Delays," BDC 1/COM/1/4.

¹¹⁶ Bill Douglas, "Conversations with my Producer," July 1984, BDC 1/COM1/1/4, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas, "Conversations," BDC 1/COM/1/1/4)

¹¹⁷ Douglas, "Conversations," BDC 1/COM/1/1/4.

¹¹⁸ Douglas, "Conversations," BDC 1/COM/1/1/4.

¹¹⁹ Douglas, "Conversations," BDC 1/COM/1/1/4.

¹²⁰ Douglas, "Conversations," BDC 1/COM/1/1/4.

of Barratt's inexperience, but rather Barratt's understandable expectations and conditions of employment for appropriate and fair payment for his labour. This manoeuvring and strategy of Merchant to pay Barratt as little as possible is likely why Merchant had a reputation for being able to produce films for less than anticipated.

Douglas's representation of Merchant as trying to avoid paying crew the equity minimum and to get them to work for less is similarly echoed by Simon Callow, who appeared in six Merchant-Ivory productions, who described him as 'an intermittent payer when it came to work'.¹²¹ Douglas had himself had an experience of this unwillingness to pay. In 1973, on Merchant's request Douglas adapted Ruth Praver Jhabvala's short story *The Widow* for which he did not receive payment.¹²² Moreover, Douglas was told by Merchant that Madhur Jaffrey would play the lead in *The Widow*—to which Douglas commented 'I have never had to do this before. Judging by her photograph I'd say she wasn't right but to be fair I haven't met the creature'.¹²³ Demonstrating that Merchant had an expectation for Douglas to change and adapt his working methods to suit his preference; Merchant had worked with Madhur Jaffrey earlier in his film *Autobiography of a Princess*.

When discussing the lead up to the production in 1984, Petrie argues that it was 'Douglas's insistence on meticulous control over every detail of the production, coupled with his mistrust, and by this stage, intense dislike of Merchant, made the situation intolerable', subsequently resulting in the production being aborted.¹²⁴ However, through my analysis of the correspondence, and other sources, my interpretation is that it was not Douglas's 'meticulous control over every detail of the production' that led to the project being

¹²¹ Simon Callow, "Obituary: Ismail Merchant," *Sight & Sound*, London, Vol 15., Iss., 7, July 2005, 3.

¹²² Douglas discusses this opportunity in his correspondence with Lindsay Anderson. See Letter from Bill Douglas to Lindsay Anderson, Undated, LA/5/01/2/9/7; Letter from Bill Douglas to Lindsay Anderson, Undated, LA/5/01/2/9/8 (hereafter cited as Douglas to Anderson, LA/5/01/2/9/8); Letter from Bill Douglas to Lindsay Anderson, Undated, LA/5/01/2/9/9; Anderson to Douglas, LA/5/01/9/10, Lindsay Anderson Archives, University of Stirling.

According to Douglas, Satyajit Ray told him that he too was offered *The Widow* by Merchant and Jhabvala. See Letter from Bill Douglas to Lindsay Anderson, 16 November 1983, LA/5/01/2/9/19, Lindsay Anderson Archive, University of Stirling.

¹²³ Douglas to Anderson, LA/5/01/2/9/8.

¹²⁴ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 178.

aborted, but rather a refusal on both sides to compromise in their approach to the management of the production, coupled with Douglas's expectations of what a producer should offer him, and a dislike for Merchant's methods. Douglas commented 'I couldn't tolerate people being brutally treated in the way the producer had the designer'.¹²⁵ Clearly, Merchant's approach to achieving a film on a tight budget was to pay as little as possible, whereas Douglas admirably endeavoured to pay those fairly for their work. The irony of this situation considering the film's subject matter was not lost on Douglas who commented:

[w]hen Ismail rages it is against the Unions who "will do as I say or there will never be an Ismail Merchant film in England". This man puts James Frampton in the shade, he is our modern Frampton and the six actors I have taken on are the modern martyrs. In his rough dealings he has transported them'.¹²⁶

As I highlighted in Chapter Two, Douglas's concern for crew members to be adequately paid was similarly shown during the production *My Way Home* when Douglas negotiated fiercely with the BFI on the behalf of payment for Cottam and Rees's additional contributions of work.

Based on Douglas's account during the Merchant phase of the production, there were also issues when it came to the payment of Susie Figgis, the casting director. Figgis accepted a fee of £1,500 and agreed to be paid in two instalments with the second date fixed.¹²⁷ When the date came, however, Figgis did not receive the second payment and it was only when she enquired with Merchant that she received a post-dated cheque.¹²⁸ Douglas conveyed his dismay at Merchant's treatment of her when he stated: '[i]magine doing this to a girl who is one of the prides of the british [*sic*] film industry. Susie Figgis is a boon to any budget, she will do something for peanuts just to help a poor film on the road'.¹²⁹ Thus, the poor payment of Barrett was not an isolated incident during the production of the Merchant production of *Comrades*.

The issue of Barrett's appointment continued, and Merchant told Douglas he wanted to fire him. In response, Douglas decided to take the issue to Channel 4. Douglas explained that 'all I wanted was a say about two or three of the crew,

¹²⁵ Douglas, "Deliberate Delays," BDC 1/COM/1/4,

¹²⁶ Douglas, "Deliberate Delays," BDC 1/COM/1/4.

¹²⁷ Douglas, "Deliberate Delays," BDC 1/COM/1/4.

¹²⁸ Douglas, "Deliberate Delays," BDC 1/COM/1/4.

¹²⁹ Douglas, "Deliberate Delays," BDC 1/COM/1/4.

the designer, the editor and the composer and he could have everybody else he wanted'.¹³⁰ Here, Douglas recognises the best working practices for him. In their discussion of labour in the creative industries, Alan McKinlay and Chris Smith note:

the sector has experienced a profound shift from internal and regulated labour markets to labour as atomised independent contractors. The networks of friendship and shared experience that are a precondition of the 'fast trust' essential to the viability of the sector's project-based organisation as also mechanisms that allow labour to cope with the highly fragmented labour markets.¹³¹

Although McKinlay and Smith's discussion centres on the contemporary creative industry, their critical perspective is still relevant to this discussion of film production during the 1980s. More broadly, the film industry had increasingly experienced a shift from stable, permanent positions within a studio system, to working in temporary environments on a one-off project basis. Essentially, to use McKinlay and Smith's term, it was during this period of study that the labour market had indeed become very 'highly fragmented'.¹³² McKinlay and Smith's necessity of 'fast trust' is also made evident here; Douglas expresses his need for particular individuals to be in certain roles for him to be able to carry out his work most effectively and by appointing those who he was already familiar with, it would already have a level of trust in place.

Following Douglas's meeting with Channel 4, Douglas recalls that 'Ismail relented (helped by Channel 4) and Barrett came back and when Ismail saw the designs he was impressed.'¹³³ However, shortly after Barrett came back to the project, there was then a further six-week delay as Merchant was in New York and the London production office had not been authorised to sign cheques, leading the production to come to a standstill. In a unit list dated 3 September 1984, both Barrett and Amberston are listed as production designer/art directors which suggests that although Barrett was eventually appointed by Merchant, that Amberston was also going to be in the role. By going forward with both Amberston and Barrett, it indicates Merchant's continued lack of trust in Barrett, and perhaps, by implication, Douglas.

¹³⁰ Douglas, "Deliberate Delays," BDC 1/COM/1/4.

¹³¹ Smith and McKinlay, *Creative Labour*, 29-30.

¹³² McKinlay and Smith, 29-30.

¹³³ Douglas, "Deliberate Delays," BDC 1/COM/1/4.

Another point of contention between Merchant and Douglas was the choice of composer for the film. Merchant wanted American-born composer, Richard Robbins who he had worked with regularly on the Merchant-Ivory films.¹³⁴ In Douglas's account written in July 1984, he recalls a meeting with Merchant and Robbins, and writes:

[Robbins] looks as if he hasn't slept all night. I think back to our restaurant dinner when he says he hasn't been paid any royalties for the last three films. ... I like Robbins as a person, in fact I feel sorry for him but keep my distance. The producer has thrust Robbins on me as the composer of my film, even fetched him all the way from New York which puts me in a very delicate situation. I want Hans Wener [*sic*] Henze, at least I want to try for him, but the producer doesn't ask me what I might like and I haven't yet found the courage to stick my neck out.¹³⁵

Similarly, Robbins is listed as composer in the unit list, which suggests either a compromise on Douglas's part or that the issue had still not been resolved.¹³⁶

Throughout this pre-production stage, in an attempt to save money, Douglas was under considerable pressure from Merchant to condense the script and the shooting schedule. Merchant sent the script to his long-time collaborator Ruth Praver Jhabvala, who commented that the story did not get going until the first pay-day scene,¹³⁷ and suggested that the film start from the men being arrested.¹³⁸ Jhabvala and Douglas had a telephone call to discuss the comments she had on the script. This conversation took place shortly before principal photography was to commence, only two months prior. Included in the Working Papers is a note in which Douglas discusses her comments:

Miss Jabvala's [*sic*] criticisms caused me some confusion, not because of the extent of them but because I have had a totally opposite reaction from other quarters. Who is right and who must decide what is right? I would say the writer of the piece and a sympathetic understanding producer. I couldn't avoid the feeling that Ismail didn't like the script after all. ... It would be better left on paper than a confused mess to suit all tastes on the screen. I should not be misunderstood here for Ruth Jabvala [*sic*] is a fine

¹³⁴ Robbins wrote scores for *The Europeans* (1979), *Jane Austen in Manhattan* (1980), *Quartet* (1981) and *Heat and Dust* (1983) and would go on to work on many more Merchant-Ivory films including *A Room with a View* (1985), *Maurice* (1987), *Slaves of New York* (1989), *Mr. & Mrs. Bridge* (1990), *Howards End* (1992), *The Remains of the Day* (1993), *Jefferson in Paris* (1995).

¹³⁵ Douglas, Conversations, BDC 1/COM/1/1/4.

¹³⁶ Unit List, 3 September 1984, K74G721 F16, Film Finances.

¹³⁷ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 178.

¹³⁸ Jewell, Discussion, July 2021.

writer but I for what I am worth am a different person and the script of COMRADES is what I am.¹³⁹

Also included in the materials held at the BDCM, is Merchant's returned copy of the script with his notes.¹⁴⁰ Merchant's annotations on the script are fairly minimal and stop abruptly at the point where George is to be arrested.¹⁴¹ Petrie discusses Jhabvala and Merchant's criticisms, and argues that by failing to appreciate the crucial sequences which helped to establish the social relations in the villages, different narrative priorities are reflected.¹⁴² To receive extensive criticisms regarding the script only a short period of two months before photography was to commence would understandably provoke some doubt. It appears that Jhabvala's comments initiated concerns from Douglas whether the project might be taken from him, leading him to ask his agent if Merchant could fire him as 'he wouldn't put anything passed [*sic*] Mr Merchant'.¹⁴³

On the returned script, Merchant frequently commented on the time and season of particular scenes; querying if the scenes were to take place on the same day, and highlights any item which suggests a change in season.¹⁴⁴ For instance, he underlines the detail of 'dandelion', suggesting that this implies that the scene is set in summer.¹⁴⁵ Merchant's focus on time here is understandable, as the film's internal narrative and time structure would impact the shooting schedule and account for additional costs; each seasonal change in a script demands different requirements and may alter the film schedule if it were thought to be necessary to film at different times of year.

Throughout the time in which Merchant and Douglas were working together, Merchant had been putting pressure on Douglas to cut the script to save on costs. Arguably, Jhabvala and Merchant's dismissal of a significant part of the first half of the film shortly before filming would commence reflects his prioritisation of cost over narrative. In addition, it was Douglas who was responsible for working from the script to create a proposed shooting schedule and stated that although he had been able to reduce it from the original thirteen

¹³⁹ Bill Douglas, Note, BDC 1/COM/1/4, BDCM.

¹⁴⁰ Merchant Script, BDC 1/COM/2/2.

¹⁴¹ Merchant Script, BDC 1/COM/2/2.

¹⁴² Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 178.

¹⁴³ Letter from Bill Douglas to Tim Corrie, Undated, BDC 1/COM/1/1, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas to Corrie, BDC 1/COM/1/1).

¹⁴⁴ Merchant Script, BDC 1/COM/2/2.

¹⁴⁵ Merchant Script, BDC 1/COM/2/2.

to ten weeks, 'I think anything less would be unrealistic'.¹⁴⁶ Douglas expressed that he felt Merchant was most concerned with the shooting schedule in his correspondence with Lindsay Anderson: '[a]t the moment all I can hear are moans about cost and that I must shoot in eight weeks not ten'.¹⁴⁷ In April 1974, Merchant wrote to Korda at Film Finance and said that the film would be shot in nine and a half weeks—six in Dorset and three and a half in Australia.¹⁴⁸ Merchant had budgeted £1,791392 million. Merchant's insistence on trying to condense the time needed to film suggests he prioritised costs and logistics. Spicer et al. discuss the producer's role in detail and the importance of their 'understanding of the strengths and limitations of the personnel involved'.¹⁴⁹ Having not worked with Douglas previously and attempting to condense the script and schedule, it suggests that there was lack of understanding to Douglas's way of working like holding a shot. The impact of Merchant's approach would in fact result in a further constraining of resources and time available to those during principal photography.

Along with the time consuming process of securing finance and a producer, there was also the need to secure a completion guarantor for the project. Jewell explains that on 5 July 1984, Korda, the Managing Director of Film Finance wrote to Merchant, stating that they had agreed that Douglas would provide a detailed storyboard, but they had not heard from neither Douglas nor Merchant since.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, Korda explained:

[we have] serious reservations about the form, length and complexity of the script and inadequacy of the schedule. [...] In its present form the script is difficult, if not impossible, to relate to the schedule and it is also, in our considered opinion, far too long for the number of shooting days... In order to do a proper assessment of your project, we need a shooting script, schedule, story-board [*sic*] and a detailed budget.¹⁵¹

Jewell commented that Film Finance expressed concern regarding logistical aspects such as transportation, locations, equipment, but that they also 'implied

¹⁴⁶ Letter from Bill Douglas to Dan (Surname Unknown), 10 November 1983, BDC 1/COM/1/1, BDCM.

¹⁴⁷ Letter from Bill Douglas to Lindsay Anderson, 8 November 1983, LA/5/01/2/9/18, Lindsay Anderson Archive, University of Stirling.

¹⁴⁸ Merchant to Korda, K74G721 F16.

¹⁴⁹ Spicer, McKenna and Meir, "Introduction," 11.

¹⁵⁰ Peter Jewell, Chapter Three "Ex-Comrades," in *Long-Awaited Comrades*, BDC 1/COM/1/4, BDCM, 13 (hereafter cited as Jewell, "Ex-Comrades," BDC 1/COM/1/4).

¹⁵¹ Jewell, "Ex-Comrades," BDC 1/COM/1/4, 13.

artistic criticisms', for example, they suggested a number of places where dialogue should be added.¹⁵² Douglas's scriptwriting style was such that he sparingly used dialogue. In spite of Douglas explaining this to Merchant, requesting that he relay this stylistic detail and approach to Korda, for Film Finance, the guarantors struggled to understand how the script would translate into schedules and budgets.¹⁵³ Jewell recalls that these negotiations went on for some time, but that together, he and Douglas worked on a shooting script for Australia and whilst Douglas was carrying out a recce in Australia, Jewell worked on the Dorset section of the shooting script.¹⁵⁴

The choice of location for filming brought a number of challenges. The village was based in 'private land owned by Mr. Wilfred Wilde who leases it to the Army,' which led to difficulties in obtaining permission to film there.¹⁵⁵ Consequently, the production team had to be very precise in detailing what they intended to do before they were granted permission.¹⁵⁶ According to Douglas, 'Ismail told [him] he wanted to move the shooting from Dorset to somewhere in Ireland. I said I couldn't imagine Dorset in Ireland. Mr Merchant liked to be where he didn't have to answer to anyone'.¹⁵⁷ Although it is unclear as to when it was suggested or how it was resolved, Merchant's decision to move the production to Ireland was not carried out.

Initially, to secure the location of Tyneham from the Ministry of Defence, Douglas had written to the Brigadier at Bovington Camp, then Merchant wrote to Whitehall with a copy of the script before filming could be approved.¹⁵⁸ One of the senior staff based at Bovington was married to a friend of Merchant's and thus

¹⁵² Jewell, "Ex-Comrades," BDC 1/COM/1/4, 13. Korda's suggestions included dialogue between Young Stanfield and Brine, as well as between the Congregationalist's when they are stood on the village green.

¹⁵³ Unaddressed Note, Undated, K74G721 F16, Film Finances Archive.

¹⁵⁴ Jewell, Discussion, September 2021.

¹⁵⁵ Notes of Meeting Held on Tuesday 7 May 1985 at the Offices of Film Finances, Jilda Smith, Therese Pickard, Simon Relph and Donna Grey in attendance, K74G721 F16, Film Finances Archive (hereafter cited as Meeting, 7 May 1985, K74G721 F16).

¹⁵⁶ Special Feature: *On-Set Report*, 15 October 1985, 2 min. on *Comrades*, Dual Format DVD and Blu-ray (London: BFI, 2012).

During the production, it was claimed that they had been finding unexploded shells in the fields, so although they were encouraging locals to come watch scenes being filmed, there was a degree of reluctance due to safety concerns. Fuller "On Location," BDC 1/COM/5/1, 29.

¹⁵⁷ Douglas, "Deliberate Delays," BDC 1/COM/1/4.

¹⁵⁸ Douglas, "Deliberate Delays," BDC 1/COM/1/4.

there was a potential threat that if Merchant were to leave, then so too would the production's permission to film in the village.¹⁵⁹ Fortunately, when Merchant left the project, this did not happen; however, there were still difficulties in gaining access to the restricted site which needed to be negotiated. For example, the village was open only on select weekends between 8 am to 8 pm and over other specific periods such as Christmas.¹⁶⁰ When discussing the location of Tyneham, Jilda Smith from Film Finances stated '[t]he danger of shooting in the village was the possibility of ricochet from the firing range, so on days when the firing range is in operation, no-one may go near the village'.¹⁶¹ As such, the time available to shoot in this location would be constrained and limited.

The materials held in the Working Papers, particularly unsent materials written by Douglas in 1984 on his experience of working with Merchant convey that their relationship was coming to a climax of some sort. For instance, in an unsent letter addressed to Tim Corrie (Douglas's agent), Douglas discussed working with Merchant, stating '[i]f he has to stay then A PRODUCTION MANAGER SHOULD BE APPOINTED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE [capitalised in original]. Ismail can then get out of my sight and let us get on with it'.¹⁶² Douglas then proceeded to list qualities he would like for his production team: 'supportive, co-operative, constructive, enthusiastic!!!) Unlike impression given by "Producer" so far'.¹⁶³ Douglas's underlining of 'unlike' and putting the word 'Producer' in speech marks demonstrates Douglas's intense dismay with Merchant thus far. Here, Douglas suggests that he does not consider Merchant worthy of the title and that he feels he is unable to work with him. At the very least, Douglas feels that Merchant's physical presence on-set is not necessary.

Evidently, there were clear differences between Douglas and Merchant and their approach to the project. Merchant saw the scale of the film as being much larger, budgeting for three hundred extras when Douglas 'never wanted

¹⁵⁹ Douglas, "Deliberate Delays," BDC 1/COM/1/4.

¹⁶⁰ Bill Douglas, Handwritten Note, Undated, BDC 1/COM/1/2/2/1, BDCM. The village of Tyneham continues to have restricted access today and is only accessible during select weekends over the summer period. See "On Way Days is Tyneham Open to the Public?" accessed 16 March 2022, <http://www.tynehamopc.org.uk/visiting-tyneham/opening-times/>.

¹⁶¹ Meeting, 7 May 1985, K74G721 F16.

¹⁶² Douglas to Corrie, BDC 1/COM/1/1.

¹⁶³ Douglas to Corrie, BDC 1/COM/1/1.

more than forty'.¹⁶⁴ Similarly, the scale of the journey to Australia was another noticeable difference where, on 5 September 1984, David Hannay, the associate producer in Australia, wrote to Merchant with a budget for the ship sequence with an estimate of £20,800.¹⁶⁵ This expense may have induced concern from Merchant; Douglas recalls he received from Merchant on the same day, in which:

Ismail talks about simplyfying [*sic*] the ship wreck sequence but the way I was going to shoot it[,] it was going to be simple. ... I agree men wading in water and being shot at could be expensive but it depends on how you do it. You don't have to be in a studio. ... The scene in *My Ain Folk* where the miners are wading through water wasn't done under a mine. It was done in a loch right on top. The audience accepted what they saw.¹⁶⁶

Although Merchant was likely appointed for the fact that he was able to get films made during a time when funding was extremely scarce and indigenous production had dwindled, his methods in avoiding paying Equity and ACTT minimum rates and late payments was an off-putting factor and constraint that led a number of crew members such as Barrett and Menges to leave the production. Barrett and Menges were able to leave because 'Ismail refused to put any actor or technician under contract'; Barrett and Figg were paid on a weekly basis leaving them in a position which meant it was easy to withdraw from the project.¹⁶⁷

The Aborted Production

The shoot was scheduled to start in October 1984, but the relationship between Douglas and Merchant continued to be strained. In an unsent letter addressed to Merchant, dated 5 September 1984, Douglas expressed how he was sorry to have let those at Channel 4 down who have shown support to him, but that he felt that there had been a lack of support from Merchant and that he had expressed no enthusiasm towards the project.¹⁶⁸ Following this unsent letter, Douglas gave an ultimatum to Channel 4; on 12 September 1984 Douglas wrote to David Rose, the commissioning editor for fiction, and stated: 'I think you have

¹⁶⁴ Douglas, "Deliberate Delays," BDC 1/COM/1/4.

¹⁶⁵ Telex from David Hannay to Ismail Merchant, 5 September 1984, K74G721 F16, Film Finances Archive.

¹⁶⁶ Douglas, "Deliberate Delays," BDC 1/COM/1/4.

¹⁶⁷ Jewell, "Ex-Comrades," BDC 1/COM/1/4, 8.

¹⁶⁸ Letter from Bill Douglas to Ismail Merchant, 5 September 1984, Marked Unsent, BDC 1/COM/1/1, BDCM.

to make up your mind whether you want a Bill Douglas film or an Ismail Merchant film'.¹⁶⁹ This outward facing image that Douglas presented in the correspondence he sent to Rose has a slightly more aggressive tone and reflects the commercial value of the name being attached to a project. In contrast, his private and unsent letter is more personal, indicating a warranted attempt to place himself within a production hierarchy, like Chapter Two, however, this time it was in relation to an eminent industry figure.

In response, Isaacs wrote a letter to Douglas in which he personally conveyed his determination to make *Comrades* with Douglas. However, Isaacs said:

I want to make it clear, though, that however determined we at Channel 4 are, we cannot do it without financial partners, the NFFC and Rank. We cannot afford, and will never be able to afford, to fund the film ourselves. It is important, therefore, to keep the NFFC and Rank committed to Comrades, which they are prepared to back with Ismail Merchant as producer.¹⁷⁰

This highlights the difficulties in navigating the piecemeal financial structure of film finance, not only for Douglas but other funders as well. This also demonstrates that Isaacs's role here is one of diplomacy: he is under pressure to keep these various stakeholders happy to ensure their continued financial investment in the project as well as protect the interests of Channel 4. In a letter from Colin Leventhal, head of programme acquisition at Channel 4, to Merchant on 27 September 1984, Leventhal states that if Merchant can meet these requirements, that shooting would be able to commence in February or March.¹⁷¹ In an unsent letter to David Rose at Channel 4, however, Douglas made his level of dissatisfaction towards Merchant clear by calling him 'a demagogue'.¹⁷² Following this, on 6 November 1984 Douglas met with Tim Van Rellin, who was suggested by Merchant as a potential production manager for the project—a requirement stipulated by Channel 4 in an attempt to remedy the conflict.¹⁷³ In a

¹⁶⁹ Letter from Bill Douglas to David Rose, 12 September 1984, BDC 1/COM/1/1, BDCM.

¹⁷⁰ Letter from Jeremy Isaacs to Bill Douglas, 27 September 1984, BDC 1/COM/1/1, BDCM.

¹⁷¹ Letter from Colin Leventhal to Ismail Merchant, 27 September 1984, K74G721 F16, Film Finances Archive.

¹⁷² Letter from Bill Douglas to David Rose, October 1984, BDC 1/COM/1/1, BDCM.

¹⁷³ Letter from Bill Douglas to David Rose, 6 November 1984, BDC 1/COM/1/1, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas to Rose, 6 November 1984, BDC 1/COM/1/1).

sense, Van Rellin would be brought in to work as an intermediary between Douglas and Merchant. Douglas, however, was dissatisfied after meeting with Van Rellin, and he wrote to Rose explaining his displeasure, stating that it was due to Van Rellin's confusion due to Merchant's poor communication that led Douglas to refuse this proposed development. Douglas stated: '[Van Rellin] had been very badly briefed, not seeming to know why he was meeting me or what he would be asked to do in relation to COMRADES. I am sorry therefore my answer is still NO'.¹⁷⁴ In Douglas's account, he accuses Merchant of purposefully trying to sabotage the project for personal gain.¹⁷⁵ According to Jewell, it became known to Douglas that Merchant was paid £40,000 when the project came to an end.¹⁷⁶ Although there is no evidence in the materials that specifies Merchant received payment, it was estimated by Relph that the expended abandonment costs for the 1984 failed production was £34,327 which had not been included within the budgeted cost of the production.¹⁷⁷ Regardless of whether Merchant received a pay out to leave the project, the aborted production costs would have no doubt bothered Douglas as it would impact any future funds he had to work with.

After Merchant had left the production in November 1984, one of the film's funders, Rank, who had signed on to the project only a few months before in June 1984, pulled out.¹⁷⁸ Unfortunately there is no correspondence pertaining to their withdrawal, however, this reluctance to continue supporting the project demonstrates a loss of hope in the project's future and that funders considered it to be less viable now Merchant had withdrawn. Fortunately, in spite of the Channel's terse response when Douglas was having difficulty working with Merchant, the NFFC and Channel 4 were still committed to the project.

Simon Relph Comes to the Project

Following Merchant's withdrawal from the project, and the withdrawal of Rank, it seemed doubtful if the project would go ahead. At the beginning of 1985,

¹⁷⁴ Douglas to Rose, 6 November 1984, BDC 1/COM/1/1.

¹⁷⁵ Douglas, "Deliberate Delays," BDC 1/COM/1/4.

¹⁷⁶ Jewell, "Ex-Comrades," BDC 1/COM/1/4, 27.

¹⁷⁷ Sir John Terry review draft agreement, 20 August 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4, BDCM.

¹⁷⁸ Douglas, "Deliberate Delays".

however, Relph came on board. There are conflicting accounts by Relph as to how he came to the project. In an interview with Jill Forbes at the time, he explains:

I first read the script in September or October in 1984, when I was approached by Ismail Merchant about working *with* him. He was committed to *A Room with a View* and the start of *Comrades* was beginning to slip. Then Jeremy Isaacs rang me in December and asked if I would take it over, because Channel 4 have money in it as well as the NFFC.¹⁷⁹

In contrast, when interviewed by Spicer in 2013, twenty-eight years later, Relph explained that he had a good relationship with Rose at Channel 4 and that Rose asked him to join the project in early 1985.¹⁸⁰ There is no evidence to suggest that Relph was working with Merchant before Merchant's departure, however, both timelines suggest that the replacement of Merchant by Relph was fairly swift and ultimately due to Channel 4's involvement.

Relph's first opportunity to produce was on Warren Beatty's film, *Reds* (1981). As Spicer explains:

[the film was] a major American production film in the UK. Relph was hired as assistant director but took over as executive producer when Charles MacGuire, whom Beatty had brought with him to perform that role, returned to America early in the production'.¹⁸¹

Reds (1981) was a commercial venture starring Beatty and had a substantial budget of \$33,500,000.¹⁸² Nevertheless, it was not a clear-cut commercial project, it was a risky venture due to its three-hour-long running time and the genre of the film crossed between documentary and historical drama. When discussing why Relph agreed to produce *Comrades*, he recalls that it was both the unique quality of the script along with his interest in politics that attracted him to the project:

I was always interested in films that were fundamentally about the human condition and politics with a small 'p'. *Comrades* actually epitomises what I mean by that. It's about those characters, those individuals, but it has an enormous political dimension about what's right and wrong.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Forbes, "Dark Side," 35.

¹⁸⁰ Spicer, "Art and Craft of Producing," 240–241.

¹⁸¹ Spicer, "Art and Craft of Producing," 236–37.

¹⁸² For further details see *Reds* (dir. Warren Beatty, 1981), *The Numbers*, accessed 18 January 2022, [https://www.the-numbers.com/movie/Reds-\(1981\)#tab=summary](https://www.the-numbers.com/movie/Reds-(1981)#tab=summary).

¹⁸³ Spicer, "Art and Craft of Producing," 240–241.

After joining the project, Relph was responsible for finding a third funder. In his discussion of the two funders already committed to the project, Petrie highlights that fortunately, Channel 4 and NFFC were in a favourable position as they were not as reliant or motivated by commercial potential.¹⁸⁴ When it came to securing a third funder, Petrie argues that Relph was able to secure Curzon's support for the project in April 1985 as they were able to offer them favourable terms of recoupment for their investment.¹⁸⁵ Wingate confirmed that '[Curzon] would underwrite £600,000' of the £2.1million budget in April,¹⁸⁶ however, correspondence between Relph and Wingate evinces that negotiations of the 'favourable terms' concerning an Equity investment were still ongoing in May 1985.¹⁸⁷ Initially, an Equity investment from Curzon of £100,000 was discussed, however, Relph suggested that Wingate increase their Equity to 'the higher sum of £150,000' to which Wingate responded that it was 'a favourable recoupment position [and it] is one that I certainly would like you to pursue'.¹⁸⁸ Wingate mentions an NFFC meeting taking place on May 14 1985 that would have 'crucial significance for [Relph's] planning' and stipulated:

if NFFC fails to approve the investment on May 14th, the offer of the guarantee will be withdrawn although we will remain interested in investing in the film and in distributing it in this country. Because the offer of the guarantee constitutes an exceptional step on our part, I would like to be assured that our identity as potential guarantor will remain confidential to the Secretary and Chairman of the NFFC.¹⁸⁹

Thus, Relph had negotiated that Curzon would step in as a guarantor for the film which was a 'exceptional step' on Curzon's part evincing Relph's negotiation skills and Curzon's support for the project. Wingate stated: 'I fervently hope that your discussions with NFFC and Channel 4 will reach a satisfactory conclusion so as to enable you to get to work on what I feel will be an outstanding film'.¹⁹⁰

After taking over the role of the Producer, Relph not only had to secure an additional funder (Curzon) but had to ensure the project continued to receive the

¹⁸⁴ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 182.

¹⁸⁵ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 182.

¹⁸⁶ Letter from Roger Wingate to Simon Relph, 26 April 1985, K74G721 F16, Film Finances Archive.

¹⁸⁷ Letter from Roger Wingate to Simon Relph, 7 May 1985, K74G721 F16, Film Finances Archive (hereafter cited as Wingate to Relph, K74G721 F16).

¹⁸⁸ Wingate to Relph, K74G721 F16.

¹⁸⁹ Wingate to Relph, K74G721 F16.

¹⁹⁰ Wingate to Relph, K74G721 F16.

support that had been agreed to by Channel 4 and the NFFC. Relph approached the current funders with a breakdown of different aspects of the film, providing his own commentary.¹⁹¹ Referring to taking over the project from Merchant, he states: 'I am extremely enthusiastic about the prospect' and this fervour and support for the project continues throughout this letter.¹⁹² Unlike Merchant, Relph openly expresses his excitement towards the project.

Following the false start to production, Douglas and Relph had to regain the trust not only from both of the financial backers but the crew and staff who had already committed to the project when shooting was to commence in October 1984 under Merchant. For example, Robin Soans—who plays the film's protagonist George Loveless—had been committed to the original project and had even chosen to decline a job at the Royal Court on the premise that the project would be going ahead under Merchant.¹⁹³ Significantly, Channel 4 stipulated in their contract with Skreba Production (Relph's production company) that they would get to choose the art director.¹⁹⁴ It could be inferred that this was an attempt by Channel 4 to avoid the conflict that had taken place before as well as acknowledging that a more experienced art director was needed.

Along with the appointment of the film's art director, the script's length continued to be a point of contention with the funders and having taken over as producer it was one of Relph's first challenges to allay their concerns. In a letter to the NFFC on 11 February 1985, Relph acknowledges the length of the script to be an issue and is aware of the funders feeling that 'it should be cut in order to achieve a film within a price that could be afforded'.¹⁹⁵ Ultimately, the pressure to cut the script was because more pages meant higher production costs. Relph then goes on to state that:

[t]he script is written in a form very unlike any other that I have seen. Bill has indicated scenes in the normal way but he has also added subdivisions within scenes to indicate individual shots and I believe that this has had the affect [*sic*] of extending the number of pages.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹ Letter from Simon Relph to NFFC, 11 February 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4, BDCM (hereafter cited as Relph to NFFC, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4).

¹⁹² Relph to NFFC, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

¹⁹³ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 179.

¹⁹⁴ Letter, Leventhal to Relph, Film Finances.

¹⁹⁵ Relph to NFFC, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

¹⁹⁶ Relph to NFFC, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

In relation to script writing conventions, Petrie argues that '[m]ost screenplays tend to conform to the received idea of what a screenplay should be, in terms of narrative structure', which would enable a producer or script supervisor to calculate how long it would like take to photograph.¹⁹⁷ In this letter, Relph approximates that the film would be two hours in length but stipulates that 'we intend to do a thorough accurate timing of it'.¹⁹⁸ The use of 'we' both here and throughout the letter creates a reassuring tone for the funders and suggests that Relph and Douglas were in agreement with this process. As Pat P. Miller suggests about the process of script-timing:

[m]ost companies prefer to get a general idea of the playing time . . . of a script before the start of a photography ... With stopwatch in hand, you must emote (not just read) the written dialogue, and enact the business/action described in the script.¹⁹⁹

In light of Douglas's scriptwriting style and his avoidance of standard script-formatting, it is unsurprising that this script-timing was inaccurate. Alex Norton who would play the Lanternist commented: 'I'd never seen a script like it. It was all descriptions of surrounding and virtually no dialogue'.²⁰⁰ Ultimately, length remained a problem on *Comrades*. Indeed, the rough cut was also considered too long and running time would continue to be a point of contention throughout the post-production process, an aspect I will expand on in the following chapter.

In comparison to Merchant, there seems to be a degree of trust from Relph towards Douglas presented in his correspondence with the funders. As indicated, in the aforementioned letter, Relph presents himself and Douglas as having a collaborative working relationship and demonstrates that there is support between the two colleagues. This presentation of unity not only works to instil confidence from the investors, but also extends to Douglas.

However, Douglas and Relph's working relationship was not without their problems and in a letter dated 21 August 1985, Relph responded to a letter from Douglas and expressed how hurt he was after receiving a letter 'full of so much

¹⁹⁷ Petrie, *Creativity and Constraint*, 176.

¹⁹⁸ Relph to NFFC, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

¹⁹⁹ Pat P. Miller, *Script Supervising and Film Continuity*, Third Edition (New York and London: Focal Press, 2013), 101.

²⁰⁰ Lewis Chester, "The Tolpuddle Martyrs are Fighting on..." *News on Sunday*, 30 August 1989, 21, BDC 1/COM/5/1, BDCM.

anger, bitterness and resentment'.²⁰¹ Relph recognises that Douglas had 'a long hard road to get to this point', but that it was essential that 'Donna [Grey] and I be trusted by you'.²⁰² Relph acknowledges the amount of time Douglas had been with the project up until this point. Relph highlights how he and Douglas had been apart due to Relph's other work commitments, recognising the impact this may have had on Douglas, but he assures him that 'I am here now and I will be with you 90% of the time from now on'.²⁰³ Although there was occasionally conflict between the two men, Relph openly and directly expressed his support for Douglas, acknowledging the time that Douglas had committed to the project already.

Merchant had proposed that the Australian scenes were shot first, followed by the English scenes, and he intended that shooting would start in February/March.²⁰⁴ Relph, however, was aware that due to the seasons, it was important for the shooting to take place from September to October in England (which corresponded with Douglas's 'chosen month of September'),²⁰⁵ and the Australian shoot from late November to December 1985 during the latter's summertime.²⁰⁶ Furthermore, Relph suggested that he would like to extend Merchant's proposed schedule of six weeks in England and four in Australia to add some more time to the English part of the shoot and that he 'believe[d] it possible to do so without necessarily increasing the overall cost'.²⁰⁷ Relph then goes on to explain that he saw Merchant's scale of production as being far greater than the 'subject or Bill Douglas needs', and that he had a plan 'to have few people working over a longer period of time to be generous with limited resources'.²⁰⁸ This considered strategy regarding employment is similarly illustrated when he states that his approach would be to:

employ hungry young talent rather than go for top names . . . My point is that such a film as this simply cannot compete with the rates that are currently being paid at the moment in the industry . . . and the budget that

²⁰¹ Letter from Simon Relph to Bill Douglas, 21 August 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4, BDCM (hereafter cited as Relph to Douglas, 21 August 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4).

²⁰² Relph to Douglas, 21 August 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4. Relph is referring to Donna Grey, the Production Manager for *Comrades*.

²⁰³ Relph to Douglas, 21 August 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

²⁰⁴ Douglas, "Deliberate Delays," BDC 1/COM/1/4.

²⁰⁵ Douglas, "Deliberate Delays," BDC 1/COM/1/4.

²⁰⁶ Relph to NFFC, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

²⁰⁷ Relph to NFFC, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

²⁰⁸ Relph to NFFC, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

we should prepare will be based on the premise that we can crew the film with good talented people who will be happy to work on a different scale.²⁰⁹

By having longer-term contracts and roles for the crew members, it would make the production more affordable. This contrasts Merchant's approach, which would involve hiring largely contract key workers on a weekly basis and those who he had worked with previously. Douglas wanted to continue with the same cast that had been agreed previously; however, in his correspondence with investors, Relph highlights that this would only be 'subject to my approval'.²¹⁰ This demonstrates how Relph gives the perception to the film's investors that it was him who had the final say in the production.

