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Barry Hines's Thatcher Era Screenplays

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The novelist and screenwriter Barry Hines has observed, 'My political viewpoint is the mainspring of my work. It fuels my energy'.[1] Such inspiration and commitment is clear in his best-known work, including the 1968 novel *A Kestrel for a Knave*, released a year later as the film *Kes* (Ken Loach, 1969), as well as *The Price of Coal*, a two-part Play for Today (Ken Loach, 1977). These works appeared before the watershed British election of 1979, which brought Thatcher's Conservative government to power. *Kes*, which centres on the limited options facing a teenage boy, is set at a time when Thatcher was shadow education spokesperson. She had been Conservative party leader for two years when *The Price of Coal* was broadcast, and its portrayal of malaise in the mining industry—the pair of plays contrasts the expense of efforts made to improve the pit in preparation for a royal visit with the cost-conscious safety shortcuts that precipitate a fatal accident—appears with hindsight to foreshadow the Thatcherite policy that destroyed Britain's mining industry.[2] Indeed, we see in both these early films versions of the concerns with education, class, work, inequality, and the ability of young people to look forward to a sustainable future, that appear most forcefully and polemically in Hines's Thatcher-era work.

In this essay, I will examine the two of Hines's screenplays that address or make perceptible the effects of Margaret Thatcher's time as the British

prime minister. The first of these is the award-winning film *Looks and Smiles* (Ken Loach, 1981), which was released just two years after the Conservatives came to power in 1979. Its narrative about the prospects of teenager Mick in a recession-beset Sheffield is filmed in black-and-white, to an effect that is at once that of docudrama and of art cinema. My second example is Hines's television play *Threads* (Mick Jackson, 1984), about a nuclear attack on Britain that is once more set in Sheffield, which was broadcast on BBC2 on 23 September 1984, a year into Thatcher's second term of office. *Threads* follows a more overtly docudrama format than *Looks and Smiles*, in which elements of a voiceover and statistical intertitles accompany both the contemporary domestic drama of the film's first third, and the two subsequent sections about the nuclear attack and the thirteen years of its aftermath.

Looks and Smiles

Looks and Smiles was released in 1981, two years into Thatcher's term of office, and the film's director Ken Loach observed that he would have made the film with more 'anguish' two years later, when estimates put the total number of unemployed at over three million.[3] However, such anguish does emerge in the film as it stands, by means, as we will also see in the case of *Threads*, of the blending of documentary and dramatic elements in a polyphonic manner, such that the audience has to take part in constructing its political meaning. Some critics, including Hines himself, have seen this film as a sequel to *Kes*, since it too concerns the life options of a young man, this time one who has already left school. In *Looks and Smiles* the protagonist Mick is a 15-year-old with a passion for motorbikes, but his future is not, like Billy Casper's in the earlier film, likely to be a life down the pit as a miner, but one spent on the dole. *Looks and Smiles* begins metafictionally with a film screening, shown before the opening credits. Yet, as is true of the film's aesthetic as a whole, the filmic device of self-consciousness has a political significance. The film-within-the-film is one for army recruitment shown at Mick's school. It seems that only the army offers an alternative to

unemployment: Mick's friend Alan enlists after leaving school, but, in relation to Mick himself, who does not, we see the imagery of the rows of chairs at the school screening being simply replaced by the ranked chairs in which he waits at the unemployment benefit office.

