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Submission in fulfilment of Masters by Research

University of Huddersfield

2016

***It Always Rains on Sunday: Early Social
Realism in Post-War British Cinema***

Alistair Billam

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Introduction



The films made at Ealing Studios during the 1940s and 50s are seen by many as the epitome of a particular form and style of British film that ‘spoke’ to its audience in an unrivalled manner, particularly under the stewardship of Michael Balcon and most famously through the Ealing comedies such as *Passport to Pimlico* (1949, Dir: Henry Cornelius), *The Man in the White Suit* (1951, Dir: Alexander Mackendrick), *The Lavender Hill Mob* (1951, Dir: Charles Crichton), *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (1949, Dir: Robert Hamer), *The Titfield Thunderbolt* (1952, Dir: Charles Crichton) and *The Ladykillers* (1955, Dir: Alexander Mackendrick). As the decades passed it is a popularly held assumption that these comedies largely represent not just Ealing Studios but a particular style of British film of the post-war period. In short, Ealing as a term has become shorthand for the comedies and the comedies themselves have become visible representations of a particular form of post-war Britishness (see Duguid. 2016).

My interest in the film *It Always Rains on Sunday* (referred to from this point as *It Always Rains*) was instigated after an unusual response during and after viewing the film for the first time in 2011. I had a general leisurely and a professional interest in British film and in Ealing films in particular as I was keen to build up my knowledge of the context, traditions and legacy of British film and British cinema more generally.

During the period when I was re-acquainting myself with these films (many of which I had not seen since my childhood) I started to move beyond the 'obvious' examples and searched out less well known examples from the Ealing roster. Inevitably these lead me to view non-comedic texts such as the war time drama *Went the Day Well?* (1942, Dir: Alberto Cavalcanti), *San Demetrio, London* (1943, Dir: Charles Frend) which portrayed the vital role of the Merchant Navy during the Second World War, the supernatural *The Halfway House* (1944, Dir: Basil Dearden) and probably the most 'un-Ealing' film of all, the horror compendium, *Dead of Night* (1945, multiple directors but including Robert Hamer, the director of *It Always Rains*). I also viewed films that I had seen before but had not realised were produced from Ealing studios such as *The Blue Lamp* (1950, Dir: Basil Dearden), *Scott of the Antarctic* (1948, Dir: Charles Frend) and *The Cruel Sea* (1953, Dir: Charles Frend). This in itself was interesting, that the output of Ealing during this period was far more wide ranging in style, genre and content than is popularly believed, but it was when viewing *It Always Rains* for the first time that I really did question my sense of not only what Ealing Studios could produce, but more widely about what a British film could produce in the post-war period.

Here was a film set in Bethnal Green in London's East End that focuses on one day that foregrounds the lives of one family, the Sandigates. The world of Rose and her husband George is turned upside down by the arrival of escaped convict Tommy Swan. Tommy and Rose have history and were engaged to be married. The two teenage Sandigate daughters, Vi and Doris (both of whom have relationship problems of their own), and the younger son Alfie add to the drama and tension as the day quickly unfolds but the film also characterises a number of background scenarios and contexts which add to the convincing portrayal of life in post-war Bethnal Green. Included here are the 'low life' hoodlums, Whitey, Freddie and Dicey, who throughout the film are shown to attempt increasingly inept ways to 'flog' a quantity of roller skates. Added to these are the Jewish brothers, Lou and Morry Hyams, the former is the local 'guvner' who is always on the lookout for opportunities to expand his

business and the latter, the local band leader (billed as 'The Man with the Sax Appeal') and record shop owner, who is trying to deal with his wife who correctly suspects his late nights at the club were not spent as innocently as he protests.

Additionally, there is the hypercritical Neesley, the local 'fence' who when not trying to pull off a financial feat over spivs is sanctimoniously enforcing his religious values on others.

The film is rich with smaller characterisations which collectively, along with the main characters weave a dense and complex portrayal of post-war East End life that has its roots in cinematic social realism. It is interesting to note that the tag line used to publicise the film in 1947 was 'the secrets of a street you know' thus confirming that the film was self-consciously appealing to the audience's sense of realism through recognition.

It Always Rains is a film that was arguably doing 'kitchen sink' more than two decades before the British New Wave 'classics' that include *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960, Dir; Karel Riesz), *A Taste of Honey* (1961, Dir; Tony Richardson) and *A Kind of Loving* (1962, Dir; John Schlesinger)¹. Admittedly, there are differences and I am not suggesting overturning the received view that the British New Wave of the late 1950s and early 1960s actually started in the 1940s. To be clear there are no 'angry young men' in *It Always Rains* such as Arthur Seaton (Albert Finney's character in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*). Similarly, there is no Marxist undercurrent that asks serious questions about the existing status quo which legitimates social class exploitation (a theme running throughout *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*). Indeed, Street (1997) has acknowledged that 'the critically praised new wave films of the early 60s had their roots in a number of earlier films including *It Always Rains on Sunday*' (Street 1997, p79) but then goes on to argue that the difference between these early films and the new wave films is that the former portrayed the working class in a patronising way so were therefore not as radical as in the 1960s counterparts. However, I agree with Muir's (2010) view who suggests that *It Always Rains* is not like other

¹ For a detailed account of British New Wave cinema, see Murphy, 1986a)

Ealing or wider British film examples that exhibit social realism such as *The Blue Lamp* or *I Believe in You* (1952; Dir Basil Dearden) as 'the working class are not presented as comic relief, nor are they patronised' (Muir 2010, p59) and as such *It Always Rains* presents a 'totally unsentimental depiction (that) predates British social realist dramas of the late 50s and early 60s' (p 59). Nonetheless, there is no strident political message in *It Always Rains* or central characters demanding that change takes place in wider society, but there is an attempt at social realism that is extremely rare in British film during the 1940s. Indeed, Stead (1989) argues that if *It Always Rains* was an attempt at social realism, it was not an opportunity that was taken up further by others during the succeeding years. I think it is also worth pointing out that *It Always Rains* works as a melodrama in ways that the later British New Wave films do not. Indeed, the popularity of the highly melodramatic Gainsborough films during the 1940s would have had an influence on Ealing's output simply in terms of commercial consideration if nothing else. By the late 50s, such melodrama was seen as old fashioned and was one of the key stylisms that film directors of the new wave such as Karel Reisz, Lindsay Anderson and Tony Richardson railed against.

The term 'slice of life' has often been used to describe the British new wave (and of course the earlier French new wave of the 1950s) but this term perfectly describes *It Always Rains* with its representation of London's Bethnal Green throughout an entire Sunday (what Charles Barr refers to as 'an unnaturally eventful day', (Barr 1998. p70).

Whilst the film centres on characters that the narrative develops around, there is much attention given to the wider community within which the central characters exist. Murphy (2006) has suggested that the film's director Robert Hamer clearly imbued *It Always Rains* with an 'admiration for the French poetic realist films of the late 1930s' (Murphy, 2006, p269) which possibly accounts for the film's unusual 'slice of life' approach and wider standing in relation to other British films of its time. Within minutes of the opening scenes, the film portrays Rose (played by Googie Withers) banging on her bedroom wall to get her step daughter Doris to 'make a cuppa', to which the second step-daughter Vi responds; 'tell her to

make it herself...lazy cow' (Scene 5 in synopsis). This is far from the established conservatism associated with much British film of the day and of those associated with Ealing especially.

Another key issue which the film addresses and which again runs contrary to the norm of British film at the time is the way it foregrounds sexuality. Although much of this is repressed, there is little doubt that the film centres on the use of sexuality to push the narrative along. Vi has an affair with a married man (Morry Hyams), Rose has sex with an ex-boyfriend (Tommy) in the marital bed, the local 'wide-boy' Lou tries to get Vi's sister Doris to work for him with the implication of 'favours' should she take up his offer. Every relationship developed between a man and woman in the film centres on the issue of sexuality; whether it is about sexuality used as temptation, repression or by its obvious absence (and the inevitable consequences).

In short, my response to *It Always Rains* bordered on shock, so deeply held were my expectations of what British post-war film did, I found it hard to accept that such a mainstream British film could exhibit such a sophisticated sense of social realism and address such issues that were obviously relevant to post-war British society, but rarely engaged with by its film industry; certainly not to the extent that *It Always Rains* did.²

In 2011 when I originally viewed *It Always Rains*, my initial reaction of shock turned to incredulity (with a hint of smugness) that such an important British film had not been given its potentially elevated place within the Ealing canon and within British film discourse more generally. However, as is usually the case when something is 'found' and presumed to be forgotten, the reality can sometimes be very different. In the case of *It Always Rains*, it appears that notwithstanding Barr's thorough account of Ealing Studios work in his book first published in 1977, the 1970s and 80s tended to view the film dismissively. The entry for *It*

² Interestingly, the 2012 Blu-Ray release of the film contains a documentary – *Coming in from the Rain* - where the film director Terence Davies also confesses his 'shock' when first seeing the film.

Always Rains in Halliwell's Film Guide dismissively suggests that the film is 'now dated – the stuff of every other television play'. Similarly, Everson (1980) states that the film 'has largely been forgotten today' (1980 p317). An edition of the BBC's arts programme *Omnibus* covering Ealing transmitted in 1986 completely misses the film by concentrating on Hamer's subsequent dark comedy *Kind Hearts and Coronets* despite Googie Withers' inclusion in the programme and her talking about Hamer. In more recent years however, the profile of *It Always Rains* has risen considerably. Muir's *Studying Ealing Studios* published in 2010 uses the film as one of its key case studies and quotes Scott Foundas with stating that *It Always Rains* 'is a major work, badly in need of rediscovery' (Foundas, 2008 quoted in Muir 2010, p 56). Following this, the BFI re-released the film for cinemas in 2012 and then released it on DVD and then Blu-ray the following year. As part of the acknowledgement of this new found interest from the BFI, Roy Stafford delivered a lecture at the National Media Museum titled 'The Dramatic Side of Ealing' which focussed on *It Always Rains* and featured a screening of the film. Similarly, I delivered an introduction and screening of the film at the 2013 Holmfirth Film Festival. In October 2012, the journalist John Patterson wrote an article in *The Guardian* which referred in praiseworthy terms to 'the revival of Hamer's almost forgotten kitchen sink noir classic' (Patterson 2012) and continued to point out that Hamer's legacy is about far more than the comedies he is noted for. The November 2012 (volume 22 issue 11) edition of *Sight and Sound* carried a 10-page feature on Ealing which contained a full page reproduction of the *It Always Rains* film poster (as well as containing a full page advert for the Blu-ray release). That year also saw the release through the BFI of *Ealing Revisited*, a major work containing chapters by established Ealing scholars and features a still from *It Always Rains* on the cover as well as the film and in particular Hamer being heavily discussed through the book. In 2015, Brian McFarlane released *Twenty British Films – A guided tour* which included *It Always Rains* as one of the twenty key texts chosen, where he rates the film as 'one of Ealing's most complex achievements' (McFarlane, 2015, 74).

So, *It Always Rains* is not the 'forgotten gem' I may have originally thought back in 2011 when I first became acquainted with the film, but with renewed interest in Ealing's film output and specifically Hamer and *It Always Rains*, this seems as good a time as any to address the film, its main themes, issues and contexts in this dissertation.

The structure of this thesis is as follows:

Chapter one explores the ethos and ideology of Ealing studios generally in order to provide the social and political context for *It Always Rains*. Centrally this discussion will be related to the importance of the immediate post-war period in Britain and the impact of issues that were prevalent and important at that time such as austerity and rationing and how Ealing, for at least a few years, managed to 'speak' to Britain through a finely balanced concept of post-war national identity. The main illustration of this will be provided by the 1948 film *A Passport to Pimlico* (Dir: Henry Cornelius). Finally, it provides an examination of the reasons why this notion of national identity started to erode after the electoral defeat of Labour in 1951.

Chapter two discusses the extent to which *It Always Rains* should be considered an 'embedded community' film. By this, it is meant that the portrayal of the Bethnal Green community is grounded or 'embedded' within the twenty-four-hour narrative of the film. Competing explanations of community will be explored in an attempt to establish how it is represented in the film. The chapter will also argue that there are two main frameworks for interpretation of the film and both relate primarily to the accent placed on community. The role of the Police will also be considered and in particular, the character of Detective Inspector Fothergill (as a prototype George Dixon). There will also be a discussion on the extent to which the film uses betrayal as a key narrative device.

Chapter three develops and foregrounds the role of *It Always Rains'* director, Robert Hamer. It will be argued that his directorial 'vision' alongside the tension between Balcon and Hamer resulted in hugely creative and successful partnership up to 1949, but quickly dissolved after this. Drawing on Barr's work, the chapter will establish how Hamer did not fit in with Balcon's

view as he was too 'maverick' in temperament and concentrated on a cynical and potentially depressing narrative in his films. This chapter will offer the main discussion on the director so will offer contextually based discussion for the other films Hamer directed during his post-Ealing career (though the discussion will primarily be concerned with his first and most successful period at Ealing).

The conclusion will attempt to establish what the contemporary position of *It Always Rains* and Hamer in 2016.

Appendix: *It Always Rains on Sunday* in detail – Full Film Credits, narrative overview and scene by scene film synopsis.

The basic argument of this thesis is that within the Ealing ethos led by Balcon, Hamer was able to creatively prosper, but this was only allowed under certain constraints and once these were pushed to a limit, his time at Ealing was inevitably curtailed. Despite the opportunities that arose subsequently, Hamer, due to personal difficulties could not fulfil the promise of his earlier film productions. However, it will also be argued throughout the dissertation that *It Always Rains* is, at least arguably, his finest contribution to British post-war cinema and supersedes Hamer's and Ealing's most famous film, *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. Furthermore, there is a conceptual significance to the organisation of this thesis through the chapters. The introduction lays out the significance of the film in terms of the impact that it had on the writer of this work. Chapter one looks at the historical context from which the production of the film took place – Ealing Studios (or as the company was called before Balcon, Associated Talking Pictures,, Michael Balcon and post-war Britain. Chapter two explores the represented community portrayed in the film around which the narrative of the film unfolds, and chapter three explores the wider context of the film by examining more closely the role of the film's director. It is by taking these three pivotal areas that the importance and significance of *It Always Rains* is based on and is the key explanation as to

why it should be regarded as one of the greatest films to be produced by Ealing Studios and certainly the finest of Robert Hamer's.

Chapter 1: Ealing and post-war British cinema.

There is a general consensus that what is recognisable as an Ealing film in terms of style, approach and content (or what Barr perceptively terms as 'projecting Britain') was only established once Michael Balcon took over from Basil Dean as studio head in 1938. Dean's stewardship oversaw the building of the iconic Ealing studios in 1931 and established Ealing films as synonymous with comedy, 'laughter and a jolly night out' (Perry 1981, p38) for British cinema goers. It should also be noted that Dean was central to the success of Gracie Fields and George Formby in their film careers during this period (Muir, 2010, p18). It is easy to underestimate the extent to which the portrayal of gritty, working-class northern characters in locations set in northern England was seen as quite radical for its time, and this portrayal of provincial parts of Britain remained and became more identifiable when Balcon took over the studios. However, nearly half of the films produced at Ealing under Dean's reign had been hired out to other film and production companies with the consequence that it would have been extremely difficult to establish a common identity throughout Ealing's output as so many of the films had nothing in common with Ealing Studios other than the floor space that had been hired to produce them. This approach was overturned by Balcon who wanted to establish a much more coherent identity to Ealing's output, so it is with Balcon occupying the position vacated by Dean (who had returned to the theatre) that it becomes possible to see a recognisable identity through a style of production beginning to emerge.