This notion of giving the financiers confidence in his ability is further highlighted in his approaches to reducing cost. Petrie highlights that the relationship between directors and producers is one of constraints, but that it 'is often a positive constraint in that it restricts directorial excess'.²¹¹ Although it could be assumed by an auteurist position that the producer figure enacts constraint on the director's creativity, this would, be naïve as some producers can have a positive influence to avoid superfluous costs such as unnecessary equipment, crew, or too much time for a project, leading to indecision. With regards to the production of *Comrades*, time can be viewed as a significant aspect where Relph can be viewed as having a positive constraint. During the Merchant production, it was Douglas's responsibility to try to narrow and limit the shooting schedule which Jewell assisted him with. When it came to the production under Relph, it was Relph who took responsibility for negotiating the shooting timeframe with funders and he worked more as an intermediary force, recognising the needs of the project to have more time in Dorset and thinking strategically how to enable this. Principal photography had originally been scheduled to begin in Dorset on 1 September.²¹² However, Relph had requested that photography commence a week later on 9 September 1985 'as the holiday season would then be over and accommodation/locations easier to arrange', demonstrating his forethought of not only logistical ease because of availability, but its impact on the budget.²¹³

²⁰⁹ Relph to NFFC, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

²¹⁰ Relph to NFFC, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

²¹¹ Petrie, *Creativity and Constraint*, 177.

²¹² Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 179.

²¹³ Meeting, 7 May 1985, K74G721 F16.

The contractual agreements between Relph's company Skreba Productions and Channel 4, Curzon and NFFC illustrate how the initial hierarchy of the production was situated legally. The contractual agreement identifies a restriction that any changes of employment regarding the above-the-line crew and cast had to be approved by the investors. In light of the contentious issue of appointing the composer for the film, significantly, the contract illustrates that the music composer for the film had not yet been approved and that, similarly, '[a]ny performer who may be given feature or star billing including performers of cameo roles', also had to be approved by the investors.²¹⁴ This clause is indicative of investors' authority, that they have to be notified should there be any changes to the contributor's agreement. The changes for which they require notification are situated within the above-the-line categorisations such as the producer, director and principal artists and suggests their prioritisation of elements that have commercial potential; their priority is to see a return in their investment.

As I demonstrated in Chapter One, in relation to the definition of roles and responsibilities, the contractual agreements for a production can be particularly illuminating. The agreement between Skreba Productions, the funders NFFC, Channel 4 and Curzon, states that the producer agrees that the film will be 'first class in technical and pictorial quality and to the best of the ability of the Producer first class in dramatic and artistic quality'.²¹⁵ Douglas or the 'director' is hardly mentioned, and, at least from this document, it puts the onus on the producer figure: they are positioned as having greater creative autonomy and responsibility than the director. Within this agreement, it is also confirmed that the film would have a running time of between 120 minutes and 130 minutes (inclusive of main and end titles) and that Curzon, NFFC and Channel 4 can be present during the editing process.²¹⁶ The way in which the funders from the outset were establishing their presence during the editing stages demonstrates the level of creative control that they are capable of exercising.

Due to Douglas's limited financial circumstances, Douglas had withdrawn from Corrie's representation.²¹⁷ As such, Jewell took the position of his stand-in

²¹⁴ Sir John Terry, Review Draft Agreement, 20 August 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4, BDCM (hereafter cited as Review, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4).

²¹⁵ Review, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

²¹⁶ Review, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

²¹⁷ Letter from Bill Douglas to Tim Corrie, 18 April 1985, BDC 1/COM/1/1, BDCM.

agent. During the negotiations of Douglas's contract, Jewell stated that due to the original and personal nature Douglas as a writer-director, *Comrades*

will carry an individual stamp ... To this end, Bill sees himself retaining a fair measure of control over a wide spread of the film's elements, including editing. We would be grateful if there is some way for this to be acknowledged in his contract, to ensure that he is granted a major share in final approval of the film in its finished form.²¹⁸

Jewell goes on to say:

there have been too many instances in the history of film—including recent times—where the filmmaker's rights have been trampled upon usually in the name of commercial interests which posterity has invariably rejected.²¹⁹

Douglas agreed to the following terms: that there would be twelve weeks for filming, allowing a further thirteen weeks for editing, that the anticipated aggregate cost of the film would be £2,150,000, with a contingency of £155,859, and, as previously mentioned, the film's principal contributors would have to be agreed upon by the funders.²²⁰ The contract agreed that the commencement date of the film would be the 9 September 1985, the completion date 14 December 1985, and the delivery date 30 April 1986.²²¹ The contract includes an additional note in pen saying 'or thereabouts' by the delivery date, which at this early stage already suggests a lack of commitment to this date requested.²²²

Conclusion

By examining the pre-production stage of the film, I have demonstrated that although Douglas's reputation as being 'difficult' has led some to assume that it was he who largely caused the delay to the production, the majority of the time lost was spent trying to secure a producer and finance for the project, and this was further exacerbated by the aborted production. As funding was so scarce, filmmakers and producers had to navigate a piecemeal financial structure and to negotiate and manage multiple inputs from various stakeholders, communicating

²¹⁸ Review, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

²¹⁹ Letter from Peter Jewell to Sir John Terry, 19 August 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/4, BDCM (hereafter cited as Jewell to Terry, BDC 1/COM/3/4).

²²⁰ Agreement between Skreba Productions and Bill Douglas, 11 October 1985, BDC1/COM/3/4, BDCM.

²²¹ Draft Agreement, BDC 1/COM/3/4.

²²² Draft Agreement, BDC 1/COM/3/4.

and balancing creative intentions with the profitable intentionalities of funders, which Spicer et al. argue 'is precisely ... [the] combination of art and commerce that allows the producer, usually, to take overall charge of a production'.²²³ The pre-production stage of *Comrades* highlights the lack of stability of a film production; after Merchant left the project, Rank followed suit, and it was not until Relph was secured as producer that momentum for the production resumed. In addition, although the producer figure may often be assumed as one of negative constraint, analysis of the working relationship between Douglas and Merchant and Douglas and Relph reveals that Relph and Douglas worked well together in the context of the production team and its hierarchy; Merchant and Douglas did not.

Even during this early stage of production, my analysis demonstrates how positions shift: there was fluidity in the negotiations and decision-making processes of film production. Although there may be resistance from some individuals, a large part of this is based on what they perceived their role to be, their commercial mindset or their need to prioritise the organisation they work for. Ultimately, I have demonstrated the multiple inputs and voices during production that influence creative choices due to differing motives and priorities.

This chapter has set out the framework and terms agreed to by Douglas, Relph and the film's funders. In comparison to the *Trilogy* which was state-backed, *Comrades*, a relatively large-scale production, was largely funded by commercial sources. This made things very different in terms of securing funding and viable (commercially minded) producers.

In this chapter I have begun to uncover examples of labour that has been previously hidden or overlooked in scholarly work on the production thus far such as Jewell's work on Douglas's behalf as stand-in agent, negotiating his contractual terms in detail. The following chapter will go on to examine the notion of hidden labour in greater detail, with a particular focus on Jewell, the continuity script supervisor, Penny Eyles, the production designer, Michael Pickwood, and the editor, Mick Audsley, whilst analysing their working relationships with Douglas.

²²³ Spicer, McKenna, and Meir, "Introduction," 10.

Chapter Five

'A Lanternist and his Comrades': Working dynamics and hidden labour during the production of *Comrades*¹

It is not that the director issues instructions to everybody in sight and they then carry them out; rather, every creative member of the filmmaking team comes to *share* a vision of how the film ought to be, a vision that they may well identify with the desires of the director. They each do their part, and the parts are coherent because they were each fashioned in relation to an ideal of the whole.

Bruce Kawin, 'Authorship, Design and Execution'.²

An aspect that was repeatedly praised in press reviews and has been frequently mentioned in the scant academic work on Bill Douglas's only feature film, *Comrades*, is the figure of the itinerant Lanternist (played by Alex Norton).³ The film deploys the character of the Lanternist as a narrative device.⁴ In Douglas's notes on the part, he writes: 'same actor playing different characters/alter egos. A sort of chorus figure who binds the film together. All his characters are linked to optical entertainment'.⁵ In the Lanternist's various guises (he appears twelve times in the final film, adopting different personae—see Figure 11 on page 237),⁶

¹ This is in reference to an article Bill Douglas wrote: Bill Douglas, "A Lanternist and his Comrades," *The New Magic Lantern Journal* 5, No. 2., August 1987. It was then later used by Jewell for a talk he gave; Peter Jewell, "A Lanternist and his Comrades: representing lantern techniques in modern cinema," BDC 1/COM/3/5/1, BDCM.

² Bruce Kawin and Barry Keith Grant, "Authorship, Design and Execution," in *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 193.

³ Derek Malcolm, "Tolpuddle Triumph," *Guardian*, 27 August 1987, 11. Malcolm states that the device works 'to link both film-maker and audience with the sprawling, episode story through Alex Norton's itinerant Lanternist. He sees what we see, and his method of entertaining heralds the beginnings of cinema itself'. See Miller, "Who is the Lanternist?"

⁴ In Alex Norton, *There's Been a Life! My Autobiography*, (Scotland: Black & White Publishing, 2014), Footnote, 216, he says that Albert Finney was originally supposed to play the part of the Lanternist. Correspondence during the failed Merchant production concurs with this that he was a possibility, however, it is unclear if Finney was confirmed to play the part. For example, Bill Douglas, List of Characters, 3 August 1984, BDC 1/COM/1/3/2, BDCM shows that some actors are confirmed, but the Lanternist is not. When Relph met with Film Finances to discuss the project in 1985, he stated: 'The actor that is suggested is used for the part of the Lanternist, is Stephen Berkoff,' however, Norton was a fairly last minute appointment and there were additional script costs for the late casting of the Lanternist; Meeting, 7 May 1985, K74G721 F16.

⁵ 'Comrades' Shooting Script, BDC 1/COM/2/4, BDCM.

⁶ Thirteen were scripted, however, the character of Mr Wetham was cut. In order of appearance, they are the Lanternist, Sergeant Bell, [Mr Wetham], the Diorama

each appearance coincides with objects and visual devices, providing a history of optical entertainments: the antecedents of cinema. This 'sub-plot' or narrative thread is interwoven with the story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs who were deported to Australia as punishment for their trade union activities. The film's subtitle, which appears shortly after the title appears onscreen: '*A Lanternist's Account of the Tolpuddle Martyrs and What Became of Them*' also reinforces the notion that the Lanternist can be viewed as a self-reflexive figure for Douglas, the director. As so little is known about the Martyrs—an appealing quality to Douglas (see Chapter Four), —the subtitle provides an overt framework: that the film is essentially Douglas's account of what became of them.⁷ Douglas echoes this when he said in an interview:

I wanted the Lanternist to be the storyteller—a little like me, the film director—and since he provides visual transformation, I decided he himself, as played by Alex Norton, should go through transformations, performing tricks in different disguises. And sometimes he'd comment on the action, sometimes be part of it; sometimes be with the Martyrs, sometimes against them.⁸

In much the same way that the Lanternist has captured the attention of the critics, Douglas himself has been the focus in the academic study of the filmmaker's work. This is unsurprising in light of the historical dominance of the auteur theory in film scholarship, 'obscur[ing] the contribution of others involved in the production process' as Spicer explains.⁹ Understanding of a film's production has been approached in an extremely broad way, for example, through the overarching term 'personal vision' of the director.¹⁰ This term, 'vision', is similarly echoed in Bruce Kawin's comment at the start of this chapter, however, he argues that it comes to be *shared* by others in the filmmaking team.¹¹ Building on Kawin's argument, how then does this 'vision' come to be communicated, navigated and shared for *Comrades*, an example of where the director has traditionally been given most credit?

Showman, Usher, Wollaston, Ranger, Tramp, Captain, McCallum, Silhouettist, Mad Photographer and Witch.

⁷ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 194.

⁸ Andrew, "Releases," 16.

⁹ Spicer, "Author as Author," 89.

¹⁰ Graham Petrie, "Alternatives to Auteurs," in *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader*, ed. Barry Keith Grant (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 110.

¹¹ Kawin and Grant, "Authorship," 193.



Figure 11. The Lanternist in his various guises, *The Observer*, 30 August 1987, BDC 1/COM/5/1, BDCM.

As I have done throughout this thesis, I position Douglas as just one actor of many and provide a wide scope in my analysis of the production to uncover the labour and contribution of others involved in the production process. In his chapter on the film in *A Lanternist's Account*, Duncan Petrie briefly comments that the contributions of Peter Jewell, Gale Tattersall, and Mick Audsley to the

film, 'should not be underestimated'.¹² This chapter will expand on Petrie's comment, uncovering greater details of the labour and contribution of individuals whose labour has previously been hidden, overlooked, or 'underestimated', investigating a mixture of both above- and below-the-line labour.

The distinction between these industry terms of 'above' and 'below-the-line' has varied between scholars. Miranda J. Banks posits:

[t]he work of writers, directors, producers and celebrity actors is considered, and compensated, above the line [...] Below-the-line practitioners are considered [...] industrially and socially—as craftspeople or technicians, people who work with their hands. These practitioners hold distinct trade knowledge, much of which they have learned through apprenticeships or on the job.¹³

In slight contrast to Banks, Andrew Dawson and Sean Holmes provide the following definition:

the term 'above-the-line' is applied to workers who are able to exercise a degree of creative control over the production process (writers, directors, editors, cinematographers and leading actors, for example) differentiating them from 'below-the-line' workers, a large and amorphous group that might include technical specialists of one kind or another, craft workers, ancillary staff and supporting actors.¹⁴

Banks, Dawson and Holmes each categorise below-the-line labour as craftspeople and technicians, while cinematographers and editors are often rather ambiguously placed somewhere in between. Although Dawson and Holmes consider cinematographers and editors to exercise a degree of creative control, Banks does not include these workers within her above-the-line categorisation. Nonetheless, it is apparent in both definitions that these terms connote a barrier, a line of separation that is supposedly based on autonomy because of influence, creative input, or other ways of determining the value of labour, such as a fee. In Timothy Havens and Amanda D. Lotz's discussion of Mayer's work, they state 'that the distinction between above-the-line and below-the-line workers is quite blurry and that we risk buying into a self-serving industry

¹² Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 189.

¹³ Miranda J. Banks, "Gender Below-the-Line: Defining Feminist Production," in *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*, eds., Vicki Mayer, Miranda Banks, and John Thornton Caldwell (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 89.

¹⁴ Andrew Dawson and Sean Holmes, "New Perspectives on Working in the Global Film and Television Industries," in *Working in the Global Film and Television Industries: Creativity, Systems, Space, Patronage*, eds., Andrew Dawson and Sean Holmes, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), 3.

distinction if we insist too much on distinguishing between jobs that are creative and those that are not'.¹⁵ I agree with Mayer regarding the risks of these distinctions and, as such, do not intend to use these categories as defining roles that contributed to creative choice and input. Rather, I employ the terminology in the same way in which the film's budget as a document intends to differentiate between variable and fixed costs. The above- and below-the-line costs in the financial statements for *Comrades*' budget are categorised within the following divisions. The above-the-line classification includes story and script; producer fees; director fees and principal artistes.¹⁶ The below-the-line costs includes such payments as: production unit salaries; art department salaries; artists (cast other than principals, stand-ins, doubles, stuntmen, and crowd); musical direction; costumes and wigs; sets and models labour costs; publicity salaries and expenses and other expenses ranging from equipment and power to special effects and location facilities.¹⁷

The materials and sources I have drawn upon are diverse and comprise documents held at the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum (BDCM) such as scripts, call sheets, editing notes, production designs, script supervisor's notes, photographs, correspondence, and contracts relating to the film. I have also examined and refer to materials in the Simon Relph Collection, part of the BFI Special Collections, and previously unseen documents such as Daily Progress Reports, budgetary records, and correspondence at the Film Finances Archive. Through close inspection and analysis of each of the specific roles, this chapter reanimates traces of work of specific individuals during the production. In so doing, this chapter illustrates a different representation of the landscape of activity during the production of *Comrades* presented in scholarly work produced thus far, allowing for greater understanding of the various roles and challenges during the production at various tiers of the production hierarchy. Instead of focusing on a top-down model of industrial hierarchy and the image that is often outwardly presented by the popular press in interviews, on-set reports and features, this chapter examines a wider range of input through a micro-level evaluation of

¹⁵ Timothy Havens and Amanda D. Lotz, *Understanding Media Industries*, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 155.

¹⁶ Statement of Production Costs: *Comrades*, 22 November 1985, Box 2 of 5, Production File and Budgets Simon Relph Collection, BFI Special Collections (hereafter cited as Statement, 22 November 1985, Simon Relph Collection).

¹⁷ Statement, 22 November 1985, Simon Relph Collection.

granular interactions, work processes and their contribution. This chapter examines the interactions that take place between different types of working documents as well as the different evidence that these documents can reveal. By approaching the study of the production holistically, I will be able to trace varied levels of agency. In the role of historian, I am similarly in a position to provide a commentary or narrative based on my own selection of sources found in the archives. Therefore, I acknowledge that this is just one alternative form of representation of work, labour, and contribution. However, my approach provides a more comprehensive alternative to auteurist discourse typically in favour of hearing from the higher tiers of the industrial hierarchies.

The chapter begins with a series of case studies providing background on four contributors to the film: Penny Eyles, the script supervisor; Peter Jewell, the script editor; Michael Pickwood, the production designer and Mick Audsley, the editor. As I mentioned earlier, I have also carried out a series of interviews with Eyles, Audsley and Jewell, which will be referred to here when appropriate. I will then move on to examine some of the main challenges and difficulties that there were during the Dorset and Australia shoots. This will set the scene of what the conditions of the project were and the schedule the cast and crew were working to. I will then carry out a series of micro-level sequence analyses, tracking the aforementioned workers' labour and agency at a more granular level to explore how Douglas, was sometimes with his comrades, sometimes against them.

To best achieve this reconstruction of labour, I have selected two scenes and offer a close analysis of relevant archival materials, investigating the contribution, labour, and expertise of these workers. As the figure of the Lanternist is such a key element to the film's narrative and works as a metaphor for Douglas's role as storyteller, this has influenced my choice to examine selected scenes where the Lanternist/Norton appears. There are two scenes which are especially pertinent as they each saw an intervention of a different kind during the final stages of post-production. Firstly, the sequence with Mr and Mrs Wetham in the print shop in which Mrs Wetham (played by Barbara Windsor) and Mr Wetham (Norton, who was cut from the final film) carry out a comedic sketch. In Douglas's notes, Mr Wetham is described as a 'cadaverous figure in black, like a Dickensian undertaker', and had he appeared in the final film, would have been alongside the *trompe l'oeil* picture in the window of the print shop and the

zogroscope.¹⁸ Secondly, the McCallum sequence in which Norton ‘plays his most ferocious character’, the sadistic guard of the chain gang.¹⁹ This scene appears in the second half of the film in Australia and alongside McCallum’s appearance, his sentry-box which becomes, in effect, a camera obscura. Douglas describes the box as follows: ‘[w]ooden sentry-box on wheels has a knot-hole in door through which when sun is in the right position, an upside down image is thrown on light-coloured wall at back. To be optically effected’.²⁰ This scene became a point of contention with the censors during post-production due to McCallum’s violent treatment and carnal relations with the dog. The choice behind these specific sequences was governed by pragmatic reasons; these scenes, and the corresponding archival materials available allow for the broadest reflection of labour and creative input. By examining these scenes in particular, this chapter will not only analyse contributions from workers and their involvement in helping a scene come into being, but also consider additional factors that impacted creative choice, and subsequently, the final film that we see today. Finally, there will be further examination of the post-production and editing of the film in which there was a greater level of input of the funders and Douglas’s agency was arguably limited.

Essentially, then, I ask what these archival materials reveal about hidden labour, working dynamics and creative autonomy. I will investigate the labour and varied agency of these workers at a micro-level, offering a greater understanding of the working environment, the value and identity placed on particular workers and the community created. Ultimately, this chapter provides an alternative history of the production and craft of filming *Comrades* from those whose work may otherwise be hidden.

Penny Eyles, Script Supervisor on *Comrades*

Before examining Eyles’s labour and agency during the production of *Comrades* it is first pertinent to discuss the role of the script supervisor in greater detail. Essentially, the script supervisor is there to ensure that there is continuity

¹⁸ Letter from Bill Douglas to Donna Grey, 29 July 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas to Grey, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4).

¹⁹ Douglas, “A Lanternist and his Comrades,” 2.

²⁰ Douglas to Grey, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

between screen direction, action, eye lines, performance continuity, action and dialogue matching, costume, props and so on. This is achieved through very close observation and detailed note making. In her work on 'The Continuity Girl', Melanie Williams argues that '[c]ontinuity is a job that hinges on invisibility, noticed only if it is not done properly via continuity errors which render visible the processes of film-making that should ordinarily be invisible'.²¹ By its very nature, then, this is a role that is considered successful only if their labour has gone unnoticed.

Eyles began her career as a secretary, then moved to film as a producer's assistant at the BBC, working her way up to script supervisor. Eyles's first role as script supervisor was on *Poor Cow* (Ken Loach, 1967), and she has gone on to work with many other notable British filmmakers such as Stephen Frears, Sally Potter, Terry Gilliam, and Terry Jones. Before joining the *Comrades* production, Eyles had worked on twenty feature films as a script supervisor. As such, she was one of the most experienced crew members on the set of *Comrades*. In Williams's work on the role, she discusses the 'deeply gendered' and critical neglect of the role.²² Furthermore, Williams explains:

[c]ontinuity was an area of film labour overwhelmingly occupied by women, to the extent that its traditional nomenclature was feminised as 'Continuity Girl' or 'Script Girl', later evolving into the more gender-neutral 'Continuity Supervisor' or 'Script Supervisor', the latter used more often in the US context.²³

There are discrepancies in how Eyles is referred to in the materials. For example, in the industry magazine *Stills* from November 1985, there is an image (see Figure 12 on page 243) on-set from *Comrades* during the shooting of Dorchester high street. The caption that appears alongside Figure 12 lists Eyles as the 'continuity girl'. I argue that 'girl' negates her expertise and knowledge. The credits for the film refer to as script supervisor which is how I will refer to her as this is most appropriate in recognising her role.

²¹ Melanie Williams, "The Continuity Girl: Ice in the Middle of Fire," *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 10, no. 3 (2013): 608, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jbctv.2013.0160>.

²² Williams, "Continuity Girl," 604.

²³ Williams, "Continuity Girl," 604.

Men o' Dorset: (from left) Douglas, Relph, Robin Soans as martyr George, first assistant Redmond Morris — and continuity girl Penny Eyles (photo: David Appleby).



strange way, "I can't help admiring him [George Loveless, the Martyrs' leader]. Even when all was lost, he had the uncanniest look in his eye, as if somehow he had won." So that's my sympathy factor.'

Alex Norton meanwhile has 14 roles, all bizarre spokesmen commenting on the action. One of these is the Irish Sergeant Bell, a one-legged relic of the Napoleonic Wars, who has a monkey (with little regard for the sound recordist) on his shoulder and a penny peepshow. He's come, along with a gypsy fiddler, a fire-eater, a juggler and an itinerant sailor, to entertain the villagers at the harvest festival dance on the green. The peepshow attracts the attention of the vicar — Freddie Jones in black gaiters and drainpipe hat — who pays his coin and is shocked by the image of the naked Adam and Eve, though not so shocked that he doesn't sneak a second look. As he marches off, cinematographer Gale Tattersall

Figure 12. Graham Fuller, 'On Location: Comrades,' Stills, November 1985, 29.

Typically, a script supervisor's work on a film production starts a few weeks prior to principal photography because before a production starts, a script supervisor needs to be very familiar with the script. During this time, they are responsible for breaking down the script and making note of and highlighting any continuities and changes in order to make the final film work coherently and consistently. It is unclear from the materials exactly when Eyles came to *Comrades*, however, what is evident is that Eyles discussed the breakdown with Jewell in advance of principal photography commencing. Jewell wrote to her at the beginning of September 1985, and noted that a breakdown had been created by Douglas, but commented that: '[i]t moreorless [*sic*] tallies with your own ideas but if not I should stick to what you've got!'²⁴ Jewell gave her permission to go ahead (which is notable in terms of his agency), and acknowledges her expertise. Although there is a crossover or repetition of labour by Eyles which on the surface

²⁴ Note from Peter Jewell to Penny Eyles, 5 September 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/1, BDCM.

level might suggest a lack of trust or agency, I argue that this is simply a wholly appropriate system of double-checking and conferring between workers, particularly as continuity and script supervision had been carried out rather haphazardly during the *Trilogy*.

In the process of breaking down the script, a script supervisor must have an in-depth encyclopaedic knowledge of the story and the narrative's timeline, such as if the film is set over a period of days or years. For *Comrades*, the film is set in 1834, but the men are deported to Australia and return to Britain four years later after tremendous support from the British public led to the men being released. The film is set across various seasons as well as two vastly different geographical locations: rural Dorset and the arid Australian outback. During both the breakdown process as well as principal photography, Eyles had to be attentive to the timing details. This aspect alone would affect everything: the locations, the lighting, the costume, even the tans the actors had on their skins. Eyles's contribution here is made evident in ensuring aspects such as costume and location is continuous and coherent to the story's internal timeline, whilst also being responsible for noting and recording the times of the daily shoot. In relation to the figure of the Lanternist, Eyles became responsible for tracking this figure of a storyteller in his various guises who was embedded in the larger narrative of the Tolpuddle Martyrs. In so doing, Eyles kept track of this interwoven narrative of the Martyrs and the history of pre-cinematic moving imagery, as well as monitoring the effect of the story's timeline on the landscape, lighting, clothing, the additional daily times of the production and work that had been completed each day.

In film production, a script supervisor will typically work in isolation with no assistants. Eyles commented in an interview: 'I'm pretty consistently on set. My job is very concentrated, and I work in total isolation, although everyone tries to keep everyone else out of trouble'.²⁵ The role of the script supervisor is one of autonomy as they are typically a department of one, unless it is a large-scale production like *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), which had first-unit script supervisor, Barbara Cole, continuity assistant, Josie Fulford, and a second-unit script

²⁵ Ann McFerran, "A Life in the Day of Penny Eyles," *The Sunday Times Magazine*, 1995, accessed 29 June 2019, <http://www.scriptsupervisors.co.uk/page9.htm>.

supervisor, Lee Turner.²⁶ For an independent production like *Comrades*, there was only the budget for one script supervisor and with this isolation comes added pressure in that they are expected to be on set at all times and have no replacement. Eyles commented: 'I never get a lunch break, and around 7 you begin to flag, particularly when you're filming until 10pm. But, being freelance, you're only as good as your last job, so you have to keep up the pace'.²⁷ This phrase, 'you're only as good as your last job' is a common idiom used by film crew workers when discussing their work, echoing Blair's 2001 article examining labour in the British film industry.²⁸ This pressure that Eyles conveys, demonstrates Caldwell's notion of the: *labour nomadic system*, the idea that 'even after a technical worker has obtained employment and established credentials and competency, they still must hustle for every new production they hope to work on'.²⁹ Throughout this thesis, I have illustrated the importance Douglas placed on his own reputation and his awareness of its potential impact on securing future work. Eyles's comment demonstrates that this same value placed on reputation is evidently just as important, not only to those who are above-the-line such as Douglas, but also those who are technical staff and below-the-line crew.

Although the script supervisor typically constitutes a department of one, their day to day work involves working closely with a wide range of people and departments and it is a very multifaceted role. For instance, they may work with the actors by helping cue their lines or the wardrobe department to ensure that actors are dressed correctly for a scene; likewise, the makeup and hairdressing departments; the property departments; the sound department; cinematography and editing. Eyles commented in an interview that her role was to be 'the second pair of eyes for everyone involved'.³⁰ Eyles becomes something of a buffer for the director and a spokesperson for other crew members. For example, when interviewed, Eyles said: 'people will always come to you as a script supervisor

²⁶ "Lawrence of Arabia: Full Cast & Crew", *IMDb*, accessed 28 March 2022, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0056172/fullcredits/?ref_=tt_cl_sm.

²⁷ McFerran, "Life in the Day".

²⁸ Blair, "Last Job," 149–169.

²⁹ Caldwell, *Production Culture*, 113.

³⁰ "Queen Anne's Alumna Speaks to Sixth Form about Her Career as a Script Supervisor," Queen Anne's School, accessed 27 July 2019, <https://www.qas.org.uk/latest-news/queen-annes-alumna-speaks-to-sixth-form-about-her-career-as-a-script-supervisor/>.

rather than go to the director if they're not sure about something and I'll say "yes, go and see them" or I'll go and see them, so you act as a sort of buffer zone to everybody'.³¹ By acting as the director's shield, this required a level of emotional resilience, reinforcing Williams's point regarding gendered production roles.



Figure 13. *On-Set Photograph, 1985, Nick Keen, BDC 1/COM/3/3, BDCM.*

On the set, the script supervisor is responsible for noting down everything that is contained within the single frame. The script supervisor has to tread a fine line between disruptive interference and effective intervention, using their intuition as to whether they should intercede either with other crew members, actors, or the director. When I interviewed Eyles in 2020, she said:

if I have to go talk to an actor about notes, I talk as little as possible to them unless they want help and it could be something about their lines, but I'll hardly even have eye contact with them because I don't want to break their concentration with the camera and their particular part.³²

This primary research illustrates how the script supervisor needs to weigh up whether interrupting is essential as any delays to the production obviously costs time and money, however, fixing any continuity errors during post-production could cost even more time and money. Thus, the script supervisor must use their instincts to decide whether it is worth interrupting. By the very nature of these ephemeral interactions, it is hard to illustrate where and when these sorts of

³¹ Penny Eyles, Interview with Author, 5 March 2020.

³² Eyles, Interview, 5 March 2020.

interactions took place as it would have been a considered decision made by Eyles to intervene and these decisions would not have been recorded in her materials, rather, it would have been a verbal communication based on an error she would have noticed.

From looking at Nick Keen's on-set photograph (Figure 13 on the previous page), one's eye is immediately drawn to those stood by the camera, to Douglas and Gale Tattersall (the cinematographer). Eyles is the figure in the long-green jacket and is shown to be holding one of her four continuity script books for the project.³³ This image vividly illustrates how Eyles would need to be agile, frequently moving around different people during filming. In her interview as part of the BECTU Oral Histories project, she said, 'I think some people sit. I don't. I mean, I sit when I'm doing paperwork, but I'm always ... If I started to sit, I would fall asleep... well, I've had to sit occasionally, and squat and look between people's legs'.³⁴ Eyles's comment here on needing to sleep is also indicative of overworking, indeed, for Eyles, she would need to be on-set, long hours. This aspect of overworking is a common feature in film productions. In his article on post-Fordist culture, Douglas Ezzy states that '[e]mployees often arrive before sunrise (5.30 or 6.00am) and work late into the night and on weekends' and that within this framework there is a 'pseudo family of the work team'.³⁵

Eyles's responsibilities would require her to move around more than might be initially expected when one thinks of the secretarial roots of the role. Indeed, she would be responsible for noting shots, subtle movements and eyelines in detail which may require her to be beside the camera, but she was also responsible for noting costumes and props which she photographed using a polaroid camera. Eyles's Polaroids combined with the level of detail in her notes, illustrate the close proximity she needed to have with the actors to accurately record their costume and prop details. Further to this, the weather conditions during the shoot, combined with long hours, indicate the conditions of endurance.

³³ All four books are held as part of Douglas' Working Papers at the BDCM; see Eyles, Continuity Books One to Four, BDC 1/COM/3/1,

³⁴ Penny Eyles, "Women's Work Oral Histories: Penny Eyles," interview by Melanie Bell, accessed 24 July 2019, http://bufvc.ac.uk/womenswork/oral-histories/womens-work-oral-histories?interview=Penny_Eyles.

³⁵ Douglas Ezzy, "A Simulacrum of Workplace Community: Individualism and Engineered Culture," *Sociology* 35, 3 (2001): 634, 635.

Eyles's waterproof and almost full-length coat reflects the practical necessity to dress to withstand the changeable weather and to continue working effectively.

With regards to her work processes on-set, it was Eyles's practice to take Polaroids of anything that required continuity and these images helped support her notes and provided a reference point for other crew members from different departments. Eyles's fastidious notes include details of the costumes, props, weather, and lighting, the movement and screen direction of the actor, the camera filters used and the shot's angle. Along with the Polaroids that she took, she often drew a little thumbnail sketch alongside her notes which included arrows noting the eyeline direction of the actors. These photos, supported by her drawings, would not only allow for cross-referencing, but would provide a visual cue to allow for whole setups to be recreated if needed for pick-ups or reshoots. Shooting out of sequence is typical during a film production as a way to save money. The script supervisor's work allows for the film to look like it was shot in real time, in shot and scene order as though there was continuous action. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Douglas had only ever shot out of sequence during *My Way Home* in Egypt out of necessity, so he was not especially experienced in this way of shooting.

Along with her photographs as a method of recording, Eyles underlined anything in the script which required a prop.³⁶ Eyles then listed on the following page all objects to be used within that corresponding scene. By doing this, Eyles created a reference guide of props needed, which communicated information very quickly, alerting both her and potentially the production manager and property department what was required to be on set for a specific scene, working like a checklist of necessities. Although the property department and other respective departments had their own working documents and way of noting the specific requirements of a scene, Eyles, as the script supervisor, was responsible for recording and recognising *all* potential areas to ensure that continuity was maintained throughout. In Pat P. Miller's comprehensive overview of the role, she highlights that frequently, it is the script supervisor's script that is the only current and completely up to date script.³⁷ As such, it can be an extremely useful document for the director and other crew members who may not remember what has been shot up until that point.

³⁶ Eyles, Books One to Four, BDC 1/COM/3/1.

³⁷ Miller, *Script Supervising*, 57.

Miller suggests that it is the responsibility of the script supervisor to complete the Daily Progress Reports (DPRs) which are then given to the assistant director who in turn gives them to the Production Office.³⁸ For *Comrades*, the DPRs were compiled using information recorded by Eyles, however, these were completed and signed by Donna Grey, the production manager.³⁹ In this sense, this makes Eyles's role even more invisible as it is based on the information that she has recorded throughout the day's shooting, however, on record, this work is signed off by Grey. For a historian, these documents are very useful in the understanding of everyday work carried out on-set as they note the times, slate numbers, set ups, the film footage stocks and additional notes or comments explaining any incidents or delays.

As mentioned, a script supervisor's role entails working with most departments and one of the most important is with the editor. During the production of *Comrades*, it was Eyles's routine practice to send a marked-up script (MUS) to Audsley as a guide for him during the editing process.⁴⁰ Eyles had worked with Audsley before on the TV movies *Walter* (1982) *Walter and June* (1983) and then on *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), all of which were directed by Stephen Frears.⁴¹ Despite the script supervisor being involved in the production and the editor's role being more heavily involved in post-production, the working relationship between the script supervisor and editor is much closer than one might initially expect. The script supervisors' detailed notes are referred to in the industry as 'a bible' as it serves as a comprehensive guidebook, advising how all the disparate pieces of film are intended to go together; highlighting any deviations from the final script, they can also work as a guide on the director's preferred shots as suggested by Eyles's circling of specific take numbers.⁴² As such, their role, and the materials that they produce works as a communication device and liaison between the director and the editor. In a sense, then, Eyles

³⁸ Miller, *Script Supervising*, 107.

³⁹ Daily Progress Reports, Box 12, Simon Relph Collection, BFI Berkhamsted.

⁴⁰ Eyles, Interview 5 March 2020.

⁴¹ *Walter* (Stephen Frears, 1982) was the first film to be broadcast on the first night of Channel 4 going live on 2 November 1982. Due to Eyles' longstanding working relationship with Frears, Eyles and Audsley have worked together several times since *Comrades* and in the BECTU interview she states how she would seek advice from Audsley when they have worked on different productions. Eyles, "Women's Work" interview by Melanie Bell, accessed 24 July 2019, http://bufvc.ac.uk/womenswork/oral-histories/womens-work-oral-histories?interview=Penny_Eyles.

⁴² Miller, *Script Supervising*, 9.

can be thought of as Audsley's representative on set whilst he was in the cutting room as shooting continued, for it is her continuity sheets which will be able to assist him in matching cuts and assembling the film, greatly saving time and money as a result.

A script supervisor's notes can be invaluable if reshoots are needed and Eyles's continuity books were utilised even when she was not on set. For example, due to previous work commitments, she was unable to be present for the Winter/Spring shoot scheduled in 1986 to film scenes that required snow, as well as scenes that were unable to be completed during the proposed September to November 1985 Dorset shoot. For these final scenes to be completed, Eyles sent a small collection of notes. One of the scenes that were not completed during the first scheduled shoot was that in which Betsy Loveless reads George Loveless's letter which was to be filmed at Plymouth Docks in April 1986 (scene 118); Eyles's page is shown on the following page (Figure 14). Eyles writes that: 'I think the letter takes about 60 secs to read[.] There is no continuity except what Betsy was wearing on her way to Plymouth—picture attached'.⁴³ Eyles communicated that the costume that Betsy Loveless wore needed to be the same as what Staunton was wearing in scene 115 (marked in pencil on the photograph) and provides a polaroid as a reference.⁴⁴ Unlike her handwritten notes which she produced during the principal photography, the notes for the reshoots were typed up and prepared specifically for the Winter/Nov shoot. Eyles's lack of, or rather sporadic use of punctuation throughout both her typed notes and handwritten notes highlights the urgency, and that this information was intended to be communicated very quickly. Her communication was rapid and intensive during the production as well as the materials she provided for the Winter/Nov shoot. Eyles's written style is indicative of her important role in the production and the linking together of roles through the materials she created to communicate effectively with one another. The materials suggest a level of familiarity and shared forms of communication with those who these notes were intended for.

⁴³ Penny Eyles, Plastic Folder of Notes, 5 September 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/1, BDCM (hereafter cited as Eyles, Notes).

⁴⁴ Eyles, Notes.