This film is striking for its black and white look, which is equally crucial to its politics. *Looks and Smiles* is based on a novel that Barry Hines at first intended to be about teenage 'courtship'. This changed during the novel's composition since, as Hines put it, 'the storm clouds' of mass youth unemployment were gathering, two years into Thatcher's term of office.[4] The film's political meaning is conveyed by means of the personal relationships that constitute what remains of its originally romantic focus. Indeed, the film's title, which quotes the phrase used in Leo Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina* by the Princess Scherbatskaya, to describe to her daughters the notion of an unspoken romantic agreement,[5] both ironizes the down-to-earth courtship of Mick and Karen, and points to a more general conception of social codes and implications that are hard to decipher. As well as its concern with Mick and his search for a job, *Looks and Smiles* centres on Alan, who is sent to Northern Ireland after enlisting in the army, and Mick's girlfriend Karen, who works in a shoe shop, although her aspiration, as she tells Mick, was to have been 'a nursery nurse', had her qualifications been better. The Barry Hines Archive shows that, as with all his screenplays, the writer drew upon contemporary documentary material for the film's ideological background as well as its plot. Such material relates to the film's engagement with its contemporary political realities of unemployment and the presence of British troops in Ireland. These were both central features of Thatcher's administration: while she was described in commentary after her death in relation to Ireland as 'a tough and uncompromising believer in the Union, and instinctively loyal to the security forces', unemployment levels remained at ten per cent throughout most of the decade of her office in order to keep inflation low.[6] The Hines Archive shows evidence of material used to represent such a context, in the form of prescient newspaper articles about

threats to Britain's steel industry, of the kind that we see Mick's father reading in the film; Manpower Services Commission leaflets on careers for young people, including such unlikely roles as hotel porter and cowhand, a pile of which Mick leafs through before being told by a careers advisor that there is nothing on offer; as well as such documents as the newsletter of the Sheffield Movement for Troops Out.[7]

This material is crucial to the plot of *Looks and Smiles*, and exists on two thoroughly blended levels, the political and the aesthetic. Politically, we are aware of Thatcherism's effects in relation to such plot elements as the lack of options for young people, lack of state housing, the substitution of enlistment in the army for employment, and lack of encouragement to teenagers to stay on at school to gain qualifications. The film's background could thus be described as documentary, and the material that goes to constitute such a background had a direct influence on the plot. For instance, one of the Archive's holdings, a leaflet issued by Barnsley Council containing advice about preparing for an interview, prompted a whole section of the film's narrative. Mick is offered an interview as an apprentice fitter, although he is not offered the job, because he has a black eye and 'first impressions count', and is confronted with other candidates who act out the advice given in the leaflet: they are ten minutes early, 'wait patiently without fidgeting or groaning', and read the company magazine.[8] The very existence of the leaflet and its preservation in the Hines Archive reveals the high stakes of gaining a job interview during a recession. Mick's black eye is equally a reminder of such high stakes. The fact that it was sustained as a result of his loyalty to Alan, whose feud with some other young men led to a fight in a nightclub, reveals the latter's role in representing a different, more dangerous path in life. Alan personifies an alternative to the dole; despite his tales of victimizing Catholic families in Belfast and showing Mick and Karen a stolen plastic bullet, Mick is shown to be tempted to enlist himself. Yet in the nightclub scene his attention is drawn by Karen, in contrast to Alan's interest in settling old scores. Mick almost literally bears the mark of his friendship, which cost

him a job and threatens his future. The letter offering him the interview arrives at the same time as Alan's letter about his life in the army, summing up the plot's two conflicting strands. Indeed, Mick's father's reasons for not wanting his son to sign up, for fear that he will have to take part in strike-breaking, is not only a percipient flashforward three years to the Miners' Strike,[9] but suggests that belonging to the army is itself inimical to the exercise of workers' rights.