Basil Dean (Source: filmreference.com)

In a filmed interview from 1969 (broadcast in the 1986 *Omnibus* edition titled 'Made in Ealing') Michael Balcon offers a revealing and honest account of why Ealing films projected a view of Britain so successfully:

*I think we all came here convinced that films made in this country should be from the roots right down into the soil – should be absolutely indigenous...that sounds dramatic but I don't intend it to be, but I do happen to think that the only nationalism that's worth a damn is cultural nationalism when films are absolutely rooted in the soil of the country. (Balcon 1969 in Omnibus: *Made in Ealing*, BBC broadcast 1986).*



Michael Balcon (Source:wordpress.com)

Whilst it is possible to see this view as rather simplistic and perhaps overly idealistic, and almost impossible (or at the very least highly problematic) to take this view to contemporary British film, it is extremely useful as a starting point from which to view the Britishness of Ealing's output (see Richards, 1997). Taken from this perspective, the Ealing ethos was to make films that were deeply rooted in the British psyche and therefore as such, we can view them as constructs which exhibit social, political and cultural aspects of British identity. However, on the one hand we must guard against over estimating the role of Balcon, for example he never directed a single film during his tenure as studio head. Indeed, Barr (1998) points out that Balcon was keen that his unit teams see the full process of production through to the end which suggests it is incorrect to present Balcon's presence as in some way equivalent to an auteur's 'stamp' over the entire output of the studio over the 20 years of his headship. On the other hand, however, there is no doubt that the production arrangements installed by Balcon did foster a distinct direction for the 'family' of production

teams to work. Harper and Porter (2003) argue that it was the norm for film workers inside and outside of Ealing to refer to such production teams as 'Mr Balcon's young gentlemen' (2003, p57). As early as 1931, Balcon had written about 'making pictures which express England' (Muir quoting Balcon from Kardish 1984) and also, when in 1955 the studio was sold to the BBC, a plaque was erected with an inscription written by Balcon where he states 'Here during a quarter of a century many films were made projecting Britain and the British character' (quoted in Barr, 1998, 7). Interestingly, Harper and Porter (2003) argue that the bold statement on the plaque, is more of an attempt at defiance in the face of those he saw as responsible for the eventual downfall of the studio and as such stands as a 'rhetoric of patriotism, essentialism and reflectionism' rather than an authentic crystallisation of British identity through film (Harper and Porter, 2003, p65). Clearly though, this is not Muir's view who goes as far as stating that Balcon's role at Ealing can be best understood by seeing him as a fully signed up auteur of British cinema:

...not in a creative way as he had no direct input into either script or direction, but he was an impresario who was able to raise the finance, supervise the production, assemble the team, and provide the environment that motivated creativity. His authorship was underpinned by his documented philosophy to make pictures 'which express England', to present the world 'with a complete picture of Britain'. (Muir, 2010, 20).

Whether one agrees with Muir and the view that Balcon's leadership of the studios in effect awards him auteur status or not is outside of this work's remit, however it is reasonable to assume that, even if we metaphorically use broad brushstrokes, Balcon's vision for Ealing was no accident made with hindsight (which still allows Harper and Porter's less enthusiastic view of Balcon's outlook to be included). Indeed, such a vision was calculated and intended to provide a direction for the studio's overall output. In short, as Stafford comments, Balcon 'was a strong leader who selected projects, but not one who interfered in the production process' though he was adamant that Ealing's output should be seen to be British in

production and content which is why Ealing films carried a title card announcing 'a British picture made and recorded at Ealing studios'. Indeed, during the war years - an image of a fluttering Union Jack' was added (Stafford, NMM lecture, 2012). A very good summary of what Balcon and Ealing stood for is offered by McLaughlin (1999) who refers to a;

'national narrative' studio style, which finally came together during the 1940s, combined conventional cinematic structures with 1930s documentary realism. The films were of high quality, had good entertainment value, included a degree of escapism and, despite the fact that the studio operated under the control of the Ministry of Information, 'softened' the visually and emotionally excessive propagandistic elements. However, there could be no doubt that the films produced by Ealing Studios were 'rooted in the soil' and sensibilities of the nation (McLaughlin, 2005, 15)

According to most commentators (for example Barr, 1998 and Stafford, 2012) the years when Ealing was its most popular and creative were 1945 through to 1951. These years are significant as they are the same as those covering the post-war Attlee-led Labour Government³ This opens up a discussion about what the political stance of Ealing was and how this feeds into the immediate post-war political culture of war-shattered Britain. On the face of it, Ealing films can come across as quaint, idyllic, whimsical, conservative and socially conformist. Yet it could be argued that Ealing occupied what could be best described as a liminal space during this period which allowed it to transgress political slogans and positioning in a way that was not possible once the Conservatives had been elected in 1951.

The Britain that is portrayed in *It Only Rains* is one of post-war austerity, of making ends meet and pulling together and trying to make a go of things. This is the rationed Britain of bombed out bus shelters, mended socks and leftover blackout covers. People were trying to find their place in an increasingly problematic post-war world of uncertainty where relations between social classes and men and women were called into question. Where in the pre-war

³ For a fuller discussion of how this period mirrored an almost Ealing-style of history, see Hennessy, 2006)

age, everyone knew their place whether it be through deference to social standing or patriarchy, the post-war period had shattered such previously held beliefs and certainties by posing questions that arose out of the call for everyone to contribute to the war effort. As a consequence, *It Always Rains* shows the struggle of people in this world of social turmoil; the 'beds for men' Hostel (memorably referred to as 'the Ritz' by Detective Fothergill) which potentially is full of those men returning to 'civy' street' and finding the experience a difficult one. Additionally, the bitter taste of reality for Rose as she realises her marriage is loveless and has to confront a future of boredom and an unsatisfied existence. Such situations are played out in a grey and uncompromisingly bleak backdrop of dishevelled housing and public spaces.

In chapter 3 the relationship between Balcon and Hamer will resurface and it will be argued that *It Always Rains*, at least on the face of it, does not conform to the 'classic' Ealing idiom established by Balcon. For example, despite the inclusion of a high incidence of humour and comic asides, *It Always Rains*, is fundamentally a bleak and fatalistically depressing film. Similarly, as stated in the introduction, this is a film that foregrounds sexuality in a way that it is hard to believe Balcon would have consciously sanctioned. Indeed, *It Always Rains* is arguably the most sexually charged Ealing film of all. Yet, it could be argued that due to a number of factors, including the 'impresario' skills of Balcon as head of studio, the determinism of Hamer to see his vision realised and an almost 'perfect storm' of time, place and context, *It Always Rains* actually stands as an ideal example of Ealing Studios output at that particular stage in its development.

At this point in the argument it is important to discuss the relationship between Balcon's concept of Britishness and how it successfully 'spoke' to British cinema audiences during the period of 1945 through to 1950. By discussing this it becomes possible to see Balcon's Ealing project tapping into a social nerve that connected with large swathes of the cinema-going public.

During the war years of 1939 to 1945, Ealing released a number of films which to varying degrees attempted to address Britain's wartime effort. Sometimes these were little more than entertaining slices of wartime propaganda (see for example the comedic *Let George do it*, Dir: Marcel Varnel, *Convoy*, Dir: Penrose Tennyson, and *Sailors Three*, Dir: Marcel Varnel [all 1940] plus the more battle-centred *Nine Men*, 1943 Dir: Harry Watt). Others addressed this in more subtle ways however, the most obvious and certainly interesting example being Alberto Cavalcanti's *Went the Day Well?* (1942) which famously addressed the 'what if' scenario of a troop of disguised German soldiers invading a small English village. Posing as legitimate British soldiers on training manoeuvres, the villagers quickly start to become suspicious of their military guests. What follows is an almost unprecedented 'celebration' of violence as the villagers take their revenge on the Germans. The film is an exceptional fusion of efficient propaganda along with slick and engaging entertainment. Over time, *Went the Day Well?* became an established Ealing, non-comedic 'classic'. Others from this period gaining similar status are *San Demetrio London* (1943, Dir: Charles Frend), *The Halfway House* (1944, Dir: Basil Dearden) and possibly *The Foreman Went to France* (1942, Dir: Charles Frend⁴). In nearly all cases, these films were well received and popular with the war-time cinema audience (Murphy, 2001).

The important point that needs to be made is that during the war, Ealing's output was more than simple propaganda as it stretched the formula to include a collective sense of belonging beyond the norm. Duguid puts it well when he states Ealing's war time films 'moved away from comic-strip tales of individual heroism among gentlemen and officers and towards more three-dimensional accounts that stressed teamwork, courage, real struggle, real suffering and endurance' (Duguid 2012, p56). However, as earlier stated, the end of the war in 1945 brought with it immense social change across society and Ealing's film output managed to

⁴ Featuring Tommy Trinder in a rare non-comedic performance.

address this by extending and adapting one of the key aspects intrinsic to the war-time films: collective belonging.

In the post-war period the essence of Ealing's output continued the 'we're all in this together' or 'People's War' approach, but it was mixed with a sense of positivity and purpose for the future. It has been well documented that Balcon was liberal minded (and correspondingly so was the overall Ealing oeuvre) and he asserted his desire to vote for the Labour party in 1945 (see Barr, 1998, Muir, 2010 and Duguid 2012). Indeed, this political stance has been cited as a wider issue. Barr for example refers to this as 'our (Ealing's) mild revolution'. In his seminal work on Ealing, Barr quotes J.B. Priestley's 1945 novel *Three Men in New Suits*. The quote he uses is from one of the newly demobbed soldiers:

'We don't want the same kind of men looking after our affairs as pre-war. We act as if we've learnt something. We don't keep shouting "That's mine – clear off!" We don't try to make our little corner safe – and to hell with anybody else! We don't talk about liberty when what we really mean is a chance to fleece the public. We don't go back on all we said when the country was in danger. We stop trying for some easy money. We do an honest job of work for the community for what the community thinks we're worth. We stop being lazy, stupid and callous.... Instead of guessing and grabbing, we plan. Instead of competing, we co-operate'. (quoted in Barr 1998, p50)

Barr uses this quote to illustrate 'the mood' that was so prevalent at the time and which significantly helped the election and direction of the first post-war, Attlee led Government. Indeed, he argues that Priestley's sentiment cannot be overstressed in explaining how well it fits the Ealing work ethic and mode of production adhered to by the creative teams. They 'co-operate' rather than 'compete'. Furthermore, he states:

'Making a successful film did not earn any extra reward for individuals, nor did failure bring penalties. Now...was Ealing competing with other film-makers, its object being essentially to keep going on in a modest, self-sustaining way. In its sanctuary

combining responsibility to the public with freedom from short-term market forces, Ealing would become the perfect example of a particular kind of post-war experiment in collective benevolence'. Barr (1998), p51.

This is not to suggest that the 1945 – 51 period should be seen as some sort of seamless arrangement on the part of Balcon and Ealing to produce films exactly tailored to suit the psyche of the British post-war nation. Indeed, Duguid (2012) and Harper and Porter (2003) have pointed out that this period, despite being Ealing's most commercially successful, was also noticeable for its lack of direction, false starts and expensive failures. *Dead of Night* (1945, Multiple directors) was a one off attempt at the horror genre. Despite its commercial success (and later critical success), it was never followed up (a possible lost opportunity given the success of Hammer Studios the following decade). *The Loves of Joanna Godden* (1947 Dir: Charles Frennd) represents an odd cul-de-sac with Googie Withers and John McCallum (Rose and Tommy from *It Always Rains*). The film is a historically situated (1905) drama centring around Withers' portrayal of a feminist farmer, whilst *Saraband for Dead Lovers* (1948 Dir: Basil Dearden) was the only lavishly coloured costume drama Ealing ever produced. Starring Stuart Granger, this film was probably produced to ease the pressure from the Rank organisation to produce what Barr calls 'prestige' films that would succeed in America. It was an expensive flop.

So there was no architects' drawing for Balcon to follow in the quest to 'project Britain and Britishness' but there was a 'direct, calmly progressive (and) tolerant' (Duguid, 2012, p56) ethos to the films that Ealing produced during this period. It is interesting to note that like so much of the narrative surrounding the construction of national identity in the post-war period, for Balcon and Ealing more generally, British and English national identity were used interchangeably almost to the extent that these concepts underlined a common culture of the United Kingdom which was only slightly adapted⁵ when a film was specifically set within one

⁵ For a fuller discussion on Britishness during this period, see Ward, P (2005).

of the other three home nations (for example in *Whiskey Galore* (1949) and *The Maggie* (1954) both directed by Alexander Mackendrick who, as a Scot probably fought harder than most to question the British/English non-negotiable monopoly of national identity).

The film that arguably best sums up Duguid's 'calmly progressive' approach within a framework of national identity is Henry Cornelius' *Passport to Pimlico* (1949). Here is a film that places nationhood as something that can be projected onto a space. The people of Pimlico in London become aware of a never repealed act from the 15th century whereby the Duke of Burgundy was awarded part of Pimlico as a sovereign land. In effect, the people of Pimlico, or 'Burgundians' see that they are citizens of Burgundy, rather than of Britain. The crucial point though is that the film articulates Britishness through both the outside and inside of Pimlico/Burgundy. There is no sense that becoming a Burgundian requires a different national identity, rather it allows them to express their already established (English?) identity with greater fervour – hence Burgundy becoming the place that identity is projected on by its inhabitants. How is this therefore differentiated from the Britain remaining outside of Pimlico/Burgundy? As Muir (2010) persuasively points out, the two Britain's in *Passport to Pimlico* represent the psyche of post-war Britain by offering contrasting solutions, choices and prospects in much the same way as the General Election of 1945 offered the British electorate. Burgundy represents a nostalgically driven war-time Britain, with everyone pulling together for a greater cause and a better, more prosperous future. The Britain outside of Burgundy however, can be seen to represent the harsh reality of living in post-war Britain which can be best illustrated by continued austerity and long term rationing. This concept of Britain becomes the enemy against which the Burgundians have to fight. The representation of social class is central here, with the implication that the election of a Labour Government in 1945 largely moved the class structure away from the ruling class of the aristocracy, and instead the new rulers are civil servants and Whitehall bureaucrats obsessed with petty laws and planning procedures, and it is this that the Burgundians must fight.

The projection of Britain in *Passport to Pimlico* is therefore twofold: on the one hand we see nostalgia for war-time Britain when hope for the future and all 'pulling together' to realise this was the overriding objective, but on the other hand, we have the Britain of increased bureaucratisation and through this, the de-humanising of the community spirit. The conclusion of the film is where Duguid's 'calmly progressive' ethos is most apparent, as whilst the two versions of Britain are involved in a political 'stand-off', a solution is brokered through compromise on both sides which allows 'the citizens of Burgundy (to) return to Britain where their patriotism really resides. The jubilation of the community is signalled by a street party with a new ration book on every plate' (Muir, p 80).

Passport to Pimlico therefore represents an accurate account of what Balcon's Ealing was trying to achieve during this period through being 'calmly progressive' or, using his own term through a 'mild revolution'. The position outlined here in relation to Ealing's output in the post-war period now needs to take into account Barr's well established 'maverick/mainstream' typography before concluding the chapter by including Harper and Porter's account of the decline of Ealing during the 1950s.