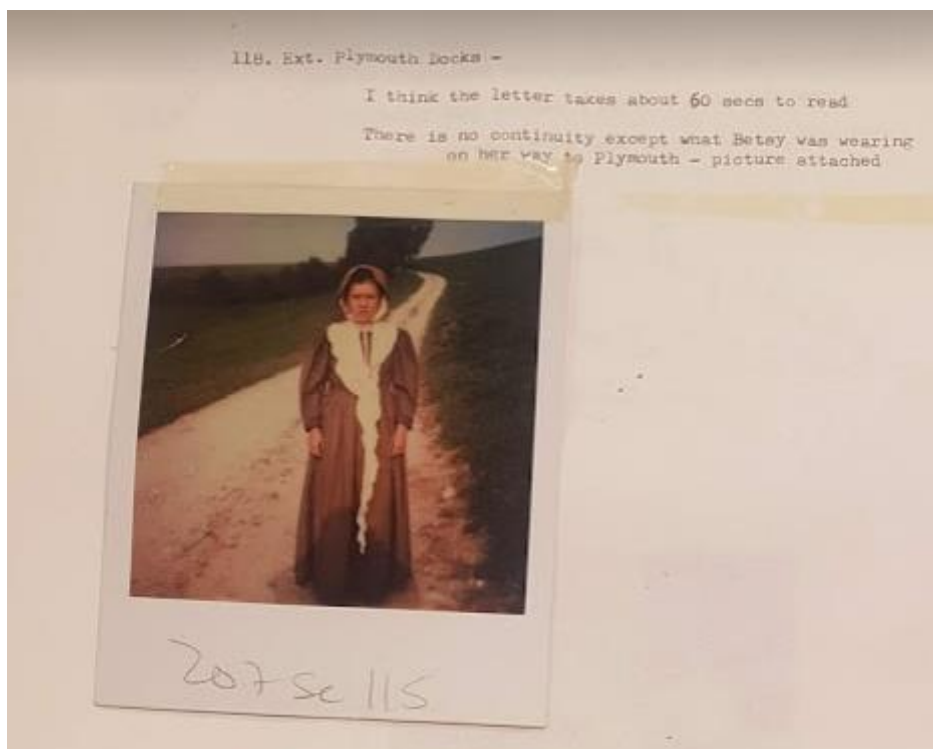


Figure 14. Penny Eyles' Continuity Notes, BDC 1/COM/3/1, BDCM.

Peter Jewell, Script Editor and More

Similar to Eyles, Peter Jewell's extent of labour and contribution during the production of *Comrades* has been mostly overlooked. Jewell is credited as the film's script editor, a role that would be accounted for in the above-the-line costs in the film's financial records.⁴⁵ However, closer investigation of the materials evidence that Jewell had a much broader role during the film's production than has been previously recognised in press articles and critical accounts of Douglas's work. As I explained in the previous chapter, Jewell took the role as a stand-in agent for Douglas, negotiating contractual stipulations on his behalf in considerable detail with Sir John Terry, a legal advisor for Skreba Productions, and this continued throughout the production.⁴⁶ In a letter dated 19 August 1985, Jewell writes:

⁴⁵ *Comrades* Production Budget, English, Final, Box 2, Simon Relph Collection, BFI Special Collections.

⁴⁶ Sir John Terry was knighted in 1976 for his services to the British Film Industry after managing the NFFC for twenty years, supporting filmmakers including Karel Reisz, Ken Loach, Alan Parker, Ridley Scott. He was a founding father of the National Film School,

I feel he needs a professional advisor, but for the time being I am cast in this unlikely (and unpaid) role. Since I am only a friend and a complete novice in these affairs, please excuse me if some of my queries in regard to this draft Contract are simplistic.⁴⁷

Jewell then proceeded to thoroughly question and scrutinise different elements of the contract, giving particular attention to the editing stage of the film, an aspect I will return to later in this chapter.

Before examining Jewell's approach to the work and his contribution to the production in detail, it is imperative to highlight that Jewell is a unique worker as, unlike the other production team members, he was not only an amateur in filmmaking, but his contribution was based around his close and longstanding friendship with Douglas. As previously noted, the character of Robert in *My Way Home* (1978) is based on Jewell. Jewell's friendship with Douglas helps to explain the level of his willingness to often carry out labour unpaid. As well as working as script editor and stand-in agent, Jewell had even been the person who had originally suggested and encouraged that Douglas make a film about the martyrs during a trip they took to Dorchester. As Douglas recalled during an interview following the film's release:

I have this friend—mentor really—whom I portrayed in the third part of the trilogy. He came from a totally different background to me; he was educated and generous enough to hand on some of that education to me. He has often said, "If you go places, don't walk through them like a dead man." So when we were in Dorchester one day, he *had* to take me into the museum, where there were a few items on display about the Martyrs. And when he suggested that I do a film about them, and I asked who they were, he gave me to understand that only the barest details are actually known about their lives, and that I would have to do a lot of work on the story myself. So I said, "Look, I'm not good at research—you do it for me and tell me only what I need to know".⁴⁸

Douglas's use of the word 'mentor' to refer to Jewell indicates he looks up to him and considers him to have a certain air of expertise in comparison to himself, similarly, this is demonstrated in the way Jamie looks up to Robert in *My Way Home*. When interviewed, Douglas publicly acknowledged that it was because of Jewell that he chose to make a film about the martyrs.

London in 1970. See Simon Relph, "Obituary: Sir John Terry," *Independent*, 21 April 1995, accessed 21 July 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-sir-john-terry-1616572.html>.

⁴⁷ Jewell to Terry, BDC 1/COM/3/4.

⁴⁸ Andrew, "Releases," 15–17.

During the script writing process, Douglas was struggling to overcome the fear of writing a script that would be filmed in colour.⁴⁹ According to Jewell, he suggested that Douglas could try approaching this episodically, proposing that six colours be used to signify different episodes in Australia; three primary (red, yellow, and blue) and three secondary colours (orange, green and mauve).⁵⁰ Both the script and storyboards show that Douglas took on Jewell's suggestion and initially colour-coded George Loveless's 'episode' as blue, Brine as red, Old Stanfield as yellow and Young Stanfield as orange.⁵¹ Douglas later changed his mind after Jewell deemed this to be 'restrictive'.⁵² Douglas clearly respected and trusted his friend's opinion. However, there are still remnants of this idea in the final film. For example, during the Brine and the chain gang scene, there is the intense red of the blood splattered on the sand, Young Stanfield is shown in the orange grove, and Mrs Carlyle divulges that her name is Violet.

Douglas suggested that Jewell research the Martyrs; Jewell worked as the film's researcher throughout the writing stage, and this also continued during principal photography. Jewell extensively researched the sailor's hornpipe, card game, farmworkers, union banners, midwifery, optical effects, and of course, the Tolpuddle Martyrs.⁵³ In Jewell's correspondence to Relph and Grey, he provided details of further research he had carried out, and wrote short essays on the subjects he investigated.⁵⁴ In these short papers, he condensed information and thought about what would be most relevant and helpful towards the filmmaking process and what was most relevant to the film's script. For example, Jewell provided helpful guidelines and comments on the card game that is played in the parlour by Frampton and his peers, and Jewell provides directions with regards to the movement and how the game would have been played.⁵⁵ When Douglas was writing the script and questions would arise, Douglas would send a list of his queries to Jewell to answer and investigate. One document shows that Douglas had a list of twenty-three questions that he gave to Jewell in one sitting.⁵⁶ What

⁴⁹ Peter Jewell, In Discussion with Author, 8 June 2019.

⁵⁰ Jewell, Discussion, 8 June 2019.

⁵¹ Bill Douglas, *Comrades* Storyboards, BDC 1/COM/1/4, BDCM.

⁵² Jewell, Discussion, 8 June 2019.

⁵³ Historical Research, BDC 1/COM/1/2/1/3, BDCM.

⁵⁴ Historical Research, BDC 1/COM/1/2/1/3, BDCM.

⁵⁵ Letter from Peter Jewell to Simon Relph and Donna Grey, 11 September 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4, BDCM (hereafter cited as Jewell to Relph, Grey, 11 September 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4).

⁵⁶ Bill Douglas, List of Twenty-Three Questions, BDC 1/COM/2/5, BDCM.

this demonstrates is that there was in fact a considerable degree of concern regarding authenticity from Douglas, and that this was shared between them, it was not always initiated by Jewell in his role as script editor and researcher.

Jewell expressed his enjoyment of doing the research for the film and stated that Relph could pay him in kind, as he and Douglas would like to have the optical props that were made for the film.⁵⁷ Jewell expressed that he was 'always willing to help if I can unpaid', however, he added how he 'could do with the cash this month'.⁵⁸ This demonstrates his willingness to accept the props as his payment, even though, as he communicates, the monetary payment was needed and that really having the props as well as the fee was his preferred option. The way in which Jewell was willing to accept the optical props that had been made specifically for the film as payment is reflective of his and Douglas's shared interest in pre-cinema history. Together, they collected one of the largest collections of moving image related ephemera, which is housed at the BDCM, and it was this shared interest that led to the character of the Lanternist and interwoven narrative to be realised.

It is difficult to track the exact conception of the Lanternist figure, however, what is evident from the materials is that by the second script draft which was written in May 1980, the cast list included ten instances of the Lanternist as a recurring character.⁵⁹ Jewell suggests that '[Douglas] wrote at least five drafts, and then invited me to act as his script editor. I incorporated the best of all his drafts and produced a fair copy of *Comrades* early in 1980'.⁶⁰ However, scripts labelled first and second draft 1980 contain annotations by Jewell, again revealing his foundational influence on the project.⁶¹ Furthermore, the shooting scripts dated 1984 created for the production under Merchant include notes written by Jewell.⁶² Therefore, this is indicative of Jewell's extensive involvement throughout.

⁵⁷ Letter from Peter Jewell to Donna Grey, 10 October 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4, BDCM (hereafter cited as Jewell to Grey, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4).

⁵⁸ Jewell to Grey, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

⁵⁹ Bill Douglas, Second Script Draft May 1980, BDC 1/COM/2/1, BDCM.

⁶⁰ Jewell, *Long-Awaited Comrades*, BDC 1/COM/1/4, 4.

⁶¹ Bill Douglas, Second Script Draft May 1980, BDC 1/COM/2/1, BDCM.

⁶² Shooting Script, August 1984, BDC 1/COM/2/4, BDCM.

When discussing *Comrades* retrospectively in February 2001, Jewell stated: 'I was his so-called script editor'.⁶³ The way in which he refers to himself as Douglas's 'so-called script editor' could be interpreted as Jewell not believing this accurately fits his role because in reality he was doing much more. However, based on how Jewell has often appeared to tone down his contribution when asked during this research project and his evident reluctance to ask for payment from Skreba Productions for his own research work, I would argue that this suggests he does not feel this 'industry' title is appropriate for him. Jewell was concurrently working as a social worker in South London, and as previously mentioned, had not worked as a film industry professional. Repeatedly, there seemed to be a degree of reluctance from Jewell to ask for money for his work, however, part-way through principal photography in November 1985, Relph wrote to Jewell and stated:

[o]f course you should be paid for the time you have spent. It seems to me you have not claimed for the period when you were managing Bill in Barnstaple so we have added something to your account for that. Also, we definitely wish you to claim for your out of pocket expenses, photocopying etc.⁶⁴

Although Jewell only visited the set of *Comrades* once, in a letter to Relph and Grey early into the photography, he mentioned how he was suffering from 'withdrawal symptoms' from not being there.⁶⁵ Jewell also suggests, albeit indirectly, that he is feeling proud of himself for his contribution when he states:

I've still got one or two [r]ewrites to do, fairly small and in Australia, but there are minor amendments to the Old Vic scene (scheduled for 27 September ?) which Bill had better finalise for me sometime ! Meanwhile, this old typewriter's feeling fairly proud of itself.⁶⁶

This slight detachment of assigning the responsibility of the work to the typewriter reflects his lack of ownership of his contribution. Jewell continued to work in various roles throughout the production, often unpaid which shows the commitment to Douglas and the work.

Douglas had also sought advice from Jewell regarding the casting of Mr Pitt and James Frampton. In a handwritten note Douglas listed those who had

⁶³ Peter Jewell, Talk, 17 February 2001, BDC 1/COM/3/5/1, BDCM.

⁶⁴ Letter from Simon Relph to Peter Jewell, 5 November 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/4, BDCM.

⁶⁵ Jewell to Relph, Grey, 11 September 1986, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

⁶⁶ Jewell to Relph, Grey, 11 September 1986, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

been mentioned as potential cast members for the part of Frampton. Robert Stephens (who played Frampton in the final film) was actually quite low down the list after 'Ben Kingsley, Lindsay Anderson, [Alan] Bates, [Dirk] Bogarde, Both Foxes [Edward and James Fox], Grainger, Richard Harris, Rex Harrison, Trevor Howard, Malcolm McDowell, Robert Morley, O'Toole, Tim [Pigott-Smith]'.⁶⁷ There is then a handwritten document titled 'My choices' written by Jewell in which Stephens's name is circled in the document.⁶⁸ What these examples demonstrate is the reliance Douglas placed on Jewell, the level of trust he had in him and the weight his opinion held. Furthermore, it highlights the extent of his contribution to a wide variety of areas, including casting, and the challenge of researching film labour's self-erasure.

During discussion, Jewell said that there were three main contributions that he made to the film. There were: (i) the Vicar's sermon, (ii) Hammett's line ('[t]here's some folks that think they're better than others. They're not. Just more selfish, that's all') said during the railway carriage scene, and (iii) the order of the episodes during the Australian sequence.⁶⁹ Regarding the latter, according to Jewell, he proposed that the order of six 'episodes' should be structured in terms of varying mood: soft, hard, soft, hard, soft, hard.⁷⁰ This is evident in the final film: starting with Loveless's pleasant interaction with Charlie, moving on to Brine and his fellow chain gang's brutal labour and treatment by McCallum, followed by Old Stanfield telling the Aborigine men to use their head instead of their fists, the next is a 'hard' episode in which Young Stanfield is apprehended by a group of men on horseback, this is followed by Mrs Carlyle offering James Loveless a life in Australia and after leaving her stumbling onto the Mad Photographer's studio, finally, the last episode shows Hammett being sold at an auction to be bought by the Fop and sent to the penal settlement on Norfolk island.

After principal photography finished, Jewell worked as a music advisor, and he even helped Audsley during the editing stage in the cutting room.⁷¹ According to Audsley, Jewell 'worked as a counterweight to Bill and he could

⁶⁷ Note from Bill Douglas addressed to Peter Jewell, Undated, BDC 1/COM/1/3/1, BDCM.

⁶⁸ Peter Jewell, "My Choices," Undated, BDC 1/COM/1/3/1, BDCM.

⁶⁹ Jewell, Discussion, July 2021.

⁷⁰ Jewell, Discussion, July 2021.

⁷¹ Audsley, Interview, 9 March 2020.

sometimes be more articulate than Bill was able to be about his own work'.⁷² With regards to the music for the film, it was Douglas who suggested that Jewell might also work on a music cue-sheet for Hans Werner Henze.⁷³ Jewell corresponded with David Graham (composer) and suggested the possibility of a 'freedom' theme which could link to '[w]e'll win the day'.⁷⁴ Jewell comments in his correspondence to Graham that Henze or Douglas could alter much of this work at a later date.⁷⁵ The song is sung by the congregation at the Methodist church and returns during the final credit sequence where the camera pans across the Tolpuddle Martyrs and their families. Jewell also wrote short synopses of the film when requested to by Relph for marketing purposes.⁷⁶ What each of these instances demonstrate is Jewell's willingness to help where possible; repeatedly, Jewell shows a readiness to work, even if unpaid he would help if he was in a position to do so, clearly reflecting his commitment to Douglas and the film. With regards to uncovering hidden labour, Jewell's contributions were clearly multifarious and not restricted to one particular time, set contract, or even defined expectations of a role and it is from analysing the working documents that the extent of his contribution is revealed.

Michael Pickwoad, Production Designer

Like the script supervisor, the production designer is a role that is often considered to have been successful through its seamless integration with the story world. Fionnuala Hannigan states that: '[f]ilm design is so incredibly influential, yet at its very best, we don't even see it.'⁷⁷ *Comrades*, was the first feature film that Pickwoad worked on as production designer, however, he had had a substantial career as an art director beforehand, including *The Ploughman's Lunch* (Richard Eyre, 1983) which Simon Relph produced.⁷⁸ For *Comrades*, Pickwoad produced numerous drawings which included painstaking

⁷² Audsley, Interview, 9 March 2020.

⁷³ Letter from Peter Jewell to Simon Relph, 9 September 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4, BDCM (hereafter cited as Jewell to Relph, 9 September 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4).

⁷⁴ Letter from Peter Jewell to David Graham, 23 March 1986, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4, BDCM (hereafter cited as Jewell to Graham, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4).

⁷⁵ Jewell to Graham, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

⁷⁶ Jewell to Relph, 9 September 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

⁷⁷ Fionnuala Hannigan, *Filmcraft: Production Design* (Lews: Ilex Press, 2012), 8.

⁷⁸ Susie Figgis also worked as the casting director for *The Ploughman's Lunch* which Relph produced.

details of locations, intricate accuracy of the chains that bound the men and sophisticated drawings of pre-cinema visual objects such as: the magic lantern slides, phantasmagoria, and the heliotype (See Figure 15 below). It was also the art director (who would have worked closely with Pickwoad), Henry Harris's first feature film. Following *Comrades*, Harris then went on to work with Pickwoad on the now cult classic, *Withnail and I*.

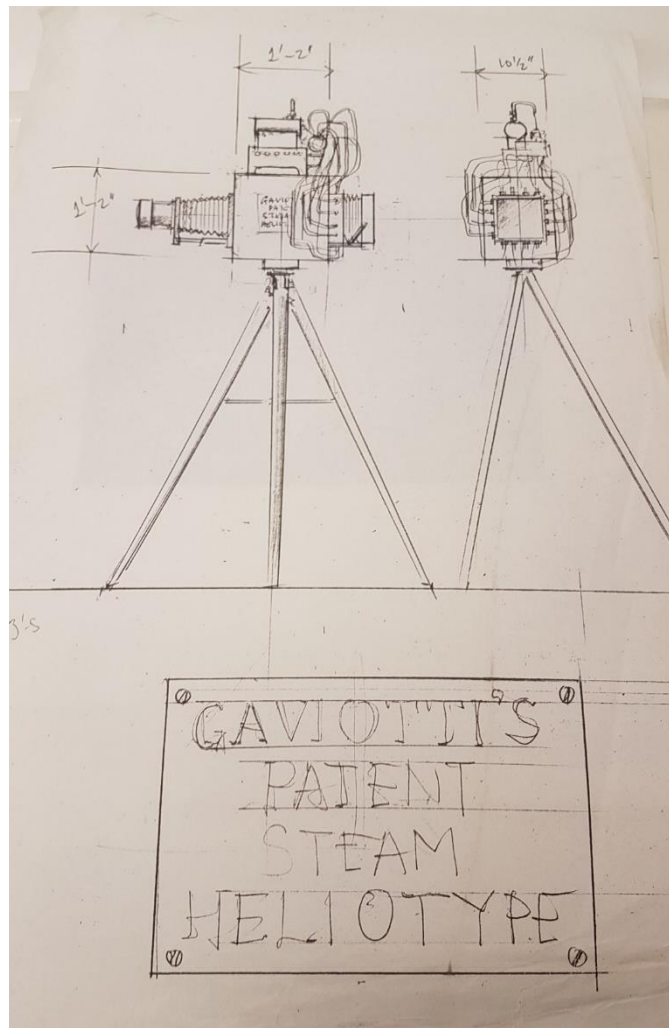


Figure 15. Sketch of Heliotype, Michael Pickwoad, BDC 1/COM/3/2, BDCM.

Like a script supervisor, the role of the production designer would have to start work prior to the principal photography began. In June 1985, Pickwoad did a number of recces to Tyneham.⁷⁹ Pickwoad's team began building and re-

⁷⁹ Michael Pickwoad is listed as claiming costs from 1 June 1985; Petty Cash Book and Purchase Day Book, Simon Relph Collection, Box 12 ¾, BFI Special Collections.

creating the Nineteenth Century in the village of Tyneham in late July 1985.⁸⁰ In Relph's correspondence to Douglas in August 1985, he writes:

Michael has found a place for the court room corridor which you obviously realise is not exactly like your drawing. It has many virtues ... We will continue to look for one that fits your plan. I think you should also see one Michael has found which sounds very good.⁸¹

Referring to Kawin's quote at the beginning of this chapter, although it is unclear from the documents which location was chosen, the way in which Pickwoad is carrying out location spotting armed with Douglas's drawings conveys how Douglas's 'vision' is being communicated and *shared*.⁸² Moreover, this correspondence demonstrates Relph's ability to persuade, asking Douglas to consider Pickwoad's find despite not fitting exactly with Douglas's plan.

Pickwoad was tasked with designing and mapping the filming locations in both Tyneham and Australia and he was also responsible for creating the replica pre-cinema devices and effects that are incorporated into the film. Pickwoad demonstrated a concern regarding the authenticity, particularly during scenes such as the gates to the Governor's House, the Governor's study, and the chain gang scene in which McCallum appears.⁸³ In preparation for the chain gang scene, where Brine appears chained to the men in the blaring heat of the Australian outback, Pickwoad refers to the thickness of the material used for the chains. Pickwoad comments that: '[a] thinner chain will give a feeling of more antiquity than modern fatter chain'.⁸⁴ Alongside this comment, he references Margaret Weidenhofer's book: *The Convict Years: Transportation and the Penal System, 1788-1868*, demonstrating a commitment to authenticity and accuracy. Jane Barnwell suggests that historical drama is the area of production design that is most recognised.⁸⁵ Barnwell notes that for historical drama, '[t]he world that is created is different from that currently inhabited and as such its construction cannot be invisible to the audience'.⁸⁶ During the 1980s there was a wealth of

⁸⁰ Fuller, "On Location," 29, BDC 1/COM/5/1.

⁸¹ Relph to Douglas, 21 August 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

⁸² Kawin and Grant, "Authorship," 193.

⁸³ Pickwoad, BDC 1/COM/3/2.

⁸⁴ Pickwoad, BDC 1/COM/3/2; Margaret Weidenhofer, *The Convict Years: Transportation and the Penal System, 1788-1868* (Melbourne, Australia: Lansdowne Press, 1973).

⁸⁵ Barnwell, *Production Design*, 82.

⁸⁶ Barnwell, *Production Design*, 82. See also C.S. Tashiro, *Pretty Pictures: Production Design and the History of Film*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010).

historical and period dramas released, most notably from the Merchant, Ivory and Jhabvala triumvirate with films such as *A Room with a View* (1986) and *Maurice* (1987). In contrast to these films, which celebrate the picturesque and pleasure in the wealth of great detail, *Comrades* is austere, claustrophobic, bleak and muddy in its design, particularly during the Dorset segment of the film. The costume and the set design work together to achieve this. For example, the sparse décor in the houses of the men of Tolpuddle in contrast to the wealthier more cluttered Frampton house or Governor's house works on both a practical level in terms of tight budget, but also helps confront the class distinctions and helps serve the stories of the characters.

Along with designing many of the objects, Pickwoad had to consider how a pre-cinema visual object could be used to fill the whole frame with its image. More so than the object to be looked at or be as part of the *mise-en-scène*, it would actually be used as a form of projection that would fill the frame. For example, at the very end of the film there are a series of slides that Pickwoad designed telling further details about the Martyrs. Similarly, for the panorama which is used to show the journey the men make from England to America, Pickwoad designed the slide holder. In his notebook he wrote, 'the idea of a simple 7"x4" wooden frame with 3 ¼ aperture surface to meet the job. . . seem[ed] more appropriate/authentic for the period and job in hand'.⁸⁷ The language of 'meet the job' is suggestive of his approach to production design and creation of objects. The objects essentially need to 'meet the job', they are not intended for longevity. Pickwoad's designs and creations are only intended to be available for the job and his priority is the authenticity, the usability by the cast in being able to interact with the object and keeping costs low.

As well as working closely with the Douglas's script, Pickwoad also had a number of sketches by Douglas of some of the different locations. For example, Douglas had created rough sketches Mrs Carlisle's place and the Wetham print shop.⁸⁸ Andrew Noble notes that as a teenager, Douglas briefly had ambitions of becoming a designer: '[t]here was one brief moment of hope when I sent some drawings to Hollywood to a certain Milo Anderson, whose name I picked out of a

⁸⁷ Michael Pickwoad, Photocopy of Journal, BDC 1/COM/3/5/1, BDCM.

⁸⁸ Bill Douglas, "Donna - Notes," 18 August 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/3, BDCM.

fan magazine. I waited in suspense for the invitation to become a designer'.⁸⁹ Douglas's drawings for *Comrades* could suggest that Pickwood's creative agency was restricted in some ways. The way in which Douglas had also produced his own designs, is similar to how he had also produced a script breakdown for Eyles. Alternatively, however, by Douglas giving Pickwood designs to work with, it helps to bring about the notion of a 'shared vision' and the documents themselves work as a form of communication. Ultimately, by analysing the documents they reveal that the roles are connected and interlinked, that creative contribution is active and shared.

Mick Audsley, Editor

In a similar way to the script supervisor and production designer, and from a normative professional standpoint, an editor is also considered to have been successful in their role if their editing is hidden. As Ephraim Katz suggests:

[t]he best compliment one can pay an editor is to tell him his editing is invisible: an editing job is considered successful when it goes unnoticed on the screen. Ironically, an editor invests weeks or months of intensive work to achieve the impression that he has done nothing at all.⁹⁰

From discussing the experience of editing on *Comrades*, Audsley noted that as a result of the aborted Ismail Merchant production, Audsley and Douglas had worked on 'the screenplay in the run up to when [they] actually started' and had quite a lot of contact during that time.⁹¹ Audsley also recalled an encounter with Relph which taught him a lot in terms of preparation necessary for the job:

there was one occasion where Simon Relph came in and asked where's that shot designated for? You know, Bill's language was very specific, and I didn't know. And I thought, woah, this is bad, I should know which bit this is intended for. And that taught me a lesson to do as much work on the screenplay so that when it all comes in out of order you know that that's for that, you know?⁹²

Audsley had drawn several family trees for the main characters at the beginning of his script, mapping the relationships of—George Loveless, Thomas (Old) Stanfield, James Hammett, and Mrs Brine and—demonstrating a wish to

⁸⁹ Noble, "Memoir," 16.

⁹⁰ Ephraim Katz, qtd in Don Fairservice, *Film Editing: History, Theory and Practice*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), n.pag.

⁹¹ Audsley, Interview, 9 March 2020.

⁹² Audsley, Interview, 9 March 2020.

understand what the interconnections of the key characters were.⁹³ Audsley also notes the number of pages for each section which suggests his monitoring of timing.⁹⁴ A key skill for the editor is to ensure the appropriate rhythm and duration is applied for a scene. For scenes that had a bit more action, characters, or various shots, Audsley had a process of breaking these scenes down even further by drawing the scene frame-by-frame, noting the shot type and the take number, making suggestions regarding which one should go to print. As mentioned, Eyles would produce a MUS for Audsley which would be 'lined'. A 'lined' script works as a guide for the editor and conveys 'what coverage was shot and to changes made to the script during production'.⁹⁵ Essentially, this process means that the editor can see from a quick glance the material available to them to work with; they do not have to rewatch or root through all of the film, thereby greatly saving time, especially in light of how much footage there was.⁹⁶ As a document, the MUS shows that there were relatively few deviations from the script and minimal additions during the filming process.⁹⁷ This is indicative of the restrictions imposed by Douglas on actors to *ad libitum*, moreover, it shows how useful a document it was to communicate with the cast and crew because he intended to stick very closely to the script. This is supported by Eyles's continuity scripts which demonstrates that one of the few people who was allowed to ad-lib was Norton, as I will demonstrate in greater detail during the discussion of the case study of the Lanternist.

Audsley's script shows that he had a rating system where he marked particular takes with one or two ticks to show his preference, but he explicitly specifies if there is a take that Douglas liked, often underlining this. For example, for Scene 46 (EXT Barn Payday) Audsley comments that Take 3 was best because it was forceful, but underlining that 'Bill likes Take 4', thereby giving this greater importance.⁹⁸ In a similar way to Eyles's exacting processes, Audsley makes note of any significant changes to the script, not only dialogue, but props or setting, too. For example, he notes alongside Scene 124/1 (EXT Landscape

⁹³ 'Comrades' Editor's Script, BDC 1/COM/2/3.

⁹⁴ 'Comrades' Editor's Script, BDC 1/COM/2/3.

⁹⁵ "How to Line a Film Script," *Amy Clarke Films*, accessed 21 March 2022, <https://www.amyclarkefilms.com/blog/how-to-line-a-film-script>.

⁹⁶ "How to Line a Film Script".

⁹⁷ Mick Audsley, 'Comrades' Editor's Script, BDC 1/COM/2/3, BDCM.

⁹⁸ 'Comrades' Editor's Script, BDC 1/COM/2/3.

Day) that although it is scripted as being '[a] peaceful lakeside' he has crossed out lakeside and written 'waterfall'.⁹⁹ This shows that during the filming, either they were unable to find a lakeside that was appropriate or that a waterfall was preferred, and, as such, they had to change and work outside the configurations proposed in the script.

As I discussed in Chapter Two, Douglas and Audsley worked together previously in quite tense circumstances where they had to deliver a version of *My Way Home* for German Television by a strict deadline due to an arrangement the BFI had made. It is perhaps because of going through this experience that led Douglas to develop great trust in Audsley. When interviewed, Audsley commented:

Bill was very comfortable with me cutting whilst he was shooting which was new to him, he hadn't experienced that ever before the idea of... which is normal to a film but it was necessary over a period of however many weeks and then we had the winter stuff and then we went to Australia and he was very happy that I would cut in his absence while he was shooting... I always felt very privileged that that was something that he felt comfortable to subcontract to me.¹⁰⁰

Indeed, as Petrie notes, '*Comrades* was the first film Douglas had made which was edited as it was being shot', which demonstrates a significant amount of trust in Audsley.¹⁰¹ Perhaps it also signifies that Douglas had demonstrated some awareness that he was perhaps best to be left out of the cutting room which had shown to be a difficult time for him during the *Trilogy*.

During an interview, Audsley explained that his cutting room in Dorset, was also used 'as a set in Bindon Abbey' for the film.¹⁰² This doubling up of workspaces as sets for the film in some sense blurs the line between cast and crew. In addition, Audsley explained: 'I slept above the cutting room in Bindon Abbey, Dorset, which was not great really', demonstrating that it became Audsley's temporary home as well.¹⁰³

By examining each of these roles of the script supervisor, script editor, production designer, and the editor, it is clear that there is a need for their work

⁹⁹ 'Comrades' Editor's Script, BDC 1/COM/2/3.

¹⁰⁰ Audsley, Interview, 9 March 2020.

¹⁰¹ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 185.

¹⁰² Audsley, Interview, 9 March 2020.

¹⁰³ Audsley, Interview, 9 March 2020.

to be invisible as a mark of their success. Furthermore, this analysis has highlighted the level of input and involvement from Douglas who created his own designs for locations, created mini-continuity charts, and ultimately, as much as the editor's preference could be conveyed and discussed, Douglas's was given priority. This has indicated the differing levels of agency or trust that is placed on them to carry out their respective roles. Ultimately, the roles are interlaced, and there is a proliferation of documents that support and reflect this interlacing as an effective part of the production process. So far, this discussion has largely focused on production organisation and pre-production. I will now go on to examine the frameworks they were working in during principal photography in Dorset, and then Australia.

Filming of *Comrades* in Dorset

The first half of the film, set in 1834 in Dorset, shows the men setting up a trade union in secret. The second half is after the Tolpuddle Martyrs have been sentenced and deported to Australia. In the contract between Skreba Productions and the film's funders (Channel 4, National Film Finance Corporation, Curzon), it was agreed that there would be twelve weeks for filming and that the completion date would be the 14 December 1985, including the rest days.¹⁰⁴ The choice to film on location is unsurprising as studio hire in the 1980s was expensive and, as a result of technological developments e.g. increasingly portable equipment, films at this time were often shot on location.¹⁰⁵ There were forty-eight days scheduled for the Dorset shoot and that part of the production was expected to finish on the 6 November 1985, with the intention of shooting the Australian section before the end of the year. Throughout the production, however, changes had to be made to the supposed 'final schedule' which had been created on 4 September 1985.¹⁰⁶ By no means was this a fixed document or framework that the crew would be working to, rather, it was intended to be an ideal guideline instigated by Skreba, and to be implemented by Douglas and the production manager, Grey. Like any working environment, people could fall sick; William Gaminara who played James

¹⁰⁴ Draft Agreement, BDC 1/COM/3/4.

¹⁰⁵ Barber, *British Film Industry in the 1970s*, 1.

¹⁰⁶ The first schedule (undated), second schedule (1 August 1985), third schedule is missing, and the fourth schedule (4 September 1985) are held at the museum, BDC 1/COM/3/5/3, BDCM.

Loveless, for example, fell ill partway through the production with appendicitis.¹⁰⁷ There may be other logistical reasons that impacted the schedule choices, such as lighting and weather conditions. I have compiled a table which illustrates the overages during the Dorset shoot (see Figure 16 below). This table demonstrates that by the end of the Dorset shoot, there was an overage of thirteen days leading the shoot to finish on 11 November 1985. As mentioned, there would then be a later winter shoot scheduled for April 1986 in Dorset to shoot the scenes that required snow and a number of scenes from the original September to November 1985 shoot as they had failed to complete them in time.¹⁰⁸

Date	Days to Date	Remaining	Over	Under
09/09/1985	1	47		
10/09/1985	2	46		
11/09/1985	3	45		
12/09/1985	4	44		
13/09/1985	5	43		
14/09/1985	6	42		
16/09/1985	7	41		
17/09/1985	8	40		
18/09/1985	9	39	0.50	
19/09/1985	10	38	0.50	
20/09/1985	11	37	0.50	
21/09/1985	12	36	0.50	
23/09/1985	13	35	0.50	
24/09/1985	14	34	1.00	
25/09/1985	15	33	1.00	
26/09/1985	16	32	1.00	
28/09/1985	17	31	1.00	
29/09/1985	18	30	1.00	
01/10/1985	19	29	1.00	
02/10/1985	20	28	1.00	
03/10/1985	21	27	2.00	
06/10/1985	22	26	3.00	
07/10/1985	23	25	5.00	
08/10/1985	24	24	5.00	
09/10/1985	25	23	5.00	
11/10/1985	26	22	5.00	
12/10/1985	27	21	5.00	
13/10/1985	28	20	5.00	
14/10/1985	29	19	5.00	
15/10/1985	30	18	5.00	
16/10/1985	31	17	5.50	
17/10/1985	32	16	8.00	

¹⁰⁷ Daily Progress Report No. 18, Australia, 17 December 1985, K74G721 F16, Film Finances Archive.

¹⁰⁸ Daily Progress Reports No. 1 Monday 9 September 1985–No. 52 Monday 11 November 1985, K74G721 F16, Film Finances Archive.

18/10/1985	33	15	8.00	
19/10/1985	34	14	8.00	
22/10/1985	35	13	8.00	
23/10/1985	36	12	8.00	
24/10/1985	37	11	8.00	
25/10/1985	38	10	8.00	
26/10/1985	39	9	8.00	
28/10/1985	40	8	8.00	
29/10/1985	41	7	8.00	
30/10/1985	42	6	8.00	
31/10/1985	43	5	9.50	
01/11/1985	44	4	10.00	
02/11/1985	45	3	12.00	
04/11/1985	46	2	12.00	
05/11/1985	47	1	12.00	
06/11/1985	48	0	12.00	
07/11/1985	49	-1	13.00	
08/11/1985	50	-2	12.00	
10/11/1985	51	-3	13.00	
11/11/1985	52	-4	13.00	

Figure 16. Filming in Dorset Overage/Underage.

Due to a variety of reasons, the scheduling often had to be changed at very short notice, often only a matter of days before. Although the exact reason behind a change is not always clear, from a close reading of the DPRs held at Film Finances Archive as well as correspondence from the BDCM, it is possible to conclude several reasons behind these changes. These included: some of the cast members being unavailable at certain times; weather conditions; inappropriate lighting; illness; family tragedies; personal reasons of the actors; physical injuries on set, or simply, that it made logistical sense. Schedule Two demonstrates that ‘Scene 3pt Ext. Frampton’s House. Frampton’s shadow at the window’ was moved from Thursday 19 September to earlier in the week on Tuesday 17 September to follow the shooting of ‘Scene 73 Internal of Frampton’s House where Frampton gives the men an audience’.¹⁰⁹ This change was made for logistical reasons as the relevant cast members and location set-up would already be there on the Tuesday. By comparing Schedule Four with the one-week schedules which were also produced, it is evident that for ‘Scene 67, Int. Stanfield’s House of the women hear the men going upstairs’, which includes Betsy Loveless (Staunton), was intended to be shot on Thursday 24 October

¹⁰⁹ Second Shooting Schedule, 1 August 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/3, BDCM.

1985 in Minchington, East Dorset.¹¹⁰ However, this then had to be moved to the evening of Wednesday 23 October due to a cast member (Staunton) no longer being available. These two examples demonstrate that with regards to timing and scheduling, workers had to be reactive as the schedules were changeable at very short notice. With regards to the commitment of the cast and crew, there was an expectation of availability for the duration of the production, as well as a contractual obligation.

The schedules highlight the regularity of rest days and how they too were often subject to change. In the original schedule, it was proposed that the rest days would be on Sundays each week, which would have created a sense of routine and regularity for the crew and cast. By the fourth iteration of the schedule, and the following updated one-line schedules, rest days were sporadically placed and changed depending on travel needs and extended day shooting requirements. This further demonstrates the unpredictable nature of film production and demands of time placed on the crew and cast during the production.

Owing to the organisation of filming in both Dorset and Australia, the production was split into two production crew and casts. Drawing from my own research into the production crews, I have mapped out the allocation of workers (excluding cast) into two charts indicating production and organisational hierarchies (Figures 17 and 18). These are split between principal photography during the UK shoot and the Australian shoot and have been constructed using the crew list, the accommodation list for Dorset and the credits on the film.¹¹¹ Of these two crews, there were only a small number who were part of both the UK and Australian shoots as marked on the hierarchies by the Australian and British flags. These were: Douglas, Redmond Morris (assistant director and associate producer), Relph, Pickwood, Harris, Gale Tattersall (cinematography), Eyles, Clive Winter (sound), Audsley, and Elaine Carew (makeup).¹¹² What this

¹¹⁰ Fourth Shooting Schedule, 4 September 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/3, BDCM; One-week schedules, BDC 1/COM/2/5/3.

¹¹¹ Crew List, 22 August 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/3, BDCM; Accommodation List, BDC 1/COM/3/5/3, BDCM; *Comrades*, Dual Format DVD and Blu-ray, directed by Bill Douglas, 1987 (London: BFI, 2012).

¹¹² Obviously, the cast members that were scripted in both sections were included in both shoots, however, due to limited space, I have not included the cast members in the organisational charts. During the interview with Eyles, she confirmed that Mick

suggests is that those in certain roles were considered to be important enough and irreplaceable in their contribution to pay for their flights.¹¹³ What the UK production hierarchy (Figure 17 below) demonstrates is that a much larger construction team (particularly thatchers and plasterers) was needed. This is understandable in light of how much of the village had to be built, which was significant, with a mixture of slate and thatch roofing needed on most of the deteriorating structures.¹¹⁴ The on-set photograph (Figure 19 on page 271) and the rough sketch of the village from an aerial view (Figure 20 on page 274) shows the way in which the fronts of buildings were made, and additional thatch had to be added to buildings. In comparison, for the Australian shoot, the management and directorial team is far greater.