Despite Loach's later concern that the film's aesthetic blunted its social critique, in *Looks and Smiles* the tropes of documentary and art cinema are inseparable, as suggested by critics' comparisons of the film with Doré's and Piranesi's engravings, famous for showing urban hellishness. A *Daily Telegraph* reviewer went a stage further in rejecting both the style and its content, in declaring that, 'merely to photograph gritty realism and record obscenities is not enough', and calls for 'an occasional beauty' or 'hint of a way out'.[10] Yet the film's black and white look enhances the expressiveness rather than the documentary nature of these images. In a handwritten production note held in the Archive, Hines claims that at times of economic downturn it is 'difficult to separate family conflict' from 'social conflict, especially within [a] working class' setting. Unlike the 'wealthy', working people are not 'cushioned' from economic realities; rather, 'marriage, relationships between the parents and children are influenced by social conditions' and this 'adds tension to the film'. Such narrative 'tension' is indeed apparent within the protagonists' family lives, and is conveyed visually in terms of the film's Sheffield setting: for instance, although Hines's novel *Looks and Smiles* only briefly describes Mick's and Carolyn's respective homes, in the film there is a stark visual contrast between Mick's 1930s house with its shed and garden, usually shown from an aerial viewpoint or in deep focus from a hillside perspective, and Carolyn's home in the huge brutalist Park Hill Flats, always filmed straight-on or from below to emphasize its looming and geometric inhumanity. This sums up the contrast between the home lives of the two: Mick's loving family is set against Carolyn's fraught

relationship with her mother. Thus the effects of two years of Thatcher's term of office are shown as intimate dramas.

It is left to a French journalist, interviewing Loach for *Le Monde*, to make a connection between *Looks and Smiles* and new wave aesthetics: he compares it to Czech and Polish films of the 1960s by Milos Forman and Jerzy Skolimowski. In response, Loach describes a wish to 'simplify' the image with black and white, and avoid the distracting and 'softening' effect of colour. This comment reveals the inseparable nature of the aesthetic and 'simmering' political conviction, in Derek Malcolm's phrase[11]. *Looks and Smiles* concludes with an enigmatic close-up on Mick's face, in the manner of the ending of François Truffaut's *400 Blows* (1959), which once more balances the impression of documentary with the aesthetic. Mick is in a dole queue and we hear the voice of the official saying the same thing—'See you again in a fortnight'—to every claimant, but the emphasis is on Mick's individual subjective world and what he might choose to do in such limiting circumstances.

Threads

In November 1983, just before filming for *Threads* began in and around the city of Sheffield,[12] Britain became the first country to host US cruise missiles. At the same time at an international level, there took place what has been described as a nuclear dilemma more threatening than the Cuban Missile Crisis of twenty years earlier, in which Soviet leaders mistook a NATO exercise for a covert attack on the Warsaw Pact states.[13] Thatcher herself was a vocal advocate of nuclear 'deterrence', which, so she claimed in speeches immediately prior to the 1983 General Election, had been responsible for the almost forty years of peace enjoyed by Europe since the Second World War. Indeed, such support for deterrence was a central element of the Conservative electoral assault on Neil Kinnock's Labour Party, which advocated its abandonment. Such factors form the political and intellectual setting of the film. *Threads* opens, as an intertitle has it, in 'Sheffield, Saturday

March 5', the precision of the date allowing for an impression of normality, and enabling what turns out to be a countdown to the nuclear attack, while the omission of a year implies that the action is set in an undefined present or near-future moment. Despite the film's specific location both geographically and historically, its effect is not limited in either respect. Thus, although its details are set during and inspired by Thatcher's rule, the film also has a wider resonance.

The combination of specific detail with symbolic meaning is part of *Threads*' representation of nuclear disaster in every sense. It is a combination which constitutes the plot and the mise-en-scène, as well as being deployed to ironic effect. This is evident in the scene which introduces us to Ruth Beckett and her boyfriend Jimmy Kemp, whose tryst in a car on a hillside above Sheffield is interrupted by the 'shattering roar' of a military aeroplane. 'Peaceful, isn't it', Ruth observes ruefully, although she goes on to express a wish to live 'out in the country'. Jimmy does not concur, since, in his view, 'It's dead'. Everyday phrases of this kind convey not only a terrible dramatic irony, since, in the post-attack world, we see Ruth toiling alone in what has indeed become a 'dead', bleak and grey countryside, but also the ineffectual nature of such terms to convey the individual deaths and even greater social losses that will follow. Ruth and Jimmy's daughter Jane, conceived on this occasion in the car but born after the nuclear attack, can neither respond to her mother's death, ten years after the blast, nor use language effectively to express or convey any sense of an inner world.[14]