Charles Barr in his original 1977 version of his book *Ealing Studios* argues that there are two distinct schools that can be identified from the output of the studios during Balcon's reign as studio head. These were termed 'Mainstream' and 'Maverick' and apply to both films and directors. The terms used are well selected and go some way in indicating what they represent. The Mainstream school includes most of the comedies and the conservative films that conform to an established post-war consensus, so examples would be *The Cruel Sea*, *Scott of the Antarctic* and *The Blue Lamp* and directors Charles Frennd, Charles Crichton and Basil Dearden. Duguid writing in *Sight and Sound* describes this school as 'at best...calm, direct, tolerant, moral but not puritanical' but could easily become bland and eschew 'middle-class conformity'. Indeed, at its worst, it was responsible for a 'reactionary embrace of pre-war social structures' (Duguid, 2012, p54). *The Titfield Thunderbolt* (1952, Dir: Charles Crichton) is often regarded as being the worst offender in this respect. Countering this

school, the Maverick tendency in Ealing's output is best illustrated by the directors Alexander Mackendrick and Robert Hamer alongside Alberto Calvacanti and their associated films. Duguid describes these as 'irreverent, challenging, ironic, cynical and morally ambivalent and they freely acknowledge the less wholesome impulses' (Duguid, 2012, p54).

What is interesting in the context of this chapter is that there are a number of commentators, including Barr himself who point to the Mainstream tendency to gradually erode the success of Ealing's output. The point here is that it appears that whilst Balcon and Ealing were able to achieve a balance between the Maverick and Mainstream tendencies during the fruitful years of 1945 to 1951, this balance was gradually destabilised as Balcon pushed the Mainstream to the centre ground and the Maverick became more peripheral as the 1950s progressed. Indeed, Harper and Porter (2003) in their detailed analysis of British Cinema in the 1950s offer three key reasons for the demise of Balcon's Ealing during that decade. Two of these are particularly relevant here. Firstly, they argue that the changing demographic of the audience could no longer be predicted and as a consequence, 'films could no longer repeat the old truisms about class, gender and generational difference and still expect to attract new audiences' (Harper and Porter, 2003, p58). Secondly, they argue that the Ealing 'family' made up of the small production teams, gradually became 'dysfunctional, as Balcon exercised his power more roughly, the 'sons became grudging and resentful' (2003, p58). On the former point, it could be argued that the ability of Balcon and Ealing to successfully project a national identity that 'spoke' to its audience was being compromised so greater reliance was put on the Mainstream tendency to articulate Balcon's vision of post-war Britain. Clearly, this proved to be unsuccessful. The latter point further illustrates the tendency for Balcon to marginalise the Maverick tendency by reducing autonomy within the production teams. The Ealing blueprint, with fewer successes to celebrate, resulted in the production teams working less harmoniously and therefore more difficult to keep on Balcon's side. In chapter 3, these points will be returned to specifically in the light of the later work of Robert Hamer.

Chapter 2: The community and social realism in *It Always Rains on Sunday*



Coronet Grove, Bethnal Green. The home of the Sandigate family in *It Always Rains*

One of the most striking aspects of *It Always Rains* is the depth and detail to which it constructs a sense of community for the narrative of the film to work through. Indeed, it could be argued that that one of the key reasons why the film is regarded as a 'social realist' text is simply due to the unusually sophisticated portrayal of the local community. Interestingly however, not all commentators agree that this is a positive aspect of the film. Notably, Barr for example claims that the multiplicity of secondary stories and 'clutter of intersecting lives...in this teeming East End environment is a distraction from the main drama' (Barr, 1998, p70). Similarly, Murphy (2006) argues that 'the proliferation of cheery sub-plots detracts too much from the central story' of the film (2006, p269). Such a split in opinion underlines a wider divide regarding what the film actually is and what its central focus is. For some it is a social realist film with the focus on the community, the everyday life and what Sinclair calls 'ingrained authenticity' (Sinclair, 2012, *Coming in from the Rain*) but for others

It Always Rains is a melodrama, with the focus firmly on the dramatic narrative encapsulating the central characters.

Interestingly, most of the discussion in the United States about *It Always Rains* tends to frame the text within a noir setting precisely because the realist elements are backgrounded in favour of the melodramatic centrality of the relationship between Rose and Tommy (see Eifert 2012 for example). A number of writers including Barr (1998) and Muir (2010) make the case for a strong comparison to be made between *It Always Rains* and *Brief Encounter* (1945, Dir; David Lean). There are clear reasons for this; both films address adult relationships, desire and repression within the immediate post-war period and both films could be said to address the same set of social and cultural issues from competing social class perspectives (*It Always Rains* from a working class standpoint and *Brief Encounter* from a solidly middle class standpoint). However, despite these similarities there is a major difference between the films in that *Brief Encounter* only works as a melodrama with the central roles played by Celia Johnson and Trevor Howard *being* the narrative and therefore the prime instigator for the unfolding drama. In the case of *It Always Rains*, Rose and Tommy's narrative is *embedded* within the wider community of parallel narratives. This is one reason why *It Always Rains* is more of a social realist, and therefore at least arguably and certainly for the time, a more sophisticated film than *Brief Encounter*.

Most commentators however appear to agree that the focus on community in *It Always Rains* provides one of the film's key strengths. Interestingly though there are competing explanations of what the term actually means. Higson for example argues that the film's sense of community is at its most domestic form - the family, and from this, we can understand the wider narrative conventions of the community; the 'family versus the individual (and) social responsibility versus individual desire' (Higson, in Barr 1986, p89-90). So for Higson, it is precisely because of the sense of community and the assumptions that can be made about it, that we, as an audience can explore the potential for the dangerous and/or erotic individual situations arising, or as he states 'the network of interactions which

make up a community are already in place and go on to explore the possibility....of its deconstruction by the intrusion of violent and erotic forms of individual desire' (Higson, 1995), 268/9). Perhaps more fundamentally though, it is the 'naturalness' of the film's portrayal of community for audiences at the time of its release that presents one of the strongest cases for understanding the importance of this aspect of the film. Stafford rightly points that this is one of the reasons why *It Always Rains* was in the top ten most popular films in the UK in 1947. Quoting a review from that time, he states 'this careful, observant study of East End life bares the touch of genius. Its characters were believable, its actions normal and its background authentic' (film review quoted in Stafford, on-line posting 17/7/13).

As was stated in the introduction, Ealing's film output tends to be remembered for its comedies rather than its dramas. However, Stead (1989) argues that this was not the case at the time the films were produced. He argues that 'there had been a good deal of praise for the realism of *It Always Rains on Sunday* but thereafter the majority of critics almost seemed to acquiesce in the acceptance of straightforward social realism as a more secondary genre in Ealing's output' (Stead, 1989, p150/1). Interestingly, Stead continues to argue that the 'Englishness' so closely associated with Ealing's style of narrative was perceived to exist in a fictional world (or to make reference to the previous chapter, the world of Burgundy), so any attempts at realism may have been sceptically received once the 'fictionalised' comedies had been prioritised by the studio.

Having established the importance of community in the narrative of *It Always Rains* and rejected the view that this distracts from the central drama between Rose and Tommy, it is now appropriate to consider what exactly constitutes the community within the film. Whilst this is a highly contested concept (see Crow et al, 2011 for example), the term generally refers to wider social connections beyond the immediacy of family within a common locale. Therefore, community can be conveyed in a number of ways, by the activities of characters – secondary and peripheral, by the representation of the locality, including buildings such as

houses and places of work and worship, and by the representations of day to day habitual activities and occurrences. Clearly, this understanding of the term moves the analysis into the realm of social realism, so it should be noted that for the purposes of this work, the concept of community, or rather its representation is closely bound with the concept of social realism. Crucially, this understanding of community being 'activated' through social realism fits well with Higson's previously stated view that the 'naturalness' or assumptions of community allow for the individual motivations and desires to be tested and tried. It is useful at this point to quote from Dilys Powell who, writing at the time of the release of the film, neatly summarises the perspective being argued:

It Always Rains expresses 'a devoted attention to the tiny decorations of the everyday, to the chattering neighbour, the darts game and the black cat brushed with an exasperated gesture off the sofa head. These trifles mark the difference between the studio set and the room lived in: and an audience convinced of the realism of the scene it watches becomes submissive to the movement of the story' (Powell, quoted in Muir, 2010, p59)

Powell in the last part of the quote could not have expressed Higson's point about the relationship between the community and the role of the individual within in it any better, but crucially, this was written in 1947, so once again the earlier point made by Stead is borne out, that as the 1950s progressed, realism was increasingly marginalised by Ealing as portrayals of fictionalised worlds were prioritised.

To summarise, the understanding of community used in this work is a broad one that attempts to combine realism and community as part of the same object of analysis. The 'Black Cat' referred to by Powell above is therefore an act that represents the community from within which it takes place.

The setting of *It Always Rains* is the East End of London, specifically Bethnal Green. This is significant. Much of this area had been dominated by overpopulated slum housing since the

turn of the 20th Century. During the Second World War Bethnal Green suffered badly due to German bombing and as a consequence, the post-war period saw the clearance of much of the remaining Victorian slums. *It Always Rains* therefore takes on a very historically unique period, and this is central to the film's authenticity and realism⁶. The fact that the narrative of the film takes place within a 24 hour period (bar the two brief flashback scenes) means that the 'snapshot' the film offers is even more perceptive and detailed.

Writ large across the film is the feeling that this is a community coming to terms with life two years after the end of the War. There are very few mentions of anything related to the war, certainly nothing direct but its shadow falls across the film from start to finish. Indeed, some of the character development can be best understood as a response to dealing with issues that came from the war. This film is most definitely set in London, in 1947. If the film had simply kept to the central drama between Rose and Tommy, it is difficult to imagine how the shadow of the war would have been so much a part of the film's realist authenticity. Muir sums up neatly the importance of post-war 1947 in relation to the film:

The London of 1947 is one of restrictions, rationing, bomb damage, routine and poverty. The settings provide the spaces within which the characters' lives are shaped – the cramped terrace house near the railway line with the Anderson bomb shelter in the yard, the bar at the Two Compasses Public House, the seedy men's lodging house, Morry's record shop, the dance hall, the Sunday Street Market. (Muir, 2010, p58)

The point of course, is that all these would have been recognisable to urban audiences at that time in 1947. Indeed, it is worth re-stating the publicity tag line that accompanied the film: 'the secrets of a street you know'. Community is therefore etched into the recognisable

⁶ It is useful to note that Bethnal Green was the subject of Wilmott and Young's seminal study of changing community and family in *Family and Kinship in East London*, 1957.

settings represented throughout the film and the characters' secrets are dramatically played within in it.

One of the most remarkable scenes in the film is of the Sunday street market (scene 9). A jib/crane shot is creatively used to bring the audience into the market. Both the photography and the sound recording are used to heighten the sense of immersion and authenticity as

The Sunday street market



the spectator is caught up in the hustle and bustle of the busy street market. Much of the success of this scene is down to the cinematography of Douglas Slocombe⁷. Probably more than any other scene in the film, the spectator is made fully aware of the community firmly embedded into a realistic 'everyday' situation; the mass of people, squashed together as they look for bargains, the stall holders pitching their goods, the mix of characters, gender

⁷ Douglas Slocombe died recently in February 2016 aged 103 and who worked for many years achieving the status of one of Britain's foremost cinematographers. In addition to his early work with Ealing directors such as Hamer, Alexander Mackendrick, Charles Frend and Basil Dearden, Slocombe worked post-Ealing with prestigious Directors such as John Huston, Joseph Losey, Ken Russell and, most famously of all, Stephen Spielberg.

and age and, perhaps surprisingly, the inclusion of some non-white faces. As Stafford notes, mirroring the idea that Ealing's post-war output worked as a metaphor for the Attlee Labour Government and the values of 'collective responsibility' and 'doing things together', the portrayal of Bethnal Green and the market are of places where 'people are known' (Stafford, on-line posting 17/7/13). The scene soon focusses on one person – Det Sgt Fothergill, who appears to 'know' everyone. In this scene he speaks to Sloppy Collins, the journalist and Mrs Wallace, an ex-acquaintance of Tommy Swan. When the market scene is revisited (scene 12) Fothergill speaks to Morry Hyams about 'knock off' roller skates. In short, no one is embedded further within this community than Det. Sgt Fothergill. He knows everyone and everyone knows him. It is worth picking up the role played by Jack Warner here, as there are some noteworthy parallels to be drawn between this role and the role he would play some three years later in *The Blue Lamp* (1950, Dir: Basil Dearden). According to Gillett (2003), the representation of the Police in both films is about one of control over the working class which is incapable of disciplining itself (Gillett, 2003, 178). The role of the Police is therefore seen as ideologically unquestionable, and the representatives of the Police, such as Fothergill are seen as essential and positive aspects of the wider community. The roles played by Warner in both of these films functions in this way. He is dependable, trustworthy, honest, knowledgeable, professional, revered and powerful. In effect, with only nuanced differences, this is the same character with a different name; in *The Blue Lamp*, the character is called George Dixon who was infamously killed by 'cop killer' Tom Riley (Dirk Bogarde). So popular was this character that he was revived and given his own BBC Television series, *Dixon of Dock Green*, which ran for 22 years between 1955 and 1976. There are two key points here. Firstly, McLaughlin (2005) refers to the Dixon character as embodying the 'Ealingisation' of 'the English bobby' which essentially means how the character represents the values Balcon held so strongly for Ealing more widely. Dixon becomes a representation of pre-war nostalgia of England, of 'an 'imagined community' of long, hot summer days, village greens, quiet meadows and cricket matches' (McLaughlin, 2005, 14). Secondly, there is a strong case to be made that the Fothergill character in *It*

Always Rains is, in effect the pre-formed Dixon of *The Blue Lamp* and beyond. He might not be the fully formed version and representation of pre-war nostalgia of Dixon, but there is certainly the forging of that 'Ealingisation' character typology in *It Always Rains*.

Many commentators such as Barr (1999), McLaughlin (2005) and Aldgate and Richards (1999) have commented on the ideologically conservative narrative of *The Blue Lamp*, and whilst the Dixon character significantly contributes to this, the same cannot be said of the Fothergill character in *It Always Rains*. As will be argued in chapter three, Robert Hamer's decidedly pessimistic and 'maverick' outlook meant that his film had a much darker edge and tone to Dearden's more pro-establishment and conservatively moralistic production.



Jack Warner as Det Insp Fothergill

Jack Warner as George Dixon in the BBC TV series. Source: Getty

It would be easy to overstate the progressiveness or radicalism of the portrayal of community in *It Always Rains*. Gillet (2003) is correct when he argues that a distinction needs to be made between community and communality. It is possible for the latter to be present in the sense that there is a sharing of social class position, but this does not necessarily mean that a sense of community is fostered in the form of a set of 'shared interests'. *Passport to Pimlico* clearly exhibited both of these concepts but the extent to which *It Always Rains* does so is debatable. Just as it has been argued that *It Always Rains* can be conceptualised as a melodrama or a social realist film, Durgnat (2001) argues that it

can also be understood as a film about 'ordinary people' or 'low life'. This has interesting implications for the way community can be understood in the film. On the one hand, the melodramatic aspects of the film lend themselves well to the 'ordinary people' reading of community. Here the East End cross-section of Bethnal Green 'bristles with wonderful character finessing...without sentimental glossing' (Forshaw, 2012 p183) and the central melodrama between Rose and Tommy is a 'love story (which) evokes *Brief Encounter* for sharing the everyday anguish of an ordinary middle-aged housewife while trains shriek by' (Durgnat, 2001 p135). On the other hand, the characters in *It Always Rains* are 'low life' in that many of them are criminals or morally corrupt. Obviously there are the three petty criminals, Dicey, Whitey and Freddie, the two Hyams brothers and Caleb Neesley, but as Durgnat points out, even Rose and Tommy fit in this category. In Tommy's case, he is a convicted violent criminal on the run and even when confronted by Rose (scene 33) when she tells him there is no point continuing to run, he shows no restraint or compunction in attacking her so he can continue to escape. Furthermore, even Rose herself, by harbouring Tommy also becomes a criminal.