Audsley and Elaine Carew were in Australia as this was not evident from the materials; Eyles, Interview, 5 March 2020.

¹¹³ It is not clear if Carew's flight was covered in the budget, but Elaine Carew was Australian and during my interview with Eyles (5 March 2020) she suggested that Carew went because it was an opportunity for her to go back home.

¹¹⁴ Michael Pickwoad, Production Design, BDC 1/COM/3/5/2, BDCM.

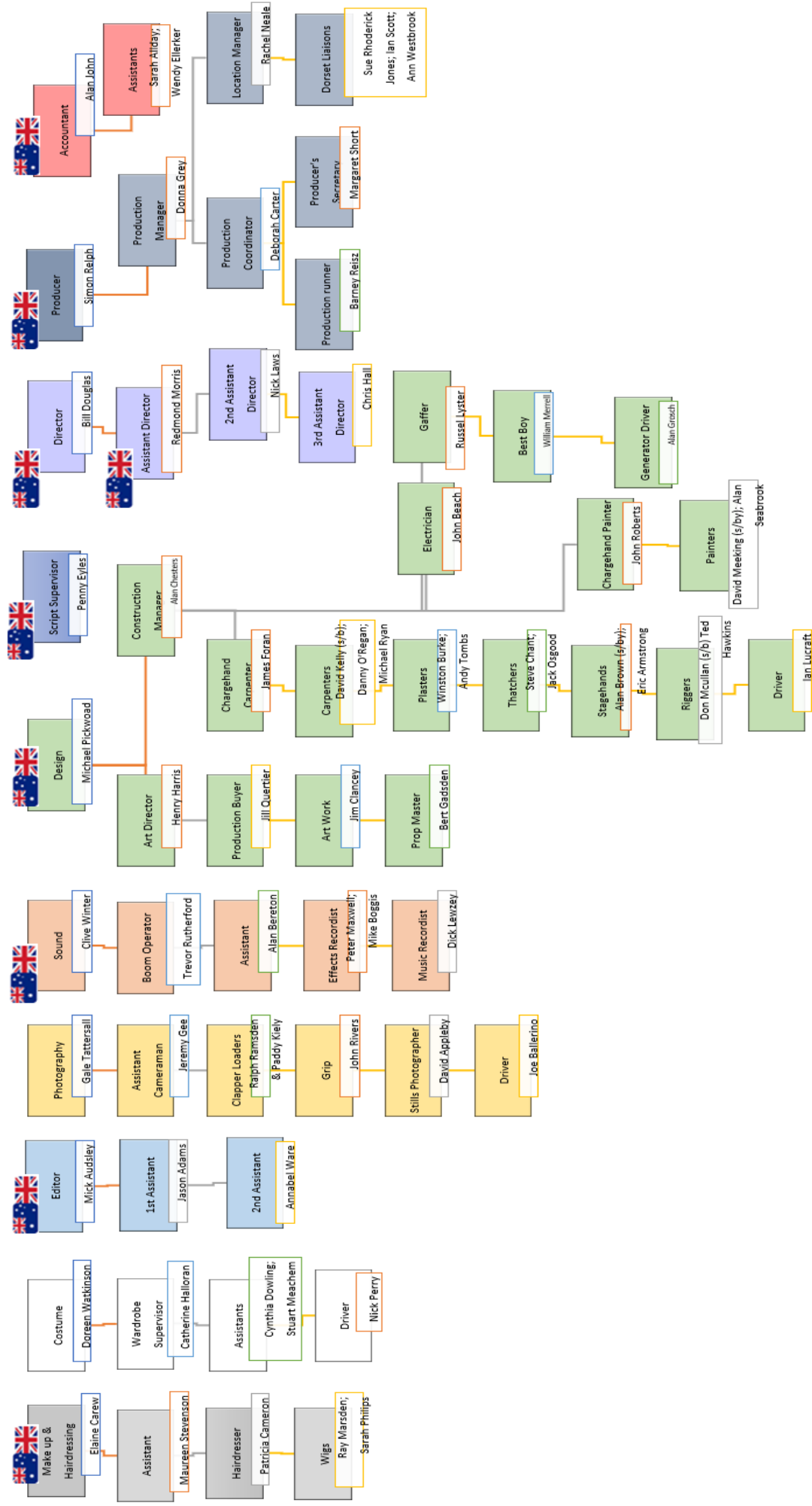


Figure 17. Principal Photography Organisation Chart, UK, 9 September-11 November 1985.

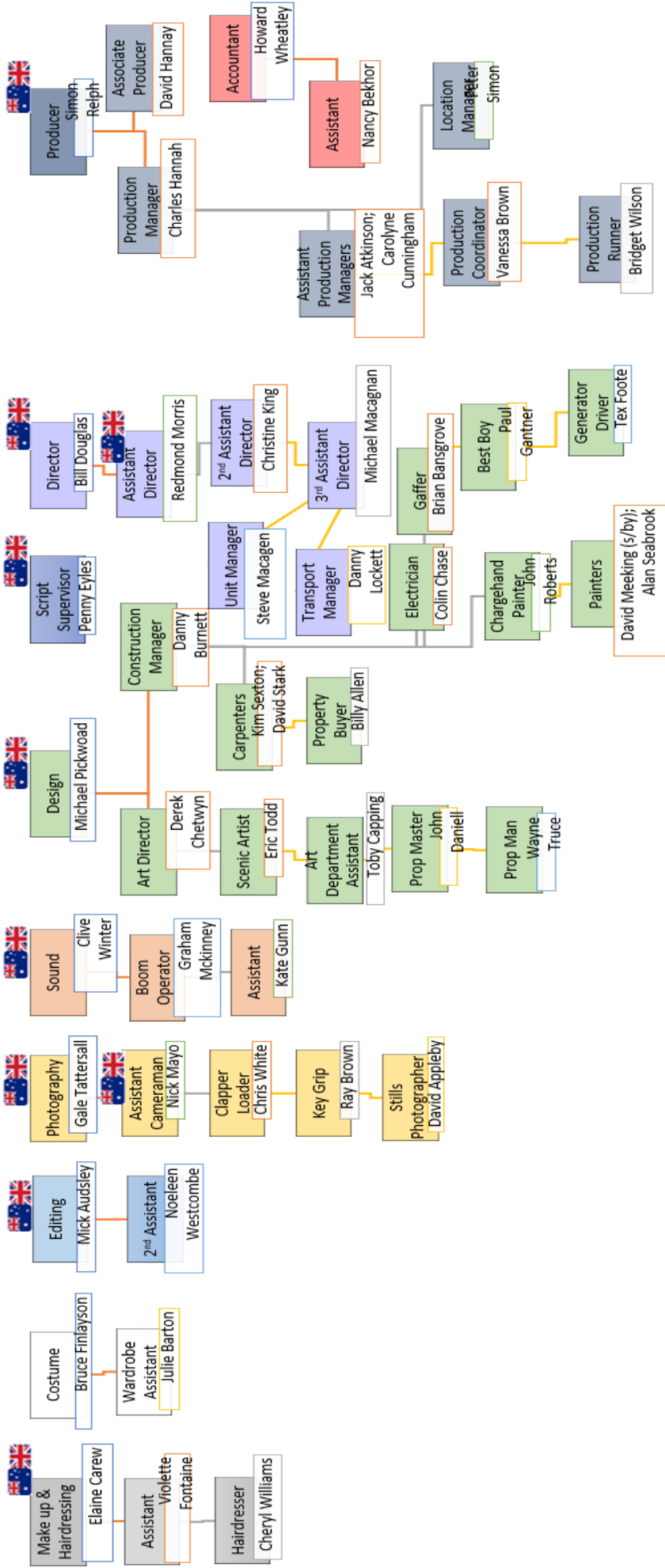


Figure 18. Principal Photography Organisation Chart, Australia, 25 November 1985-4 January 1986.

The hierarchy demonstrating the Australian production (Figure 18) shows that there was an additional associate producer present (David Hannay), two assistant production managers (Jack Atkinson and Carlyne Cunningham), a unit manager (Steve Macagen) and a transport manager (Danny Lockett). In comparison, the UK production had no need for these roles. The additional administrative and logistical management for the Australian portion of the production reflects a greater need of support in those areas. This was likely due to the British crew members' unfamiliarity with the location, that extra time needed to make travel arrangements and other logistical considerations such as managerial support for the new crew and cast members.

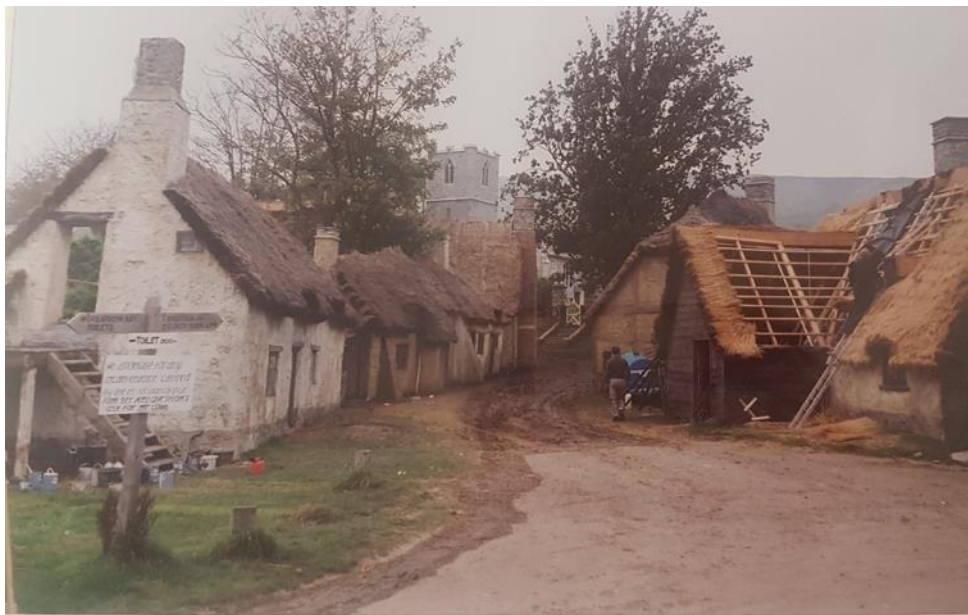


Figure 19. On-Set Photograph, 1985, Nick Keen, BDC 1/COM/3/3, BDCM.

For the UK shoot, the filming of *Comrades* largely took place in the abandoned village of Tyneham in Dorset; it was decided that they would be unable to shoot in the actual village of Tolpuddle as it was too modernised.¹¹⁵ As mentioned in Chapter Four, Douglas had carried out extensive location shooting and had settled on this village after visiting over a hundred villages between 1980 and 1981. The fact that Douglas visited so many villages when location spotting demonstrates a drive to find a location that fitted with what he had imagined for the village. What had appealed to him about this spot was that because it was an

¹¹⁵ Meeting, 7 May 1985, K74G721 F16.

abandoned village in the middle of the Lulworth firing ranges, it had largely been left untouched. This location had already been decided on and secured before Relph came to the project, but Relph agreed on its suitability for the purpose of the production and referred to it as a 'wonderful spot'.¹¹⁶

Nonetheless, Tyneham needed a significant amount of construction work to make it appropriate for photography. Merchant had initially been reluctant to agree to Tyneham for this reason.¹¹⁷ In an attempt to minimise costs, only half of the infrastructures or the outside façades of buildings were built. During a meeting with Film Finance, Relph discussed how this would be navigated during filming, stating 'the village for the film would be built in front of the present remains, but that this would only be a frontage and no interiors would be built [and that] ... the exteriors would be designed with selected interiors in mind in order to retain continuity'.¹¹⁸ As we can see from the on-set photography by Nick Keen on the previous page (Figure 19), the white building to the left (Old Stanfield's house) has had thatch roofing added, however, the back of the building's exterior has not been built. This is further supported by Figure 20 on page 274, a hand-drawn map by Pickwoad showing pre-existing buildings and proposed buildings. The building marked 'Old Stanfield' only has the front facing side drawn. Access to other locations also proved difficult and required further negotiations. For example, permission to film the exterior of the Frampton property had to be agreed upon with Mary Frampton on behalf of her elderly parents. Douglas had settled with Mary Frampton that due to the poor health of her parents the crew would only film the exterior of the property, not inside.¹¹⁹

Along with the stress of securing locations, there were additional pressures felt in the choice of casting and using extras. With a budget of £2.3 million,¹²⁰ there were new union restrictions to navigate. Douglas had not had this issue previously due to the special arrangement the BFI Production Board had with the unions. Rather ironically, these pressures instigated by Equity (the British Creative Practitioners trade union),¹²¹ emerged regarding the casting of the

¹¹⁶ Relph to NFFC, BDC1/COM/3/5/4.

¹¹⁷ Douglas, "Deliberate Delays," BDC 1/COM/1/4.

¹¹⁸ Meeting, 7 May 1985, K74G721 F16.

¹¹⁹ Douglas, "Deliberate Delays," BDC 1/COM/1/4.

¹²⁰ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 179.

¹²¹ For more information, see "About", *Equity*, accessed 21 March 2022, <https://www.equity.org.uk/about/>.

second jailer who was not a union member, and below-union rates of pay for extras.¹²² With regards to the second jailer, Douglas originally intended having two wardens attend to George Loveless during the prison sequence; he had planned for a younger, more conservative warden and the older warden, to be more liberal with the intention of subverting audience expectations.¹²³ As evidenced in Douglas's storyboards for the film, Douglas envisaged Alex McCrindle to play the older, more sympathetic and liberal jailer, and Jeremy Mosdell to play the 'younger gauche jailer'.¹²⁴ Unfortunately, Mosdell was not an Equity member, and, as such, Relph stated: 'I cannot as Producer of the film, engage somebody to play a scripted part with dialogue who is not a member of Equity'.¹²⁵ As a result, the scene with the two jailers was dropped and only one was used instead. In the same letter, Relph then goes on to state, '[t]he position is particularly sensitive in view of the recent publicity which was none of our doing, but which unfortunately drew attention to the issue of employment of Union members as extras in the film'.¹²⁶ It is unclear what 'recent publicity' Relph refers to here, however, the casting of extras was a point of contention because union members had been cast as extras and their payment of £25 per day pay was below the minimum rates.¹²⁷ Pressures from the unions also affected the choice of the crew. Despite Douglas's request, Relph was unable to appoint Barney Reiss as Douglas's third assistant due to union restrictions and as Relph had explained, he was able to find a union member at his grade willing to do the job at a lower fee.¹²⁸ Unlike Douglas's films made with the BFI, where due to a special arrangement with the unions they could pay crew less, due to the scale of *Comrades*, the production had to adhere to union requirements. Thus, Douglas was constrained in employing who he wanted during the making of the *Trilogy*

¹²² Letter from Simon Relph to Bill Douglas, 26 October 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4, BDCM (hereafter cited as Relph to Douglas, 26 October 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4).

¹²³ Peter Jewell, "List of Notes for Donna [Grey]," 21 August 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/3, BDCM (hereafter cited as Jewell, "List of Notes", BDC 1/COM/3/5/3).

¹²⁴ Jewell, "List of Notes", BDC 1/COM/3/5/3.

¹²⁵ Relph to Douglas, 26 October 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

¹²⁶ Relph to Douglas, 26 October 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

¹²⁷ *On-Set Report*, 15 October 1985.

¹²⁸ Relph to Douglas, 21 August 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

due to the budgetary constraints, and during *Comrades*, Douglas was still restricted due to union requirements as a result of the scale of the production.

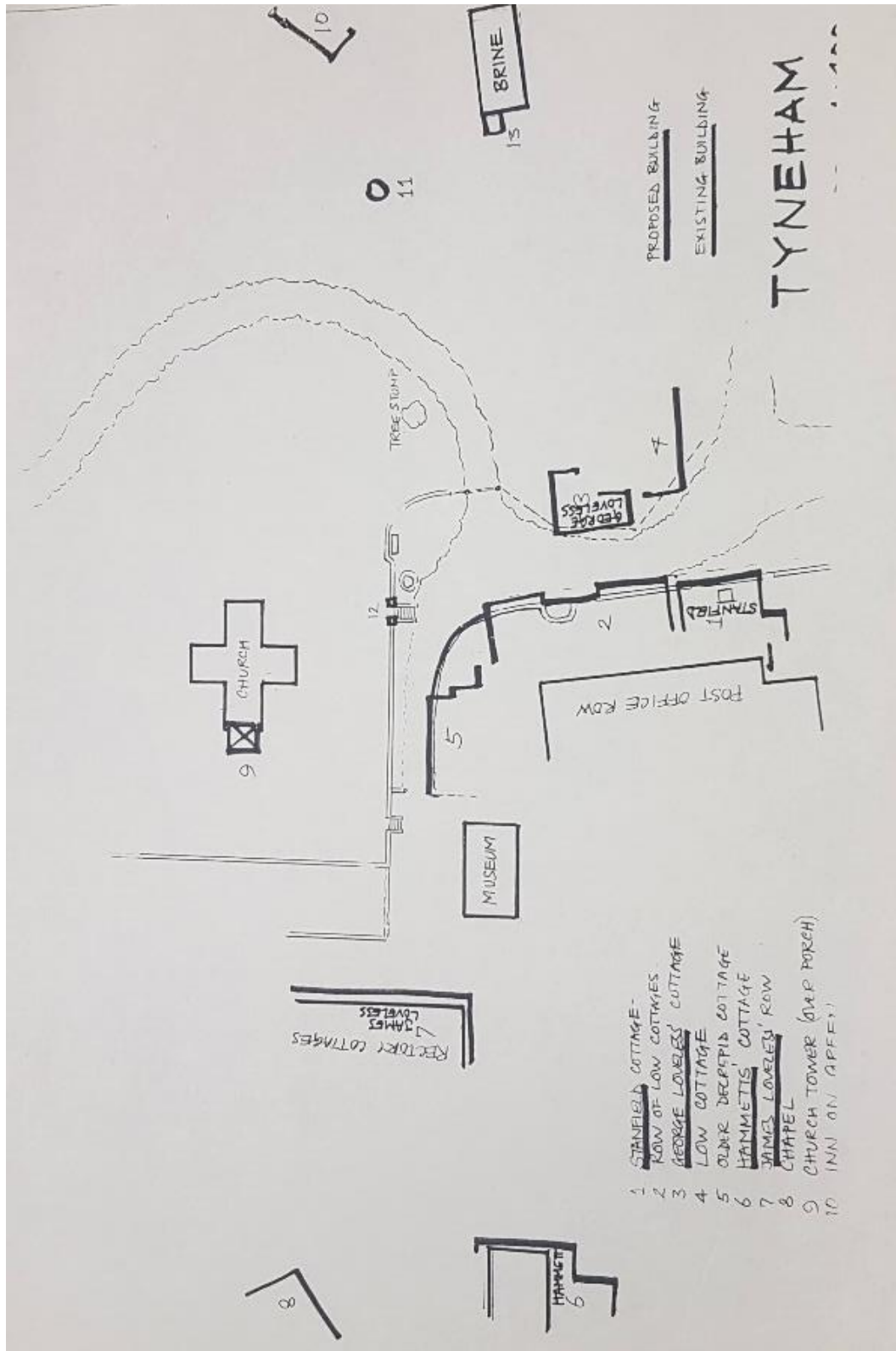


Figure 20. Hand-Drawn Map of Pre-Existing and Proposed Buildings in Tyneham, Michael Pickwood, BDC 1/COM/3/2, BDCM.

The working day and schedule on-set fluctuated. For instance, although it was planned that days during the shoot would have an 8am unit call and wrap at 8.30pm, as mentioned, rest days became irregularly spaced out. Douglas was taken ill on the evening of 2 October 1985. From the DPRs of subsequent days after Douglas became unwell, it is evident that his illness impacted the production's schedule considerably. The production fell two days behind schedule and an insurance claim was made for approximately £50,000.¹²⁹ According to the DPRs, for the 3 October, 'Tests Only' is listed as being carried out and for the 4 October, the crew were on standby for the day and 174 (shot one) is marked as complete.¹³⁰ It was only when Douglas returned on the 5 October that shooting resumed. The very minimal work being completed during these two days led to a revaluation of the schedule in relation to the progress of the first four weeks of photography; the assessment indicated that the production was now five days behind schedule. On the seventh week of the production in Dorset, Douglas requested time off before the Australian shoot was to begin, however, Relph denied his request on 26 October 1985, and wrote:

I do wish that it would be possible and indeed I have tried to bring it about. The truth is that we are significantly over our budget and Film Finances, who are at the moment being extremely constructive about the overage, cannot permit a delay which might inevitably cost them a great deal of money.¹³¹

Petrie compares how a director works on one project over a long period of time—typically one or two years—whereas other members of the crew may work on several projects in one year.¹³² Unlike other members of the film crew, a director may work on one project for longer, whereas an individual crew member can be contracted for a set period of time. For example, other members of the crew for *Comrades* were able to work on several projects in one year, and this is apparent in both above- and below-the-line roles. Relph, for example, was the producer of *Wetherby* (David Hare, 1985), which was released shortly before photography for *Comrades* commenced. Following this, (and during his time as producer for

¹²⁹ Statement of Production Costs: *Comrades*, 13 October 1985, Box 2 of 5, Production File and Budgets, Simon Relph Collection, BFI Special Collections.

¹³⁰ Daily Progress Report, No. 21, 3 October 1985, K74G721 F16, Film Finances Ltd; Daily Progress Report, No. 22, 4 October 1985, K74G721 F16, Film Finances Ltd.

¹³¹ Relph to Douglas, 26 October 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4. In this letter, Relph congratulates Douglas' effort in being more efficient and praises him for the amount of work he had achieved that week, not just the amount but the quality also.

¹³² Petrie, *Creativity and Constraint*, 203–4.

Comrades), he became the head of British Screen Finance, the privatised and replacement body of the NFFC. Similarly, as previously mentioned, Audsley had to leave the production before *Comrades* was complete because he was already committed to start work on Frears's film, *Prick Up Your Ears*, a film about the English playwright Joe Orton, and a figure that Douglas had considered making a film about before he embarked on *Comrades*.¹³³ Pickwoad had begun scouting for locations in the Lake District and Ireland for the film, *Withnail and I* (Bruce Robinson, 1987) prior to the filming of *Comrades* commenced. Due to difficulties in securing the funding for *Withnail and I*, however, the project had to be put on hold which led to Pickwoad being available to work on *Comrades*, a year before *Withnail* would begin.¹³⁴ These examples show that for some crew members the work was intermittent or sandwiched between other projects.

Comrades was not, however, the only project that Douglas worked on throughout the entire eight years. Douglas wrote several scripts during this time: *The Diary of Mildred Harris*, a novel on Charlie Chaplin's first wife; *The Widow*, an adaptation of a short story by Ruth Praver Jhabvala, for which, as I discussed in the previous chapter, he received no payment; and *A Travelling Showman and his Peep Show*, a five-part television series.¹³⁵ In addition, he also played Alex Britain in Saxon Logan's horror film *Sleepwalker* (1984). Apart from *Sleepwalker*, which similarly saw delays due to a lack of funding available, these other projects were never made. Douglas's request to have a break between the Dorset and Australian sequence was not possible due to budgetary restrictions.

In terms of the atmosphere on set during the production, Robin Soans—who plays George Loveless, the film's protagonist—described the set of *Comrades* as follows:

[f]ilm is a very rarefied medium. A lot of the time the product seems secondary to the whole process of making films—the most important question is 'Where are we eating tonight?' or 'What wine are we going to have with this salmon?' This film wasn't like that—or at least most of it wasn't like that. The people who lived that sort of existence seemed out of place... The lack of selfishness and degree of goodwill (on the part of the actors) was quite astonishing and must have been similar in its own

¹³³ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 174.

¹³⁴ Special Feature: Michael Pickwoad Interview by James McCabe, August 2014, *Withnail and I*, Arrow Video, Blu Ray, 2015.

¹³⁵ Jewell, "Comrades-in-Waiting," BDC 1/COM/1/4, 1.

parallel way to the community spirit which must have existed between the Methodist labourers at the actual time.¹³⁶

Here, Soans mentions how on the set of other film productions, food consumption was of a certain calibre or quality, whereas *Comrades* was different. In relation to Caldwell's work, at the microsocial level in which he argues that film and television function 'as local cultures and social communities within their own right,' Soans's comment suggests that there was a different kind of culture on the set of *Comrades*.¹³⁷ There is a sense that they would 'muck in together' and there were less expectations in the provisions made available to them from those involved. Further, Soans's comment suggests that those who did have certain expectations in the quality of provisions seemed at odds with the production. If Caldwell's notion of a 'social community' is considered here, those who were not willing to 'muck in' would have been at the periphery of this community.¹³⁸

When it came to the casting of the Martyrs, Douglas took the approach to cast relatively unknown actors as the Martyrs and 'stars of the day' in fairly small cameo roles. This approach was frequently praised in the reviews for the way the film 'subverts one of the standard procedures of British costume drama in which famous personalities often overwhelm the characters they are supposed to be embodying'.¹³⁹ This method had a significant effect on the working-dynamics and culture during the production. Douglas expressed his dissatisfaction and troubles of working with some of the actors who played the aristocrats making specific reference to Freddie Jones (Vicar of Tolpuddle) and Robert Stephens (Frampton).¹⁴⁰ Douglas was not alone in his criticisms of their impact on the working-dynamics. For example, Norton describes his first meeting with Stephens as follows:

when I first encountered him in the make up trailer at six o'clock that morning, [Stephens] was polishing off the remains of a bottle of vodka and telling long, rambling anecdotes with no discernible punchline, which were interrupted only by his frequent attempts to stick his fur-coated tongue down the horrified make-up assistant's throat.¹⁴¹

¹³⁶ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 183.

¹³⁷ Caldwell, *Production Culture*, 2.

¹³⁸ Caldwell, *Production Culture*, 2.

¹³⁹ Grahame Smith, "Still Dancing: The Return of *Comrades*," in Booklet for *Comrades*, Dual Format DVD and Blu-ray (London: BFI, 2012), 3-4.

¹⁴⁰ Letter from Bill Douglas to Simon Relph, 20 April 1986, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas to Relph, 20 April 1986, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4).

¹⁴¹ Norton, *Life!*, 217.

Similarly, this was echoed by Audsley when I interviewed him in 2020 who said: 'Freddy Jones and Robert Stephens. Oh my god! They used to get hammered, they knew how to party, those guys'.¹⁴²

It was following Douglas's illness that the production started running behind schedule. Returning to Figure 16 (pages 265-266), as the data from the table shows, there was a small overage which was exacerbated by Douglas falling sick on the 3 October 1985. Time delays and running behind schedule meant that there was a very real risk that the production would go over budget. With this in mind, Relph and Douglas discussed what could be done to help. In a letter to Douglas from Relph dated 18 October 1985, he reflects on an earlier discussion they had:

[s]ome weeks ago when we first started to have financial problems with the film you asked me what you could do to help. At the time, I think I said to you that the really important thing to do was to go on producing the really excellent film that you shot and obviously to do it as quickly as you can.¹⁴³

Although Relph viewed efficiency and time to be of great importance, the quality of filming took greater priority, and in his opinion, it was that which needed to continue; Relph encouraged Douglas to focus on this. Moreover, it highlights that there were financial concerns much earlier on in the production than has been previously proposed. Petrie suggests that it was during the Australian shoot when the budgetary concerns during production began.¹⁴⁴ Although the problems did indeed intensify during the Australian shoot as the film began to go further over-schedule and over-budget as a result of bad weather and unsuitable filming conditions, there were clearly earlier budgetary concerns which impacted the working methods and approach to production in Dorset.¹⁴⁵ Relph then went on to explain to Douglas how he had:

some pretty tough battles to fight in London in order to protect your right to go on and complete the film that you have imagined for so many years . . . I have reached the point at which I cannot conjure up any more time or money. If we are to go on making the film as we have been with the greatest freedom, without interference, with continued support from our Cast and Crew and with the encouragement of our extremely supportive

¹⁴² Audsley, Interview, 9 March 2020.

¹⁴³ Letter from Simon Relph to Bill Douglas, 18 October 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4, BDCM (hereafter cited as Relph to Douglas, 18 October 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4).

¹⁴⁴ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 184.

¹⁴⁵ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 184.

financiers, then we have to find a way of finishing the filming with the very limited amount of money and time we have left.¹⁴⁶

The way in which Relph states that he has been fighting ‘some pretty tough battles’ on Douglas’s behalf presents an image of himself as a protective paternalistic figure, working in support of Douglas to have a great deal of freedom. Relph represents himself as having facilitated conditions of freedom for Douglas during the shoot and encouraged Douglas to use his ‘wonderful economical Scottish brain of yours to simplify the shooting ... as best you can’.¹⁴⁷ With regards to the working dynamics at play, Douglas is answerable to Relph. Although Relph may not always have been physically present on set, he demonstrated his autonomy over the time that would be permitted for the shoot and following this, the production crew were working to Relph’s request. In a letter dated only eight days’ later, Relph congratulated Douglas for the work *he* had achieved in that week, not just the amount but the quality of filmmaking as well.¹⁴⁸ The data in the table Figure 16 reflects this momentum of work: although the production was still eight days over, the crew had not fallen any further behind. Significantly, Relph directs his congratulations and attributes the achievement in quality to Douglas, neglecting to fully acknowledge the labour and efforts of the crew and cast; Douglas is given autonomy by Relph over the production, and the crew’s success is framed as his success. Although Relph may be at a distance at times from the production physically and that the actuality of work being carried out is dependent on a multitude of factors, however, the pace and speed of work during the production is at least attempted to be set by him.

It was during Douglas’s brief illness that the Mr and Mrs Wetham Dorchester Print Shop was scheduled to be filmed which will now be explored in more detail.

Case Study: Mr and Mrs Wetham Dorchester Print Shop Scenes 56 and 57

¹⁴⁶ Relph to Douglas, 18 October 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

¹⁴⁷ Relph to Douglas, 26 October 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4; Relph is specifically referring here to the scenes that take place in Old Stanfield’s.

¹⁴⁸ Relph to Douglas, 26 October 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

There had been a rehearsal on the 30 September between Robin Soans and Barbara Windsor with only a small crew on set.¹⁴⁹ The following day, a stunt advisor, Bill Weston, arrived on set and parts one to eleven and thirteen for scene 57 in the print shop were completed.¹⁵⁰ Shooting of the scene continued on 2 October, however, they were unable to complete parts twenty-five, thirty and thirty-one.¹⁵¹ It was during Douglas's brief illness on the 3-5 October 1985 that final parts 25, 30 and 31 of Scene 57 in the Print Shop, Dorchester, filmed at Stinsford School were scheduled to be completed. The DPR for 3 October 1985 records that:

Bill Douglas was taken ill last night and failed to make the filming today. The insurers were informed and the doctor has prescribed 48 hours complete rest. Therefore shooting on Friday has been cancelled. Camera & sound shot tests and wild-tracks were then dismissed at approx. 13.00. Hair/Make-Up/Wardrobe and rest of shooting crew were dismissed.¹⁵²

As such, the final parts for the Print Shop scene had to rescheduled and were instead completed on the 15 October 1985.

The print shop scene begins with a camera trick and artistic trick working in unison where the camera zooms out of the *trompe l'oeuil* picture 'Blossom and Decay' (see Figure 21 on page 283) in the print shop's window and George Loveless enters, emblematic of the film's democratic blending of old and new visual culture. The exterior of the print shop was filmed on the 29 November 1985 and the DPR notes that Robin Soans (Loveless) had pulled a muscle in his back when he was lifted onto a carriage.¹⁵³ The reason for Loveless's visit is to request a banner to be made for his society of friends. Frampton and Loveless have a brief interaction in the shop, Mrs Wetham is then scripted to return, Frampton then leaves, George was originally scripted to be then shown 'innocently studying

¹⁴⁹ Daily Progress Report, No. 18, Box 2, Simon Relph Collection, BFI Special Collections.

¹⁵⁰ Daily Progress Report, No. 19, 1 October 1985, Box 2, Simon Relph Collection, BFI Special Collections.

¹⁵¹ Daily Progress Report, No. 21, 3 October 1985, K74G721 F16.

¹⁵² Daily Progress Report, No. 21, 3 October 1985, Box 2, Simon Relph Collection, BFI Special Collections.

¹⁵³ Daily Progress Report, No. 18, 29 October 1985, Box 2, Simon Relph Collection, BFI Special Collection.

prints through a zograscope', another optical device.¹⁵⁴ It is then scripted as follows:

MRS WETHAM: Mr Loveless, I'm afraid my husband is not at home.

It is one of the prints rather than the now frosty Mrs Wetham that occupies George's attention.

Mrs Wetham, in a fury fit to explode holds the door wide open.

MRS WETHAM: He is away on business.¹⁵⁵

It is at this point that Frampton was scripted to reappear in the shop and to give a print to Mrs Wetham, asking her to '[p]ass this through to your husband'.¹⁵⁶ This would then have revealed that Mrs Wetham was in fact lying to Loveless that her husband was on business. It is then scripted that because of this embarrassment and out of a nervousness of being found out that she 'doesn't quite know what to do with herself' and after placing Frampton's scroll atop of a pile of prints rolled up, a comical scene ensues where they crash down on her. In Douglas's notes on the filming of this, he specified: 'Mrs Wetham's slapstick bits at the end of the scene will have to be carefully worked out, probably with the help of a Stunt Advisor to make sure she doesn't hurt herself', highlighting that this would need to be rehearsed on the day, recognising early on preparations needed for the filming.¹⁵⁷ It is scripted: '[w]hat her hands can't manage, her upturned breasts abort quite nicely' but because of the weight of the scrolls she 'flounders in the sea of paper'.¹⁵⁸ Douglas continues to describe this scene using aquatic imagery, as though Mrs. Wetham is drowning underneath these papers, for example:

Mrs. WETHAM's face appears above the waves, gasping for air. In a frantic move for survival she strikes out for land in the shape of a brass drawer handle. She grabs hold and hangs on tight . . . A desperate Mrs. WETHAM, sensing the tidal wave about to descend on her, miraculously succeeds in sliding it back again . . . With a sigh of relief, she anchors herself to her life saver, and kicking back the waves with her dainty feet, up she comes.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ Bill Douglas, *Comrades*, (London and Boston: Faber & Faber, 1987) 42.

¹⁵⁵ Douglas, *Comrades*, 42.

¹⁵⁶ Douglas, *Comrades*, 42.

¹⁵⁷ Bill Douglas, "Donna - Notes," 18 August 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/3, BDCM.

¹⁵⁸ Eyles, Book Two, Scene 57, BDC 1/COM/3/1.

¹⁵⁹ Eyles, Book Two, Scene 57, BDC 1/COM/3/1.

It is telling that although this comical event was cut from the final film, yet it is included in full in the publication of the script published by Faber and Faber the same year as the film's release.

At the beginning of the published script of *Comrades*, there is a comment stating: '[the published script] is almost wholly taken from the shooting script dated August 1984, which in turn was based very closely upon the original screenplay in 1980'.¹⁶⁰ The Working Papers hold a large dossier of correspondence between Jewell and the publisher of the script, Faber and Faber who appears to have initiated this. This correspondence shows that the script was first sent by Jewell to Faber and Faber in November 1986.¹⁶¹ Not only does this correspondence demonstrate another area of responsibility taken on by Jewell, but the decision to publish largely the original screenplay, implies a preference for the original script before much editing or intervention by the funders, such as their dismissal of the Mrs Wetham slapstick scene which is included in full in the publication.

Looking at this scene in particular, and the labour and contributions of the aforementioned workers, it was Jewell who suggested adding in the line: '[h]e is away on business', to be said by Mrs Wetham, further enhancing the level of deception and embarrassment to be felt by Mrs Wetham when she is caught in her lie.¹⁶² In addition, on Douglas's behalf, Jewell enquired whether shops at the time had 'ting-a-ling bells' and stated that 'Bill wanted one'; the bell is heard as Loveless enters the print shop and is shown above the door when he is inside, impacting the dressing of the set.¹⁶³ This concern for authenticity contradicts the frequently suggested idea that Douglas was less concerned with period detail and even promoted or at least implied by Douglas himself by his suggestion that Jewell do the research.

Mr Wetham was originally scripted to arrive upon the scene following Mrs Wetham's comical slapstick moment and it was scripted as follows: '[a] dumbfounded Mr. WETHAM arrives upon the scene from his little back rooms,

¹⁶⁰ Douglas, *Comrades*, vii.

¹⁶¹ Letter Fiona Plowman (Faber & Faber Ltd) to Peter Jewell, 24 November 1986, BDC 1/COM/4/3, BDCM.

¹⁶² Peter Jewell, In Discussion with Author, September 2021.

¹⁶³ Peter Jewell, "List of notes for Simon Relph and Donna Grey," 2 September 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/3, BDCM.

just in time to find an unbalanced Mrs. WETHAM falling into his arms like a sack'.¹⁶⁴ Loveless then acknowledges each of them and '[a]t the door, George simply doffs an imaginary hat. There is a final shattering of something unseen as George leaves the shop. Outside we see the trompe-l'oeil picture once more, swaying to and fro in the Print Shop window'.¹⁶⁵ Although the first shot of the *trompe l'oeil* picture remains in the final cut, the zograscope and the repeated shot of the *trompe l'oeil* was left on the cutting-room floor.



Figure 21. *Blossom and Decay*, EXE BD 70035, BDCM.

In Eyles's continuity books she notes this scene in great detail. With regards to time, she notes that this scene was to be set in 'Winter/End Nov'.¹⁶⁶ Some of her notes on Mrs Wetham's slapstick routine are written as follows:

WA chair L Rack—Mrs W hold door her L—before roll to her R tip her close door – she roll R hold them R-L he block her. . . . She R-L knock easel middle floor. She R-L to chest knock table over he block her. She round table to chest through roll her R he watch L she through roll her R pull draw out . . . & to knock cabinet she exit R-L Hear George.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Eyles, Book Two, Scene 57, BDC 1/COM/3/1.

¹⁶⁵ Douglas, *Comrades*, 44.

¹⁶⁶ Eyles, Book Two, Scene 57, BDC 1/COM/3/1.

¹⁶⁷ Eyles, Book Two, Scene 57, BDC 1/COM/3/1.