Despite Hines's claim that *Threads* is a 'neutral' film that simply projects what the effects of nuclear attack would be,[15] the deployment of the local to convey a global meaning is not just an aesthetic but a political technique. It is one that shows the high cost for individuals of world events as well as the consequences of personal inaction and passivity. Such a double narrative impulse is clear in the film's first 40 minutes in the build-up to the attack, where it appears to be constructed in a way typical of the 'Play for Today' or even kitchen sink format of social drama.[16] Yet we do not witness

the encounter between Jimmy's and Karen's parents, the working-class Kemps and middle-class Becketts, on the occasion of their offsprings' engagement, despite its hint at offering an instance of the British sitcom's staple device of comic class antagonism and misunderstanding. Although we see the Kemps arriving at the Becketts' house, we do not follow them inside. This withholding of the detail of social drama is an early hint at what will be the film's abrupt generic shift. The bomb destroys not only the recognizable world within the film's diegesis, but effects an abrupt and disorientating change in genre for the spectator, since the characters undergo horrible deaths or, in the case of Jimmy, simply vanish. *Threads* is a horrifyingly extended sequel to *Looks and Smiles*, since both start out in a recession-beset world. We see Mr. Kemp prepare the family's evening meal because he is on the dole, and his wife warns Jimmy of the dangers of getting married in such an economic climate. However, in *Threads* the fate of the central young couple goes beyond that of Mick and Karen in *Looks and Smiles*, whose tragedy is that they cannot find fulfilling work or predict a stable future; in *Threads*, the threat of unemployment is succeeded by nuclear attack, including the unseen death of Jimmy and Ruth's struggle for bleak, brief survival in post-nuclear Britain.

The pitting of the contemporary everyday against an apocalyptic scenario demonstrates just what the characters and, by extension, the spectator stand to lose, by calling upon the signifiers of what Anthony Giddens calls our 'ontological security', humans' need for an existential sense of 'continuity and order in events'.[17] It also implies that failing to think beyond the everyday may obscure a wider vision of the world. Thus in *Threads* the schoolgirl Alison Kemp, Jimmy's sister, delivers newspapers for pocket-money but does not read the headlines, and her habit of wearing headphones means that she cannot hear the increasingly ominous radio reports, while a landlord changes channels when unwelcome news bulletins are broadcast on a pub television. When Mr. and Mrs. Kemp are due at the Becketts' home, Mrs. Beckett blocks her husband's view of the television news

with a cushion as she tidies the living-room, and insists that he turn it off in time for the Kemps' arrival. Both the danger of losing the familiar world, and its ability to obscure individuals' vision, are shown in Mrs. Kemp's last words before the blast as her son reacts enthusiastically to his father's plan to build an indoor shelter out of newly painted doors:

> MICHAEL: Dad, are you going to build one of those in here?
> MRS. KEMP: Over my dead body he is. I want to know something more definite before we start ripping this place to pieces.

It is as if Mrs. Kemp's words conjure up the 'definite' blast that follows moments later and does indeed 'rip' the place to pieces, leaving her and her husband to wish they were 'dead bodies' in place of their vanished children.

The two realms of the everyday and the apocalyptic become increasingly entwined as disaster looms: a local supermarket is as busy 'as if it were Christmas' because shoppers are panic-buying, and an enterprising street hawker offers tin-openers for sale at a wildly inflated price of £1.20 because 'they could save your life'. Thus nuclear threat is initially seen in everyday terms. Yet the details that adhere most closely to the film's setting in 1984, in its Thatcherite as much as Orwellian sense, represent a complex political polyphony. Although the political stripe of the British government in *Threads* is not identified and the Prime Minister's gender left studiously unstated, other, perhaps less distractingly immediate, details do appear which prevent the action from appearing to take place in a vacuum. The actual Russian foreign minister in 1983, Andrei Gromyko, is named in a news item, while the city council's Emergency Committee chairman Clive Sutton hopes that the stockpiled corned beef 'isn't from Argentina', in reference to polarities established during the Falklands War. Most strikingly, in the scenes of public protest at the international crisis and the government's response to it, we witness unexpected differences of opinion between anti-war and anti-government protesters. It is as if even the anti-Thatcherite political agenda

with which Hines allied himself, and for which *Looks and Smiles* advocates, has come to seem a small-scale distraction from other all-important issues.