The discussion in this chapter has seen a clear and distinct pattern emerge in that *It Always Rains* has two potential 'readings' or interpretative frameworks. This pattern is summarised as thus:

<i>It Always Rains on Sunday</i> Interpretative framework #1	<i>It Always Rains on Sunday</i> Interpretative framework #2
Community	Communality
Social realism	Melodrama
Ordinary people	Low life
	Noir

There is no case being made here as to which is the 'correct' or favoured interpretation of the film. However, it is worth pointing out that in the introduction section to this dissertation,



the case was made that the impact of seeing this film for the first time on this writer was certainly more situated in the community framework. In addition, when quoting Terence Davies' 'shock' at seeing the film, he gave an example in the documentary *Coming in from the Rain* of Mrs Spry (Hermione Baddeley), the doss house landlady, wearing a dressing gown and slippers, she exhibits her disdain for Fothergill

and Leech (and in turn for the Law) by turning her back and slowly walks away whilst scratching her behind (scene 7). A minor but telling example that underlines the social realist credentials associated with framework #1 of the film.

Mrs Spry's contempt for the law

One key element of the narrative to *It Always Rains* that works well in both interpretations of the film is, as Gillett (2003) rightly points out the prominence of betrayal within the film. Every major character (and some of the minor ones too) are betrayed in one way or another. Gillett argues that the only exception is Lou Hymas, who seems to remain above and out of reach, possibly as a consequence of his political, social and cultural power and the esteem he is held in. By implication therefore Gillett also sees Fothergill as betrayed, though it could be argued that due to the power that this character exudes through his visibility and 'knownness', his betrayal is nothing more than being lied to by Whitey and the other petty criminals

as they protect their story from the law. So, even if the case of Fothergill is taken to one side on the grounds that his betrayal is an occupational hazard to be expected, the remaining incidence of betrayal within the film is overwhelming. Of course, it is this element within the narrative that offers those who identify *It Always Rains* as a noir tale as compelling evidence to categorise it in this way. Rose is betrayed by Tommy in at least four ways: he does not return from his visit 'up north' and so the relationship ends (scene 9), he does not recall that he and Rose were engaged (scene 28), he leaves Rose at the house to escape alone and physically assaults her in doing so (scene 33). Most obviously, George is betrayed by Rose, Morry betrays Sadie by having an affair with Vi (but Sadie then leaves Morry as a consequence), Vi is betrayed by Lou when the promise of moving 'up west' fails to materialise, Dicey, Whitey and Freddie are betrayed by Neeley (but who is later mugged and potentially killed by Whitey). This is very much in keeping with the melodramatic, noir reading of the film and with what Barr somewhat disparagingly refers to as an 'unnaturally' eventful day' (1998, 70).

It could therefore easily be argued that the centrality of betrayal to the film's narrative makes a strong case for *It Always Rains* to be primarily considered as a noir narrative. Indeed, Murphy (1986) refers to the film as 'a spiv movie' which panders to what is in effect, a moral panic about working-class criminality and 'riff-raff'. However, there are two reasons to consider before fully taking on board this view, Firstly, as has already been stated, the two main interpretations presented here are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, they are flexible and can cross over to form a multi layered interpretative narrative that fits both frameworks simultaneously. Secondly, to subject the narrative to a mono interpretation would miss the subtlety of the 'everyday' and social realist approach adopted by Hamer. *It Always Rains* is, as Perry (1981) suggests, a 'surprisingly bleak film in spite of its rich detailing of East End life', and here lies the main reason why the film provides more than a simple tale of noir betrayal and counter portrayal. Had it not been for the 'embeddedness' of the main narrative of Rose and Tommy into the East End community the film could simply be seen as a noir

'pot boiler' (albeit a very good one), but the extent to which the betrayals within the narratives are firmly 'weaved' into the community, it would be overly simplistic to do so.

In an attempt to establish why *It Always Rains* is considered a critically regarded film and has 'survived' when others from the same period have been forgotten, Stafford (2013) argues that the representation of community is a central reason for this, but he also points out that the film's 'greatness' is due to excellence in three key areas of film production:

- Script (the excellent script interpretation of Arthur La Bern's novel by Angus MacPhail, Robert Hamer and Henry Cornelius)
- Star performance (Googie Withers is seen by Stafford as standing out by offering a star performance that lifts the film above the norm).
- Technical and creative production (the quality of Ealing's production at almost every level).

In agreeing with Stafford's position, this could also be used to reinforce the view argued here that *It Always Rains* can legitimately be interpreted by using two frameworks. Stafford's underlining of excellence probably shows that framework #1 is only possible to a fewer number of film texts – certainly within the Ealing roster of post-war Dramas.

Stafford, along with Williams (2012, 2016), Barr (1998) and McFarlane (2015) point to the performance of Googie Withers in her Ealing films, particularly those directed by Hamer and *It Always Rains* specifically as being praise worthy and noticeably strong, particularly given that Ealing were not noted for their strong female characters.



Googie Withers in *It Always Rains*

Indeed, Williams (2016), paraphrasing Kenneth Tynan rather witheringly notes that in Ealing films, 'the men correspond with their girlfriends via postcard and the closest you get to an embrace is a pat on the head' (Williams, 2016). Balcon readily acknowledged that Ealing 'didn't do' sex or women very well (1986, *Made in Ealing*), but a combination of Hamer's enthusiasm for narratives around sex, desire and social class alongside his 'sympathy with female focussed drama' meant that Withers 'responded strongly to having such a sympathetic director who was interested in her as a screen presence and knew how to get the best of her' (Williams, 2016).

Both *Pink String and Sealing Wax* (Hamer's previous Ealing production with Withers again cast in the lead role) and *It Always Rains* are studies in 'constrained women' dealing with repressed desires and Withers performs them in a way that was almost totally unique within the Ealing style ethic (Williams, 2016). This is a studio known for its gentle wimsiness and war films showing male camaraderie, yet Withers offers performances that have more in common with those associated with the 'bodice rippers' of Gainsborough Pictures and

Margaret Lockwood – the antithesis of Ealing (Cook, 1997). *It Always Rains* was Googie Withers' final film for Ealing and Barr tellingly states that when she left, there was 'a gap that was never filled' (Barr, 1998, p70).

A further good example of the poetic or 'ingrained' realism within the portrayal of the community in *It Always Rains* is the ease with which it represents Jewishness in the film. Far from offering crude explanations by the use of racial stereotypes (in the way that arguably David Lean tended to do during the same period with his portrayal of Jews in the Dickens' adaptations from the same period). In *It Always Rains*, the Jewish Londoners simply exist as part of Bethnal Green's wider community. They are not used as a plot device or as a sub-narrative –they simply 'are' and reflect the reality of London's East End during the late 1940s⁸. Given that the film's narrative takes place on a Sunday, it could be surprising for a contemporary audience to observe how many shops are open and just how much activity there is. This is clearly not a 'sleepy' Sunday where the Christian Sabbath is being observed. There are also a number of nonchalantly expressed Jewish phrases peppered throughout the film; Morry says he is married to a 'schlemiel' and also refers to Sadie as a 'meshugga'. She in turn, referring to his extra marital activities tells Morry that she knows about him and 'his 'little shiksas' (scene 19) (Eifert 2010). But these exchanges are not laboured over or bought attention to, they are simply uttered as part of the detailed realism of the wider community. McFarlane sums up this aspect of the film well when he argues that far from distracting from the central story of Rose and Tommy, 'the side stories' or sub plots 'help to create a rich texture of community (and) highlight the strong and humanly moving story of Rose, her runaway lover and her loving, patient husband' (McFarlane, 2015, p85).

The brilliant portrayal of community and the injection of social realism in *It Always Rains* has a little to do with the influence of the documentary ethos of the GPO unit that had moved into the Ealing production teams during the early 1940s, but the main reason for this was the

⁸ It should be noted that the MP for Bethnal Green in 1945 was Phil Piratin, a Communist of Jewish origin.

individual talent of the film's director, Robert Hamer. It is to his stamp on the film that the discussion now turns.

Chapter 3: Robert Hamer and *It Always Rains on Sunday* – the wider context.

'He had no sentimentality whatsoever but he was like a diamond....sharp' (Googie Withers, 1986, Made in Ealing)



Robert Hamer – the eternal publicity shot used in almost all commentaries on the director's work

'(Robert) Hamer is one of British Cinema's small number of auteurs, and his work in a variety of genres is characterised by a vision that is once ironic and deterministic' (Pulleine, 1999, p32).

'He (Robert Hamer) now looks like the most serious miscarriage of talent in the post-war British cinema' (David Thomson in Duguid, 2012 p59).

Throughout this work the discussion of *It Always Rains* has focussed on the film as text and narrative and the ways in which the film conforms or not to generic conventions and character types. However, whilst this approach is necessary and a key requirement of any detailed film discussion, in the case of many films and particularly in the case of *It Only Rains*, any discussion would be incomplete without a careful consideration of the film's

director. So many of the film's stylisms, narrative approaches and plot developments are the result of a very specific film vision associated with the director of the film, Robert Hamer. The following discussion will foreground his contribution to *It Always Rains*, taking into account his wider filmography, his relationship with Ealing through Balcon and his potential auteur status in British cinema.

In chapter one, the central role of Michael Balcon was discussed and how he molded a studio style for Ealing that was popular not only in Britain but also in the USA. It was noted during this discussion that a small number of directors were relied upon to 'deliver' this style throughout its production output. Crucial to this discussion was the distinction made by Barr concerning the mainstream/maverick type of director working under Balcon. In the case of Hamer, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that he was the most maverick of the non-conformist or rebel directors working under Balcon's stewardship. Furthermore, of all the professional relationships Balcon had with his directors, the one with Hamer was probably the most problematic despite stretching, on and off, from the early 1940s to the late 1950s. Possibly the most important reason why the relationship continued despite deeply held disagreements was the fact that Hamer directed what is arguably Ealing's most successful film in *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (1949). Such was the success of this film that it provided the catalyst for Hamer to demand more freedom to produce the films he wanted to make but at the same time, this drove him further from Balcon's conservatism. Hamer tellingly stated that he 'wanted to make films about people in dark rooms doing beastly things to each other' (Drazin 2007, p71). Clearly, this would not have fitted well with the moralistic undertow of Balcon or his view of the Ealing way of doing things and focussing on mild comedic satire, English community identity and consensus building. Yet Balcon also recognised that Hamer was a very talented director and who felt that with careful guidance, this talent could be channelled in ways that would continue to bring success to the studio. Ultimately, the stylistic gulf between them proved too great for any meaningful compromise to work, and the result was Hamer eventually descending into acute alcoholism which prematurely finished his

directorial career. For Balcon, the loss of his key 'maverick' proved to be, certainly with hindsight, symptomatic of his dogged failure to adapt to the cultural shifts emerging as the 1950s progressed and which ultimately led to the demise of Ealing by the end of the decade.

It is not the intention here to produce either a detailed account of Hamer's life or an analysis of each of his films. This is done numerous elsewhere and exceptionally by Drazin (2007) Kemp (2003) and Duguid (2012). What is intended here is threefold. Firstly, a brief overview and narrative of Hamer's directorial progress across the 13 films that Hamer carried out director duties for.

Table showing Robert Hamer's film productions:

Title	Year	Role	Studio
<i>San Dementrio London</i>	1943	Partial director (took over when main director Charles Frennd was taken ill), associate producer and co-script editor	Ealing
<i>Dead of Night</i>	1945	Director of <i>The Haunted Mirror</i> section	Ealing
<i>Pink String and Sealing Wax</i>	1945	Director and co-script writer	Ealing
<i>The Loves of Joanna Godden</i>	1947	Partial director (as with San Dementrio, took over when Frennd was ill)	Ealing
<i>It Always rains on Sunday</i>	1947	Director and co-script writer	Ealing
<i>Kind Hearts and Coronets</i>	1949	Director and co-script writer	Ealing
<i>The Spider and the Fly</i>	1949	Director	Mayflower/ Rank
<i>His Excellency</i>	1951	Director and co-script writer	Ealing
<i>The Long Memory</i>	1953	Director and co-script writer	Rank
<i>Father Brown</i>	1954	Director and co-script writer	Columbia

<i>To Paris with Love</i>	1955	Director and co-script writer	Rank
<i>The Scapegoat</i>	1959	Director	MGM
<i>School for Scoundrels</i>	1960	Director	APB

Secondly, to identify the major themes and styles of Hamer that emerge from his film output and thirdly, to relate these themes and styles to *It Always Rains* as the main case study of this work.

Robert Hamer was born in Kidderminster in 1911 to prosperous middle class parents. He attended Rossall School in Fleetwood, Lancashire where he excelled and won a scholarship to Corpus Christi, Cambridge. It was here that an incident occurred which resulted in the young Hamer being 'sent down' (a phrase used by many commentators without elaboration). Drazin (2007) states however that this was due to a 'homosexual affair'. This was to have an impact on Hamer both in the short and long term. In the former it resulted in him not starting the expected 'glittering' post-graduate career and instead started work as a clapper boy at Gaumont studios. In the long term and more complexly the legacy of the experience probably had a major impact on his adult life and may at least partly explain his embittered, sombre and cynical outlook on life and love, as well as certainly to his continued and eventually uncontrollable alcoholism.

Through work at the GPO film unit and contacts he made there (primarily, Ealing director Seth Holt) (see Murphy, entry on Hamer, 2006), Hamer moved to Ealing and after working as an editor was soon offered the associate producer's role and was co-script writer for *San Dementrio, London* (1943, Dir Charles Freund). Arguably, this is an unremarkable film in that it is patriotic war time propaganda film showing the determination, grit and heroism of a group of Merchant Navy personnel. However, it's 'docudrama' approach (probably as a consequence of the GPO connection) was well received and importantly, when the Director

Charles Frend was taken ill, Hamer took over the role and impressed with his clear minded ability and enthusiasm. His next directing project was to take one of the five compendium stories in the one-off Ealing attempt at the Horror/Suspense genre, *Dead of Night*. Hamer's section, *The Haunted Mirror* was the first to exhibit an identifiable Hameresque narrative style. The plot to his story is simple enough and centres around a soon to be married couple (played by Googie Withers – in the first appearance of three in a row for Hamer - and Ralph Michael) and the purchase of a haunted mirror. Peter (Michael) becomes increasingly obsessed and spellbound by the mirror and eventually tries to kill Joan (Withers). In the struggle between them the mirror falls and cracks, breaking the spell. The use of a mirror is the first of a number in Hamer's films. In every occasion it is the representation of the reflection that becomes central to the narrative of the film. In the case of *The Haunted Mirror*, the reflection Peter sees becomes more than pure reflection and changes into a series of visions which for Barr (1998) represent all that Peter unconsciously represses in his superficial, middle-class life; 'the dark of the mirror world looks out at his white modern apartment, its mystery and its receding perspective confronts his flat, ordered life' (Barr 1998, 56). When the mirror is cracked and the 'spell' is broken, the status quo is re-established and Peter has no knowledge of what happened before. Joan and Peter are then presumably free to follow their lives as though nothing had happened, though for Barr, this is in effect a psychotic 'lobotomy' whereby the young couple can return to the 'surface' of a simple, bland, middle-class existence. In other words, the simple reflection of a mirror.