These details note the eye direction of George, Mr Wetham and Mrs Wetham, the movement of bodies and place in relation to the camera. Alongside these handwritten notes there are her drawings which aid her shorthand descriptions. Furthermore, as illustrated in Figure 22 on page 282, Eyles took Polaroids of Norton and Windsor in their costumes. Prior to this Eyles noted Mrs Wetham's costume in greater detail, including the white shawl and its placement on Windsor's lower back.¹⁶⁸ In light of the delay in being able to complete the scene due to Douglas's illness and having to reschedule, Eyles's work would have been very useful to the crew to pick up filming the scene thirteen days later.

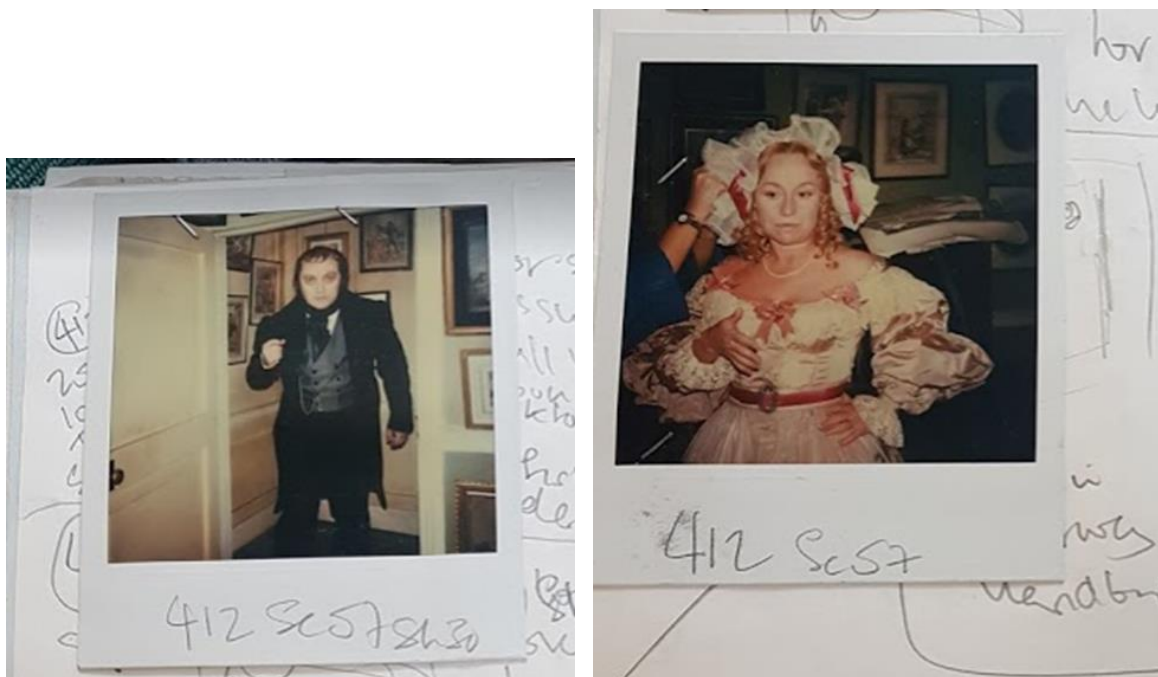


Figure 22. Mr and Mrs Wetham, Penny Eyles Continuity Notes, BDC 1/COM/3/1, BDCM.

¹⁶⁸ Eyles, Book Two, Scene 57, BDC 1/COM/3/1.

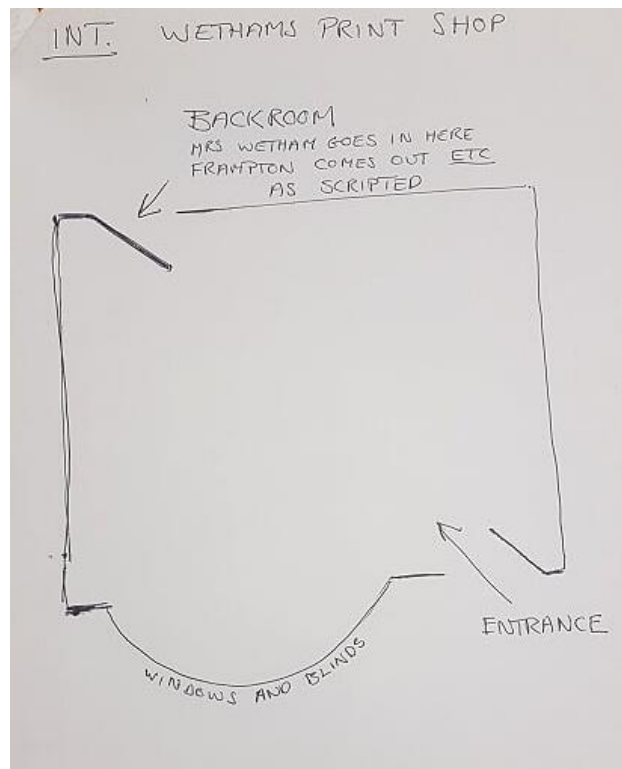


Figure 23. *Int. Wetham's Print Shop*, Sketch by Bill Douglas, 'Donna – Notes,' BDC 1/COM/3/5/3, BDCM.

For the design of the shop, Douglas provided a plan of the interior of Mr and Mrs Wetham's print shop which included directions the look and feel, stating that there should only be '2 doors, main entrance and backroom. Everything is a bit rundown and higgledy-piggledy, as if they haven't quite made it and probably never will'.¹⁶⁹ The design of the shop that Douglas provided was quite minimal for Pickwoad to work with (see Figure 23 above).

In a letter to Sir John Terry, Jewell highlighted Channel 4's resistance to Windsor playing Mrs Wetham.¹⁷⁰ The film's funders Channel 4 had been dismissive of Windsor when she was originally cast; at this point, in 1985-6, the popularity of *Carry Ons* had waned and perhaps this influenced the funder's reluctance to cast her. However, this criticism became more prominent during the editing stage of the film. For example, in April 1986, Isaacs expressed how he found 'the slapstick of Barbara Windsor's boobs, and the prints, the pigeon shit

¹⁶⁹ Bill Douglas, List Addressed to Donna Grey, Simon Relph and Redmond Morris, 18 August 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/5/3, BDCM.

¹⁷⁰ Letter from Peter Jewell to Sir John Terry, Draft, Undated, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4, BDCM.

dropping on Murray Melvin's arm, overdone. (I may be wrong)'.¹⁷¹ Although Douglas was adamant on the importance of this scene, he reluctantly agreed to this cut, eventually. Although the final scene was heavily edited and remains left on the cutting room floor, by analysing the individuals' work and contribution to the scene, I have uncovered not only hidden labour, but greater details about a character not included in the final film due to pressures from the film's funders.

Although these letters are undated, Jewell refers to the LFF screening being a fortnight ago which took place in November 1986, thereby suggesting that these were sent in December 1986.¹⁷² In his correspondence with Sir Terry, Jewell is demonstrably fighting on Douglas's behalf regarding the demands to cut the film and suggests that these were due to external commercial pressures.¹⁷³ Douglas repeatedly received criticisms from the funders that this scene was too slapstick in feel and as a result of this, he was pressured to cut it from the final film.¹⁷⁴ As such, the final scene in the film cuts quite abruptly. Mr Wetham's character was also cut from the final film, following the decision to cut Mrs Wetham's routine, as his appearance was then deemed unnecessary and at odds with the scene.

As mentioned, the Dorset sequence had fallen thirteen days behind schedule. In light of the delay, contracts had to be renegotiated and new schedules had to be compiled. It was originally planned that there would be four weeks in Australia from 18 November 1985 to 12 December 1985, and that it was estimated that they would require 26 days in total. Due to the delay of the Dorset shoot finishing, however, this then got pushed back to start on the 25 November 1985 and finish on 4 January 1986.¹⁷⁵

Australia: Production Dynamics on Location

When it came to the Australian shoot, it is clear from analysing the previously unseen DPRs held at the Film Finance Archive, that the production was plagued

¹⁷¹ Isaacs to Douglas, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

¹⁷² 30th London Film Festival Programme, 1986, EXE BD #37998, BDCM.

¹⁷³ Letter from Peter Jewell to Sir John Terry, Second Draft, Undated, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4, BDCM.

¹⁷⁴ Letter from Jeremy Isaacs to Bill Douglas, 18 April 1986, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4, BDCM (hereafter cited as Isaacs to Douglas, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4).

¹⁷⁵ DPRs, K74G721 F16.

with difficult weather conditions. As a result, as demonstrated in the table I have compiled below (see Figure 24 below) the filming in Australia took place from 25 November 1985 to 18 January 1986 and had an overage of 11 days.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, there were problems during the Australian shoot as on account of cost, the location spotting had not been as extensive. As such, some of the locations did not align with Douglas's expectations, so additional time was required to find alternative locations to film.

Date	Estimated to complete	Days to Date	Remaining	Over	Under
25/11/1985	25	1	25		
26/11/1985	24	2	24		
27/11/1985	23	3	23		
28/11/1985	22.5	4	22	0.5	
29/11/1985	22	5	21	1	
30/11/1985	22	6	20	2	
02/12/1985	21	7	19	2	
03/12/1985	21	8	18	3	
05/12/1985	21	9	17	4	
06/12/1985	21	10	16	5	
09/12/1985	22	11	15	7	
10/12/1985	21	12	14	7	
11/12/1985	20	13	13	7	
12/12/1985	19	14	12	7	
13/12/1985	18	15	11	7	
14/12/1985	17	16	10	7	
16/12/1985	16	17	9	7	
17/12/1985	15	18	8	7	
18/12/1985	14	19	7	7	
19/12/1985	13	20	6	7	
20/12/1985	12	21	5	7	
21/12/1985	11	22	4	7	
02/01/1986	10	23	3	7	
03/01/1986	10	24	2	8	
04/01/1986	9	25	1	8	
05/01/1986	8	26	0	8	
07/01/1986	7	27	-1	8	
08/01/1986	6	28	-2	8	
09/01/1986	5	29	-3	8	
10/01/1986	4	30	-4	8	
11/01/1986	3	31	-5	8	
13/01/1986	3	32	-6	9	
14/01/1986	2	33	-7	9	
15/01/1986	2	34	-8	10	

¹⁷⁶ Alan John, Production Accountant, Notes on Costs, 14 January 1986, Box 2 of 5 Production File and Budgets, Simon Relph Collection, BFI Special Collections.

16/01/1986	2	35	-9	11	
18/01/1986	1	36	-10	11	
21/01/1986	0	37	-11	11	

Figure 24. Filming in Australia Overage and Underage

As a result of the delays in Dorset, there were already financial concerns and pressures put on the cast and crew to make up the time lost. Unfortunately, however, due to rainy weather conditions in Australia financial concerns, and time pressures only worsened. There was a real threat that the film would have to be stopped because of the budgetary crisis. It was at this point that Norton claims he, along with the actors who played the Tolpuddle Martyrs, had discussed during the Australian shoot the possibility of forgoing their payment to ensure the film be finished.¹⁷⁷ In spite of having longer screen time, those who played the Martyrs were not categorised as the Principal Artistes but were categorised in the production's financial records as 'below-the-line' actors.¹⁷⁸ On first instance, as it was Norton who is categorised as 'above-the-line' who made this claim when interviewed, he might be scrutinised as using this as an opportunity to cultivate a certain image for himself and his Comrades. However, from close examination of correspondence held at the Film Finance archive, it is evident that Norton was in fact paid the same as the Martyrs (the equity minimum).¹⁷⁹ The collective willingness to forgo payment suggests a sense of camaraderie and a belief in the value of what they were creating. Similarly, during the aborted Merchant production, Douglas had expressed a willingness in his personal correspondence with Lindsay Anderson to take pay out of his own salary to have Alan Bennett contribute to the script on the Vicar's sermon, which Jewell would eventually write.¹⁸⁰ In 1984, Douglas had stated, 'I know without asking that Ismail wouldn't

¹⁷⁷ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 185.

¹⁷⁸ Statement of Production Costs, 22 November 1985, Box 2, Simon Relph Collection, BFI Special Collection.

¹⁷⁹ It was also stipulated in both the Martyrs and Norton's contracts that 'if any artist receives billing so then will the Artist in the same size, colour and position as the ...Tolpuddle Martyrs'; Casting Advice for the Tolpuddle Martyrs, 7 August 1985, Box 12, Simon Relph Collection, BFI Special Collections; Casting Advice for Alex Norton, Undated, Box 12, Simon Relph Collection, BFI Special Collections.

¹⁸⁰ Douglas was not confident that he could write this section of the script, so he sought support from his mentor Lindsay Anderson to put him in communication with Bennett. Bennett being involved came to fruition, however, and it was in fact Peter Jewell who wrote the Vicar's speech. On the one hand, that Douglas felt incapable of being able to write this speech suggests his own insecurities impacting his approach to his work. On

pay a penny, but I would gladly out of my salary ... We shouldn't of course mention my paying because I don't know how he'd feel about that and it might put him off'.¹⁸¹ These two examples demonstrate the self-sacrificing nature of film production and an acceptance that there may be no payment for their labour. David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker argues that within the creative industries, 'workers become so enamoured with their jobs that they push themselves to the limits of their physical and emotional endurance'.¹⁸² I argue that it is not just physical and emotional endurance, but financial too. Indeed, Caldwell discusses 'a third type of invisible production economy. Tens of thousands of individual aspirants in Los Angeles, from their twenties through middle age, are only able to survive and pursue deferred career gratification because they are secretly supported by unacknowledged patrons'.¹⁸³ In this sense, there is a community spirit and production culture that there are some members of the crew and cast that see the film as something much bigger, more than just a job with the intended outcome of being paid their salary.

In terms of contractual agreements, performances played by well-known stars were negotiated in terms of individual rates of pay, whereas the Tolpuddle Martyrs were each paid the same daily rate of £93.50 and weekly rate of £375.00.¹⁸⁴ Vanessa Redgrave, who played a small cameo role as Mrs Carlyle was paid £10,000, and due to delays this rose to £32,000.¹⁸⁵ With the delays and the necessary renegotiation of contracts, all of the cast members were given additional remuneration, however, with the exception of Norton, it was those

the other, it further demonstrates the continued support and contribution by Jewell; Letter from Bill Douglas to Lindsay Anderson, 14 August 1984, LA 5/01/2/9/22, Lindsay Anderson Archive, University of Stirling (hereafter cited as Douglas to Anderson, 14 August 1984, LA 5/01/2/9/22).

¹⁸¹ Douglas to Anderson, 14 August 1984, LA 5/01/2/9/22.

¹⁸² David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker, *Creative Labour: Media Work in Three Cultural Industries (Culture, Economy and the Social)*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2011) 6.

¹⁸³ John T. Caldwell, "Authorship Below-the-Line," in *A Companion to Media Authorship*, ed. Derek Johnson and Jonathan Gray, (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2013), 358.

¹⁸⁴ Casting Advice for the Tolpuddle Martyrs, 7 August 1985, Box 12, Simon Relph Collection, BFI Special Collections; Casting Advice for Alex Norton, Undated, Box 12, Simon Relph Collection, BFI Special Collections.

¹⁸⁵ Letter from Simon Relph to Jilda Smith, Film Finances Ltd, 25 October 1985, K74G721 F16, Film Finances Archive.

below-the-line workers who were willing to forgo their payment when it looked a likely possibility that the production may otherwise need to stop.

McCallum Scenes 134, 136/1-3, 137

McCallum is another of the Lanternist's guises. This scene immediately follows George Loveless's stargazing which is brought to a dramatic halt when there is an abrupt cut to a pickaxe hitting the hard, dry earth. This sequence shows that Brine is a part of a chain gang, working long and hard days in the arid landscape of the Australian outback. According to Eyles's notes, this is eighteen months into the men being in Australia.¹⁸⁶ Significantly, it is one of very few occasions in which an actor was encouraged to improvise. As Norton recalls:

Bill wanted him portrayed as a disgusting degenerate and had written a sequence where he has carnal relations with his guard dog in the darkness of his hut. Bill told me to improvise the scene and, as the camera rolled, I began by feeding the slaving animal a tasty bit of chicken and encouraging it to lick my face before giving it a full-on snog.¹⁸⁷

A crucial part of this scene is where the convicts smash his hut. Pickwood's designs includes sketches of McCallum's hut and with them, Pickwood specifies that the materials (the planks of wood) needed to be able to be 'reasonably demolish[ed] by actors with 14-16 hammers!'¹⁸⁸ This provides some insight into Pickwood's considerations of how the actors would have to interact and perform with the objects.

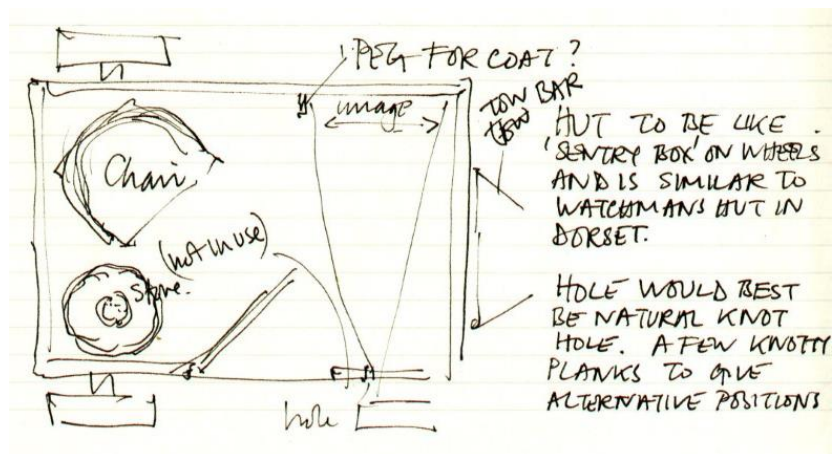


Figure 25. Int. McCallum's Hut, Sketch by Michael Pickwood, BDC 1/COM/3/2, BDCM.

¹⁸⁶ Eyles, Book Four, BDC 1/COM/3/1.

¹⁸⁷ Norton, *Life!*, 226.

¹⁸⁸ Michael Pickwood, Production Design Folder, BDC 1/COM/3/2, BDCM (hereafter cited as Pickwood, BDC 1/COM/3/2).

Pickwoad specifies that the hut needs to be made out of such materials that the actors will be able to demolish it.¹⁸⁹ This further supports the idea that these constructions and those behind them are less concerned with longevity, but rather the usability and interactions the actors need to have with them when filming. Pickwoad also writes questions on his designs. For example, on Figure 25 above, he has drawn the interior of the hut and asks where there should be 'Peg for Coat?' It is likely that a discussion would have ensued with Douglas whether this would be appropriate or not. This demonstrates that Pickwoad asks questions and makes suggestions beyond what is written in the script.

Pickwoad clearly considered the best approach of working within the geographical landscape of the road and the most cost efficient approach. Pickwoad specified that a full road did not need to be constructed and instead they could make about 25 feet of road instead.¹⁹⁰ The nature of the role entails creating illusions through half-built constructions, seen in the construction of the village of Tolpuddle as well as building half a road in Australia. Instead of spending unnecessarily both in terms of materials and labour, Pickwoad looks for alternative ways and approaches. As we can see in Figure 26 on page 292, a still from this scene, the stones make the road appear to go on into the distance. Pickwoad's sketch (Figure 27, page 293) shows that it is in fact a fictional road and the scattered rocks are just long enough to make it look like the road is much longer on screen, playing with the viewer's perspective. Working closely with Douglas's script, Pickwoad then goes on to state that there is a need for a bird to be scavenging McCallum's body and includes pictures of a broad tailed eagle which would have been used as an army mascot.¹⁹¹ As production designer he considered not just the landscape, but anything that needed to be in the frame, like the bird.

Pickwoad details that McCallum's hut should have '[a]small stove and suitable chimney need only be 12" diameter. Rickety Chair (Bad condition of period) Door opens inwards and must be made to stick slightly on opening when allows it to stick firm when men attack the hut, so dog only can escape'.¹⁹² Pickwoad's designs worked very closely with the script to such a level that they

¹⁸⁹ Pickwoad, BDC 1/COM/3/2,

¹⁹⁰ Pickwoad, BDC 1/COM/3/2.

¹⁹¹ Pickwoad, BDC 1/COM/3/2.

¹⁹² Pickwoad, BDC 1/COM/3/2.

intentionally made the door faulty and unable to open properly so it linked with McCallum's inability to escape the hut when the men attacked. On Pickwoad's design of the hut, he notes the materials that it should be constructed of (bark) and the dimensions of the hut.¹⁹³ Pickwoad questions whether there should be a peg for coat and notes the hole which would be used to create a visual effect in the film of seeing the men projected through it before they attack, another visual link.¹⁹⁴ When it came to the filming of this scene, Eyles notes the locations of the men surrounding the hut and their placements within the frame by their first name, not as characters, indicating her close working relationships.¹⁹⁵ Alternatively, Eyles by referring to the men by their first names, it could be to help aid her memory if she were to be approached by the actors for guidance.



Figure 26. Still from Comrades.

¹⁹³ Pickwoad, BDC 1/COM/3/2.

¹⁹⁴ Pickwoad, BDC 1/COM/3/2.

¹⁹⁵ Eyles, Book Four, BDC 1/COM/3/1.

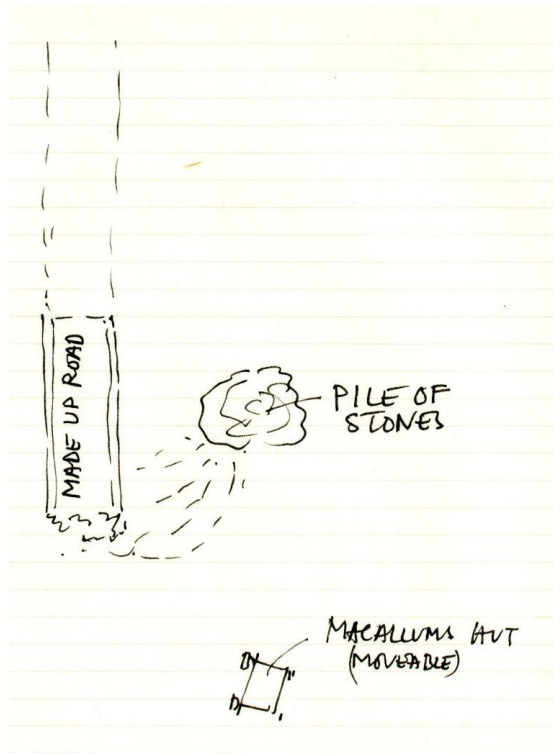


Figure 27. Sketch of Road, Michael Pickwood, BDC 1/COM/3/2, BDCM.

Post-production: The Funders and the BBFC

The editing was a laborious process which saw a total of three editors come and go. As mentioned, Audsley and Douglas edited the film as it was being shot and their first assembly that was shown to the film's investors was considered too long at 3 hours 26 minutes running time.

Mike Ellis and Simon Clayton later joined the project as editors during the post-production as Audsley was committed to begin work on Stephen Frears's production *Prick Up Your Ears* (1987).¹⁹⁶ Audsley approved of Ellis as his replacement and it was Ellis's completed cut which was shown at the London Film Festival (LFF) in 1986.¹⁹⁷ Following the screening at the LFF,¹⁹⁸ Douglas

¹⁹⁶ Eyles was the script supervisor for *Prick up your Ears* and worked with Audsley on *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Stephen Frears, 1985) and *Dangerous Liaisons* (Stephen Frears, 1988).

¹⁹⁷ Author Unknown, "About the Production and the Versions", in Booklet for *Comrades*, Dual Format DVD and Blu-ray (London: BFI, 2012), 25.

¹⁹⁸ The feature article on the film (see *Monthly Journal of the British Federation of Film Societies* (BFFS) 3:4, April 1987), suggests that the LFF screening did not have an

threatened to remove his name from the credits. Douglas referred to this version of the film as a 'hybrid version forced on us by the pressure to make the film shorter'.¹⁹⁹ Douglas then worked with Clayton and Jewell to create a version he was happy with. Following Clayton's appointment, Audsley came on in a supervisory capacity and would come at the end of the day to assess the work that had been completed. In a sense, at this stage, he was in a more consultant type role, echoing the arrangement Peter West had during *My Way Home* which I examined in Chapter Two. In a similar way to *My Ain Folk*, which saw Douglas being removed from the BFI site, at one point during the editing for *Comrades*, Douglas was physically kept out of the editing suite.²⁰⁰ It was at this point that Jewell again joined the editing process and worked alongside Clayton and Douglas, further demonstrating the level of trust Douglas had towards Jewell and that he was a reassuring presence.

As mentioned, it was the McCallum sequence with his dog which was a point of contention with the censors at the BBFC due to the bestial and violent nature of the scene. The correspondence between Douglas and James Ferman from the BBFC reveals that the scene was standing in the way of a PG certificate.²⁰¹ For the film funders, particularly Curzon, this would be a concerning issue as it would further restrict the potential audience numbers. For some time, Douglas contested their criticisms, arguing that he had in fact toned down the violence despite pressures for authenticity in other areas of the film.²⁰² Douglas personally loathed violent cinema and he highlighted: 'the film is careful to show the dog's freedom which is the moment of the audience's cleaning. Without this an English audience would undoubtedly have been morally wounded!'²⁰³ Regarding the filming of this scene, Audsley recalls:

I remember Bill's insistence that the dog had to run in a straight line, and we had this thing about the dog being the innocent who had to be... you had to let the audience off the abuse in a way where the freedom... you know, it is very complex stuff when you sit down and analyse what's going

intermission and that the final version was a further eight minutes longer than the LFF/Ellis version.

¹⁹⁹ Letter from Bill Douglas to Simon Relph, 13 November 1986, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas to Relph, 13 November 1986, BDC 1 /COM/3/5/4).

²⁰⁰ Norton, *Life!*, 229.

²⁰¹ Letter from Bill Douglas to James Ferman, BBFC, 15 March 1987, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas to Ferman, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4).

²⁰² Douglas to Ferman, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

²⁰³ Douglas to Ferman, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

on and how he would show violence... He wasn't a fan of violence, not at all. It was always seen obliquely you know like a whip of blood on the wall.²⁰⁴

Following the BBFCs comments, Clayton (the film's third editor) worked to cut this scene accordingly and to remove the 'offending shots'. Douglas wrote to Relph and said:

[w]hile I sympathise totally with the desire for a wider audience—I would like nothing better—I cannot be a willing colluder to the brutal weakening of the Brine sequence. Whatever other reasons the film antagonisers have for wanting the scene deadened it certainly is, we now run the risk of boring or sleepyfying [*sic*] the audience instead of giving them a jolt or better an electric shock. While trying to pack the audience in you may send them packing.²⁰⁵

Here, Douglas compares editing the Brine sequence to that of a crime. The need to cut and edit the film had previously been because of the film's funders' disagreements with the length and certain aspects of the script. Now, there was a more direct form of censorship.

In the Audsley edit, the intermission was placed after the Martyrs had been arrested which is where Douglas wanted it, however, the placement of the intermission would become a point of contention with Relph and the funders.²⁰⁶ Douglas wished for the intermission to be placed after the martyrs had been sent to jail but before the court room scene, whereas the funders, along with Relph, thought it best placed between the Dorset and Australian sections. Following a preview screening in June 1986, Roger Wingate from Curzon wrote to Douglas and stated:

I think it should divide two parts which are, more or less, self[-]contained entities. Part one should take us up to the point of departure for Australia and should run for approximately 1 hr 45 mins. [...] Provided audiences have enjoyed the first part, they will only be too anxious to resume their seats to know what happens to the Martyrs after transportation.²⁰⁷

The idea of an intermission was not new and had been discussed by Relph and Douglas as a possibility even as early as February 1985, long before filming had

²⁰⁴ Audsley, Interview, 9 March 2020.

²⁰⁵ Letter from Bill Douglas to Simon Relph, 22 May 1987, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4, BDCM.

²⁰⁶ See *Comrades*, Reels 1-4, VHS, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4, BDCM.

²⁰⁷ Letter from Roger Wingate to Bill Douglas, 5 June 1986, New Acquisition still to be catalogued, February 2022, BDCM. According to Jewell, this letter was ripped in half by Douglas out of frustration (there is indeed a huge rip through it), and Wingate had sent this letter after being very pleasant to Douglas at the screening and full of praise.

started. At that point, Relph had proposed eighty minutes for the Dorset sequence and forty for the Australian to the funders, however, this was not guaranteed.²⁰⁸

The funders of the film became increasingly critical of Douglas's working methods, and it is evident that during the editing process, there was a greater presence and attempt of control over decision-making. The editing stage almost saw a return of the involvement of Channel 4 and Curzon, two of the three film's funders. Although Douglas sent the rushes to Channel 4 as requested and was in regular communication throughout the film's production, as per the agreement, the process saw increased communication and involvement by the funders. There continued to be severe disagreements regarding the film's length. The first assembly that had been constructed by Douglas and Audsley was considered to be too long by the investors and Channel 4 attempted a second version. As mentioned, Audsley was already contracted to begin work on Frears's film *Prick up your Ears*, and it was this point that Ellis was appointed (by Audsley) as his replacement. Ellis then completed a further cut which was then shown at the LFF in 1986.

One of the main motivations behind the funders' desire to have a shorter film is that if the film was shorter, then they could hold more screenings of it throughout the day, thereby earning more money. The commercial potential is evidently a greater priority to them and influenced their stance in terms of negotiations. This above-the-line involvement during the editing process stage supports Spicer's consideration of the producer anticipating and having a sound knowledge of audience tastes, the idea that the producer or funders are being influenced by what they predict the audience may prefer.²⁰⁹ The film's length was also commented upon by the reviewers repeatedly following the film's release.

The concern regarding the film's length had been expressed by film's funders and the guarantors throughout the negotiations from the development stages under Merchant up until the editing. Petrie posits:

[t]he commercial intentionality of financiers must be reconciled with the artistic or communicative intentionalities of film-makers in this respect. In Britain this general economic constraint is compounded by the fact that

²⁰⁸ Relph to NFFC, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

²⁰⁹ Spicer, "Production Line," 33-34.

film-makers in this country have never enjoyed a stable source of finance, either commercial or state subsidised.²¹⁰

The contrasting and conflicting intentionalities between the financiers and filmmakers returned more prominently during the editing stage. Although there was a demonstrable degree of 'freedom' given to the filmmakers during the production of *Comrades*, it was during the post-production stage that there was a greater degree of intervention by the film's funders. The main points of contention between the film's financiers and Douglas during the production were: the film's length, the place of the intermission, the editing of particular scenes such as those depicting Mrs Wetham and McCallum that I have examined. These instances reflect commercial intentionalities driving certain decision-making, resulting not only in conflict and negotiation but impacting creative choice, and ultimately the final film. There is a blurring of boundaries here between the influence of the production team and the influence of outside consumerist pressures, situating the mass audience as the most significant influencer over the film.

In the contract between Skreba Productions and Douglas, there was a telling clause which stated:

[t]he Director hereby agrees and undertakes with Skreba to cooperate fully with the editor of the Film in the editing thereof and Skreba for its part agrees and undertakes with the Director to ensure that the individual producer of the Film will consult fully with the Director as to the final cut of the Film with a view to such final cut being the final cut as required by the Director and in the event of the Director being dissatisfied with the final cut of the Film as approved by Channel 4 the Director shall be entitled to have his name removed from the Film's credits.²¹¹

This was a result of Jewell's negotiating on Douglas's behalf. For example, in discussion with Sir Terry, Jewell wrote:

Bill sees himself retaining a fair measure of control over a wide spread of the film's elements, including editing. We would be grateful if there is some way for this to be acknowledged in his contract, to ensure that he is granted a major share in final approval of the film in its finished form (or reserve the right to disassociate himself entirely if this right were removed). This may seem unnecessarily paranoid but (again in my view) there have been too many instances in the history of film – including recent times –

²¹⁰ Petrie, *Creativity and Constraint*, 205.

²¹¹ Agreement between Skreba Productions Limited and Bill Douglas, Month not included, 1985, BDC 1/COM/3/4, BDCM.

where the filmmaker's rights have been trampled upon usually in the name of commercial interests which posterity has invariably rejected.²¹²

Not only does this highlight the hierarchical structures at play here, but it also anticipates that there may be difficulty between Douglas and the editor, likely due to Douglas's reputation gained from the editing of the *Trilogy*. This prophesising of potential conflict and pre-emptive measure instigated by Jewell during the contractual negotiations is likely to be based on Douglas's experience during the *Trilogy* as well as Jewell's witnessing of this.

During the editing, Douglas sent a version to Jeremy Isaacs which he claimed was unfinished, for his comments.²¹³ Isaacs took this opportunity to provide some criticisms to Douglas; Isaacs seemed regretful that he had not criticised some aspects of the script earlier. Isaacs commented that this script was 'too wordy, too prosy, too obvious' and suggested that the Dorset scenes were too repetitive.²¹⁴ Isaacs really emphasised the need for cuts and put pressure on Douglas when he said:

I hope that you are prepared to make changes, and cuts. Unless you are, I fear that COMRADES will be heavier and prosier, and less moving and dramatic than it can be, and ought to be. If, on the other hand, you are prepared to be as rigorous in the cutting room as you have been with your previous films, then COMRADES can be your masterpiece.²¹⁵

Isaacs did have some positive comments, particularly with regards to the visual style and the composition of the images, calling Douglas's work 'masterly'.²¹⁶ Other aspects he praised were: the sense of community in Tolpuddle, the bright heat of Australia, the goodness of the martyrs as represented on screen, and he also commented on the recurring Lanternist as a 'marvelous [*sic*] device'.²¹⁷ Isaacs commented on the risk of the martyrs 'turning into goody goodies and . . . the rich turning into caricatures'.²¹⁸ He also made a major structural criticism which he considered to be a fatal mistake; that the audience knew that the committee would be formed to provide support to the Tolpuddle Martyrs' families and to work on the men's release before the men have been transported to

²¹² Jewell to Terry, BDC 1/COM/3/4.

²¹³ Letter from Bill Douglas to Jeremy Isaacs, 19 April 1986, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas to Isaacs, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4).

²¹⁴ Isaacs to Douglas, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

²¹⁵ Isaacs to Douglas, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

²¹⁶ Isaacs to Douglas, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

²¹⁷ Isaacs to Douglas, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

²¹⁸ Isaacs to Douglas, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

Australia. Isaacs was adamant that the audience should not know that the men will be returning, and rather, that it should be put on the audience to infer that the men will return. He states: 'I find parts of this middle passage of the film the least convincing work you have done. Virtually all of it, I believe, can go. It should be cut, and will not be missed'.²¹⁹ Douglas wrote a brief letter responding to Isaacs's criticisms and suggested that it was a mistake for him to see it in its unfinished state, however, he hoped that the next time he sees the film his 'qualms [will] have been assuaged' and he thanked him again for his support.²²⁰ Instead of responding more specifically to Isaacs's criticisms one by one, he wrote to Relph a more direct response to Isaacs's criticisms in detail, leaving it to Relph's discretion whether it would be constructive to pursue the argument.²²¹ Douglas stated that Isaacs's pleas for surgery would leave scars 'which would show!' and he appeared to staunchly oppose the edits Isaacs suggested.²²² The way in which Douglas ultimately had to concede on some of their requests suggests his occasional pliancy, despite his reputation for being a difficult collaborator.

Following this correspondence in April 1986 and after the dub had been added, Relph met with Isaacs, David Rose, and Colin Leventhal in July of that year.²²³ What is clear is that they were still resolute in their opinion that the film needed to be shorter. Relph said to Douglas that 'Jeremy did say he would show the film at any length you want on television, but for cinema he was adamant that 3 hours 26 minutes was unacceptable'.²²⁴ Although Douglas acknowledged Relph's help and contribution, he was not afraid to convey his dismay and disappointment with the final cut.²²⁵ Douglas stated:

[w]hile I am prepared to go along with the new cut and do not want to broadcast my dissatisfaction at the way we have got there – first one editor, then another editor and lately no editor at all – I should say that if I was pushed into a corner at any interview I would have to give an honest opinion.²²⁶

²¹⁹ Isaacs to Douglas, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

²²⁰ Douglas to Isaacs, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

²²¹ Douglas to Relph, 20 April 1986, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

²²² Douglas to Relph, 20 April 1986, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

²²³ Douglas to Relph, 20 April 1986, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

²²⁴ Letter from Simon Relph to Bill Douglas, 21 July 1986, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4, BDCM.

²²⁵ Douglas to Relph, 13 November 1986, BDC /COM/3/5/4.

²²⁶ Douglas to Relph, 13 November 1986, BDC /COM/3/5/4.

Indicating a return in behaviour of Douglas's threatening their reputation, he goes on further to say:

I am also alarmed when I hear that you still feel the film is too long. Regardless of the likes and dislikes of the investors, productions staff, or the crew and their friends, I didn't shoot scenes such as Mrs Wetham in the Print Shop or McCallum and his dog unless they had something to say.²²⁷

In August 1986, Channel 4 attempted a second version using a black and white dupe, by Rose along with the editor, Bill Diver.²²⁸ Rose expressed concern regarding 'the sense of impatience expressed by nearly all those who have seen the film' due to its perceived lack of narrative clarity and in their edit, tried to 'demonstrate a way of carrying the audience at all times'.²²⁹

This battle over the editing continued and it was at this point that the film's third editor came to work with Douglas. With regards to the censor's cut, Clayton, the third editor expressed a considerable degree of hurt from Douglas's actions:

[w]hen Mick and I discussed the cut we decided that the only way to get over the problem with the censor and let it still make sense was the way that we did it but at the same time we felt that it would be dishonest to do anything other than take out 'the offending' shots. The sequence was not what you wanted and we could not make it what you wanted without offending the censor. I did it with the help of Finn, Mick came and looked at it and approved it. After you saw it for the first time what we had to do to make it possible for you to watch it on the screen was almost impossible but, as in the past Finn and I managed to do it, this would not have been possible if we did not have the will to do it, a commitment to the film and your vision of it.²³⁰

Clearly, the editors were trying to navigate around the censor's request as well as Douglas's wishes, but that ultimately, they could not risk offending the censor or to ignore their request. Douglas's stance here echoes how he described the Lanternist 'sometimes he'd comment on the action, sometimes be part of it; sometimes be with the Martyrs, sometimes against them'.²³¹ Certainly, there were times where he commented on the work of the crew, sometimes he would be with

²²⁷ Douglas to Relph, BDC /COM/3/5/4.

²²⁸ Letter from David Rose to Bill Douglas, 13 August 1986, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4, BDCM (hereafter cited as Rose to Douglas, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4).

²²⁹ Rose to Douglas, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4.

²³⁰ Letter from Simon Clayton to Bill Douglas, 19 May 1987, BDC 1/COM/3/5/4, BDCM.

²³¹ Andrew, "Releases," 16.

them and work collaboratively and supportively and sometimes he would be against them.

As a result of Douglas making the cuts to the 'offensive dog scene', the film received a PG rating. This was preferred as it would make the film more accessible to a wider audience. However, the film was still long with a running time of 183 minutes which could make it difficult to schedule multiple screenings per day. The film was shown twice a day at the Curzon cinema, Shaftesbury Avenue (West End).²³² Douglas conveyed his dissatisfaction in a letter to Relph, commenting: 'I notice the Phoenix is showing *La Dolce Vita*, a three hour film without an intermission. The film is being given three showings per day and the final curtain coming down at a thoughtful time for the cinema[']s patrons'.²³³

Conclusion

By investigating the labour and creative contribution to the production of *Comrades*, I have demonstrated the value of a collection of archival materials as the basis for a production-centred approach as it allows for a reinterpretation of a film's production. This chapter provides a different understanding of the landscape of activity as it accounts for labour that has been hidden or previously unacknowledged. The case studies of the script supervisor, the script editor, the production designer, and the editor has revealed more about labour that hinges its success on the basis of its invisibility.

Despite film productions being an impermanent site or space, there is a sense during the production of *Comrades*, that by working together, crew and cast are united through their shared experience. Not only did some of the crew work together previously, but a number of individuals also went on to work with one another regularly throughout their career. Eyles and Audsley, and Pickwood and Harry, for example, both worked together in numerous productions. Douglas

²³² The film was shown at 2.30pm and 7.30pm Monday to Saturday and 3.30pm and 7.30pm on Sunday; Advert for *Comrades* screening, *Time Out*, August 26-2 September 1987, BDC 1/COM/5/1, BDCM.

²³³ Letter from Bill Douglas to Simon Relph, 3 November 1987, New Acquisition February 2022, still to be catalogued, BDCM (hereafter cited as Douglas to Relph, 1987).

would also go on to write one of the leading roles (Gil Martin) in his next project, *Justified Sinner*, for Norton.²³⁴

At the heart of the auteur debate there is the notion that the director is a site of individual creativity. Ultimately, this can be challenged, that there are sources of creative input which can be hidden and that suggestions made by these labourers are often masked by top-down accounts of the creative hierarchies due to showmanship as well as embedded hierarchical structures that impact the accounts that are captured. By examining the production at a granular, micro level, this chapter demonstrates how closely these labourers worked with the script and other documents created by Douglas as a form of guidance and direction. Therefore, there is both individual and collective labour to consider as part of the creative process of film production.

Evidently, there is a return of greater involvement and interventions by the producer, funders, and censors. Ultimately, agency appears to become more complex and constrained in the final stages and as much as Douglas threatened to remove his name, they were firm on their required cuts and changes, leading him to eventually concede on some points of contention such as the Mrs Wetham slapstick scene. The film itself reasserts the value of community, unity and of working together. Although some saw it merely as a job, some were willing to work unpaid for the good of the film and the production culture was such that there was a willingness to sacrifice financial gain from the project.

Comrades was released much later than Douglas had initially anticipated; he had hoped that it would be completed and released in time to celebrate the 150th Tolpuddle Martyrs anniversary in 1984.²³⁵ As I have examined in Chapters Four and Five, due to the problems securing finance, the aborted production under Merchant as well as the fairly lengthy editing stage due to negotiations with its funders, the film 'previewed at the Hampstead Everyman before opening at Curzon West End (London) on 28 August 1987.'²³⁶ Petrie notes that the film 'played for only six weeks in London at the Curzon West End' and that Roger Wingate 'decided, in spite of Curzon's heavy investment, not to continue with the film in the West End and to put it into another Curzon cinema once its fixed-term

²³⁴ Norton, *Life!*, 229.

²³⁵ Jewell, "Ex-Comrades," BDC 1/COM/1/4, 1.

²³⁶ Newland, "We Come," 333.

booking had come to an end'.²³⁷ Paul Newland states 'it was withdrawn from circulation after only six weeks, and despite a VHS release in 1989 it effectively vanished from public view'.²³⁸ Douglas conveyed his dissatisfaction to the film's distribution in his correspondence with Simon Relph, writing:

I recall being told that the cinemas around the country would show the film if I cut out the offensive dog scene. I complied. Now, from what I know about the film[']s distribution plans for the remainder of this year it doesn't look to me as if the promise is to be fulfilled.²³⁹

Newland and Douglas's comments both suggest that following the London screening there were no further screenings. In contrast, Petrie comments that the 'film did well in art-house cinemas but not in mainstream venues'.²⁴⁰ Indeed, materials concerning the release of the film show that after its London screenings, the film went on to be programmed across the country at the Cornerhouse, Manchester, Cinema 3 in Canterbury, Glasgow Film Theatre, the Chapter in Cardiff, Cinema City in Norwich, Cambridge Arts, Ipswich Film Theatre, Oxford Phoenix, Sheffield Anvil, Tyneside Cinema, Derby Metro,²⁴¹ and Edinburgh Film House.²⁴²

²³⁷ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 187.

²³⁸ Newland, "We Come," 333.

²³⁹ Douglas to Relph, 1987.

²⁴⁰ Petrie, "Lanternist Revisited," 187.

²⁴¹ "Comrades: Where you Can See the Film in Britain," *NALGO Journal*, BDC 1/COM/5/2, BDCM.

²⁴² Advert in *Movie Guardian*, 27 August 1987, 11, BDC 1/COM/5/2, BDCM.

Conclusion

By closely examining the films that Douglas produced between 1972 and 1987: the *Trilogy* and *Comrades*, and by taking a production-centred approach, this thesis has uncovered extensive new knowledge at various stages of their productions. It has unveiled further knowledge about the workers or rather media makers that contributed to the films, as well as work to reposition Douglas as 'difficult'¹ or as a 'victim' which he has been framed as in earlier scholarly work.² This thesis comprehensively explores and uncovers constraining and enabling factors during the films' productions as well as an understanding of certain decision-making processes and choices that were made. In so doing, this thesis demonstrates that challenges faced during the productions were much more complex than previous scholarly work has suggested. Further, by examining the causes of delays to the productions and how funding was secured, it has demonstrated that there were many interconnecting factors, different intentionalities of key individuals, and wider contextual impacts, which constrained the productions.

Returning to the central research questions, firstly, to what extent did Douglas's film productions experience constraint as well as creative opportunity as a result of the British film industry's infrastructure of the 1970s and 1980s? This project has demonstrated that at the macro-level, the government provided inadequate support to the film industry. Across the period, the industry saw a withdrawal of the few initiatives that were in place to support it, such as the Eady Levy, with the Government having no intention of replacing or finding alternatives to these schemes. As such, the support from key individuals in senior positions at the BFI Production Board like Mamoun Hassan (whose support continued up until the end of Douglas's life), Jeremy Isaacs at Channel 4, and later Simon Relph at British Screen, was vital to Douglas being able to produce the films he did. Douglas's *Trilogy* did not align with the new direction of the BFI Production Board under Barrie Gavin and Peter Sainsbury, however, aside from the script grant, the financial support had fortunately been secured before Hassan's departure, which meant that *My Way Home* was still able to go ahead. This thesis

¹ Hoyle, "Bill Douglas Trilogy," 230.

² Graham, "Glimpse Given"; O'Hagan qtd in Webb, "Philistines"; Street, *British National Cinema*, 177.

has demonstrated that shifts in leadership at the BFI Production Board did mean that there was a loss of Hassan's quite hands-on involvement and enthusiasm, a quality that may not have been appreciated by Douglas initially but was a characteristic he criticised Sainsbury for lacking.

The level of financial support the BFI gave to Douglas was unparalleled in comparison to the average grant filmmakers received from them at the time. It was unusual for a filmmaker to repeatedly receive funding from the BFI, particularly full funding for a project. Terence Davies, for example, had to seek additional support from the Greater London Authority for *Death and Transfiguration*, his final instalment of his own childhood trilogy. Douglas had applied for finance at a crucial time of change for the BFI Production Board and benefitted from Hassan taking the Board's filmmaking output in a new direction. In terms of the finance for *Comrades*, the film received the largest contribution (£1 million) that Channel 4 had given to a single film, and this had been secured by Isaacs who had to present and justify this expense to the broadcaster's senior board. From 1971-1987, the level of financial support that Douglas received was thanks to support from key individuals negotiating and advocating on his behalf, which meant that, financially at least, he was able to secure greater finance than others who also sought support from these institutions.

The financial support from the BFI did however come with its own challenges and constraints. *My Childhood* became a beacon for the BFI Production Board's new direction at the beginning of the 1970s. The BFI were acting as an agent in the cultural drift of non-commercial cinema. As such, this may have brought additional pressures in terms of delivering the film so it could be screened at prominent international festivals such as Cannes or Berlin. Undoubtedly, however, the BFI Production Board was a vital resource for filmmakers making low-medium budget films and as Douglas's film, *My Childhood*, was a key example of the Board's new direction, the film was a contributing factor and asset to the Board in becoming a sustaining force for both experienced and new British filmmakers during the 1970s.

Although the BFI was shifting and working to reposition its role in the British film industry across the 1970s, it still took on some role as a training ground for filmmakers. As such, some of the production conditions for the films were less than ideal. Although some of the typical conditions of the BFI Production Board

films suited Douglas's way of working such as the use of non-professionals and working on location, he was constrained in that he had to work with new crew members for each film due to the BFI's supposed intention to give the most experience to the greatest amount of people. Douglas himself also suffered financially, and he was not alone in this as a consequence of being funded by the BFI. There was also evidently a misunderstanding by senior BFI personnel, after Hassan left at the reality of the filmmaker's financial situation and Douglas's dependence on receiving a maintenance grant from the BFI. What this thesis also highlights is the importance of reputation for both above- and below-the-line labour, as well as an institution. Douglas recognised this and in a desperate measure threatened to speak out publicly about the BFI. However, ultimately, he did not choose to act on this.

Being funded by the Production Board had its limitations in terms of distribution of these films as shown in Chapter Three. Examining the distribution and exhibition of the film and incorporating this within the analysis of the production has revealed much greater knowledge and understanding about why Douglas's *Trilogy* experienced further constraint. Significantly, however, this chapter revealed that this was a well-known problem for all filmmakers supported by the Board at this time. In fact, Douglas's films arguably received better distribution than other BFI films as they received international television screenings and screenings at a number of Regional Film Theatres and film clubs across Britain. I have established, however, that this was largely due to the active involvement and efforts by Douglas and Judy Cottam that helped to achieve this, as well as further financial impacts that Douglas took on personally for the benefit of promoting the film.

This thesis has demonstrated that the lengthy production time of eight years for *Comrades* was in fact largely due to the lengthy time it took to secure funding and a producer, not due to difficult or obstinate behaviour as is implied in previous analyses. By the 1980s, due to a lack of finance available, film productions were often made up of a myriad of funding sources, this in turn meant that there were a greater number of stakeholders to navigate and appease. This was a new challenge for Douglas, who had up until this point received funding from one sole funder. The challenge of navigating different stakeholders' requirements became evident particularly during the editing of *Comrades* in

which lengthy negotiations regarding Barbara Windsor's appearance and the bestial nature of the McCallum sequence were criticised and expressed as concerns by the funders. During *Comrades*, Douglas also had to adapt to new ways of working such a filming out of sequence order and editing as the principal photography was being carried out. This new way of working demonstrated the level of trust he had towards Mick Audsley in leaving him to edit as shooting continued. Moreover, another new challenge came as a result of the higher budget and the sources of the funding, as the production had to adhere to union agreements further impacting choice of crew appointed.

This project has shed new light on the working relationships between Douglas and the two producers associated with *Comrades*, particularly the aborted production under Ismail Merchant. By examining Merchant and Relph's involvement with the project, this thesis has revealed the differences in their approaches to the project and their roles as producers. Furthermore, the difficulty in securing a producer and the lengthy time that this took further indicates the special importance of the independent producer during this period and that those who were successful in raising finance were limited to select individuals. Ironically, these independent producers demonstrated the entrepreneurial spirit that Thatcher's government so fervently advocated. Hassan was strategic in his circulation of the script and the lack of standard scriptwriting format that Douglas adhered to with poetic prose may have contributed to the delay as it became difficult for the commercially focused to understand and appreciate it.

To turn to the second research question: how can an in-depth analysis of one filmmaker's oeuvre, at various stages of production contribute to the field of production studies research? This approach enables a tracking of broader contextual shifts in which a filmmaker works in and has to navigate. By analysing different levels of a production hierarchy and examining different roles and contributors that worked with the filmmaker at various stages of the production, new insights that a solely top-down or macro approach would allow have been offered. A framework of political economy in production studies has historically dominated the field. Havens et al. argue that a framework of political economy in production studies provides an 'incomplete explanation of the role of human agents'.³ Further, as mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Havens and Lotz

³ Havens et al., "Critical Media," 240.

describe the approach as a “jet plane” perspective of media analysis that focuses on power relations and media ownership, and encourage scholars to take a “helicopter view” or rather a micro approach that focuses on the details and complexities.⁴ Indeed, scholars within the field increasingly tend to centralise their focus on the micro-level interactions, often concentrating on below-the-line workers whose histories have been obscured or hidden. This thesis has demonstrated that by engaging with a micro-level analysis in the study of a director’s oeuvre, taking a holistic approach to go beyond analysis of the director and examine other media makers, there is a much greater understanding of collaboration, the working environment and production culture. Moreover, by examining different stages of production such as pre-production planning stages which entailed time consuming periods trying to secure a producer, the difficulty of securing funding, then moving on to the principal photography which uncovered greater knowledge of working relationships and processes of different roles, and then examining the post-production stage including distribution, a much deeper understanding of different types of constraints and creative opportunities faced across one filmmaker’s oeuvre are uncovered. Thus, my contribution to the field of production studies is that it demonstrates that by engaging with a range of analyses of both above-the-line, below-the-line, as well as institutional operational structures such as the BFI, and by examining various stages of production, it helps to bring about a comprehensive view of how an independent filmmaker worked, as well the lived realities of receiving funding from key institutions in the period. More specifically, by taking this approach and by analysing and utilising an individual filmmaker’s oeuvre as a case study, new knowledge of independent filmmaking in the 1970s and 1980s and how the industry operated is achieved.

By utilising a large dossier of working documents in the study of one filmmaker’s oeuvre and by carrying out a number of interviews with Douglas’s collaborators, this research has reappraised creative labour and contribution, challenges, and constraints, and has worked to reposition and reframe the understanding of a filmmaker’s productions. For instance, Douglas wrote a number of personal reflections on his experience of filmmaking, notes of criticisms, and a considerable amount of unsent or draft correspondence. By

⁴ Havens et al., “Critical Media,” 239.

examining these materials in particular, this project has revealed further details and knowledge of his views and perception of the production processes. I have approached these sources with caution and employed these materials to examine Douglas's view of his management of the productions. This analysis revealed further details about Douglas's development and approach to managing the production. His approach is further highlighted in a lecture he gave whilst at the University of Strathclyde when he stated:

I do not deny the vital contribution of cast and crew—Film Editor, Cameraman, Art Director, Composer etc.—all of whom leave their mark on the finished production, but it is the film-maker himself or herself who is ultimately responsible for what stays in and what goes out!⁵

Not only do the materials offer further insight and opportunities for analyses, but the analysis more broadly reflects upon and highlights the value of a collection of materials as the basis for a production-centred study.

This thesis is the first study on Bill Douglas that extensively uses largely unresearched or previously unseen archival materials as the basis for a production-centred approach to analysis, examining not only Douglas but a range of above- and below-the-line contributors that he worked with during the *Trilogy* and *Comrades*. By adopting a methodology that examines a large and rich set of working materials across one filmmaker's oeuvre, and in doing so, repurposing these documents for a different intended function, there is an opportunity to reappraise and uncover further details of film productions, expanding the knowledge of contribution of labour and certain decision-making processes during a film production. By analysing the archival materials in detail and taking a holistic approach rather than focusing solely on those above-the-line, extensive reconfiguration of the knowledge of each of the films' productions has been achieved. In addition, this work has uncovered a much greater understanding of labour that hinges on its invisibility and the various forms of contribution of a much wider range of individuals than has previously been considered or discussed.

Crucially, due to the materials available to me, I was able to examine the distribution of the *Trilogy*. As noted in Chapter Three, this is an often overlooked aspect by production studies scholars. Therefore, this research offers previously unknown details about this stage of the film's life. This in turn allowed for a further

⁵ Bill Douglas, "Stage and Screen" Lecture, BDC 1/ XAD/3/1, BDCM.

unveiling of the constraints of the wider exhibition sector and landscape in Britain during the 1970s. By tracing negotiations in detail through close analysis of correspondence held in the various repositories I visited, the value of analysing a wide collection of materials within a production-centred approach is highlighted as it allowed for much greater insight into the reasons behind certain decision-making.

This production-centred project has also offered a different approach to the study of an 'auteur' and unveiled more nuanced elements of agency, creative contribution, intentionalities and motivations of different individuals and institutions, and decision-making processes. In so doing, it provides an opportunity to reveal developments of a filmmaker's processes and approach to the work, whilst also uncovering factors that impacted and governed certain creative choices. This thesis acknowledges the detrimental impact that auteur theory has had on film studies, film history and the way film is discussed, as well as its impact at the granular level of the production site itself in terms of hierarchical implications and pressures. In so doing, this thesis contributes to the production studies field an example of studying a filmmaker that is not narrow or limited by centring on the filmmaker alone but works to examine the production beyond the director. By adopting a holistic framework, analysing various media makers at different tiers of the production hierarchy across different stages of production, a comprehensive understanding of constraints and creative opportunities faced is achieved.

By tracking one filmmaker's oeuvre, this project has uncovered developments in his approach to the work and his role as a 'manager'. Although Douglas has been described by some as 'tempestuous'⁶ and 'mercurial',⁷ and previous scholarly work has largely focused on the conflicts during the production of the *Trilogy*, close analysis of the archival materials from across his oeuvre reveals that Douglas expressed his concern for other crew members' financial circumstances during *My Way Home* and *Comrades*. Douglas conveyed his dismay at the treatment of Susie Figgis by Merchant and requested payment for Judy Cottam and Charles Rees to acknowledge additional work they had done during *My Way Home*. In addition, when it became apparent that *Comrades* was

⁶ Hassan, "His Pain".

⁷ Newland, "Symposium," 286.

running behind schedule and over budget, Douglas was able to manage the situation, sustaining the crew's efforts to make sure they did not fall further behind. Unfortunately, however, there were some factors like the weather and lack of confirmed and definitive locations in Australia that impacted the production schedule.

Unfortunately, as I mentioned in the introduction of this research, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were limitations in being able to return to the Film Finances Archive. On my first visit, I was able to examine half off the contents held there that related to *Comrades*. As such, there is further archival research that could be carried out that could potentially allow for new information about the production.

The parameters of the project focused on 1972-1987 on the production of Douglas's films. This conscious decision allowed for an effective and in-depth examination of working dynamics, labour, and decision-making in consideration of the final texts that were available. In future research, this could be extended further to examine the work at the end of Douglas's career and engage with the burgeoning subfield in production studies of unmade films or 'shadow cinema'.⁸ Duncan Petrie's excellent chapter in Dan North's (ed.) *Sights Unseen: Unfinished British Films*, provides a useful overview of Douglas's unfinished projects.⁹ Petrie's examination centres on the scripts and traces thematic concerns across Douglas's completed and unrealised work.¹⁰ An alternative approach could be to focus on other working materials and documents available outside of the scripts such as a significant dossier of correspondence held at the BDCM, to then situate the analysis in relation to wider context, funding sources that were available and negotiations that took place. Since the publication of *Sights Unseen* in 2008, Peter Jewell has discovered and donated new pre-production materials relating to these projects to the BDCM, and following Simon Relph's death in 2016, his collection has been received by the BFI which includes some additional material relating to *Flying Horse*.

⁸ James Fenwick, Kieran Foster, and David Eldridge, eds., *Shadow Cinema: The Historical and Production Contexts of Unmade Films* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2021).

⁹ See Petrie, "Transparency".

¹⁰ Petrie, "Transparency".

Although discussions of other filmmakers have been included when appropriate, a more extensive comparative analysis to Douglas's contemporaries such as Terence Davies—who also made a trilogy of films a few years after Douglas—with a same approach of analysing working materials would be productive to uncover further any similarities and differences in their experiences of working the BFI Production Board. Similarly, a comparison to other filmmakers who received funding from Channel 4 would convey other constraints filmmakers faced as well as creative opportunities within the framework of a television provider and uncover greater details of any differences in their approach to working with different filmmakers.

Ultimately, this thesis has provided an extensive unveiling of Douglas's productions and independent production during the 1970s and 1980s from key British film funders during this period. This thesis offers an original analysis and an interpretation of Douglas's Working Papers and a vast range of other related archival materials and uses these materials to analyse creative opportunities and constraints faced during the production of Douglas's films between 1972 and 1987. In addition, this research demonstrates that by taking a production-centred approach in the study of one filmmaker's oeuvre, it is possible to uncover much greater detail of both the productions of the filmmaker in question, but also the collaborators and institutional and industrial frameworks they and their fellow media makers were working within.

Postscript

Unbeknownst to Douglas and his peers, *Comrades* was to be his only feature film before his untimely death on 18 June 1991. At the end of his life, he was working on two very different projects: *Justified Sinner* and *Flying Horse*. The first, an adaptation of James Hogg's eighteenth century novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, would see him return to Scotland and was a project that Douglas had been working on intermittently for around twelve years.¹¹ In 1990, Douglas had been offered the position of Carnegie Visiting Fellow for the University of Strathclyde from 1 May 1990 until December 1990.¹² Douglas had begun location spotting (See Figure 28, page 303) and had support from Mamoun Hassan. The project had obtained 'partial funding from Channel 4',¹³ as the broadcaster had committed £600,000 of a proposed production budget of £2 million.¹⁴ Unfortunately, however, this was withdrawn when their new head of production, David Aukin, came into the post.¹⁵ In spite of this setback, Douglas (with assistance from Andrew Noble) continued to pursue the project, and was in negotiations with Sean Connery as late as April 1991 to be involved—he had 'a long monologue for Old Dal...in mind for Sean Connery'.¹⁶ Following Douglas's death, it seemed that BBC Scotland were interested in filming the script 'with,

¹¹ John Caughie, *The Companion to British and Irish Cinema* (London: Cassell and British Film Institute, 1996), 59.

¹² Letter from University of Strathclyde to Bill Douglas, 12 December 1989, BDC 1/XAD/3/2, BDCM.

Douglas received £13,500 remuneration for the appointment and this was a very busy time for Douglas. Whilst in Glasgow for his Carnegie Fellowship he was involved in many other things: he was a member of the independent jury for the 1960 MacTaggart Film and Video Production Prize at the University of Glasgow; he chaired a session on 'East European Cinema and Television Now' for the department of Slavonic Languages and Literatures at the University of Glasgow; he was invited to the 12th International Festival of Film and Television in the Celtic countries; he contributed to the Strathclyde Tapes Project with Strathclyde school children; he was approached by the Scottish Working People's History Trust asking if he would be a Trustee for their project (1991), BDC 1/XAD/3/2, BDCM.

¹³ Letter from Andrew Noble to Andrew Fyall, Scottish Television PLC, 27 September 1989, BDC 1/XAD/1/3, BDCM.

¹⁴ Duncan Petrie, "Transparency and Illusion: The Unrealised Films of Bill Douglas," in *Sights Unseen: Unfinished British Films*, ed. Dan North (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2008), 72–73.

¹⁵ Petrie, "Transparency," 72–73.

¹⁶ Letter from Bill Douglas (typed by Peter Jewell) to Andrew Noble, 15 May 1991, BDC 1/XAD/1/2, BDCM.

ideally, a young Scot as director',¹⁷ although there were discussions of Lindsay Anderson¹⁸ or Terence Davies¹⁹ being involved, no film has been realised.

At the same time Douglas was working on *Justified Sinner*, he was also working on *Flying Horse*, a script on the pioneering photographer, Eadweard Muybridge. Set during the Gold Rush, Douglas planned to film on location in San Francisco and the Yellowstone National Park.²⁰ With Simon Relph associated with the project, Douglas had secured '£15,000 of development finance from British Screen'.²¹ As Noble commented, however, it would have been likely to have needed 'American resources to meet its extraordinary scale and scope'.²²

More broadly, around this time, Thatcher was towards the end of her third premiership and in June 1990 the Downing Street Summit took place. This event looked to be a promising moment for the film industry as it indicated that the government were finally taking an interest in the industry. Geoffrey Macnab argues that the film industry were able to convince 'the government that there were practical reasons for supporting the British film industry: reasons to do with job creation, tax revenue and inward investment, as well as prestige'.²³ Phil Wickham and Erinna Mettler, however, contest that 'there did not seem to be any interest in a commercial production strategy from the government—indeed as the summit achieved little that it could be said that this period continued until the foundation of the National Lottery in 1994'.²⁴ In a lecture Douglas gave to students at the University of Strathclyde whilst he was teaching there, he queried whether it was due to the mention of God and religion that perhaps contributed to his difficulty in securing the money for *Justified Sinner*.²⁵ In light of the wider landscape of the British film industry towards the end of his life, it is likely that Douglas would have continued to struggle to secure funding for his project. Thus, due to the lack of funding available in Britain at the time, it is understandable that

¹⁷ Letter from Andrew Noble to Sean Connery, 19 June 1991, BDC 1/XAD/1/3, BDCM.

¹⁸ Letter from Peter Jewell to Andrew Noble, 28 April 1991, BDC 1/XAD/1/2, BDCM.

¹⁹ Letter from Simon Relph to Andrew Noble, 1 July 1991, BDC 1/XAD/1/2, BDCM.

²⁰ Author Unknown, "Bill's Flying House is Taking Off," Strathclyde University publication, BDC 1/XAD/1/1, BDCM.

²¹ Petrie, "Transparency," 73.

²² Andrew Noble, "Obituary for the Glasgow Herald," Draft, BDC 1/XAD/1/2, BDCM.

²³ Geoffrey Macnab, *Stairways to Heaven: Rebuilding the British Film Industry* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018), 3.

²⁴ Wickham and Mettler, "Back to the Future," 3.

²⁵ Bill Douglas, "Scotland and Film" Lecture, BDC 1/XAD/3/1, BDCM.

Douglas started to direct his efforts to *Flying Horse*, a film that would require and be more likely to attract American finance.



Figure 28. Photograph by Donald MacKay of Andrew Noble, Bill Douglas, Judy Steel and David Steel at the James Hogg Monument, 10 March 1990, BDC 1/XAD/1/1/1.

Appendix

1. Mamoun Hassan Interview, 5 March 2020

Interviewer (I): First of all, I wanted to talk to you about your time at the BFI Production Board and its structure...

Mamoun Hassan (MH): Which was not a stationary target.

I better tell you something about how I got into the job. ... I had worked with Kevin Brownlow as an assistant editor, and he was very, you know his attitude about producers in his book, *The Parade's Gone By*, which I'm sure you've read. There is a photograph which is of people trying to gauge each other's eyes out—that's what he thinks of producers. I'm afraid he, and I'm sorry that he did that, he inculcated that attitude in me and I was very hostile to producers, very... So I'd started with Kevin as assistant editor, went into the BBC, made a short film called *The Meeting* while I was at the BBC, it won a prize at the Oberhausen which is the biggest festival and then I sort of left the BBC, partly I didn't realise it was going to be a syndrome that I don't stay in any place over three years apart from one which was kind of imposed upon me. I left the BBC after two and a half years. I got a job outside as an editor, I was there as an editor, well, as an assistant and acting editor on one or two films of no importance. I cut a commercial. I was going to earn my living but I happened to have edited the last cigarette commercial – 'Cool it with Carlton'... and I had to work overnight because Worldwide Pictures, which was the biggest documentary unit outside the BBC and ITV and so on, and they gave me this job to cut it and we had to work overnight to be able to meet the deadline.

And there I was... the language they used in the editing process ...about film, so upset me. I mean it was ridiculous. I would ask what are you thinking of and they would say, 'you know it's that cut, the flame of the matchstick to the desert in Lawrence of Arabia'. I thought these people are insane. Insane. You know, and I thought, can I work with people like this? I mean I had worked with Kevin, for god's sake. These are people who talk about film and Peter Watkins, and all these young, talented, original filmmakers, you know what I mean? And language is important. The way we communicate is paramount.

So, I remember being asked by the manager, a very nice man, and he said "Oh Mamoun, everybody who worked on that, because we got the contract" this company gave a commission to three companies and they were going to use one of the commercials, and that was the commercial they were going to use. The cameraman, I think, was Otto Heller no less to shoot this commercial. So, he said, there is a big party over the weekend on Saturday night, you can bring your girlfriend. I said, "this is overtime, isn't it?" He said, "Mamoun." That's work as far as I'm concerned. If they're the hosts, it's work. He said, "Mamoun, I don't think you're the right man to cut commercials." So, after only 3 or 4 weeks, I left. Luckily at that time, my girlfriend was working so we could eat and pay the rent.

Anyway, I then directed a shortish film 50 minutes long, based on a short story by Penelope Gilliatt—she was an important figure—she had written this short story in the New Yorker. She was a very important literary figure and critic and film critic for a time. She was married to John Osborne for a time, she was part of that group.

And then I directed a couple of industrial documentaries. One sponsored documentary 35 mm colour, quite expensive, with an unknown cameraman called Chris Menges. I didn't know, we started at the same time. So, Kevin Brownlow - Oscar Winner, Chris Menges—Oscar winner, you may say that I fell among thieves. Oscar thieves.

Anyway, I edited two art films for the Arts Council—one on Turner, one on the pre-Raphaelites and so on. All the time I was writing scripts with a friend who was at college at Oxford with my girlfriend, called David Ash who later became a documentarist but at that time we had written two or three feature scripts and so on. I didn't go to film school. The best way to train is by doing it. When I was at school, I wanted to be a writer. I went to a strange school called King Alfred School, progressive co-educational socialist school in Hampstead, and private. But we had a fantastic English teacher. He encouraged me in my writing, so I wanted to be a writer. And after I had taken my o-levels I had said to him 'I suppose I better do Latin O-level' because you couldn't read English in those days unless you had Latin, certainly if you went to Kings or whatever, the colleges I was considering in London. And he said, 'No, why do you want to do that?' I said, 'You know, I want to be a writer.' And he said, 'The only way to be a writer is there are 3 [factors] 1. Is Write. 2. Is read. 3. Submit your work to criticism.' That's the only way. He said, 'University, you'll become a critic.' I said that there are some greater writers who went to university and became writers. He said, 'Despite, not because of.' So, I said, what should I do? He said, 'I hear you're pretty good at maths and physics and things. Why don't you do something you'll never do again, but you'll learn something'. He said, 'You have a scientific mind as well I understand.' So, I decided to do electrical engineering. The reason is that my father, you know, I'm a Saudi born. And my father said, if you want to do engineering, then I might be able to get you a scholarship to go to MIT. So, I thought, MIT, well it won't stop me writing.

I never went to MIT. I did start my engineering course at BSc, but I didn't really finish it, well I didn't finish it, I dropped out. All the time I was at the Slade and going to Thorrel Dickinson's film lectures at the Slade. And a friend of mine at school who was doing a what today would be called a postgrad course but was called a postgraduate diploma. I had started a magazine at school ... and I used to publish a paper and put it on the notice board and I called it Alfie in which there were articles and photographs and so on and the odd short story and this friend of mine said, at the Slade said, 'I'd like to make a film of that short story.' I know nothing about film I only go three nights a week and I don't really think about writing, so I decided the best thing to do was to go to the NFT or Telecinema before that but the NFT which I went to anyway and I tried to learn from looking at films which I still think is the best way, better than film school. Unless you're lucky, and I was, and I met these fantastic John Krish and Lindsay and Kevin and Watkins, that's just pure luck, that is just pure luck. Of course, that was wonderful and owe a tremendous amount. Mostly an attitude. Above everything else, an attitude which people underrate. I think an attitude is one of the most important things to have really. Everything else... if you don't have that I don't know how you learn, you know?

...

MH: I was very desperate and I had this letter from Stanley Reed saying, 'The Head of Production, Bruce Beresford, is leaving, we need someone to hold the

fort for six months.' And I said to Moya, my wife, 'Well, we've got to eat, haven't we?' And she was looking after a very small child at that point and another one was coming. So, I said, 'Well I better go to the interview.' And the interview was with Stanley and Michael Balcon, and I don't know what I said but it was a one and a half hour chat. I was not aware of the hostility between Mick and Lindsay but of course I mentioned Lindsay. I got home. Phone rang. Stanley Reed said, 'Start Monday.'

The thing is you have understand that since then I've done a lot of things and the reason that I do them is that I don't know how to do them.... So, I don't know how to run a production board, had no idea. I didn't know how to produce. Didn't know how to do a TV programme. I didn't know how to go to Zimbabwe and start film training in opposition to Apartheid. I didn't know what to do in Cuba or anything about going to Australia and being asked to advise them on the future of film in Australia which is a very big deal indeed you know because it is the biggest unit that Australia had at that time. I didn't know any of these things, but I knew enough to know where to start. And I usually left when I thought I knew what was going on, which is about 3 years.

Now you may think this is very arrogant. How could I know? Of course, I didn't know, but I kind of knew... I began to realise what the problems were. The minute you realise what the problems are, you're in trouble. You shouldn't think about the problems, you should think about what you want to do and then you know, I worked, as you know on three four Chilean films and Machuka has the will to make it, he's will to mortgage his house, he's willing to do anything and everything to get that film made and I think you need that above talent. Two things you need: Attitude and Will. Talent is secondary.

Anyway, I started and there was a script, I didn't realise at that time and in my article, my obituary I said it was undecided, it wasn't, Bruce had turned it down. He'd invited Bill to come and have a chat. Now what Bruce Beresford could tell Bill Douglas I do not know but a postage stamp would cover it. Bruce knows more about film than Bill? Talking, maybe. Doing? No. Bruce is a perfectly fine, good filmmaker but that he knows about film in the way that Bill knows about film? Which is not from the outside in but from the inside out? No. I don't think there are many people in this country. It is not just Bruce but many people I know would not be able to have a conversation with Bill that a. Help Bill or that would be a conversation because Bill doesn't refer to that. I don't know what he refers to but it's not the kind of film language chat that we normally hear between professionals because he is not a professional! That's the one thing that one has to realise from the very beginning is that he is not a film professional, he's a film artist, which is something different. Bruce is a fine professional. In my view, he is not an artist. That is, it does not emanate from him. It is not where you can't separate what he does from what he is.

Anyway, I looked at it, the first few pages and I thought this is wonderful. This is truly wonderful. I didn't have to go beyond the first 10 pages to know that it was going to be. What was it? You know, film is about pictures. How many films have you seen which are about pictures? I mean I've seen films which purport to be about pictures, but they're not, they're about paintings. You know, they are painterly. There are many films, I mean, we have a great many fine cinematographers and what they do is fine cinematography but that's not

necessarily pictures. I mean pictures in the sense that when you see it there's a life, not only in the frame but beyond it. You feel like there is something beyond the frame that you're seeing. You know? And that's creating images that stay in your mind, both within the story and in isolation. You recollect them afterwards. You know what I mean? And I could see these images immediately. I thought when have I seen a script which is the film? You've read the script—it is the film. The way he sets it out, the paragraphs, the fact that all this which I mentioned in my obituary, you know, “no slug lines” all of it, how can you turn a film like that down? How? I do not know. Anyway, I called him. Obviously, he was disappointed. He thought, oh god, bloody BFI. So anyway, I told him you've got it, we'll give it to you. I'm taking it to the Board. I mean Michael Balcon was chairing the meeting at which Bruce turned down the film. He didn't tell me, he didn't tell me. I remember there was another project at that time, a short film. He said,

“where do you stand on this Mamoun?” I said, “I am backing it.” We had real heavyweights on the committee then... A number of them said that they didn't like it. So, they went around and Mick turned to me and said “Mamoun, would you put your neck on the block for this?” And I said, “Yes”. Right, we'll give him the money. And I thought, this is democracy? He didn't even take a vote and the Board didn't mind? God, I thought, I must speak to him after and I used to call him Sir Michael then, before he became Mick, but anyway “Sir Michael, isn't that a little undemocratic” and he said “Mamoun, no no. They were not elected, they were *selected*. We selected them, the Governing Board and the Production Board. We selected them. And you'll have a say in selecting the future members.” Now what happens if there is a strike and half of them don't turn up? What's the point in having the vote? He said, “I go with the strongest feeling.” And if the strongest feeling is against it and he said there were no's but they were sort of mild no's. Yours was the strongest feeling of yes. So, I go with the strongest feeling. That is the man who ran Ealing. He didn't ask for hands. Michael Relph always asked for hands when the argument either got too hot or too heated, or too angry or too controversial, he'd say “well, let's have a vote.” He was really not interested in the arguments. He was also very conventional. He was a fine designer at Ealing, probably that was his finest contribution. I know he produced film, you know, and so on....

On one occasion, I wanted to change to try and make the meetings different. I like meetings where we discuss film after all they had so much to say and so I decided that one year we would have it in a preview theatre and we would be on the same level as them, the chairman and myself. So, they were there and we were sitting and talking to them and we sat quite near them, it was a tiny preview theatre and I remember we were considering Peter Smith's *A Private Enterprise*. You know that Satyajit Ray liked it. It's a fine film, a really fine film. Underrated, I don't know why. And people were undecided whether to go with it or not. And Michael Gill who produced the civilisation series for the BBC was on the board and he was sitting right in front of me, and I was getting quite heated. David Storey, who was the greatest person to have on a Board—it was a privilege and a pleasure. His intelligence, his... I don't think he ever (maybe that's an exaggeration) rarely used the wrong word, or a generalised word. I mean he was your real writer. He's the Chekov of our time. ... He was for it. And I was getting really angry. As you know I'm a very mild person really, I don't stress these things too much or if I don't get too carried away, I try and discuss these things quietly and as we're going Michael Gill lent forward and he said “Mamoun, you're

going to lose us the vote so fucking shut up.” So, I said nothing after that. And we got the vote by one. And that was because of Michael Gill. He said, “Mamoun, you were hammering at us as if we were idiots” and he said, “it was not going to get us the vote, you know that.” There are good people, and you don’t know who they are going to be or how or why and I suddenly realised, yes, shut up. Just shut up Mamoun. But they were extraordinary days. Because you are asking about the Board, I won’t say who it was because he’s a close friend of mine and very intelligent and on the Board and a legendary figure, but because you know, because you’ve probably read the book, but I don’t know what made me write to the Bill in the way that I did when I confirmed that we gave him the money. It’s not only giving a hostage to fortune but there is something very strange going on because I’ve never written a letter like that in my life. I mean, on the basis of a script, to write to someone “You are going to make an important film. I know.” I don’t know. I’m puzzled actually...