As has already been stated, *Dead of Night* proved to be a cul-de-sac for Ealing as it became the only foray the studio made into the Horror/suspence genre. However, for Hamer it proved a perfect vehicle for him to explore repressed emotions and sexuality which were themes that recurred in his subsequent films. The success of Hamer's contribution to *Dead of Night* allowed Balcon to offer Hamer his first feature length project. *Pink String and Sealing Wax* is another dark tale, this time set in Brighton during the 1890s and again featuring Googie Withers. The plot revolves around Pearl Bond (Withers), the wife of an

abusive pub landlord who is having an affair with Dan Powell (Mervyn Johns). David Sutton (Gordon Jackson) is the son of a repressive and puritanical chemist who becomes besotted with Pearl. She sees this as an opportunity to gain access to the drugs and potions in the Chemist shop so she can steal poison to murder her husband and then marry her lover.

For Drazin, this is a film of two narratives, Firstly, the conflict within the Sutton family between the father and his children. Drazin states 'it is hard to kindle much interest in the two-dimensional characters or to take seriously the rosy outcome in which the father is chastened and all the children achieve their ambitions' (Drazin, 2007, p75/6). This aspect of the film comes across as superficial and illustrates well another observation of Drazin that Hamer tends to 'tolerate [that] which he had little interest in order to make the most of those that did appeal to him' (Drazin, p75). It is the second narrative theme that clearly shows Hamer's concerted interest and where his directorial flair is most evident. This is when the film concentrates on The Dolphin pub and its inhabitants: Pearl, the 'glamorous, sexually charged and unscrupulous barmaid' (Murphy 2006, p269), Dan Powell who Pearl wants to marry, but shows only total self-interest and will gravitate to whoever offers him the most appealing and attractive lifestyle. There is also Joe Bond (Gary Marshall) who takes pleasure in abusing Pearl in drunken stupors. Finally, there is the low life who despairingly drink their lives away (Drazin 2007, p76). In this narrative of the film we can see clearly the emerging Hameresque preoccupation with deceit, betrayal, cynicism and hopelessness. Pearl exhibits total efficiency in ensnaring the young and innocent David so she can murder her husband and frame him for doing it.

The most telling part of the film though is when Pearl finally understands that her actions were misplaced as she had never been loved by Dan. The only option open to her at this point is suicide and Hamer quickly acquiesces when Pearl jumps from a high balcony to her death. In his first feature length film, Hamer clearly states his intention of showing 'people doing beastly things to each other'.

Before his next film, Hamer again took over the directing duties from Charles Frend when he was ill. *The Loves of Joanna Godden* should not be seen as a Hamer film – he simply helped out a colleague when needed. However, it is worth pointing out two small issues. Firstly, that the film again featured Googie Withers which would further cement the excellent working relationship she had with Hamer, and secondly, it is possible to see a pattern emerging here in that Withers is consistently portraying strong female characters (as stated in chapter 2).

It Always Rains was released in the same year as *Joanna Godden*, 1947. Hamer is in full control here and it shows a marked improvement over *Pink String*. This is a *complete* film in that the previously mentioned tendency for Hamer to lose interest in scenes and narratives he does not find engaging is hardly evident. With the exception of one scene (scene 21 – which offers no narrative direction to the film and is probably a hangover from La Bern’s novel which focussed more on Lou’s relationship with Solly and Bessie), *It Always Rains* is compelling and engrossing throughout as it explores the Hameresque traits of despair, betrayal and fatalism across its various narrative threads. There is also the continued use of



mirrors as a means to depict the psychologically and emotionally repressed aspects of the characters. There are two particularly notable examples in *It Always Rains*, one involving Vi and the other Rose. The first (scene 5) is when Vi is taking off the dress she was wearing the night before in front of the wardrobe mirror. The mirror acts as an opportunity to provide a flash back to the previous night which she spent with Morry Hyams. Complimenting her on



her voice and offering her possible help and inroads into the music industry, Morry is clearly making a sexual advance to which Vi responds positively. The scene then cuts back to the present and Vi in her bedroom hanging up the dress in front of the mirror before returning pensively to bed. The mirror here represents the longing Vi feels and the desire for excitement and gratification. As the mirror world flashback ends, the reality of her situation returns and she seems to fatalistically accept that the promises of the night before are unlikely to be fulfilled. This is the non-mirror world. The second example (scene 9) is when Rose is brushing her hair in the bedroom. As she looks into the mirror, George, who is lying in bed begins to read out from the newspaper an item stating that a search is on for an

escaped convict from Dartmoor prison. This is the moment that Rose first learns that the escapee is in fact her ex-lover, Tommy Swan. Once again, the mirror acts as a flashback.



This time to when she worked behind the bar of the Two Compasses pub and saw Tommy for the first time. She sees him enter the pub as she looks into the mirror on the bar wall. The

flashback then recalls how they quickly became engaged but the idyllic situation is destroyed as she hears that Tommy has been arrested for undertaking a robbery. As the despair increases through the mirror's flashback, the present day Rose returns looking despondently at the bedroom mirror as George asks what is for breakfast. 'Haddock' she replies. Barr (1998) has commented on the significance of this. 'Haddock' represents the reality non-mirror world of boredom, banality and repression. Whereas just as it did for Vi, the mirror world represents desire, excitement, escape and freedom.

One further issue on the mirror scenes is to note that the Rose in the mirror world is blond but in the non-mirror world she is brunette. Muir (2010) and Barr (1998) argue that this is no coincidence and it reflects the hair colour of the step daughters. Vi is blond and craves excitement and sexual fulfilment whilst Doris is brunette, dependable, looking to keep a respectable job and to settle down with Ted. These characters are essentially representing the two competing versions of Rose in the film. As Barr suggests, Vi and Doris represent both Rose's past and her present.

As was argued in chapter two, the film centres around betrayal with all the characters (bar Lou) being betrayed in some way. The film confirms Hamer's infatuation with suicide as it portrays two attempts – one each from the two leading characters of Rose and Tommy.

There is a strong sense of fatalism in *It Always Rains*. The die is cast early on with the arrival of Tommy and there appears no escape from the events that follow throughout the fateful day. Such is the deep fatalism Hamer injects into the film, it is possible to argue that the logic of the narrative should end with the suicide attempts being successful (the end of scene 34). However, this would not be permitted on either moral or commercial grounds in 1947 (and possibly not even in 2016). The ending of the film does not entirely betray Hamer's fatalism though. Tommy is pulled from the railway track just before the train would have killed him. The alternative then facing him is capture by the police and being returned to prison. Given that Tommy expressed the view that he could not return to prison having suffered severe beatings when incarcerated (scene 17), this could literally be a fate worse than death for him.

For Rose, the situation is different. By the end of scene 34, all that was known about Rose was that she was going to attempt suicide by gassing herself in the kitchen using the gas oven. There is also a shot of an ambulance outside the Sandigate's house but this does not confirm whether or not she was successful in her attempt. At the start of scene 35, Rose is seen in bed in hospital with George sitting next to her. He is not angry and simply tells her

that Tommy has been caught and that Vi and Doris are looking after Alfie. The tone of George is forgiving and it is clear that Rose will be welcomed back to the family home once she has fully recovered. On the one hand, Rose getting off so lightly does seem to run contrary to Hamer's fatalistic cynicism, but on the other hand, the prospect of returning to the boring, repressed existence she had up until the start of the previous day is at least a punishing prospect. In some ways there is a parallel here with the ending of Hamer's *The Haunted Mirror* in that Rose is effectively emotionally and sexually 'lobotomised'.

The railyard chase sequence (included in scene 34) is particularly well directed and shows clearly the virtuosity and skill of Hamer's talent. Taken in tandem with cinematography of Douglas Slocombe, this scene is arguably the highest point in Hamer's ability as a director. Both McFarlane (2015) and Drazin (2007) underline the quality of this part of the film. It could be argued that the strong and underlying sense of fatalism running through the film is effectively enhanced by Tommy who is gradually entrapped, not just by the police, but by the yard itself, the track, the trains and the trucks. As Drazin states, the scene is:



'one of the most spectacular sequences I can think of in cinema...as (Tommy) tries hopelessly to elude his pursuers, he skips from track to track, dodging steam-engines

which grind into motion as if of their own impulse and close down his remaining avenues of escape. It is a memorable cinematic rendering of fate bearing down' (Drazin, 2007, p77).



Tommy finally gets caught in the railyard.

It Always Rains was the final collaboration between Hamer and Googie Withers, indeed it was her final film for Ealing. Hamer's next film would see the start of collaboration with Alex Guinness which would extend over four films.

The critical and commercial success of *It Always Rains* led Hamer to direct the film most regard as his (and Ealing's) masterpiece (Duguid 2012 and Philip French 2011 for example): *Kind Hearts and Coronets*.

On the face of it, this is a very different film from all of its predecessors, not least in the fact that it is a comedy, albeit a very black one. Ealing is now far better remembered and known for its comedies than its dramas and along with a handful of others, *Kind Hearts* is among the most well-known Ealing films of all. When learning of the plot of the film it comes as little surprise that Michael Balcon needed a lot of convincing to put this film into production with Hamer at its head (see Barr, 1998, 119) for essentially, this is a film about a serial killer, a

mass murderer (according to Kemp, when the idea for the film was initially put to him, Balcon said 'I'm not going to make a film about eight murders'. Kemp, 2003, 75). As such it is a considerable way from the norm of what an Ealing comedy was perceived to be, do or address. Alexander Mackendrick's similarly black *The Ladykillers* was not released for another six years. The plot of *Kind Hearts* revolves around Louis Mazzini (Dennis Price), an Edwardian shop assistant, who feels his Mother was slighted and missed a titled inheritance. As a consequence, Mazzini murders his way through the eight members of the D'Ascoyne family (all played by Guinness) who sit between him and the inheritance to the title. According to Duguid, 'no other Ealing film – perhaps no other British film up to that time – even approaches its elegant amorality' (Duguid, 2011, 59).

Obviously, *Kind Hearts* was a perfect vehicle for Hamer's overt cynicism. Once again, as with his previous productions we have another utterly ruthless character in Louis Mazzini and can be considered alongside Tommy Swann, Pearl Bond and Dan Powell. Yet the elegance and charm of Dennis Price's portrayal of Mazzini, the wit and inventiveness of the murders and the detailed comedic portrayals of the D'Ascoynes by Guinness, offset what could have been an unattractive and off-putting film. Certainly Balcon, despite his misgivings leading up to its production was extremely positive about it once its popularity had been established, calling it 'the best film we have made' (Kemp, 2003, p75).

When comparing *Kind Hearts* to any of Hamer's previous films, the key difference (apart from the fact that this is a comedy) is the extent to which it is a 'literary' film as opposed to a visual film (no railway yard scenes here). So, whilst the themes might be similar, it looks very different and demands a different mode of engagement from the audience. Partly as a consequence, Lindsay Anderson, the leading light of the Free Cinema movement famously criticised the film for being 'emotionally quite frozen' though as Barr suggest, this cool aloofness is part of the film's charm and may account for its continued popularity (Barr, 1998, 120).

There was, and to some extent still is, a dominant consensus that sees *Kind Hearts* as the pinnacle of Hamer's film career, after which it either gradually declined or nosedived into oblivion. As has already been stated, Hamer's severe alcohol problem offers a ready-made explanation for this, but there has been in recent years a re-appraisal of Hamer's post *Kind Hearts* films. Kemp (2003) in particular argues that what he refers to as Hamer's 'post Ealing' output offers at least four films that should be brought out of 'the long shadow' caused by the mantle of 'masterpiece' that falls across his post *Kind Hearts* films. Drazin disagrees however and argues that there is little of worth in Hamer's films of the 1950s, referring to them as 'meaningless' or 'dire' (Drazin, 2007, p84). Murphy (2006, 2012) falls somewhere in between.

The period after *Kind Hearts* saw the start of a series of film projects that Hamer wanted to put into production, all were thwarted and were seen by Hamer as increasingly personalised set-backs. 'No other director at Ealing possessed such a strong sense of what he wanted to do, but this was a handicap in a film-maker who had to work within the frame work of a company' (Drazin, 2007, p79). *Soho Melodrama*, *The King of Nightfall*, *A Pin to see the Peepshow* and *The Shadow and the Peak* were all titles of projects Hamer put forward as ideas, adaptations or fully written scripts during the post *Kind Hearts* period. All of these ideas had the potential to be Hameresque and would have followed the auteur style identified in his films up to and including *Kind Hearts*, but crucially they were either too downbeat, overly cynical, or erotically charged for them to be fully workable in the way Hamer intended, or as Drazin states, his tendency to evoke 'a mood of exquisite mournfulness...was becoming increasingly at odds with the commercial requirements of the time' (2007, p84). Hamer left Ealing in 1949 after Balcon initially backed *The Shadow and the Peak* but then changed his mind. Murphy argues that this might have been due to Balcon's susceptibility to the 'critical outcry against films dealing with spivs and the sordid underbelly of British Society' that emerged at that time. (Murphy, 2006, p270).

Hamer's first post Ealing film *The Spider and the Fly* (1949) is a low key melodrama which pays no heed to the Ealing house style and the pre-requisite for a happy ending, for this, according to Murphy (2006) was Hamer's 'bleakest' film. Set in France just before the start of the First World War, it explores the tension of a love triangle between a burglar (Guy Rolfe) and a policeman (Eric Portman) who are in love with the same woman (Nadia Gray). By the end of the film one of the three will be trialled and probably killed for treason, another is sent to the front line and certain death and the third loses the person he loves.

Hamer returned to Ealing in 1951, initially due to Balcon's willingness to consider re-negotiating *The Shadow and the Peak* project. In the meantime, Hamer was asked by Balcon to direct *His Excellency*, a film based on a play about a post 1945 Labour MP dealing with industrial unrest in a British colony. Kemp argues that Hamer only took the job on so he could work on something more interesting afterwards (Hamer's indifference to the film 'glares through every frame' according to Kemp, 2003, p78). With Balcon's repeated refusal to take up *The Shadow and the Peak*, Hamer left Ealing again, for the second and final time. *The Long Memory* (1952) is possibly Hamer's best post-Ealing film. Featuring a miscast John Mills (who according to Plain 'made it to pay the tax man', 2006, p140), as a wrongly convicted murderer who festers serving his sentence until he is released and then single-mindedly tracks down those who are responsible. The film is obviously bleak and dispiriting but visually it is outstanding. 'This is a scruffy, back-alley Britain of cracked pavements and corrugated-iron lean-to sheds' (Kemp, 2003, p79) and pre-dates the naturalism of the British New Wave by nearly a decade. Whereas the ending to *The Spider and the Fly* is depressingly gloomy, *The Long Memory* offers a degree of redemption to Mills' character. As Murphy states 'the embittered man is redeemed by the love of a wartime refugee whose experience of injustice is even greater than his, but the film is equally uncompromising in its treatment of human suffering and injustice' (Murphy, 2006, p270).

Hamer teamed up again with Alec Guinness for the 1954 release of *Father Brown*. This was a popular and well liked film, though there is little evidence that Hamer saw the project as

offering anything he could make something worthwhile of. Indeed, Kemp simply reflects that 'his heart wasn't in it' (Kemp, 2003, p81). The popularity of the film though could have provided a springboard to something more in keeping with Hamer's interests. Unfortunately, this did not materialise and the following year's *To Paris with Love* is probably the poorest film he directed. There is no evidence that the film has any positive reviews from critics or commentators and has been all but forgotten (a 'frivolous technicolour comedy of the type that has given British cinema of the 1950s a bad name' Murphy, 2006, p270).