The other thing of course was Kevin, when he got the money for *Winstanley* and I wrote him a cable and he was in New York and I said, “Come home, all your problems have just begun.” At that point, he said to me, I swallowed a ball of lead because now I’ve got to make it. Another three four years of my life.

So, what happened at the production board. The film was cut. Shot on 16 mm colour, printed black and white. We advised him for commercial reasons to print it in colour but when we saw the rushes, we thought nah. Nah, this is a black and white film. So, for some reason, I think it was John Gillatt who was the person in charge of selecting films for the Venice Film Festival, I think ... Anyway, we had this invitation to go to Venice. At the same time, we had an invitation to go to the Edinburgh festival and the Edinburgh Festival then said that there was this chap who was working with Murray Grigg who was the man who ran the festival and he got completely hysterical saying “this is a Scottish film, how dare you take it to Venice.” I mean talk about unreal. Now the funny thing is of course that it did not qualify as a feature. It is under an hour. It is in black and white. 16mm. I mean, how, how did it get there? So, I’d never been to a festival. I was out of that kind of business, being a producer and so on.

Now we come to the matter of the credit. You may have noticed that there is no credit for me on the film. Well, you won’t have noticed. There is no credit for me. I did not take credit on any of the films at the NFFC or the BFI.

I: Why?

MH: Why? Michael Balcon said, “You will regret it.” That’s what he said. He said “Why?” And I said because I have no plans to be a producer. No plans at all to be a producer so let the BFI take the credit. You know, it’s nothing to me, I want to go back to directing.

Anyway, we got to Venice, and we went to that big hotel, Hotel De Bart which is in the Visconti film, *Death in Venice*. It was more or less my first encounter with Italy, real Italy and they said, “we’re very sorry but the rooms have been given away.” Which meant that somebody had bribed them, which happened to me later too by the way. ... They said, you have to go to the office for Venice Film Festival. So, I go to their office and I say we don’t have a place to stay and they said, Sir, can you please wait a minute we have other things going

on. So, I thought I'm going to stop being English and I'm going to be a Saudi – “Okay okay, we hear you.” So, a quarter of an hour later, we were in this launch which I write about in this thing and he laid there with the wind in his hair and he was laughing and he said “if only they could see me in Newcraighall now.” ... So, we arrived at this hotel and the manager came to me because obviously they said “there's this lunatic here, please calm him down.” ... Anyway so, that evening we prepare for the meal, we have Campari, Bill and I, and we're going to the Grand Saloon and we go to the restaurant—I'm sorry, even now it's so funny—we go to the restaurant on the ground floor and this chap comes up to me and he's sort of a pantomime Italian waiter and he said “don't look at the menu, what we have today is that we have fish with sauce around it” I say, “sounds good, I think” and then he said “you want wine?” well at that time I knew nothing about wine, in that period, I mean now I know quite a lot having travelled through France and so on, it's one of my passions, but at that time I knew nothing. So, I said, “Do you have something dry? Italian?” He said, “I know just the bottle.” Bill and I were living way beyond our expectations here in Italy and then he said “the dessert. We have the perfect dessert. This Italian ice cream with crème de menthe. Would you like that?” I said, “Sounds good.” And then he very discreetly places a piece of paper and says, “it's the bill” and I say “No, no, it's all on the festival.” And he says, “No, that's the other restaurant.” So, I look at the bill and Bill was sitting next to me and he kind of absented himself from proceeding. He literally shifted his chair and looked away, nothing to do with me guvnor. It was wonderful, I mean he really was from Newcraighall. And he wasn't going to pay for anything. I used all the cash that I had for the days of the festival, all and that was with a small tip. I had no money after that. Just enough to get on the babaretto to go to the Grand Salon. And of course I then spoke to all the British film critics and asked if they had any lire you could give me? And I cabled London and said, “Will explain later but send stipend as before total.” So anyway, I got the money and was helped by my friends, David Robinson, everybody else, Penelope Houston and so on, all the greats, they all helped me out.

So, then we had the screening. The screening was on the Saturday. Saturday Morning. And it was drizzling. In the morning. In the big Salon. 16mm film. I mean, you could play basketball with the grains, they were so large on the screen. There was hardly anyone there. Except one person. Jean Rouch was there. I mean, God was on Bill's side. ... Bill was very much a godful person and God was very much on his side that day. And we see the film and I was very depressed, there was no audience to see it. There were a few people from the jury, I don't know who they were, certainly not the full jury and I see Jean Rouch and he's smiling, so I go up to and say, “Jean Rouch, I hope you don't mind but I'm involved with the film, and did you like it?” He said, “I think it's wonderful. It is truly wonderful.” I said, “do you mind if I quote you?” He said, “no, not at all.” So, I go back to the office and I say, give me the names of the jurors and where they're staying. And I wrote a little note and I said, can you copy this? Very few of you were there. Jean Rouch said, “it's a wonderful film.” What happened is I said we've got to have another viewing. It's impossible, there was nobody there. Look, it was raining. And they said, “well, if you can find someone.” Well, there was only one theatre I could go to, a preview theatre and the only time available is lunchtime. So, I go to this chap and ask “will you screen the film?” and I say, “How much do you want? Just tell me.” So, we agreed an amount for him to come in at lunchtime and he screens the film; it is packed. A small theatre and it's packed. And that evening, they voted. And they gave him the Silver Lion. An

adventure.

eh?

I: So, it was all weighing on that one screening?

MH: Well, as I say, God was on his side. You know. He must have prayed that day. And of course, in the evening he was out of his mind. When we were flying back, Mick Morcombe and his wife (Aileen?) were in front of us and I was sitting next to him and he had the little silver lion and I said to him “Bill, go and show him the silver lion.” He said Why? I said, he won the golden lion at the very first Venice film festival with Man of Arrow and I said, “Go and show it to him.”

... I didn't support him because of him, I supported him because of the filmmaker, the artist, you know, something completely different. I've never given a penny to a single person who was a friend and I've given a lot of money to people who weren't at the NFFC, and you know, because that's the job. You know, it's not my money and even if it were I think I would go for the talent rather than you know my personal antipathy or liking of the person. I mean he was, the funny thing was over all the years we met only two or three times between the BFI and the NFFC. There was no personal friendship; we were friendly, we were friendly. On one occasion, we weren't even friendly, I can't remember what he wanted when I was at the BFI, but he came in, we were in the old quarters which were wonderful in Lower Marsh which was basically a store room. Have you seen it?

I: No, I haven't, but I have read about it.

MH: It's wonderful. Partitions. A room no bigger, very small, so you can only have 3 chairs, not a place to have conversations. Across the corridor was the cutting room. Wonderful. Two big machines, there was a projector and a wall, 16mm projector, it was wonderful. And when I was at the BFI, they said after the first year, of course after Venice they thought I could do something and they said, “Mamoun, oh you've got to have an office in Dean Street” and I said “Absolutely not! Please, I beg you, don't move me from Lower Marsh” because it is a place of work, the work surrounds you. The biggest thing is the cutting room. It is a real place where we work. You know? And chat. ...

MH: So, why did he make a trilogy? Very simple. The first rushes came in. 16 mm. And I saw it. Now, you will have read scripts and I have read I don't know how many and the writer will say ‘it is an intense moment between these characters’. And you and I know, maybe, maybe, if you're lucky. I looked at these shots and there was such intensity. Wow. Wow. You can't invent that. I don't know how you achieve that. Or that you can achieve that with every frame. I don't know how. The domestic scene where no one is doing anything and you just look. I mean that is the art of cinema, the art of art if you like and that is you create this kind of attention, really. That is it basically, you attend. And I thought no, no, no, he doesn't stand a chance in the bleeding film industry, I know that. Why? Because the way he shoots. It is not because it is about the poverty that other people have said, no, there were lots of other films being made about poverty and so on. I mean left wing films and so on. No, I mean, it wasn't that it was that the language was foreign, his language is foreign. It's akin to, you may find it Satyajit Ray, you may find it in Donskoi, you may find it in, I don't know, some of the European directors. I don't know, but it certainly isn't English or Scottish for that matter. So, I rang him and said, “Don't kill the boy” because it is ambiguous at the end when he jumps off the bridge onto the train and you don't know if he's

dead. He is dead, actually. In the original draft, he was dead. He dies. And I said, "Don't kill the boy." And he said why? I said I'm coming up to Scotland and I will explain why. Don't kill the boy. So, I heard from Lindsay that Bill had shown him his script *Jamie*. And we were talking, Lindsay and I, and he said "of course it's his life story, isn't it" I said "yes, it looks like it" so I went up to him and said "I will back you to do a trilogy" change the title to *My Childhood* and I'll say it was always going to be a trilogy, right from the very beginning because at that time to give one person three grants in that period of the Action Committee well, you wouldn't know, but it would have caused a tremendous amount of anger and resentment, disappointment and all the rest of it, particularly as we only had £5000 with £3000 that had already been spent and we only had £2000 and I was talking about giving him a second film? And a third film? Because I knew, and I was right, wasn't I? The industry would not back him. I mean Channel 4 backed him, yes. Well done, David, Jeremy, thank you. But the amount they put in which was a million out of 12 million for *Comrades*, I put in 1 million out of 1 and a half million income for *Comrades*. Do you know that? I put in two thirds of the annual income from Government, from the Eady Levy into one film. And I knew that I was leaving, kind of and I spoke to the board and by that time we were not quite friends, but I spoke to Geoffrey Williams who was the chairman and said "we have to do it. I don't care." He said, "Oh god, Mamoun, you haven't given me a rest, have you?" But I put in 1 million out of 1 and a half million from Eady into *Comrades*. ... It is not a favour. It is because of his talent. ... I was just doing that job to back talent and if you do that you have to do it. I never wanted to run the BFI I never wanted to run the NFFC, it happened. And so, when you're in a privileged position like that, you can take risks because it wasn't my career at any point. So, it didn't need any courage.

I: Do you think then, that because of your attitude for having a job for three years helps you to be riskier in your approach?

MH: Without any doubt. Without any doubt. You see, I had that job for six months and then I remember Denis Forman—we may have to meet again because there is a lot to tell—I was asked whether I would apply for the job and I said what job? To back shorts? When the Experimental Film Fund started it was the only source. Now, most arts schools have a film department, and they can make their films there. Who needs us now? Not the people who need to make shorts. Although we will continue to with that but the filmmakers who want to make, now the term had not been coined then but Indie Films. Cheaply. Very rich in ambition but cheap in production terms. So, Denis was onto it anyway. He was the first director of the BFI, you know Denis Forman, a very intelligent very able man and I said to him, why don't we go in and make features? He said the problem is there is a company called the National Film Finance Corporation and the government do not like to double up on the same... I said no no, we say *non-commercial* films. And Bill was the battering ram. To have a film that everyone's talking about that has prestige, that over a period will get its money back and more but is non-commercial. So, we had the example. That's what Bill did for us. For all these people who don't know his work or who are very snooty about his work, he helped them.

I: He secured that shift?

MH: That's right. And so, he asked me to write a paper for the government. I was supposed to write it with Barney Platts-Mills—he was the young governor on the board. I basically wrote the paper, 2 and a half pages ... So, we get £120,000.

And he says, "will you apply?" I said "yes", I can do the job. I wanted to leave. I knew I was going to leave within three years. You're very prescient really, because when I went to interview for my job with Edmond Dell the secretary of state for Trade, when I went to see him for my job at the NFFC because it is a quango, you know? And my boss is the minister. And he said, "what do you plan to do?" I said, "I plan to leave in three years." That was my first response. And he laughed. He said, "you know all the colonial appointed were for three years." ... So, I thought, that's apt. I mean, we are a colonised country in film, aren't we? By the Americans. How appropriate, I thought. So, I'm not sure I wanted three years. I might've stayed there for the end of *My Way Home*.

Bill started on what I think is his best film, *My Ain Folk*. I think it is his best film. I think structurally, he kind of found his middle. The way that he tells the story. About Bill and *My Ain Folk*, I think his way of telling a story in a fractured way, but it's not fractured because he provides the knowledge to the film audience, to be able to travel. He always provides gaps in the story and most of the time the audience can jump over the gap, and it is exhilarating, emotionally exhilarating. But once in a while the gap is too big, and you fall in the gap and you think where am I? What's happening? So, he was never allowed to really explore that. I think the temper of the times was against him. But nonetheless in *My Ain Folk*, he, well, you know in the obituary I mention that sequence which starts like this with the grandmother then you don't know what's happening. But he makes that into an earthquake. You know? Only art is able to do that, and cinema is better at doing that than any other medium. In a moment you go from the micro to the macro. You know? Aristotle says drama is conflict. That's conflict. I mean how small can you get? How small can the conflict get? I mean going like that and turning the corner and changing direction only cinema can do this. It is a truly cinematic moment. That is image. Not pictorial. A picture doesn't mean a thing. A close up of what's that? Oh, they'll say a fantastic picture but it is an image, it is dramatic. And that's what Bill is capable of, the dramatic image which has a story that goes beyond that moment because you think what does it mean? And to go from there to the boy running out across the yard crying out, Jamie going over the hill and coming back with a policeman and Jamie singing with the boys and girls that optimistic hymn and the parents of those kids in the black water of the mine with the little lights reflected on the black surface of the water. That is art. But that is art. Who can you think of in the whole of British cinema who is capable of that? Perhaps Terry Davies.

So, we had the money, and I then backed these films. Well, you know what they are. I think in those jobs you have to have a purpose. You can't just back every kind of film. Its undemocratic and its patronage. That's what it is. Simple. Patronage. It is not a democratic process. I wanted to be democratic and there are one or two films, I mean there was the Dwoskin film which I backed which is sort of off-piece if you like but basically, I am a neo-realist. Right? If you think of the tenants of neo-realism, you know, Hollywood movies are structured, right? Where each act leads to the next and you learn something about the character. All neo-realist films are episodic. All of them. Bicycle thieves, you name it, think of any neo-realist film, they are all episodic. Because if you do away with the Hollywood script, what do you have? How is the story going to be told, whether it is in *La Strada* ... Episodic. All of them. They are episodes. You won't hear this anywhere else, but this is a fact, not an opinion, but they are all episodic. And all those films which I backed are episodic. All of them.

Zavatini said when the Hollywood people wonder what to make films about, we say, look around you.

I: What was the process in projects being accepted? How did filmmakers apply? Did people send in their scripts to you?

MH: Now this is one thing I feel very strongly about. They were just asked to submit the script. No producer necessary, no budget necessary. Even at the NFFC. I said just submit the script and we'll take it from there.

I: Was it solely to you and was it your responsibility to choose the best from them?

MH: No, there was a reader at the NFFC and on occasion when I couldn't make up my mind, I had three people to whom the script was sent. Now I don't believe in readers. I think it is very easy to opine. Scripts are very hard to read. You've read scripts. I mean, a script is a report of an accident, it is not the accident. So, it depends who is telling and how you read the teller. The accident is the film. I had three people. One was a film person, well I can tell you who it was, it was Stanley Reed, the former director at the BFI, an editor, and an actor. Editors have a sense of structure. Actors have an idea whether a part is juicy, whether the characters are interesting, and they had specific instructions. They were paid more than readers were paid. I said, first, tell me the story of the script in 3 pages or under. Right? If it's a genre that you normally don't see, don't report, we'll give you a basic fee and that's it. I don't want your opinion. Then I don't want you to ever use the word good or bad. Just tell me what is happening in your words, not the story, but what is happening, the drama as it happens, altogether you can write up to 10 pages. We paid them a lot of money. No one knew who they were. Only the accounts. And the reports would be sent to the board. And quite a lot of the scripts were sent to the committee and you'd be surprised who was the best and the worst. The best at the NFFC was Lord Jimmy Remnant, Conservative Whip accountant banker, director of 21 companies. I would send him the script by bike and we'd have his notes the following morning. Colin Young would read the script under the table when we were having the meeting... Most of them were so lazy you know? It was basically, the decisions were mine, basically, at the NFFC.

... lets go back to the BFI. I mean Terry turns a story. He says "I'd written a script called *Children*" Terry Davies—sent it to everybody, didn't get a reply, I got one reply, this chap rang me with a foreign name and he said "can you come in for an interview in the office?" He said "yes, when?" I go in and he said, Ok, and we go in and he says "You have £5,800 and not a penny more." "What?" He said "You're going to make the film" I said, "You or nobody else." "But I've never shot anything" he said. "Yes I know that but if you don't do it then nobody else will. Because this is such a personal document." Again, the script was so important, the way it was written. So he says "I have the money?" I said, "Not so fast. I'm going to recommend it to the Board to the committee but we're going to give you a day with a film unit where you're going to shoot a scene and I'd like to see that scene and I'll decide on the basis of that. But I'll give you the best. I'll give you a wonderful editor." So he did and he made *Children*. I mean he says, you were taking a chance. I say no I wasn't, as far as I was concerned I was taking a chance before I saw the scene but after the script, it was obvious to me that it was a film to be made. I don't think I've ever and I don't think I'm being falsely modest but I don't think I rarely took a chance. Rarely. I asked the

filmmaker to persuade me, that's all. And I had this prejudice about neorealism. I wanted those stories which are around us, you know? Everyday. Not political in the narrow sense, that's propaganda. So *A Private Enterprise*. I mean you could say what about *Winstanley*, that's not everyday? But it was everyday when you look at the scenes on the hill. Everyday life of very poor people. Isn't it? Just the historical context is different. Now it is true that I have a particular interest in the English Civil War and in the Leveller movement. And I think I persuaded Kevin to look in to that particular part of history because I used to talk about it. ... I used to talk about this in the cutting room when we met ...so I talked about that with Kevin and he says in his book that Mamoun always talked about this and people underrate one thing about *Winstanley*, if it had not been for Michael Balcon, it would not have been made because we could only give, I can't remember the figure but something like £12,000 and we needed £24k and the rest of it came from the Vivien Leigh Memorial Fund and he's never mentioned, Mick. I called him, because I used to visit him, we became friends and I liked him a lot. We kind of understood each other.

One day, I was in my office and the internal phone rang and it was Dennis Foreman and he said, 'Mamoun, can you come and see me' in Soho where Granada had an office. He said, "Would you like to leave the BFI?" At that time it was before I had thought about leaving the BFI to go and I said "Why?" He said, "we'll take the production board out of the BFI so as to give you freedom and autonomy." He said "we'll create an entity outside of the BFI and you can run it." He said think about it. So I said "what about the money?" And he said "leave it to me?" I said "just like that?" And he said "yes, just like that, because you're going to receive more and more opposition within the board, there is not going to be enough money coming in, you're going to be in conflict with the NFFC with the kinds of films you'll be making," so I sat and thought about it and said "thank you but no". He said "why?" I said "a lot of reasons but thank you but no". And that was it.

I: Why did you decide to say no?

MH: One. I was scared. Two. I didn't want to be a producer. I was thinking how do I get out of here and make a film. Three. I don't know. I don't want to run things. I want to make things.

...

I: When you were at the NFFC, did you go to the production sites for the films you backed?

MH: On the odd occasion. The one thing I did ask for was that I would look at the edit with the understanding that they did not have to make a single change with what I suggested. Not one change. All they had to do was listen. Except for one film. The first cut of *Gregory's Girl*, Romaine Hart asked to go and see it. I said "yes, we'll ask the producers". They said yes and it was then 120 minutes long and she came out and she said "you're going to shame us in the industry, Mamoun. It is a complete and utter amateurish disaster, you know that?" I said "what?" She said "it is a complete, complete disaster that film". I said, "Romaine, how many rough cuts have you seen?" She said, "that has nothing to do with it." I said, "it does have something to do with it, it is a very good film it is just at an early version. You asked to see this version". She said "it is a complete disaster, how can I be on the board and talk about that film? How did you persuade us to put in 60% of the budget?" So I said to Bill, "Look, your editor hasn't had much

experience, do you mind if I come in the cutting room and work with you?" And I worked with him in the cutting room and with the recutting of Gregory's Girl. That is a fact. And it was cut down to 80 something minutes. And Bill asked me to come in at the fine cut stage and look at his films. He asked me to look at his films. So I don't have a credit on anything of course on the films from Chile, you know Manchucka and most recently Aranya where I wasn't a producer or part of the scriptwriting team but he was pleased with me not to take editing supervisor because he said the editor really worked herself to the bone and if you ask for supervisor is lowers her so I've got Creative Consultant. But it is the last credit. Extraordinary. But basically I worked on the final cut, I am the supervising editor.

...

Penny Eyles Interview, March 5 2020

I: So first of all I wanted to talk to you about putting together the breakdown and when you came to the project. I saw correspondence between you and Peter where he said, 'It's similar to what Bill's got. Go ahead with what you've done.' And so I just wondered if there was an overlap over work when you or Bill were putting together the breakdown.

PE: Well, when I'm sent a script, I mean sometimes its blatantly obvious. There has got to be a timeline because that establishes for all the crew when there is a change in time. Say you're doing something that takes place over a weekend, then that's one thing but if you're doing something which takes place over several years, which I imagine Comrades did, then there is a difference so that make up and wardrobe and the production design know what season etc etc. when there is a change of three months maybe you want to establish the personal of someone so even the dressing in the interior flowers will be different and the next exterior they will try and find the location where you don't see bare trees, that sort of thing. I mean, I know now that it is sort of digital but actually I think with different lenses and the way people shoot things, its just little clues to the audience that they may not even notice that there has been a time change. Hair might be cut, or, if it is a long time, you know obviously ageing, different wigs, and this all has to be plotted in and I will give it out and for instance the first Assistant Director will schedule it because there is a huge make up change or a production design change to denote, which is not obvious but audiences will take it on board. Then they will use and make a schedule so you don't waste any time with make up changes, hair changes, costume changes. If someone is much older, maybe they'll get fatter. Who knows, who knows, it's all sort of things like that but that all has to be kept in mind so the shooting will continue, rather than wasting time for make up, costume design, production design, etc. etc.

I: Because with any delay that just means more money being spent...

PE: That's right.

I: Was there anything about working with Bill's script in particular – because he is a unique writer by being more poetic and descriptive - that changed your approach at all?

PE: Yes, it's quite... because I have to do a... these are all tiny little gobbets of information. When I get the script, I have to work out a timing for it. I mean, I don't know if you understand what that is but basically, roughly, because I don't know

the director, I don't know where the locations are, its easier if you've got dialogue because you can read it you know if its miserable dialogue, you might do it with a few pauses but you don't know the actors, you don't know anything, and I have to work out how long the whole film will last when its on the screen. So with this, "The men under the tree to guffaw with... fall back on the grass, unable to stop themselves from laughing" well that could be a five second scene, if that. I mean I think it looks as though, yeah, these are all tiny little scenes, so in a sense they are shots really.

I: Yes, there is not too much dialogue in Douglas'ss films.

PE: No, there is not really... No, well the powers that be always said a minute a page and I said that's ridiculous! You almost need to have a screen in your head. I mean, sometimes, if it's a modern film and it says 'the car drives up. Stops. They get out' I will watch out of my window and time that almost in cuts. I mean, someone gets out of the car, well I might keep it running you know, well if that's sort of 30 seconds. It depends really, you've got to try and judge the pace of the action. It could be described as hurrying to get in the door which simplifies things. It's quite a boring job to do if you're a fast reader but you have to do it and I check it as I go along. At the end I'll say to them I'll say to them how long I think it lasts. Occasionally, its blatantly obvious that a film is too long, particularly if you have dialogue but it will always come down in the editing. But when we're shooting, I'll always keep an eye on the screentime will take a shot and compare it with my original time, which is all guess work, so at the end of day's shooting, I will have a rough idea how much over or under what I originally estimated a particular sequence will last. I have to keep an eye on because at the end of my first timing I'll say oh it's going to be 120 minutes but it may lengthen during shooting. I know it will come down, the editor has a much clearer sort of idea. It's just keeping a vague idea on the plus on how much it may last or it may be much faster, so that's what um, well these look like almost little sequences, they are all in different places. I don't know, this is the only bit of script, well, I've timed it here you can see, those are the rough timings 'As the family gather round the carriage and shake hands with the Vicar' well that could be 10 seconds and so on, it might be a bit longer. And they say she's talking to an old lady so I make that 20 seconds. So they're all rough timings, so if I think and these were probably, yeah...

PE: It is quite long. I mean, [Bill] held shots for a very, very long time. I remember when one of these finance people came and when you're particularly busy they ask what's the scene running? And I mean, he would hold shots to almost embarrassing level for the actors till he broke through some... I mean if it was a close up on you and you were talking to me and then whatever the dialogue was he would just hold it and you would be looking at the actor and hold it until you almost became vulnerable, or something like that, it was sort of weird. I remember saying because I wasn't so experienced, and I'd be asked how much have we shot today? And I'd say well its sort of five seconds, but I don't, I can't remember because it is a long time since I've seen the film. But he'd hold it for 15-20 seconds. Yeah, which is unusual because a lot of directors—I've worked a lot for Stephen Frears if you know him? And he would suddenly say cut and I'd say Stephen, just hold it a bit longer, you might get some moments. "No, no, no, I won't need that." But I'd say there were some really nice moments before you said cut. Whereas Bill would just hold and hold and hold and hold. I mean, I think we were shooting masses of stock and they got worried about that... I wasn't, I sort of trudged along doing my job, not my problem but it was sometimes a trudge.

I: Speaking of concerns of going over budget, do you recall that effecting the atmosphere at all? Particularly when you went to Australia that concerns were starting to ramp up and that the film might not be finished because they were going so far over budget?

PE: I can't remember that because I'm not part of that sort of discussion, but I know it was difficult because Bill was... I mean, the first day or so he was absolutely charming and then he became as far I was concerned, very uncharming and I was trying to help him. You'd go up and say, would it help if blah de blah and come up with quite a good idea. And then three minutes later, someone would come up with the exact same thing and he's say 'yeah, very good idea'. And so I must say I got a bit fed up with that. By the time we went to Australia, he was just not very nice. You were sort of used to that, I mean you're on your own, right at the front and he was very and I think he was very good with the actors.

...

These two. Freddy Jones and Robert Stephens. Now these two were so drunk! Now Robert could be absolutely charming but Freddy, not so great. I mean I didn't have any problems but people in the make up caravan did when he was drunk and he came in smelling of booze and all that. I mean they get much closer. But they had this shot where the vicar and the squire were looking over towards the martyrs, by a tree. We'd done the sort of general set up and given them an eyeline to look at very accusing and they were both so drunk and their eyes were going all over the place. And I did say to Bill I don't think you've got it because their eyeline is not clear that they are looking towards the martyrs and saying what are they up to sort of thing. And of course, he ignored me but when the rushes came in we had to reshoot it.

I: Did you find Bill to be dismissive to some of the crew members, then?

PE: ... everyone is sort of concerned with their own thing so in a way being the script supervisor you're looking at the whole and that is what is, so you can say, no I don't think... And [the costume supervisor] was obsessed with the fact that some women would be wearing bonnets and he said no, they wouldn't, they wouldn't. And I've never heard someone be so horrible to a costumer supervisor and if I'd been her I would have sort of shut up and said fine, its your film mate but people with their own sort of specific thing and period detail with their professional area is different and she didn't shut up and his sort of row with her... I do remember, now what was her name? A lovely woman, Doreen someone or other. But I can't remember... he was never beastly to me, he was just not very nice and by the time we were going to Australia, ... a friend of mine was doing the makeup, my friend called Elaine Carew ... And she is Australian so she was very excited. And she said, "Penny, you don't have to come to Australia because it is an entirely separate thing" and I suddenly thought, oh bugger it, I haven't been to Australia, I'm going to go, I don't care if he's horrible, I can always storm off into the bush. I mean, he was never really horrible he was just rather dismissive, and I got fed up of that. So, I did go to Australia and suddenly he started asking my advice ...

I: So, going back to Freddie and Robert, did you ever see Bill getting quite exasperated with them? I've read that he found their presence on set particularly difficult.

PE: Well, no, but they are both quite experienced actors. I can't remember any of that. I can't remember him being... I mean Imelda might be better, talking to one of the actors. I'm just trying to look at this... William someone or other ... he's doing quite a lot. I've seen a picture of him here...

I: William Gaminara?

PE: Oh Jeremy Flynn. It would be good to get a different perspective because the actors are vulnerable and I'm very sympathetic up to a point but they do get very, very spoilt. To get the performance out of them.

I: Do you think Bill spoilt them, then?

PE: Not really. I mean, possibly it was deliberate but I think he got along well with the camera lighting man, Gale...

I: Gale Tattersall

I: You were one of the few people who worked on both the Dorset and Australian shoot.

PE: Me and Elaine in make-up.

I: So there must've been a lot of pressure going over and knowing you have a short set time to get those shots and working with a new crew.

PE: I suppose but I don't think that ever dawned on Bill. He just wanted to do what he wanted to do I mean it was relaxed from the outside because I didn't have to go in... We'd stop when there was a major row. I mean, it's such a shame with Simon... but he'd always justify it with "but he's a genius!" But occasionally, we did have a laugh. We'd say "Oh come on Simon, lets go out and have a glass of wine and some oysters".

I: Did you ever see Bill have a laugh?

PE: Not really. I mean, I wasn't sort of part of his social scene. ... Simon we used to go out with, me and Elaine and there was a hairdresser ... you don't get close. It is a job and you sort of preserve a sort of distance. Even if I have to go in to talk to an actor about notes, I talk as little as possible to them unless they want help and it could be something about their lines but I'll hardly even have eye contact with them because I don't want to break their concentration with the camera and their particular part. And I think all the crew would do their jobs, unless the actor wants to talk to them, you just sort of do it.

I: Something that I've thought about is how physical your job is – you've got to get up to the camera and to the actors.

PE: ... you've got a lot of things. Because I used to type I would go in... everyone has sort of computer programmes now but my aim is to get away from having to lug a typewriter around and you can write while you sit by the camera and you overhear stuff because nobody ever tells you anything and you can overhear what they're doing and you can think, wait, they are doing that well I better do this that and the other so they go together and you can also physically write the notes that you have to give to people like Mick and all that sort of paperwork while you're doing that. So it's much better. You've always got to be by the camera or the director because then you know because once they start to set up, they will rehearse and I will go and stand and there will be just the actors and probably the first assistant director and the lighting cameraman and they will be setting up the

shots. So I will go and stand with that little group, because there is no good standing on the other side because you won't know what angle they are going to shoot it at and you've got to work out the progression from the other scene, how did we end the other scene which I've probably thought about how we shot it exterior, in the rain, six weeks ago now what are we going to see? Are we going to see any interior windows? Perhaps we could dress them with a spray of droplets and all that sort of thing. Was it sunny outside when we did it match with this sort of lighting? Should they have wet on their clothes or was it not that bad, the rain? All these sorts of little things like that that you're thinking about all the time as well as the angle that they're going to come in. Is it a sort of progression? Are they coming in from camera right, camera left? Its endless thought and anticipation of what was shot or what might be shot. Are they going to have the right props with them? I mean everybody else is thinking about things like that but the person who is going to have to know it is me and I prefer not to dump anyone in it, so I'll go and talk to the costume department. I mean even to the time on the clock. With a film like *Gosford Park* which took place over a weekend, with a very strictly sort of orchestrated country house weekend so at 4 o'clock the tea comes in, so I'll go see the Wardrobe at the beginning of the day. We're in the middle of tea, let's put quarter past 4 on all the watches. Because everyone says "Oh you're never going to notice that" and then of course someone will say "oh we're in close-up there, what time should be on the watch?" so everything has to be interrupted and wardrobe will come in and adjust the watches so you've just got to be ahead of the game, anticipating all of the time so that's why we never stop.

I: Do you try and avoid talking to the director as much as possible and try talking to the other departments?

PE: Yes, I mean, I did a film called *Dirty Pretty Things* and there was quite an emotional scene between two people and we were moving into another room in the same little flat. It must've been on the same day. For some reason the costume designers came to me and say, "Penny, I think there must have been a little gap in time during that same day and because of the décor in the flat I'd like to put her in a pale blue t shirt. What do you think?" And I said, "Listen, she's just had an emotional scene, I think personally, you go and talk to Stephen Frears about it, but I think personally no because that breaks that mood because she's had time to change her... unless we really want her to have a different sort of feel ... I can't tell you but that's my sort of feeling on it". ... people will always come to you as Script Supervisor rather than go to the director if they're not sure about something and I'll say "yes, go and see them" or I'll go and see them so you act as a sort of buffer zone to everybody. If I haven't had a cup of tea or breakfast yet then I'll say go away.

I: In terms of equipment that you use, I imagine you have your script....

PE: I have my script which is in a black folder like this. Everything is in that folder. And I have to have a camera and it used to be a lovely polaroid which was easy and now it's a horrible little digital thing so I have to print that stuff out and you could write notes on [polaroids] but anyway they want to save money and it is expensive. A stopwatch. I have a little pad to write down the different details of the takes and those I'll chuck away. I will make my continuity sheets and write them up and once they are finished they can go but it has the notes from the director or anyone who wants to give you a note about anything like if a plane was coming over or something was out of focus. Because the unsung heroes are

the focus pullers, often. I mean how they do their job, I do not know. Say they're shooting an actor and the actor has their back to you and the camera is somewhere over there and they suddenly turn, and you've just got to get that moment where the eyes are sharp. I mean most, a lot of actors are very good, and the focus pullers and they've got that much focal depth that they've got to try and get sharp and they are amazing. Nobody... I mean, sometimes the lighting cameraman give them a really hard time when the light is so low that it is quite rough work. But there is corroboration. Everybody wants to help everyone else. I mean the makeup may be having difficulty with an actor's skin or something and they will go and see the lighting cameraman and say I need a bit of help and that's between them. But everybody is trying to do as good a job as possible because you're only as good as that job.

I: I noticed within your continuity books at the museum, you use different colour pens. Was there any logic behind that?

PE: It was supposed to show different takes, but I got terribly confused. That's the really difficult part: the action. Now they print everything but in ordinary film they didn't because of the expense. But no, a pencil. Occasionally I try to but then you'd have to try and select and then an actor would do something completely different and I would have to try and select and I'm not going to go rushing in all the time because that would just disturb their performance but I would tell the director, "look we can't" ... and some directors take that on board if they're experienced, you know?

I: That's something I noticed. You were one of the more experienced people on the set of *Comrades* in terms of films and TV programmes you'd worked on. Even Bill, although that was his fourth film, it was his first feature film. Was there any sense of inexperience?

PE: No, I mean people shoot in the way they want to shoot. I wouldn't, I would say I mean I might... I mean I didn't talk to Bill very much and because he was shooting so much stuff... I mean, I did a film with Sally Potter—*Orlando*. And she wasn't that experienced and you feel your way and I did talk to her a lot about shooting and it would take her about all day to do about 4 shots and I used to think because she was so meticulous and it looks amazing. It was good fun but I would say and we had quite an inexperienced Russian lighting cameraman and in Russia you could take years to film and I don't think he realised how much pressure he was going to be under to get the film done. I was rung up and I was interviewed by her to do a project called *Golddiggers*. I didn't understand the script. I did when I saw it but a lot of it was being shot at night—which I hate—in Iceland and I thought... and it was a lovely autumn here, beautiful sunny days and I thought, I don't want to do it. So then I was interviewed by her again and it was going to be a very long schedule and I thought I dunno about this. And then they said we're going to Russia and I said "Okay, I'll go there." So off I tootled to Russia but occasionally you'd say "Sally, maybe if you pushed in a bit further, maybe you'd get a better shot." Just sort of quietly mutter, have a look, get Alexi (that was his name) and she would sort of do that.

I: So would you say Bill was rude or 'difficult'?

PE: Well, he was very much working with his Lighting Cameraman Gale, I let them get on with it. I was less experienced then. Because I remember the first time a director asked me what did I think? What did I think? I mean I was surprised. Nobody ever asked me, I mean I was just there to record everything,

the shot, so gradually you sort of think “yes that doesn’t look... hmmm” but now you sort of, someone does that boring term ‘master shot’ and then they start to cut in and I will say to the director because where should we take it from because when the actor moves in, that always helps the editing. It gives the actors energy to sit into a shot but they’ll say I only want it from the middle but it is much easier because eyes move differently if you sit into something, even if it is only a few inches the eyes will move differently, the posture will adopt. Sometimes they won’t want to which is fine, it’s not my name on the credits. I might help the actor and say “would you like to take it from...” and they might say “no, I’ll be fine”. Again, you gently suggest.

I: Would you say he was respectful towards your work?

PE: Who? Bill? No idea. One doesn’t expect friends or anything. ...

I: Would you say his approach to managing the production was very different to other filmmakers you worked with?

PE: They are all different. I mean, Robert Altman was, I went to see him because I didn’t want to do the film. I went to this posh flat near the Albert Hall and I went up and he was there with his producer. He was a big burly man and he sat on one of these chintzy sofa and I sat on the end because if I lent back my little legs would go straight back and he rambled on because the plot was sort of ridiculous but that wasn’t sort of what he was interested in he was interested in showing a change in society between the wars when servants were no longer going to be servants. ... And I say, is there anything you want to ask me? And he says, no my main job—his main job that is—is in the casting and then I want the actors to surprise me. And he adored the actors. He was rather gruff and grumpy with the crew and I sort of had my elbows out and I stood by quietly behind him, “Pnnnnny!” Yes, I’m here. I mean that was totally different because he would arrange what he called his choreography which was how the actors were going to move and then he’d say cameras come in and there would be two of three cameras tracking up and down, I never knew what they were doing, so to have a bank of monitors I’d be trying to guess whether we’d got the shots of people and their salient lines that they were looking in a good direction for the editor if he wanted to cut with them and the 180 degrees on the line. Not that he was, I mean he never knew what the plot was. I’d hear this bellow from next door where he’d be lying on a sofa bed “Pnnnnnnny, what happens in this scene?” He wanted all the parts in every single scene. I’d say, “I don’t think you want her there because the previous scene she’s having breakfast in bed and this is another breakfast scene”. No, that was quite tricky but in a totally different way.

I: You mention thinking about the editor and what’s best for them to cut. Is that your top priority when you’re noting down?

PE: Well you’re trying to give them a brief a description as possible because they’re not going to read the stuff, but they are going to look at the different shots and different takes and any particular notes that the director makes. Like, I would like to use this take or I’m not going to use that or anything like that, but you make the notes as brief as possible. Or if there is anything you think is not going to work. Some Script Supervisors have made some quite rude notes—there was one very funny one—I can’t remember what her name was but anyway but she said “I was in the toilet” (it was the first scene of the Beatles film) I think and she said “I don’t know I was in the toilet. Came back. They shot something. Don’t know who was in it. Think it was the Beatles. They weren’t wearing the costumes,

I don't think. They were wearing what they came in in. It was shot by the director. If this is how its going to be, god help me!" No that was very funny.

I: I think it was for the Dorchester High Street scene where you commented: "Oh, here we go again".

PE: Oh, oh did I? I mean now at least we have video screens which we can look at which is really useful because up till then, all you could do was look through the camera and you couldn't do that when they were shooting and you'd be lucky to do it at the time before it was shot. So I would say what's your left what's your right but now and make up would come up to me because obviously if there is a big close up they have to go in but now they can actually see what is being shot and all you need to tell them is I think it is going to be tight, even if they don't have time to come and look. So there is little banks of monitors all over the place. But they never used to. When I first started, I was at the BBC and to look through the lens? You'd just be there with a bag of sweets.

I: So talking about Mick... you worked together for Comrades and many other films with Stephen Frears.

PE: I think we started off on a film called *Walter* which opened Channel 4 with Sarah Miles and Ian Mackellan and then did he do *My Beautiful Laundrette*. Have you seen it? I think it is one of the best British films. It is about everything. A brilliant script and we made Sammie and Rosie.... He's worked with Terry Gilliam and Comrades obviously.

I: With your job, you're obviously noting down so much that is going on. So when a director wants the actors to improv, are you having to note down all the dialogue?

PE: Well, you try and get the gist... Everything is at the end of a long lens so at least we have headsets and we can hear what's going on.

I: Whereas with Bill he seems reluctant ot have the actors improv lines

PE: I'm sure that's true. I can't remember. I just remember these endless holds on dialogue and I don't remember if he did because I suggest that if an actor is having difficulty then the best thing to do, particularly now with digital where it is so cheap is to keep it running and to do it again and gradually it usually gets better. Or to speed it up a bit because otherwise acting it can be too over the top. "Less Less" that's what Stephen would say. I don't know what Bill said, he just held it on and on and on and on.

I: From what you recall, anything about the atmosphere on the set of Comrades? You said earlier about Bill staying in his car and that you'd have a bit of a laugh with Simon.

PE: I think it was off-set where we'd be having a laugh. I can't remember. It was a long time ago. But obviously, got a bit unpleasant at times because we all thought he was unjustified and so we went into our burrows and did our job. That's all we can do really.

I: I don't know if you'll remember this – as you say this was a long time ago—but the print shop scene that had Barbara Windsor and a stunt advisor come in. During the filming of that scene, Bill became unwell and production ceased for two days.

PE: I vaguely remember that. Maybe ... No. It could have been psychosomatic or general exhaustion. Was that in England? It was winter. No, I can't remember.

I: During the reshoots will you be there?

PE: Oh, yes, that bit is tricky because obviously you've got the film and you look at it and everybody looks at it, everyone who is going to be involved—the costume and the art department beforehand to try and get some idea of how they want whatever it is to be cut in. But I can't remember a lot about it.

I: But if you're contracted to work on another film.

PE: Well, then you wouldn't do it. You can't do it. Its not ideal for you and your job or for them. You may breath a sigh of relief—"Oh, I can't go!"

I: The daily progress reports. Are they your responsibility?

PE: Yes, well, part of it is. You have to put down the screen time and whether it was over or under whatever your original estimate was, the scenes that are completed, aren't completed, anything that you might have to redo again, and then there are sort of boring things like the times you start shooting, the time you stop for lunch, I never quite know because I never get any lunch so one feels quite embittered about. But all those sorts of times, the time we wrap. You have all the crew sweeping round you on the floor and they'll say "what time are we back, Penny?" and you think, I think I became deaf when I'd be asked questions like that because I'd think if you can't be bothered to look at your watches I'm not going to bother telling you.

I: So your days in particular must have been very long. You'd have to be there from set up until ...

PE: Well I'm always there an hour before we start shooting...yes, so I always get there an hour before and set up in my little corner. I mean the people who really look after us are the prop men because they look after your whatever supplies you don't want to carry with you on their van and they find you a little space and give you cups of tea and they will take all your stuff away and move it around so they are sort of wonderful nannies. You work closely with them, too, if they've got to set up something again because I'd do these little sketches of any set because my only way of ...because I don't take part in any of the decision making as to how ... I would do a little drawing because it is my only way so I do these little funny drawings but photos only show you a certain amount ... and then I'd draw the frame in the shot because although you can write it down, the description doesn't mean very much ... but that has all the sort of detail, that that's the size of the shot so I can immediately find what shot it is that went wrong because in the morning when they look at the rushes, what we'd done the day before, you know the camera loader will come to you and say "what was the shot sc. 106?" so I can look through my continuity sheets and I'll look through my script and say well it was the two shot and I'll write down all the details of the focus, the lens, the distance, the stock or whatever it is, all the technical details will be written down in my script so this is my bible. Rather than carrying round lots of files and I will hardly look at the continuity sheets again, ... so its all there.

I: So the editor really knows your ...

PE: The editor will have that all on their sheet but its more for people on the ground if they have a reshoot. But also, for instance, if something had gone wrong, maybe there was a focus problem on a shot but they are not so closely

related, we'll be able to see that they were all on one lens and then there was obviously something wrong with the lens. So that's another reason the detail helps so you can see that the common denominator was the 85 or the 35 lens. I mean that wouldn't be on the progress report but if there was a reshoot, well you'd be able to see why they could reschedule a bit of the scene or some of the scenes but dear old Mick will say, "no, we'll be ok, we'll be ok."

I: Whilst the editing process is going on, are you in touch with the Editor much?

PE: Not really. I mean I'll drop in and we'll mutter together and I might go look at a bit of the editing but once they say wrap at the end of the shoot, that's me finished and then Stephen always likes to, occasionally there is a sort of rough cut and he'll get his friends occasionally to sort of watch it over and I'll have a look.

I: When the shooting schedule had to change at short notice, how did it effect your work?

PE: Well, no it doesn't really, you've just got to be prepared for whatever they want to do. What does happen is that at the end of the day on some films, rewrites come in and there is new material you have to work with. And I know with a film called *Tamara Drewe*, rewrites used to come in every night, you know, 30 pages, and I'd have to go through them meticulously, changing notes or make a note that two scenes have become 1 so this will effect the costume department, everybody. So I'd go through all that and it all takes time and sometimes you'd used to find, particularly with that film you're only changing a bit of punctuation. You think why do I need a new page for this. I think by the end of that film, no one was reading them but me. But I mean, it took me, I was working on it till 2 o'clock in the morning sometimes. And finally I said, I'm sorry but I have to have some overtime, I'm not doing this for nothing. But you have to be absolutely meticulous because again, if things go wrong and you've got to make sure that everyone is aware. Because they'll say, oh we've cut a scene, well they haven't cut a scene at all, that's for the financials when they've made two scenes into one thinking no one will notice but it does effect everything, it has a knock on on the breakdown, the time of day, everything.

I: And then if you've got an early start as well...

PE: It is exhausting. The only thing is that it is for a short time, relatively. Its not like coal mining or being a nurse, its no relevance to anything really, but it is hard.

I: So when a production is falling behind schedule, do you feel a sense of dread?

PE: No, except it means longer and longer hours, but you know, we can only do our best in the framework we're given and I'm not part of that framework. I think its stressful for the producers but it can be particularly if you have a director who's saying 'no, it's not finished. We need the money, you know, go and get it'.

I: I think Bill often had that attitude.

PE: yes, I think a lot of directors do. In a way, you sort of understand that except that often you think there is a lot of incompetence and not thinking, not anticipating within the film industry.

I: Noting down a director's preference, is there a certain way that you do this? Is it through circling the take number?

PE: Yes, sometimes. I'll put a little note saying "very good" or "good" or "he liked this".

I: Do you specify why it was preferred?

PE: If I'm asked to specify, yeah, but I don't know how much notice the editor takes, he might try as far to, I mean, as far as the director is concerned it is done on the run and the editor may spot. I mean, a good editor, if anyone wants to go into the film industry needs to go into the cutting rooms.

I: Any particular memories that you have of *Comrades*? Good or bad?

PE: Oh well, I liked being in Australia. We were in a beautiful part of Dorset, down on the coast in an Army ... in a village ... the Army had destroyed and there was a manor house and the remains of a church and a street and they'd dressed it up. I do remember on one simply ghastly night, when it was pouring with rain, and we were doing a night shoot, yeah, really cold and horrible and Bill giggling away like a mad pixie saying "I could've written the coach went up the hill and the sun was shining." But he said, "I wrote it was night and it was raining." And he was so pleased that with those two lines he'd caused all this discomfort. I think. I mean, I don't know it was "I wrote, that here we are" and he was terribly pleased that he'd written that, something like that.

I: And would you say he was 'difficult' to work with?

PE: He was, he was. I mean, I think everyone found that. I mean I didn't have that much difficulty I just thought why are you being so horrible to me and ignoring what I say when somebody else can say exactly the same thing and he'd say "well done, yes that's a brilliant idea" because I usually keep quiet and if I have anything of a suggestion for the director or anyone on the set, then I'll say it quietly because you don't want to land anybody in it or make them look foolish if they haven't done their job so you just say "has she got the right time on?"....

I: Would you say Bill was defensive then?

PE: No, no, because I wouldn't be saying that sort of thing to him. But he was dismissive, as far as I remembered but it was a long time ago...

...

It is exhausting. I mean, a lot of the information you put down is not going to be used by anyone but suddenly someone will come along and say "What was used in..." and sometimes I'd say "Hang on, I'm not a computer, I'll find it, just give me a few seconds."

I: Most of this is used for your eyes only?

PE: Oh yes, I mean, Mick gets a script like this but neatly marked up with only what he needs to know.

I: Do you have to keep all continuity books with you all the time when you're on set? There were 4 for *Comrades*.

PE: Yes, I keep them in case anybody asks me. ... It is a lot to carry, yes. I mean it is very easy to lose it and you're working in the rain, the wind, if the machine going to break.

I: Have you ever lost a book?

PE: I'm always losing them but somebody always finds them on a set. Occasionally, I think there was one film and I was miserable, and towards the end of the film we went to film a bit in the States and when we were finished, I think I chucked the book in the bin. ... most of the time, I've had a good time but you're so isolated which is good in a way, it makes you stronger, but on the whole it has been good but I don't think I want to do it anymore.

I: Do you keep in touch with many Continuity Script Supervisors?

PE: There are some and I've kept in touch with people like Elaine, but I've kept going longer than most people but a lot have given up. Make up I've kept in touch with occasionally and we meet up sometimes, but they are more friends. They're like a big family and you usually know somebody. ... As Script Supervisor, we have contact with everybody, so its important to establish those relationships with communication, I mean, before the beginning of each film I'd ring up the editor, I mean, Mick knows me but I'd say "[...] you must let me know if you're not getting the information you need."

I: Do you do a similar thing with the other departments as well?

PE: Yeah, yeah. I'll go and meet them and go see who is going to be the prop man, who is going to be who you work very closely with. Because you may say to a prop man "look, she's carrying a suitcase, when she walks onto the set can you put it down so she picks it up in exactly the same way so that the labels are on the right or left or sort of thing" so they can, in an invisible way, help with that sort of detailed continuity and help restablish things. They take their own detailed photos and so will the costume people. I mean sometimes you have extras which will come in for a day and then you need them the following day so you can just about get away with it if you put people with roughly the same sort of shape in the same costume in. But they usually say to the extras, are you going to be here tomorrow? And that sometimes doesn't work and they've been sat behind the main actors.

... you learn all the time on the job. And you also have to adapt to different actors, different directors, not upsetting any tenderness that they have. And sometimes people will say you have to go off and relax, and you think, if only... because whether they are setting up or not setting up there is always something to do and you have to keep on top of it.

I: There is no time to switch off.

PE: No, except when I get home in the evening. I don't even want to think about what we've been doing.

Mick Audsley Interview, Monday 9 March 2020

I: How did you come to be involved in *My Way Home*?

MA: Now, let me think because it was a very long time ago. It turned out my next door neighbour when I was living in Clapham, I guess in about 1974/75 was Peter West who edited *My Ain Folk* and a fellow film student friend of mine – I went to the Royal College of Art Film School and Peter Harvey was one of my dearest friends, recorded the sound for *My Ain Folk* so I had two connections to Bill and we met socially because Bill used to go to Peter West's house and edit, he was cutting at home *My Ain Folk* so I got to know bill socially at that time. And because

there was a two year gap in the first part of *My Way Home* and the second part in Egypt and I used to work with Peter Harvey as a sort of sound recordist and the two Peter's—Peter Harvey and Peter West—introduced me to Bill and I ended up going to Egypt to record the second part of *My Way Home* and because I was interested in editing but hadn't really started cutting, I got on very well with Bill and we had those extraordinary 10 days in Egypt making that part of the movie and Peter West chose not to edit it. Bill was quite tough to work with in many respects and the editor for *My Way Home* initially was a man called David Mingay and so Peter West was the connection in a way or was one of the two connections, said well why don't you edit the sound that you've shot in Egypt for David Mingay and work in the cutting room in post-production and I worked initially as David Mingay's assistant with the intention of becoming the Sound Designer, in those days we used to call it the Dubbing Editor. But it became quite early on that David and Bill didn't get on terribly well and there was a kind of weird vibe and we'd had some technical difficulties when we were in Egypt and there was enormous pressure to complete a cut of the movie and a dub to secure the revenue back for the first showing of the entire trilogy for ZDF in Germany and so there was a rather hurried cut or there was a lot of pressure to get a version together which would complete the three films for the first time. *My Childhood, My Ain Folk* and *My Way Home*. And to cut a long story short, Bill wasn't happy with how the film was being cut for this run up for our initial delivery for our ZDF screening or TV screening and one weekend he asked me if I would take over the cut of the film because we got on very well and he felt I understood that film well. And what we did was a very hurried cut of the movie and the dub and what I did was I physically carried it to ZDF not as a print but as a sellotaped joined film which they were very unhappy about because it has been run through and it had scratches and all that but we achieved a version of the film very hurriedly. I've never worked like that. I think it was over 3 weeks we barely slept, we cut the film down, we dubbed it and I think I sent you picture of us dubbing... I'll send you a picture of that anyway. And I took it and they got the revenue back and the BFI were very pleased that we'd taken over and made an initial completion of the film that could be screened. It got wonderful reviews as you can imagine because of what it was. And when we got back I was then formally asked to take over editing of the whole film, the whole of MWH and put it back to rushes and us to do a proper unhurried cut of the movie and complete it because we'd had to work so fast, we hadn't really explored the material properly and that's what we did. You know, I guess a way, that would've been about 1976/1977 and you know, that's what we did. I kept very close in touch with Bill from that moment on really, all the way through to *Comrades* and beyond. So that was kind of why, it was a sort of extraordinary thing that happened and you know, David was a great editor and so on but Bill could never quite express what he wanted and you had to kind of read him like a book, really. And so, we just found we had a conversation that was tuned well to one another and that's how it worked out.

I: It is my understanding that if you were unavailable during the editing of MWH that Charles Rees would come in to help. Is that right?

MA: No, no, not for *My Way Home*. There was a point in *Comrades* where very late on that Charles actually helped Bill, I was busy and I think Charles helped to put some of it back but I don't recollect... I mean Charles would have been around, Charles was a close friend and I know he would have seen the film, we all used to sort of muck in together but I don't think, we didn't really have much

time. Even though by then we had been given a sort of second period, Charles may have well of been around, I know I asked for his help and advice, he was more experienced than me, there was Kevin Brownlow, there was Mamoun Hassan, there was all these friends of ours who were around and we took their notes and their advice very seriously. But I don't actually remember Charles cutting MWH. I could ask him, I see him quite regularly, but I don't remember it.

I: Did you feel then that there were pressures from Peter Sainsbury at the BFI? And did these pressures have an effect on Bill's behaviour?

MA: Not really, I mean, I had to say that Peter was the one when I got back to Germany who said "we'd love for you take it on formally", you know and Michael Relph who was Simon Relph's father. And actually, I got my first kind of bigger industrial job because of Peter and Michael Relph, because of that involvement with Bill. I mean, Bill was such an instinctive animal, such a pure poet of cinema that the like of which I haven't really seen since. I mean I did a film for Terence Davies who is very much a disciple of Bill's and he would acknowledge this himself, Terence, that Bill's language and purity of poetry of cinematic poetry, was sort of inspired by Bill. He was a hard guy to read in many ways and he could never really tell you what was wrong with what he was seeing or that you had made together but he would certainly know it when it was right. Often it was rhythmical storytelling and the precision of the order, the very planned way of shooting and writing that he had and the rhythm of those shots and the silences and sounds and so on was very, very precise. And because it was so much his voice, his poetic voice, it was very hard to you know you had to sort of adapt to it and understand his internal rhythms and his way of looking at the world to get it.

And he was also someone who had been damaged in childhood, there was no doubt about that. But I never had... I mean, I was very lucky, many people had instances where they were quite upset by Bill or it hurt them but I can't say that it happened to me. I was probably too young and too naïve and he taught me a lot, he taught me almost everything, actually, but we always got on very well.

I: It seems at this time at the BFI Production Board people were often sharing expertise and working on different projects. Would you agree?

MA: Yes, yes, very much so. That's very true and I do quite a lot of teaching now as you know. I look back on being how lucky I was because I really stumbled into editing, I had done something before *My Way Home* and I went to film school but I didn't cut at all, I did Sound Editing and I sort of fell through into it through *My Way Home* but there was a great sense of excitement about sharing with who was working. There was not only Mamoun, there was Peter Greenaway, a little bit later, Derek Jarman. You know there was all this sort of group of filmmakers and we would share stuff, we would show things that we were making and people would give notes and ideas and now it's a sad thing but because of privacy and the sort of insular way that filmmaking has gone, people are much more reticent to sharing. And those sorts of people, including Charles who also taught me a lot while we were making those films, they would you know take you under their wing and inspire you and talk about movies in a new way, or a way that I hadn't heard and that was very, very exciting. So it was a little hothouse of people with ability and drive and talent but I think we all sort of recognised that there was Peter K Smith as well, wasn't there? The names are coming back to me. But Bill was very much sort of out there as a sort of beacon of this particular sort of stark poetic form of in this case autobiographical storytelling. It was exciting, it was great!

I: So you know people who had worked closely with Bill before. Had you been told anything about his behaviour or what it was like to work with him?

MA: Yeah, I knew what was going on and Peter West who was a wonderful editor who became a wonderful director and is sadly no longer alive as well, Peter shared a lot of MAF with me as a neighbour and friend. I was there because of connections through the BFI. He helped me find a flat, literally next door to his house that was how it worked. And so I knew about the difficulties. I knew how difficult it had been to shoot MAF. I knew Gale Tattersall, I'd met him through Peter Harvey, I knew a lot that gang. I was aware that there was a tough side to Bill's character, if you like, and this very unique talent that was frustrated by the problems of actually getting the films made. And that ten years it took to make the trilogy is extraordinary. I did get to know Peter Jewell as well at that time during MWH and obviously better later on so I was aware... we used to hang out together with Bill and all those people so yeah.

I: So did Peter Jewell help in the cutting room for *My Way Home* and *Comrades*?

MA: He definitely was very involved in *Comrades*. In *My Way Home* I'm sure he used to come to screenings. We used to have screenings every week you know, every Friday we'd run the film. He was always there as a counterweight to Bill and he could sometimes be more articulate than Bill was able to be about his own work. It was always very friendly, there was nothing confrontational about that side I mean *My Way Home* is a softer film because it resolved the story. It was actually David Mingay's construction which I'm sure in the case of the resolution flying around the room at the very end that was sort of in existence when I picked up the film so I can't claim all the editorial prowess for it because it was a joint effort, you know? Everyone clubbed in together because we realised how unique Bill's voice was and we admired it and to be honest, I've been very lucky and have worked with some amazing filmmakers over the years but Bill's talent, personally, for me, was very, very unique indeed.

I: So moving onto *Comrades*, can you tell me a bit about the process of how you came to be involved in that?

MA: Well with *My Way Home* as I say, I had the film by the time I was involved, I had been involved in a bit of the editing that Bill started with David and then when David left and I took over, the film was completely shot. I think they must have had a construction of the scots bit anyway, I can't remember the details, and we added Egypt on the end and we worked the whole thing completely as a unit because remember there was that extraordinary thing where Stephen Archibald, three days before we were due to fly to Egypt announced that he wasn't coming because Maggie his girlfriend was pregnant, I mean, he was sixteen! You know the story of all those boys is a film in itself, the reality. We thought the whole thing was going to be off and in fact it did work out. Again, just to add to the point, it happened that my sister lives in Edinburgh so I used to go to Edinburgh and I used to see Stephen Archibald quite frequently when he was alive. There was a very close connection with all those people who had been involved in Bill's ... in the Trilogy. But the film was shot and we were putting it together and Bill and I would sit together, cutting, just the two of us.

When it came to *Comrades*, we were in Dorset and Bill was shooting every day and I was actually sleeping above the cutting room in a place called Binden

Abbey, near Durdle Door and we then spent the next twenty-five years in Dorset until last year ... but Bill was very comfortable with me cutting whilst he was shooting which was new to him, he hadn't experienced that ever before the idea of... which is normal to a film but it was necessary over a period of however many weeks and then we had the winter stuff and then we went to Australia and he was very happy that I would cut in his absence while he was shooting. I used to see him regularly. They flew me out to the desert, and I have some funny pictures of us all out there, with Penny now I come to think of it. But that was something new to him because we knew each other very well and I used to show him what I'd done, and we'd talk and so on. We had to push to FilmFour because it was a good 9 months or a year in production, I think. So that was something new for him and I always felt very privileged that that was something that he felt comfortable to subcontract to me. When we finished shooting and we got back from Australia and we were waiting for the winter stuff, we just worked together in the normal way, we just sort of barrelled on through until we finished. Then there were some problems. I went off and did another job and then there we Jeremy Isaacs I think it was and Roger Wingate, they wanted us to compress the film. Which I fully understood, I got that and understood what that was about, but it wasn't what Bill wanted to do and good for him, you know. We talked about it at some length and he said, "I don't want to make that film, I want to make this one." And it was my job to support that, even though there was a side of me that we missed a bit of the audience that we could have had by making it more compressed, succinct, you know, it's got fantastic things in it but it's not as taut as it could be I think. But he very much consciously chose to do that, and I respected him, and we all respected him for that.

I: So, you mentioned going to work on another project, was that *Prick Up Your Ears*?

MA: Yes, I think it was *Prick Up Your Ears*. I was booked to do that and there was then a sort of panic about shortening the film which I think Bill agreed to look at and I was unavailable to do the work. I wasn't going to go in there after work on another film, but we kept sort of closely in touch and it all sort of backfired and eventually we sort of pieced it back together how we had it. That is my memory of it and Peter will probably corroborate that. Peter was very useful at sort of coordinating that, but he certainly did, I think Mike Ellis helped as well. Mike Ellis, he was feeling the pressure of the incentive that the producers had to reduce the length of the film but without his heart being in it but he said I will look at it and decide and I think that's probably where Mike came in, maybe Charles did. And I said well look, I'm involved but I can't do the work. And that all kind of backfired and in the end, whatever cut they ended up with, Bill wanted to put it back to the one we had left a few months earlier and that's what you see now, I think. There may be a few changes and so on but it's a three-and-a-half-hour movie, it's a lot. I can see every frame of it in my head too. And not so long ago, there is that incredible scene in Australia, you know the one where the convicts surround Alex in this box and there is all kinds of horrible things going on with the dog and all that and I remember being there, I was in Australia when they shot that, and when I came to it years later after Bill had died, it completely stunned me that we were making something like that, something so morally complex and so weird a piece of film. I mean, there is no way those guys can surround it when they are all chained together but you completely believe every side of it. But it is an incredible piece of film and as I was showing it and talking about it, it sort of hit me all over

again of what a complex piece of work it was with these very stark, simple images. And yeah, it's extraordinary.

I: You talk about the pressures of Jeremy Isaacs and Roger Wingate. Were they ever there in the cutting room?

MA: No, in those days, perhaps a bit unlike now, the cutting room was very much our domain, me and Bill and my assistants. People would let us work and friends would come and visit us and there was a lot of fun involved, in fact, Keith Allen, Keith used to bring his daughter Lily into my cutting room and park her in a buggy when he was off round town, so I used to look after Lily when I was cutting. So, I had various people come in and now she's a big pop star. I saw her again and I did mention to her that you won't remember this but your Dad used to park you in the Comrades cutting room whilst I was cutting and she used to go to sleep, probably the sound of the movieola sent her to sleep. But no, we were sort of left and presentations were not in the cutting room, they were in a preview theatre where we'd screen the movie.

I: So, it was more in those preview screenings that you felt the pressure?

MA: Well yes, there was pressure at a certain point when we had the film finally put together and possibly, Jeremy, maybe there was a necessity to have it as a screenable tv movie in two halves. I mean, at a certain point we decided we were going to have the break and split it in two with a formal interval and they wanted Bill to cut it very much and there was a feeling that if you take, because of the complexity of the ellipsis in the story, you can't take a lump out and have it go because something else goes wonky and he didn't want to just compress it to speed it up because he had an enormous amount of respect for who played George...?

I: Robin Soans.

MA: Yes, yes and all of the actors and he didn't want to interfere with them too much and again that was his call. But there was a huge amount of pressure to the extent that he did agree to chop it down and then he didn't like it and put it all back together. I think that's what happened, I hope my memory is correct on that.

I: Yes, it was at the London Film Festival that Mike Ellis's version was shown.

MA: Yes, that's right and he wasn't happy with that.

I: [Douglas] referred to it as a 'hybrid version'

MA: That's right. That's quite right, I do remember. I don't think I was at that do; I think I would've found it too painful.

I: And that was when Simon Clayton then came on...

MA: Oh yes, that's right. Now Simon helped. Simon definitely did some of the work to reduce it and he might've helped up put it back together. I can't remember, you know.

I: So, you were part of the process of putting it back together?

MA: Well, I was ultimately, yes. Or certainly I was shown it to check if that was how we had it. I can't remember but it was all to do with availability and I was booked on another film and I said, "Bill, I'm around but I can't sit and do all the work because my brain will explode" but we were in touch and I know he gave

me the chance to ok the final cut. But I remember we saw, and we said let's leave it at that.

There aren't any bad guys in this, by the way. I've had it in other films where... certainly I had enormous respect for Jeremy, particularly, and I dealt with him in other things and Roger as well, and I completely got their position and they had enormous respect for Bill, but it was a difficult debate. I think perhaps nowadays I would have handled it differently but then I've had more experience since, I mean that was 1985/86 and perhaps now I would have had greater ability to satisfy both factions of that but I do remember, I mean, not so long ago saying to Peter, do you think there would've been a way that Bill would have been happy to have reduced the screen time? And he said no, he was perfectly happy with it, so that was that.

I: So, it sounds like the cutting room was very much a friendly and relaxed space...

MA: Very much, yes certainly. I mean *My Way Home* I can't remember so well; it was a bit of a blur. But certainly, with *Comrades* which was probably nine months or a year, I can't remember in my working life. It was great, you know. The film was extraordinary, and we were developing the optical shots and there was all that stuff and there was Michael Pickwood involved, you know the designer, Penny was involved, everyone was clubbing together. Another friend of mine, Elaine Carew who did make up. Films are always tough and there's ups and downs but generally I think we all felt very proud to be involved. And the actors are incredible, you know? I mean, amazing things going on there in Dorset with those guys. Freddy Jones and Robert Stephens. Oh my god! They used to get hammered, they knew how to party, those guys. ... There was a lovely [photo] where Robin has to come into the room and it was my cutting room, so they used my cutting room as a set in Binden Abbey, it is where he looks through the door, that sort of churchy looking door, that was my cutting room. I've got a picture of Robin in and the movieola, it was very weird. It was all very sort of, you know the fact that there really wasn't... I mean we weren't sure we were even going to go to Australia until the very last... and I slept above the cutting room in Bindon Abbey, Dorset, which was not a great idea really.

I: So, if we could talk a bit about your working methods and approaches. So, when it comes to a new project, what are some of the things that you would do first of all in preparation?

MA: Well I think it's always good to talk and to do as much preparation as you can. In fact, there was something I learned on *Comrades*, I remember quite clearly, and it was beautifully shot by Gale, I mean the photography was stunning. The stuff used to come in, it used to come down on the train from Waterloo and we used to hear the train go past, "oh, we can go get the rushes from the station" and we'd bring this stuff in. And my assistant Jason would bring these boxes in and we'd start looking at what they'd shot the day before or... I think it was perhaps a one day turn around or two days at the most, it was very exciting and then we would all get together in the evening, you know, and look at stuff together. But there was one occasion where Simon Relph came in and asked where's that shot designated for? You know, Bill's language was very specific, and I didn't know. And I thought, woah, this is bad, I should know which bit this is intended for. And that taught me a lesson to do as much work on the screenplay so that when it all comes in out of order you know that that's for that you know? Because

I felt very vulnerable and I remember that was Simon who was not at all pleased that this editor didn't know where this shot was designated for. So, I thought I better shape up on that one.

So, the methods are to prepare. Now, in the case of *Comrades*, remember, there was this huge long run up of it being on and off, there was Ismail Merchant involved, so I had a lot of contact with Bill and the screenplay in the run up to when we actually started. I have, since then, tended to encourage not only myself but students and films editors also to, if you do a lot of work on the script, you're better prepared. And when it changes and moves, you're relating it to something. Now, not everybody likes to work like that, not sure Charles Rees would agree with me, he likes to respond to just the movie itself but everybody has their methods, but I certainly did that with *Comrades* and I learnt it... I mean I was concerned about when they split, how we would do that, you know, when the men all get separated in Australia, how were we going to keep the stories going and how were we going to bounce between them. When they're all together in Dorset it is a lot easier because it's nasty old Frampton and the martyrs, so it is an easier sort of conflict.

I: I noticed that [one of the ways you prepared] is that you created a family tree at the beginning of your script.

MA: Oh, was that in *Comrades*? Yes, I think I did write it all out. I don't know but I think you've got the screenplay of mine, haven't you?

I: Yes, we do have it at the museum.

MA: Because Bill and I, he used to do drawings before he shot and we'd sit and he'd say, do you think this will be alright? You know, roughly block it out. And then, we would often do drawings when we got the shots as well, to figure out what order they should come and so on. I've still got quite a few of them, there might be some in that script, I can't remember, but he was doing these funny sort of stick figures with a circle and you know... but actually they were very useful because the thing of size, the size of the shots, and the purity of Bill's shooting, was sort of exemplary, you know he always wanted to—he'd used to call it 'plussing'—you know, the shots must never repeat in size or meaning, you know, that it has to be a sort of simple progression of sizes and development of ideas and it must never repeat. I'm sure we did do this but initially he never wanted to use the same size of the shot twice. You know in conventional cinema you bounce around and this was something he abhorred. And similarly, I know he was very nervous about doing pick up shots, like popping something in later because he felt that he'd have to do the whole scene again because the actor's faces were different, you know? All of which was a purist's approach which is hard to accommodate in contemporary cinema but he's not necessarily wrong, he wasn't wrong about this, the people do look different, so he was very tuned to that degree of sensitivity to things that he was manipulating in front of the camera.

I: How interesting. He has a similar method when he was writing the script originally where he'd feel like he would have to start from the very beginning again.

MA: Yeah, that was true very much with the editing as well. Because, I was made aware of it as you like as a fledgling editor, but it became true in all my other work and still to this day that it is obviously the relationship and the progression of ideas. So, if we made a change in a scene, we had to go back, perhaps two or

three, and run into it because it was the accumulation of ideas that would affect the way you perceive that change. It's like music, you know, it has to be in relation to what's preceded it and you couldn't evaluate it in isolation. And so, the process for him of putting his signature to a cut or the choices involved in the editing was very much a part of that, which is why certainly with *My Way Home* and I'm sure with *Comrades* as well, we would run it quite often because we had to see the whole thing, you know. Now, when it's three and a half hours long it is quite something.

I: So, as you mentioned, you've worked with Penny across your career, can you tell me how your work relates to one another, how you use her materials to aid your work?

MA: I mean, as you know now you've met Penny, she had an extraordinary grasp of the entity of the project in a narrative way, the storytelling of it. So, she has to navigate her way through, not only the practical issues like oh well this has just happened, therefore they've got to... I don't know... they're covered in mud or its winters its day or its night, all that, the absolutely practical understanding of it. But what she also has, in the way in which films are shot and certainly this is true of *Comrades* and all the other work that we did, an instinctive understanding of what is needed to construct articulately what is required of the script, even if it be in Bill's language or more conventional cinema. And so, she would always be... we would phone and talk to each other on a pretty much daily basis and she'd said, "well, look, I haven't got you this, you're going to need this... I'll try and persuade... we need time, you haven't got a close up or this isn't quite clear or there is a bit of the storytelling..." so she was very much a part of the conversation. Now, with Bill's language which he'd already planned in a very, very detailed way, in his poetic voice if you like, cinematic voice and vision. I think she did very much also participate in that pre-work that he did. I can remember there are some lovely drawings of when they take the scene which causes a great deal of difficulty cutting was when the carpenter and they take the chairs up the hill and then you don't see the event which is... any other film would do the rejection of the chairs but Bill didn't, suddenly the chairs are upside down in the mud because they've been rejected by the Frampton family. And I remember the drawings for all this and how we would achieve this thing where you're actually leading up to an event where the voice doesn't tell you and again it is brave to deny you that but that's what Bill wanted to do. ... So I remember that very clearly, certainly Bill had the drawings for that sequence I know and the angle, it was all about going up to heaven, it had to be aspiring to go and the hope of the sale and then the horrors of the rejection. But Penny was very much, I'm sure she was involved in those conversations and her doubts about what we would need to pull it off. Because she has such an acute understanding as you probably gathered meeting her of the way films tick, the way films work, and the way editorial language articulates that narrative.

I: So, in your MUS you seem to use a rating system for shots and you'd also note Bill's preference as well. Do you recall any scenes of shots where you disagreed or had to negotiate?

MA: No, I mean Bill would shoot cover. Do you know what I mean but that? Running a whole... well, film cover is basically in order to be able to choose exactly where you want the cuts or the changes of size to be, it means that you repeat the action from the different angles all the way through. But Bill would shoot that, even though in his mind he had a very good idea of the emphasis of

the scene and the order of the shots that he wanted ultimately. But, you know, for example, if this cart had to go up the hill and he wasn't sure where this cut would come, where they're back in the mud or somebody's face or whatever, he would obviously shoot overlength in order for us editorially to dictate the precise moment where these cuts and the changes should be. ... I mean if we didn't get things it was always due to a practical problem or time and we would try and get it later if we could or find other ways round it, you know. I can't remember the details of that, but I remember Bill being very happy when he was shooting *Comrades*, that's my memory. And it was a much easier ride, I think, emotionally for him than the *Trilogy*. Also, perhaps, although it was very much his view of this well-known piece of history and folklore almost in Dorset, that the demons of his childhood didn't come in to play quite as much, so I remember him very much enjoying it. In fact, I think the pressures of the length of the film that was probably the worst bit... but my memory while we were in Dorset was that we had a good time. It was hard work, but it was a good time. And in Australia, too.

I: Did you have much involvement with Simon Relph during *Comrades*?

MA: Yeah, I mean, I knew Simon well anyway and I knew his Father. He was enormously supportive. He was a wonderful Producer. I was very fond of him and again I look back now, and he would look after us. ... I mean he absolutely adored the film and what Bill was doing. It was hard, hard work and he had enormous things to pull off to make it happen, but you could never have wanted a man with a bigger heart and enthusiasm and care for all of us worker bees. He was amazing. And we'd been through all the horrors with Ismail where it was on and off and he was a much more complicated character and Simon was just a rock. I miss him and I miss that era of filmmaking which he represented.

Just to add, [Bill] was a wonderful teacher, too. Later on, in the film school years I guess shortly before he died, and I saw Bill the year he died and it was funny because only the other day when I saw Peter I said I saw Bill that April and he died in the July and he never said anything to me about being ill and Peter said to me, he didn't know at that point or chose not to know how severe it was. I mean, he used to smoke, a lot. Nowadays I wouldn't be able to stay in the same room. I used to cut with the windows open ... but in those years we did a lot of things that overlapped teaching at the National Film School and he was a wonderful teacher. Again, he could often vocalise and exteriorise more clearly to students the language of film in a way that he couldn't about his own work. I always used to look on and be like 'oh wow, now I get it Bill and what you were on about' but you're saying it to someone else. So, he was a great teacher and I was incredibly shocked when he died. I really felt there were obviously more films to make but I felt that you know, he showed me the Flying Horse, these other projects that had been kicking around... You know... we were always talking about stuff that was ahead. [...] But it is weird when I go to Exeter and see there is a museum for somebody who was a mate. It's very odd. You can imagine. ... In fact, it was Bill who got me onto Chaplin because I live in the Kennington which of course is Chaplin area. And even since Bill died, I've sort of become even more interested and I'm so sorry that he's not around to talk about him. He desperately wanted to make a film about Chaplin...

What I'd just like to end with, when I first went to the BFI because of my friend Peter and I'd just left the Royal College of Art School and I needed a job and I ended up there and Peter or Anita who worked for Peter Sainsbury at that

time said you must see this film, I've got a print of *My Childhood*. And there was this funny little alcove cutting room and they set up on the projector and showed me *My Childhood* because *My Ain Folk* hadn't been made and I saw that film and it was like having a nail put through my head, you know, I had never seen anything so powerful and so that's when I became aware of Bill and I guess we met fairly soon after that, round at Peter West's house when he was cutting and we all used to sit and drink too much wine, you know, and talk about European cinema. I was just a guy next door, you know.

But Peter taught me a lot, too. He had a wonderful understanding of Bill, what Bill could achieve. And was excited by... it was painful, and it was hard for them, I know it was a tough film, but I got to share in that, and I think MAF is a magnificent movie. It's very tough. ...

Talking about that scene with Alex and the convicts... I remember Bill's insistence that the dog had to run in a straight line and we had this thing about the dog being the innocent who had to be... you had to let the audience off the abuse in a way where the freedom... you know, it is very complex stuff when you sit down and analyse what's going on and how he would show violence and so on... He wasn't a fan of violence, not at all. It was always seen obliquely you know like a whip of blood on the wall. I think he'd suffered so much psychologically. ...I was a huge fan of Bill's and as I say, he taught me a lot. I think I only worked for Stephen Frears for 40 years because I worked with Bill. When I was interviewing with Stephen and I met with Penny in 1981, I think all we talked about was Bill's films.

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