The penultimate film of Hamer's career was to be the last collaboration with Alec Guinness. *The Scapegoat* (1958) with Michael Balcon producing had a big MGM budget and was intended to be Hamer's return to form. However, the production was dogged with disagreement over the script and the studio rejected Hamer's final edit of the film which ran for two hours. Forty minutes were edited out and Hamer refused to have his name associated with the cut version. The 'return to form' did not happen and the continued failure to get his own projects running (a fully written script by Hamer called *For Each the Other* was the project he had been trying to garner interest in during later years) and his experience with *The Scapegoat* 'finished him'.

School for Scoundrels (1960) carries Hamer's name as director but it is unclear how much (or little) work of his is in the film. He was nearly sacked for being drunk on set and never worked as a director again. Cyril Frankel took over the directing duties on *Scoundrels* who insisted that Hamer's name should remain on the film's credits, though Hamer did carry out the post shoot editing (Kemp, 2003, p85)

Kemp argues that the four post Ealing films worthy of note (*The Spider and the Fly*, *The Long Memory*, *Father Brown* and *The Scapegoat*) exemplify Hamer's distinctive technique and thematic tendencies. 'None of them wholly works and the last one of them was reduced to a mutilated torso. But they share a haunted, teeth-gritted quality that marks them out as particular to Hamer. They could have been made by no other director' (Kemp, 2003, 76). In

retrospect it would be fair to agree more with Murphy (2012) when he argues that *The Spider and the Fly* and *The Long Memory* are the only films showing a ‘flickering display’ of the talent associated with his Ealing work, although perhaps it is possible to concede that in *The Long Memory*, it is more than a flicker? Regardless, it remains the case that it is the Ealing films from *Dead of Night* through to *Kind Hearts* that still offer the best examples of Hamer’s innovative style of film making with *It Always Rains* being arguably the best of these, despite the continued popularity of *Kind Hearts*. The former offers the best balance of all Hamer’s characteristics and style; fatalism, social realism, repressed sexuality, grittiness, a sense of community and everyday life, betrayal, cynicism, ruthlessness and an excellent visual flair.

One of the telling characteristics when attempting to identify whether or not auteur status can be ascribed to a film director is the incidence of actors the director works with. Sometimes, this can be the lead actor often appearing in a director’s films such as Martin Scorsese using Robert De Niro for many years and more recently Leonardo DiCaprio. Alternatively, the accent might be on more group based or ensemble players and might include non-acting roles such as cinematography or music scoring. An example of this would be the Coen Brothers use of Carter Burwell for scoring, Roger Deakins as director of photography and the use of an ensemble of actors including Frances McDormand, Josh Brolin, George Clooney and others. In relation to Robert Hamer, the following table identifies how many times individuals appeared in Hamer’s films:

Name	Role	Number of contributions
George Auric	Music score	4
Alec Guinness	Actor	4
Edward Chapman	Actor	4
Douglas Slocambe	Cinematography	3
Googie Withers	Actor	3

John Carol	Actor	3
John Salew	Actor	3
John McCallum	Actor	2
Dennis Price	Actor	2
Cecil Parker	Actor	2
John Slater	Actor	2
Joan Greenwood	Actor	2

What, if anything, does this tell us about Hamer? During the 1930s through to the 1950s, leading roles were often decided at the producer's level, so caution should be used when reading too much into the significance of these (John Mills in *The Long Memory* is an example of this. Hamer would have had little influence over who could play this role).

There are however two points to make which do suggest something about Hamer's way of working. Firstly, the music of George Auric was important to Hamer's overall creative goal, writing the score for four of his films. The Frenchman's music was used in many Ealing productions but it is noteworthy that Auric not only scored two of Hamer's Ealing productions (*Dead of Night* and *It Always Rains*) but also two of his post-Ealing films (*The Spider and the Fly* and *Father Brown*) therefore indicating perhaps a desire on Hamer's part to inject a 'Gaulic' element into his films - *The Spider and the Fly* is also set in France. Brown (2012) implies that the attraction of Hamer – an enthusiastic Francophile and 'steeped in the French poetic realism tradition' (Brown, 2012, p106) to Auric was more than a coincidence. As just referred to, the realism Hamer injected into *It Always Rains* is said to have its basis in the influence of the 'poetic realism' associated French cinema's poetic realist directors of the 1930s such as Jean Vigo, Pierre Chenal, Jean Renoir and in particularly Marcel Carne. The latter's *Le Quai des brumes* (Port of Shadows 1938) with Jacques Prevert's script writing

shares, according to Drazin, the 'same love of words' and 'moody fatalism' as *It Always Rains*. Secondly, considering Hamer only directed 11 films, it is interesting to note how many times he re-cast actors in supporting or relatively minor roles. The two significant names here are Edward Chapman (who plays George, Rose's husband in *It Always Rains*) but also minor roles in three other Hamer productions. Even more noteworthy is John Carol's contributions. He appears only to have made 14 film appearances in total and three of these are in Hamer's films (*Pink String and Sealing Wax*, *It Always Rains* and *The Spider and the Fly*). This would suggest that Hamer did have a sense of wanting to work with actors who had a proven track record with him. According to Drazin, this additionally worked the other way around with actors who had worked with Hamer wanting to work with him again. 'Both Googie Withers and Alex Guinness stressed...that he had an enormous sense of fun...and that actors enjoyed working with him' (Drazin, 2017, 78/9). This point is confirmed more recently by Sellers (2015)

There has been a long tradition within film analysis and commentary to decry the efforts of British film makers – particularly those from the 1930s, 40s and 50s. Stead (1988) for example refers to British film production of this period as 'bland and theatrical' and failed to achieve any form of cinema that rose above 'melodramatic surfaces'. In short, Stead is arguing that other European film movements such as those found in France and Italy managed to achieve a form of 'social cinema' which established a sense of 'naturalness' which the 'studio bound' British film could never achieve. Whether the argument put forward here is correct or not is not the issue, the point is that Stead treads a well-worn path in discrediting British film during the time Hamer was active as a director. Importantly, Stead concludes his case by stating that 'only the occasional' British film 'hinted at other possibilities', and the film he uses to illustrate this is *It Always Rains* (Stead 1988, 80).

Drawing on the critical reception Hamer has acquired over the years including Barr (1998), Kemp (2003), Drazin (2007) Duguid (2012) and McFarlane (2015) it could be argued that Hamer did much more than hint at these 'other possibilities', indeed such was the

prominence of the French influenced poetic realism in some of Hamer's films that commentators such as Kemp and Drazin have suggested that even though his directorial talents were not appreciated in Britain, they almost certainly would have been in France ('so attuned...to a French sensibility one wonders whether his talent might not have prospered in France as surely as it was stifled in England', Drazin 2007, 85). Yet there is no evidence that Hamer sought to work in France or any other European film industry at any point throughout his career. However, if the crippling self-doubt that allegedly hindered his later career is accepted, it is hard to consider Hamer having the self-confidence to see himself being successful in a place that produced his most treasured films. It is with an almost tragic heaviness that Kemp suggests that if the French film industry could accommodate such 'maverick' artists as Besson and Carne, then surely it could have accommodated Hamer's 'savage (and) sombre' vision (Kemp 2003, 86).

Kemp (2003) argues that Hamer was 'in the wrong country and the wrong time'. Clearly, the wrong place and time was England in the post-war period and presumably the right place would have been France during the same period. However, it is pertinent at this point to suggest as Kemp does that when overviewing the projects that Hamer wanted to put into production during his post *Kind Hearts* period at Ealing and beyond, it was not just Balcon's Ealing studios that could not house his bleak and unaccommodating perspective, there was no studio in Britain or for that matter Hollywood that could do so (Kemp, 2003, p85). There is little doubt therefore that Hamer's talents would have been far better suited to the more cynical, down-beat and morally ambiguous approach taken and fostered by the British film industry during the 1970s.

Conclusion

‘...people drawn together at a time of national emergency, working together to create films that responded to the moment, sometimes directly...sometimes indirectly, striking a chord with the audience (I’m thinking *Dead of the Night* or Robert Hamer’s *It Always Rains on Sunday*). Foreword by Martin Scorsese (Sellers, 2015)

In many ways, the fact that Martin Scorsese, one of America’s most critically celebrated directors was able to articulate this in his foreword to Robert Sellers’ *The Secret Life of Ealing Studios* in 2015 says a lot about the revisionism in recent years of *It Always Rains*, Ealing Studios and Robert Hamer.

I started this thesis on a personal note by stating the impact that viewing *It Always Rains* had on me when I first watched it back in 2011. As a consequence of researching and writing this thesis, I have come to understand with much more clarity and contextual sophistication, why I responded in the way I did.

In 2011, I knew of Robert Hamer’s name as the director of *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, but nothing of his wider contribution to Ealing’s output during the war and post-war years. I also did I know about his creative decline alongside his increasing alcoholism during his Ealing and particularly his post-Ealing period. Furthermore, the significance of the film’s portrayal of community and the use of social realism, which were so much a part of the reason I responded to the film so positively, are now far better contextualised through my understanding of the influence that the French poetic realists of the 1930s has on Hamer and the centrality of this to *It Always Rains* particularly.

As was stated in the introduction, it was these three key areas – Ealing’s post-war ability in ‘Projecting England’, the embeddedness of community within the film and Robert Hamer’s creative vision that, in a sense, produced a ‘perfect storm’ for this film to emerge as one of Ealing’s best and arguably Hamer’s greatest achievement. That is not to say that it is a

perfect film: there is the extraneous scene that offers no character or narrative function or development. There are also some model shots in the rail yard (scene 34) that detract from what is otherwise a highly gripping and extremely well directed and photographed scene. However, this thesis argues that the strengths of the film push it beyond the creative gauntlet Hamer threw down two years later with *Kind Hearts*. Unique and sophisticated as it is, Lindsay Anderson, speaking on behalf of the Free Cinema movement a decade later, could not have accused *It Always Rains* as being 'emotionally quite frozen' in the way he suggested *Kind Hearts* was. There were simply too many similarities between the early British New Wave cinema and *It Always Rains* for such a criticism to carry weight.

Throughout this thesis the argument has followed the title: 'Early Social Realism in Post-War British Cinema'. A couple of points are required for clarification. The understanding and articulation of social realism in British Film has moved and developed considerably since the film was released in 1947. To contemporary viewers, the film may appear at total odds with current expectations of what social realist films can and should convey and explore. It is clear *It Always Rains* that the East End accents are not 'authentic'. The received pronunciation delivered by the main cast members has been roughened slightly, but this is barely disguised. However, regional accents were suspiciously suspect and inauthentic in British New Wave films of the late 1950s and early 1960s (see for example Lawrence Harvey's attempt at a northern England accent in *Room at the Top* Dir: Jack Clayton, 1959). Additionally, social realism in British film after the New Wave of the early 1960s moved away from character driven narratives (such as Arthur Seaton in *Saturday and Sunday Morning*) to the more evocative and heightened aestheticism associated with films such as *Ratcatcher* (Dir: Lynne Ramsey, 1999), *Fish Tank* (Dir: Andrea Arnold, 2009) and *The Selfish Giant* (Dir: Clio Barnard, 2013).⁹

⁹ For a more detailed discussion of this point, see Giliken, A (2001) 'Realisms and beyond in Lynne Ramsay's *Ratcatcher*', *Media Education Journal*, 31: 14-17.

The strength of *It Always Rains* is offering a foundation for a *kind* of social realism in film that had not been evident until that time.

What is being suggested in this thesis is not that social realism was fully realised in *It Always Rains*, but that it was an early attempt, with the flaws inevitably visible to contemporary audiences viewing a film made in 1947.

I wish to conclude this thesis by establishing the way in which *It Always Rains* should be placed in 2017. Where should the conventional understanding of the film be? It is worth recalling that at different points and by different writers, *It Always Rains* has been 'largely forgotten' and with good reason, but also 'in need of major revision'. Has this revision taken place and if so, where does it now place the film in relation to wider post-war Ealing cinema?

As was stated in the introduction, the almost accidental 'stumbling' on a lost gem of British cinema quickly evaporated once the first exploration into the film's background and context had taken place. Clearly, here was a film that was popular upon its release but it failed to turn this popularity into a critical reputation that made the film have lasting impact. Compare again, for example, *It Always Rains* to David Lean's *Brief Encounter*, which was also released in 1947. The latter heralded the arrival of a major director who continued to cultivate both commercial and critical acclaim which culminated in multiple BAFTA and Oscar award successes over many years.

It Always Rains, however, was overshadowed by *Kind Hearts* two years later, and then Hamer, as we have established, lost his critical direction amidst a range of abortive or only partially realised projects and his gradual descent into chronic alcoholism. In short, the wider narrative that continued success brings eluded Hamer in ways that it did not for Lean. In addition, *Kind Hearts*, as one of the seminal Ealing comedies, appears to have considerably outshone its predecessor to the point of almost eliminating it as a forgotten text. (Indeed, it is worth pointing out that currently, big name supermarkets are selling Ealing DVD box sets which include *Kind Hearts*, but the sets are presented and marketed as if Ealing Studios and

the Ealing comedies are one and the same. There is no reason for a consumer to regard the individual directors or the numerous non-comedies as significant in any way).

It would also be easy to assume that this is the likely reason for *It Always Rains*' submersion into obscurity as Hamer's name appears never to have garnered commercial or critical acclaim beyond a small group of commentators, and *Kind Hearts* is popularly known and remembered as an 'Ealing' rather than as a 'Hamer'. (Again, consider the Lean comparison in relation to *Lawrence of Arabia* or *Doctor Zhivago*. These are David Lean films that were artistically and commercially successful in the UK and significantly, also in the USA).

However, it could be argued that there is another possible reason for the relative obscurity the film fell into and one which may also provide a reason for its revision and rediscovery in the 2000s and beyond which culminated in the plethora of renewed interest in the film outlined in the introduction.

In chapter two it was argued that there are two possible interpretative frameworks for *It Always Rains*. To re-state, these are:

<i>It Always Rains on Sunday</i> Interpretative framework #1	<i>It Always Rains on Sunday</i> Interpretative framework #2
Community	Communality
Social realism	Melodrama
Ordinary people	Low life
	Noir

In addition to the point made at that stage in the thesis, it could also be argued that the two interpretative frameworks typology can also be used to understand how audiences and critics at particular periods in the film's career interpreted the film.

It appears that there are three general clusters of engagement with *It Always Rains*. Firstly, there is the original cinema audience and for which we have historical reviews and commentaries. Secondly, there are the numerous and more contemporary on-line blogs which articulate views about the film within the wider context of other film reviews and commentaries. These are film fans who blog about movies, but crucially are not academics. Examples of these have been used in this dissertation (see Foundas, 2008 for example).

Thirdly and finally, there is the academic writing and research community that has addressed Ealing Studios and *It Always Rains*. This itself needs to be sub-divided into two periods. The first includes the 'official' academic perspective established by Barr's initial publication of *Ealing Studios* (1977) and potentially also includes Ellis' *Made in Ealing* (1975). These offer a macro historical analysis of Ealing Studios' output and attempt place Ealing within the wider context of British post-war film and originate from the 1970s and in up-dated editions from the 1980s. The second sub-division is the analysis and critique of Ealing's output, sub-texts, directors and specific film texts. These include Muir (2010), Murphy (2012), Stafford (2012), Duguid (2012) and McFarlane (2015) and originate mainly from the 2000s through to the present but with particular clustering from 2003 to 2015 (and this includes this current contribution to the debate).

What is interesting here is that clusters 1 and 2 tend to adhere to Interpretative framework 2 in that they appear to focus on the noirish, crime and melodrama elements of the film. In cluster three however, there is much more of a focus on Interpretative framework 1 and on the associated areas: social realism, community and ordinary people. There are clear reasons for this: clusters 1 and 2 are, by definition engaging with the film for entertainment purposes, albeit in cluster 2 from an historical perspective. It is also worth pointing out that during the research stage for this current work, it became clear that many of the film blogs originated from America and it is here where *It Always Rains* was seen as British Noir (see

Eifert, 2010), so even within the context of recent blogs, the film continues to be primarily perceived as a noir and therefore in accordance with the interpretative framework 2.

With the case of cluster 3 however, the two sub-divisions need further elaboration. With Barr's seminal overview of Ealing Studios establishing the 'benchmark' for the debate from 1977, it appears to have taken a number of years for *It Always Rains* to receive renewed attention and analysis. Indeed, it was almost totally ignored during the 1990s with Brunsdon (1999) offering the only new slant on the film. The early noughties saw Geraghty (2000) addressing the film and later, Kemp (2003) reviving interest in Hamer (2003).

A quick overview of the year of publication of works referred to in this dissertation which discuss *It Always Rains* shows that between a nine-year period of 2003 and 2011, there were five pieces published. However, in the shorter span of four years between 2012 and 2015, there were nine pieces published. This appears to show that *It Always Rains* went through a significant re-appraisal during this period. Additionally, it has to be noted that this re-appraisal adopts the key tenets associated with the interpretative framework 1 approach to the film text. The focus on contextual background to the film text— the community, ordinary people and social realism—is what unifies these more recent discussions.

It would be reasonable to assume that based on the evidence produced here, whilst the comedies continue to dominate, the place of *It Always Rains* within the study of British cinema and Ealing Studios has been significantly raised to a degree where it is considered to be a highly significant work, and as stated earlier, possibly Robert Hamer's greatest achievement.

Appendix: Scene by scene synopsis and production credits for *It Always Rains on Sunday, 1947.*



The original film poster from 1947 (Source: www.mubi.com)

It Always Rains on Sunday, based on the novel by Arthur La Bern (published 1937)

An Ealing Studios Production (released through General Film Distributors Ltd)

Directed by:

Robert Hamer

Produced by:

Michael Balcon - Producer

Henry Cornelius - Associate Producer

Screenplay by:

Angus MacPhail, Robert Hamer and Henry Cornelius

Principal Cast: Note – Actors names appear here only, throughout the rest of the work, reference will only be made to the names of the characters in the film.

Googie Withers – Rose Sandigate

John MacCallam – Tommy Swann

Edward Chapman – George Sandigate

Jack Warner – Detective. Sergt. Fothergill

Susan Shaw – Vi Sandigate

Patricia Plunkett – Doris Sandigate

David Lines – Alfie Sandigate

John Slater – Lou Hyams

Sydney Taffler – Morry Hyams

Betty Anne Davis – Sadie Hyams

Additional Cast:

Jane Hylton – Bessie Hyams

Meier Tzelniker – Solly Hyams

Jimmy Hanley – Whitey

John Carol - Freddie

Alfie Bass – Dicey Perkins

Fredrick Piper – Det. Sergt. Leech

Michael Howard – Sloppy Collins

Hermione Baddeley – Mrs Spry

Nigel Stock – Ted Edwards

John Salew – Caleb Neesley

Eddie Martin – Mrs Wallace

Arthur Hambling – Yardmaster
Grace Arnold – Ted’s Landlady
John Vere – Rev. Black
Patrick Jones – Chuck Evans
Gladys Henson – Mrs Neesley
Gilbert Davis – Governor of the Two Compasses pub
Joe Carr – Joe
Francis O’Rawe – Bertie Potts
Frederic Griffiths - Sam
Betty Bascombe - Barmaid
David Knox – Newspaper Boy

Music composed by:

Georges Auric

Cinematography by:

Douglas Slocombe - Director of photography

Film Editing by:

Michael Truman

Art Direction by:

Duncan Sutherland

Makeup Department:

Doreen Hart - hair stylist

Ernest Taylor - makeup artist

Harry Frampton - assistant makeup artist (uncredited)

Doreen Hart - assistant hairdresser (uncredited)

Harry Wilton - assistant makeup artist (uncredited)

Production Management:

Slim Hand - unit manager

Hal Mason - production supervisor

Second Unit Director or Assistant Director

C.R. Foster-Kemp - first assistant director (uncredited)

John Meadows - second assistant director (uncredited)

Cyril Pope - third assistant director (uncredited)

Peter Price - third assistant director (uncredited)

Art Department:

Charles Woolveridge - assistant art director (uncredited)

Sound Department:

Stephen Dalby - sound supervisor

George Diamond - recordist

Mary Habberfield - dubbing editor (uncredited)

Tom Otter - boom operator (uncredited)

Joe Yeates - sound camera operator (uncredited)

Special Effects by:

Richard Dendy - special effects (as R. Dendy)

Cliff Richardson - special effects (as C. Richardson)

Harry Forbes - special effects technician (uncredited)

Camera and Electrical Department:

Jeff Seaholme - camera operator

Peter Newbrook - assistant camera (uncredited)

Eddie Orton - still photographer (uncredited)

Maurice Selwyn - clapper loader (uncredited)

Costume and Wardrobe Department:

Anthony Mendleson - wardrobe supervisor

Ernie Farrer - wardrobe master (uncredited)

Lily Payne - wardrobe mistress (uncredited)

Larry Stewart - wardrobe assistant (uncredited)

Editorial Department:

Bernard Gribble - assembly cutter (uncredited)

Music Department:

Stanley Black - arranger and player: dance music

Ernest Irving - conductor

The Philharmonia Orchestra - music player

W. Pogson - arranger and player: dance music

Ernest Irving - composer: additional music (uncredited)

W. Pogson - musician: saxophone solos (uncredited)

(Source: Film credits, IMDb and Filmography to Duguid, M, Freeman, L, Johnson, K & Williams, M (eds) *Ealing Revisited*, London: BFI.

Narrative overview:

There are three main narratives within the film, all of which take place and unfold during the same twenty four hour period (the Sunday in the title of the film)

- 1) An escaped convict, Tommy Swann seeks help from his ex-fiancé, Rose Sandigate. She attempts to hide him in the familial home despite the other members of the household – husband George, two step-daughters, Vi and Doris and son Alfie being present throughout the day. A journalist, Sloppy Collins calls on the house in the evening after a tip off causing Tommy to flee but he is eventually captured by the Police after a chase.
- 2) Three small-time criminals, Whitey, Freddie and Dicey try to sell some recently stolen roller skates. Believing their fence Neesley to have offered an unfair price for the skates, Whitey attacks Neesley, shortly after which Swann, evading police capture robs him.
- 3) The two Sandigate sisters Vi and Doris' relationships with the two Hymas brothers – Morry (local band leader and record shop owner) and Lou (local businessman and 'fixer'). This narrative also involves Morry's wife Sadie who suspects him of having extra marital activities, and Ted, Doris' boyfriend who is uneasy about Lou's motives towards her.

Scene by Scene Film Synopsis:

Scene 1

Establishing shots of Sunday morning and the start of rain. Early in the morning, George Sandigate (Edward Chapman) opens the bedroom window and sees his daughter Vi (Susan Shaw) arriving home in a car. George goes back to be where Rose (Googie Withers) is still asleep.

Scene 2

Three men (Whitey – Jimmy Hanley, Freddie – John Carol and Dicey Perkins Alfie Bass) are sheltering from the rain at a tea stall. One says 'come on' and they leave. The stall holder fills in his pools coupon which is next to a newspaper with a caption reading 'Dartmoor Escape'.

Scene 3

A man (Tommy Swann – John McCallum) is running down the side of a railway cutting onto the railway line.

Scene 4

Paper boy is given his delivery from Solly Hyams (Meier Tzelniker). He rides down the road where the Sandigates live.

Scene 5

Rose and George's bedroom. Rose knocks on the wall asking for Doris (Patricia Plunkett) to make tea. Vi says the tea is for 'her' and not Dad, 'lazy old bag'. Vi admits she was 'tight' the night before which is why she's still dressed in bed. They debate referring to Rose as Mum. Doris goes to make tea. Vi looks in the mirror and starts recall the previous evening (cuts to dance hall). Morry Hyams (Sydney Taffler) is band leading in playing the saxophone. Cut to Morry's car where Vi is his passenger. She is singing, Morry complements her and advises her to enter a singing contest and to come around to his shop tomorrow to give her a record. They kiss. Cut back to Vi looking in the Mirror. She returns to bed.

Scene 6

Paper boy delivers paper to the tea stall. Whitey, Freddie and Dicey return to the stall. They discuss what to do with some stolen goods which are hard to conceal. It's been a bad night and they don't think they will be able to sell the goods for a decent profit. They blame Whitey. Looking at the paper, Whitey notices something and says 'Tommy Swann has got his skates on'. Freddie notes that the police will now 'be at every corner' looking for Tommy so getting rid of the goods (they are skate) is going to be even harder.

Scene 7

Detective Sergt. Fothergill (Jack Warner) and Fredrick Detective Sergt. Leech arrive at 'the Ritz' (Doss/Boarding house for men) looking for Tommy. Fothergill says he thinks Whitey, Freddie and Dicey 'did that warehouse last night'. The safe was empty and they only managed to get away with kids roller skates. Mrs Spry (Hermione Baddeley) the proprietor states she hasn't seen Tommy but Fothergill and Leech request to look at the guests to make sure. The single room is full of old, infirm men. Fothergill and Leech take one look and leave.

Scene 8

Tommy is walking down a road when he sees a patrolling Policeman. He runs into the doorway to a church to avoid being seen. He then runs in the direction of the road where the Sandigates live.

Scene 9

Rose and George's bedroom. Rose is getting dressed. They comment on the rain ('it always ruddy well rains on Sunday' says George). Doris brings tea in and passes George the paper. Rose asks what all the noise was last night (Vi arriving home, Doris covers for her). Rose asks Doris to start the breakfast. George reads out an article from the paper about the escaped convict. Rose brushes her hair and half listens until George reads out the name Tommy Swan which startles her. George asks if she knows him and she replies there used to be someone with that name who used to go into the Compasses (pub). George didn't remember him but Rose suggested it was before he moved to the area. Rose confirms it's 'the same bloke' when she sees the photo in the paper. Scene cuts to flashback with Rose (now blond) working behind the bar of a pub. Tommy enters the pub. He buys her a drink. They arrange a date to 'go up west'. Cuts to both of them relaxing in the country side having a picnic. Rose tells of her wish to leave Bethnal Green. Tommy gives her a 'present for a bad girl' which is a ring and he puts on her wedding finger. She asks if he means it and he says after he returns from a business trip to the North. Cut to Rose in a bedroom packed and ready to go away. A man (her Father?) tells her that Tommy has been arrested for 'smash and grab' in Manchester. Cut back to the present. (Brunette) Rose is brushing her hair looking in the mirror. George asks what's for breakfast. She pauses and says 'haddock'.

Scene 10

Busy market (it has stopped raining). Sloppy Collins (Michael Howard), a journalist asks Fothergill if he's looking for Tommy. Fothergill protests he's never heard of him. Collins wants a news feature on the case. Fothergill declines citing a previous arrangement that he was unhappy with. Fothergill speaks to Mrs Wallace (Edie Martin) about Tommy who she used to be in a relationship with. She agrees to tell Fothergill if she hears from him.

Scene 11

Sandigate's Terrace. The Kitchen of the house. All the family are present. Domesticity – reading papers (Rose and George), painting toenails (Vi) and asking for money so he can buy a mouth organ (Alfie – David Liney), washing up (Doris). The rain and wind enters the room through a broken window in the door. Rose asks Vi if they still have the blackout stuff to cover it. It's in the 'Anderson' in the back yard. Vi won't go to get it as her nail varnish is still wet ('tarting herself' according to Rose). Rose goes to the Anders where Tommy gabs her saying 'it's alright. It's me, Tommy'. He asks for help. She says she will have to wait for the family to go out but then she will let Tommy in to dry off and get some food. Rose re-enters the kitchen with blackout cover. Doris drops and breaks a plate and Rose snaps irritably at her, Doris accuses Rose of scowling and George gets accused by Rose of not standing up to his

daughters. Rose leaves the Kitchen and enters the front room where she gets scissors. She stands alone thinking anxiously.

Scene 12

Back at the market. Fothergill walks along some shops and stops to speak to Morry who is filing his nails in the doorway of his music shop. Fothergill asks if there is much demand for roller skates before moving on. Morry's wife Sadie (Betty Anne Davis) arrives to tell him his breakfast is ready. Morry claims he was working until three o'clock in the morning. Shy buys daffodils from a flower barrow and talks to the owner who mentions the dance was over at 12 and that Morry looked as though he had been enjoying himself. Morry and Sadie exchange barbed comments which result in Sadie throwing the flowers over Morry. Lou Hyams (John Slater) arrives at the shop. He asks Morry if he's interested in some roller skates. Morry can't 'take risks'. Lou points out that selling them in his shop would help him pay of the £50 owed to him. Lou leaves with Morry feeling pressured.

Scene 13

Sandigates terrace. The kitchen. Rose is preparing food for dinner. George is fixing the door. Vi is preparing a bath. Rose wants them to hurry up but George insists it's still early. George goes out to put the remaining blackout material in the Anderson – Rose looks out from the kitchen window looking concerned. George throws it in so doesn't set foot in the Anderson shelter. Rose gives a sigh of relief but Vi sees her and asks 'what's the matter' and that she 'looks all queer'. Rose says it's her heart. Doris enters to say she is meeting her boyfriend Ted (Nigel Stock) and going to Southend so won't be staying for dinner. George re-enters the kitchen after being in the outside toilet. Rose asks if he's going to have a bath. George looks preoccupied and doesn't answer.

Scene 14

Amusement arcade owned by Lou Hyams. Doris arrives to play the claw game. Lou is paying a boxer to fix a fight. Lou says that Doris could do well if she worked in a beauty parlour he owns. She thinks Lou is joking but he confirms that it's £5 a week plus tips – anytime. Lou takes flowers from a flower stall and gives them to Doris.

Scene 15

Sandigates terrace. The kitchen. George is taking a bath. Rose shows irritation to George who suggests she needs a change by them going out together in the afternoon. She says she can't as she has mending to do.

Scene 16

Outside the tea stall. Doris is telling Ted about her unsuccessful attempt at the claw game. Ted suspects Lou of ulterior motives towards Doris. They fall out. Doris leaves. Ted goes on his bike alone

Scene 17

Sandigates terrace. The kitchen. Rose is rolling some pastry. George is dressed to go out but delays leaving by looking for pipe cleaners. As he leaves Rose goes into the back yard and tells Tommy to run into the house as she 'pretends' to mind the washing line. As she starts to follow Tommy into the kitchen a neighbour opens her window and calls Rose to make small talk. Rose eventually re-enters the kitchen. Tommy stands by the fire and requests some 'bread and marge'. As Rose suggests Tommy goes up to the bedroom as it's the safest place, the front door slams. Rose runs to the hall to see Doris arriving back. She has the flowers Lou gave her and tries to enter the kitchen to put them in a vase. Rose reluctantly stands by and lets her in. Tommy hides behind the door. Rose asks Doris to get the cheese rations. Doris leaves. Rose tells Tommy to go upstairs and get some sleep. Tommy appears reluctant to accept at first but finally agrees. They go upstairs to the bedroom. Tommy starts to undress so Rose can dry his clothes. She notices scars on Tommy's back. Tommy explains these are the result of brutal flogging by the 'nice people' at the prison – his scars used to look like a lump of raw meat. Tommy asks about George. To the question 'what's he like', she replies 'he's alright. He's decent to me' Tommy states that he's still got three years of his sentence to go and would rather 'do myself in' than go back to serve it. Rose goes to get him some food.

Scene 18

Lou enters The Two Compasses pub where Whitey, Freddie and Dicey are waiting at the bar. Lou tells them that Morry won't take the skates as he's 'either too scared or too broke'. Lou puts some money in Freddie's coat pocket because they are 'stone cold' (to be paid back when they have sold the skates). As Lou leaves one door of the pub, Fothergill enters another. He offers to buy them a drink which they accept. Freddie asks for a large scotch so Fothergill comments on their expensive tastes and 'going up in the world'. Fothergill buys four bitters and quizzes the three about the warehouse robbery the night before.

Scene 19

Morry's music shop. A boy wants to buy a moth organ but he is 6 pence short. The boy asks if he can owe Morry the 6 pence. The boy leaves when Morry refuses. As he leaves, Vi arrives at the shop. Morry appears awkward and Vi has to remind him of what he said the previous

night. Vi and Morry move into the listening booth of the shop where Vi starts to sing. Morry continues to be disinterested and dispassionate about Vi's chances of a singing career. The pair start to kiss. The boy wanting to buy the mouth organ re-enters shop with Alfie who sees Vi and Morry kissing. On threatening to tell his Mother Rose about the kiss, Morry gives a mouth organ each to Alfie and his friend and they then leave. Morry gives the records to Vi as Sadie returns. When Vi leaves, Sadie confronts Morry about the timing of the dance the night before. She states that she disapproves of him bringing his 'shiksas' into their house.

Scene 20

Sandigates terrace. The bedroom. Tommy is asleep in bed when Rose enters with hot food for him. Tommy asks for money but says the '15 bob' Rose offer won't get him very far. Tommy wants to get to the docks so he can get to Cape Town. Rose goes to her dressing cabinet and pulls out a small container, offering it to Tommy she says he can pawn it. It's the ring shown in the flashback scene. Tommy looks at the ring, comments on the 'nice stone' but fails to recognise it as he asks where did she get it. A knock at the front door. Tommy says not to answer it. Rose refuses and goes to the door. It is a police officer asking about Tommy Swann. He warns Rose that if Tommy gets in touch and she harbours him she will be guilty of an offence. Rose says she has no interest in 'two bit crooks'. The officer leaves and Rose closes the door. Cut to a shot of Doris walking toward the house. Cut back to Rose starting to walk back up the stairs when Doris opens the front door. She comments on the Police visit to which Rose says it was about the 'wireless licence'. Rose follows Doris into the Kitchen. As she enters she sees Tommy's clothes in front of the fire drying. Doris does not notice. Covering the clothes with towels, George and then Vi enter the kitchen. Doris serves dinner whilst George quizzes Alfie about his mouth organ. Vi backs his story up. When George mentions that the joint of beef looks a little well done, Rose snaps at him 'if you don't like it, don't eat it'.

Scene 21

Lou is visiting Solly and Bessie (Jane Hylton). Lou says they should pack up and leave the East End. Bessie and Lou express different views about the East End. Both agree that it smells but Bessie likes it but Lou doesn't. Bessie asks Lou as the 'rich member of the family' for a donation to the work she is doing trying to convert a local hall into a modern gymnasium. Lou says it depends on the amount he gets on the Boxing match fight he's organised later in the day (he's paid the boxer to take a dive). Bessie then refuses any money as it's 'dirty'. Lou leaves.

Scene 22

The tea stall. Fothergill asks the owner if he's seen Tommy at all. Sloppy Harris appears and asks Fothergill for an update. Fothergill leaves so Harris asks the tea stall owner if knows anything. He replies sarcastically.

Scene 23

Sandigate terrace. The living room. George is asleep on the sofa whilst Rose is darning socks. Cut to Tommy in bed upstairs. His dinner plate drops to the floor noisily. Rose looks up to the ceiling and George stirs. Cut to Vi and Doris' bedroom. Looking for her hand mirror, Vi attempts to go into Rose and George's bedroom only to find the door locked. Rose runs up the stairs to confront Vi. Tommy hides in the wardrobe. Rose and Vi scuffle and Vi's dress gets torn. This results in a fight between them. Doris and then George intervene. Eventually, Vi goes into the bedroom to retrieve her mirror. Rose said the door wasn't locked at all but it was merely stuck (she had unlocked when George was asking about the fight). George follows Vi into her bedroom to confront her about being drunk and arriving home late. Stating new strict rules for her behaviour, George leaves the bedroom. Vi, having told Doris to 'get out' starts to pack a suitcase. Cut to George sitting down on the sofa who looks at the pet cat on the arm. He pushes it off and settles down for a rest. Doris leaves the house. Cut to Tommy in the bedroom. Hearing that it has gone quite, he settles back into bed. Rose sits anxiously at the kitchen table.

Scene 24

With suitcase filled, Vi calls Morry's home from a call box. Taking the call with Sadie present, Morry tries to disguise the fact that he's speaking to Vi. Calling her Sid, he arranges to meet her later. Sadie could hear her 'soprano' voice.

Scene 25

Boxing match. Ted confronts Lou about Doris. Lou makes Ted believe that he misunderstood the situation and he had no desire for Doris. At the same time, Lou's boxer dives and he receives money being put in his pockets.

Scene 26

Bessie's charity youth club. Bessie is talking to Doris about Lou. She advises Doris to stay at the gasworks rather than work for Lou. Lou is present and gives the rector £50 towards the gymnasium refurbishment. On announcing this, the boys and girls give him a loud ovation.

Scene 27

Whitey, Freddie and Dicey arrive at Neesley's (John Salew) house. After a tetchy exchange, Neesley accepts to buy the roller skates for £5.

Scene 28

Sandigate terrace. Rose walks through the hall way and starts to enter the living room but pauses and stops. She then goes upstairs. Cut to the bedroom where Tommy is lying in bed. Rose enters and sits on the bed which startled Tommy. Rose comments on Tommy's appearance not being as suave as it was. Tommy responds that he had bad luck. This leads to Tommy making an advance towards Rose. She resists. The exchange moves to how Rose feels about Tommy. She admits that she doesn't know how she feels today. Recalling how she felt about Tommy, she falls onto him and they kiss. They are disturbed by the sound of Alfie calling for his Mother. She goes to him and he explains how he saw a flower barrow knocked over by a car. George emerges from the living room. He tells Alfie to go back out and stay out and then suggest that Rose makes a cup of tea. She goes into the kitchen.

Scene 29

Three location 'scene setting' shots (salvation army choir singing in the rain, The outside of the Two Compasses pub and a small band of protesters marching with a banner stating 'March to Hide Park and Demand the Truth'. Fothergill calls at Neesley's house but he is out. Fothergill has a warrant to search the premises. Cut to the Two Compasses pub. Whitey, Freddie and Dicey are at the bar. Commiserating over their lack of money, the conversation turns to Neesley who they, but Whitey in particular see as the cause of their problems. Whitey says he's going to find him and 'do him in'. Whitey leaves the pub, slightly drunk, to carry out his threat. Fothergill enters the pub. He asks Freddie and Dicey where Whitey is. Freddie says at Church. Fothergill tells them that they are going down to the Police station with him. As they leave a dejected looking Sloppy Harris enters and orders a large gin.

Scene 30

Ted arrives outside his flat to find Doris waiting for him. The landlady wouldn't let her enter saying is 'wasn't that sort of house'. They tell each other that each wanted to apologise to other getting it wrong about the situation with Lou. They laugh when they realise that their reasons contradict each other. They start to go upstairs but the landlady appears and stops them. They get on Ted's bike and go somewhere to use up the remaining hours of the day.

Scene 31

The dance club. Morry is performing with his big band. Vi is present and smiles pleasantly to Morry. Morry then spots Sadie entering the club. She walks past him and sits next to Vi explaining that she wants to give her some tips and advice as she is leaving Morry. Sadie walks out on Morry after he joins them. Morry follows but is caught up in the dancers. He tells Vi to 'leave me alone'.

Scene 32

Sandigates terrace. Alfie's bedroom. George is playing the mouth organ to Alfie much to his delight. Rose appears and tells Alfie he needs to go to sleep. In the Kitchen George gets ready to go to the pub but Rose says she has a headache and doesn't want to join him. At first, George offers to stay at home with her but then realises he has a darts match to play. He leaves offering to bring Rose a bottle of Guinness back. Rose waits for the front door to shut and then moves upstairs. Tommy is looking out of the window at George leaving. Rose enters the bedroom where Tommy comments on George being older than Rose (15 years she replies). They move towards each other and embrace and kiss. Cut to George entering the pub. At the bar he stands next to Sloppy Harris. When George gets his drink and moves over towards the darts players, the barmaid says to Harris that 'she (Rose) will be having a good cry over old times I dare say'. This leads to her telling Harris about Rose and Tommy's past. Obtaining the Sandigate's address, Harris leaves to 'get a human interest' story from Rose. At the same time, George throws a bull's-eye in the darts match; 'pity Rose wasn't here to see it'.

Scene 33

In the bedroom Rose is helping Tommy get dressed and ready to leave. Tommy says that if he makes it he will send her a card from Bill. He also says Rose can go out and join him. Rose says it's too late and that 'you don't really mean it'. They embrace and say goodbye. Tommy moves to leave the bedroom but the front door is knocked. Unable to identify the caller, Rose says she'll stall him and goes down stairs to open the door. Alfie has already opened the door to Harris who walks in and closes the door behind him. Tommy attacks Harris and knocks him out. Rose tells Tommy he can't leave now as 'they are onto them'. A scuffle ensues ending with Tommy striking Rose. He leaves the house via the back yard. Rose and Harris come around from unconsciousness. Harris leaves without saying a word. Rose enters the kitchen and sits down dejectedly.

Scene 34

Morry is driving his car looking for Sadie. He gets out and pleads with Sadie not to leave him. As they talk someone gets in Morry's car and drives off. It's Tommy. Cut to Rose still sitting in the kitchen. She gets up to lock the doors and moves to the oven and turns the gas on. Cut to Sloppy Harris in a call box speaking to Fothergill and giving Rose's address details. In the Police station, Leech tells Fothergill about a reported car missing and stolen. Fothergill suggest this could be Tommy. A full Police operation to catch Tommy is ordered. Cut to Sandigates terrace where an ambulance is shown outside 26 Coronet Grove. The ambulance leaves as onlookers disperse. Tommy abandons the car and takes a bicycle. Cut to Whitey waiting under a bridge for Neesley to appear on his way home. On seeing him, Whitey grabs a half brick and waits behind a wall. He hits Neesley over the head several times and drags him over to a wall where he searches his pockets. Cuts to Tommy cycling over a bridge as a police car goes in the opposite direction. Cut to Whitey looking through Neesley's wallet. Tommy jumps Whitey and runs off with Neesley's money. As Whitey re-finds consciousness after the attack, Fothergill pulls up in a car. Seeing Neesley's body next to him, Whitey tries to pin the blame on Tommy but as Fothergill sees Neesley's watch on him, he gets taken to the police station. Cut to Tommy who has abandoned the bicycle. He gets seen by Fothergill who is in a car. Tommy runs into a dead end and has no choice than to jump over a wall in to a railway yard. As more police arrive, Tommy continues to try to evade them. Precariously running and jumping between moving trains, he eventually gets cornered. The only 'way out' is for him to lie across the tracks as a train approaches, but the police pull him away just in time.

Scene 35

In a Hospital. Rose is lying awake in bed with George sitting beside her. He tells her that Tommy has been caught. She is concerned about Alfie but George says he's okay and that the girls (Vi and Doris) are back and looking after him.

Scene 36

Closing shots of George walking home in the rain eventually to Sandigate's terrace (Coronet Grove).

Filmography:

- A Kind of Loving* (1962, Dir; John Schlesinger, Anglo Amalgamated, UK)
- A Taste of Honey* (1961, Dir; Tony Richardson, Woodfall, UK)
- The Blue Lamp* (1950, Dir: Basil Dearden, Ealing, UK)
- Brief Encounter* (1945, Dir; David Lean, MGM, UK)
- Coming in from the Rain* (2012, Bluray extra feature to *It Always Rains on Sunday*, Studio Canal)
- Convoy* (1940, Dir; Pen Tennyson, Ealing, UK)
- The Cruel Sea* (1953, Dir; Charles Frend, Ealing, UK)
- Dead of Night* (1945, Dir; Alberto Calvalcanti, Charles Crichton, Robert Hamer, Basil Dearden, Ealing, UK)
- Father Brown* (1954, Dir; Robert Hamer, Columbia, UK)
- Fish Tank* (2009, Dir: Andrea Arnold, BBC Films, UK)
- The Forman went to France* (1942, Dir; Charles Frend, Ealing, UK)
- The Halfway House* (1944, Dir; Basil Dearden, Ealing, UK)
- His Excellency* (1952, Dir; Robert Hamer, Ealing, UK)
- I Believe in You* (1952, Dir; Basil Dearden, Michael Relph, Ealing, UK)
- Interview with Melanie Williams* (2016, Bluray extra feature to *Pink String and Sealing Wax*, Studio Canal).
- It Always Rains on Sunday* (1947, Dir; Robert Hamer, Ealing, UK)
- Kind Hearts and Coronets* (1949, Dir; Robert Hamer, Ealing, UK)
- The Ladykillers* (1955, Dir; Alexander Mackendrick, Ealing, UK)
- The Lavender Hill Mob* (1951, Dir; Charles Crichton, Ealing, UK)
- Le Quai des Brumes* (Port of Shadows) (1938, Dir; Marcel Carne, Osso Films, France)
- Let George Do It* (1940, Dir; Marcel Varnel, Ealing, UK)
- The Long Memory* (1953, Dir; Robert Hamer, Rank, UK)
- The Loves of Joanna Godden* (1947, Dir; Charles Frend, Ealing, UK)
- Made in Ealing* (1986, Omnibus, BBC)
- The Maggie* (1954, Dir; Alexander Mackendrick, Ealing, UK)

The Man in the White Suit (1951, Alexander Mackendrick, Ealing, UK)
Nine Men (1943, Dir; Harry Watt, Ealing, UK)
Passport to Pimlico (1949, Dir; Henry Cornelius, Ealing, UK)
Pink String and Sealing Wax (1945, Dir; Robert Hamer, Ealing, UK)
Ratcatcher (1999, Dir; Lynne Ramsey, BBC Films, UK)
Sailors Three (1940, Dir; Walter Forde, Ealing, UK)
San Demetrio, London (1943, Dir; Charles Frend, Ealing, UK)
Saturday Night and Sunday Morning (1960, Dir; Karel Reisz, Woodfall, UK)
The Scapegoat (1959, Dir; Robert Hamer, MGM, UK)
The Selfish Giant (2013, Dir; Clio Barnard, IFC Films, UK)
School for Scoundrels (1960, Dir; Robert Hamer, ABPC, UK)
Scott of the Antarctic (1948, Dir; Charles Frend, Ealing, UK)
The Spider and the Fly (1949, Dir; Robert Hamer, GFD, UK)
The Titfield Thunderbolt (1953, Dir; Charles Critchton, Ealing, UK)
To Paris with Love (1955, Dir; Robert Hamer, Rank, UK)
Went the Day Well? (1942, Dir; Alberto Cavalcanti, Ealing, UK)
Whiskey Galore! (1949, Dir; Alexander Mackendrick, Ealing, UK)

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