Outside Sheffield City Hall a woman speaker's attempt to put a global perspective—'You cannot win a nuclear war! […] All major centres of population and industry will [be] destroyed'—is countered with a 'voice from the crowd' insisting on the devastation of a different kind already wreaked on Britain: 'Industry? What industry? We ain't got no industry in Sheffield […] They'd be wasting a bomb on it'. Yet the spectator is shown that the two positions are not opposed after all, simply different perspectives on the same agenda in a nation that is already 'internally deeply divided'.[18] The woman speaker's argument, that 'if the money hadn't been spent on nuclear weapons you would have built up industry', is countered by another, and this time genuinely oppositional, 'voice' which identifies, just as Thatcher herself did in election speeches in 1983, an anti-nuclear with a pro-communist stance: 'Get back to bloody Russia where you belong'. Later we see the woman speaker really being silenced, since she is arrested along with other such activists. The bomb itself wipes out all such 'small differences', in Freud's phrase, between local and global as well as nationalist and party politics.

This staging of a literalized version of Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of a polyphony of responses to the threat of nuclear attack in the crowd scene itself vanishes, as authoritarian rule is imposed. After the blast, the only groups of people that we see are starving rioters or lines of refugees. Communication itself withers away in the post-attack society, rendering *Threads* an 'increasingly silent' film.[19] The sound-montage of oppositional public voices before the blast is succeeded by the polyphony of officialdom in its wake. The 'snatches of conversation' in the immediate aftermath of the bomb that we hear in the Emergency Committee's bunker, as its leader Mr. Sutton and his advisors try to work out how to respond, becomes an alternative source of information or 'advice' to the spectator alongside the voiceover. The Scientific Advisor's commentary on different areas on a map of Sheffield, 'About 50% will still be alive but here they're as good as dead

already. They've probably received a lethal dose', is followed by utterance discussing an inhumane-sounding triage:

> MR. SUTTON: Look, what's the point of wasting food on people who are going to die anyway? […]
> MEDICAL OFFICER: And now they're coming out of their shelters. I know it sounds callous but I think we should hang on to the little food we've got.
> MANPOWER OFFICER: And I need that food to force people to work.

It is this transformation of recognisable state officials into authoritarian and murderous figures who arm traffic wardens and order executions that might make *Threads*' post-attack world seem most closely to resemble a nightmarish future projection of a Thatcherite social 'wasteland', in David Rolinson's phrase.[20] While the woman at the dole office in *Looks and Smiles* is a sympathetic but unhelpful state emissary who explains to Mick why he cannot get work, because of the 'economic situation' which means that 'things are difficult all over the country', here the female Manpower officer responds to a different crisis in which money and aspiration have become irrelevant. Instead of those who cannot get work being fobbed off, here it is people who want food who are shot and killed. Yet *Threads* is not simply an allegory for Thatcherism or its dangers. This is despite the extreme political and social events which took place between the Conservatives' election in 1979 and the film's release in 1984 which help to constitute the film's world. These include Thatcher's statement at the 1980 Tory Party Conference that 'the lady is not for turning' but would adhere to counter-inflationary policies that led to three million unemployed by 1982, the largest figure since the 1930s; the violent police response to the Brixton riots of 1981; the Falklands War in 1982; and the purchase of nuclear weapons as part of the Trident defence system the same year. Despite this record, the Tories gained a landslide electoral victory in 1983. However, as is suggested by the deaths of Clive Sutton, the Manpower Officer and all the members of his staff in their airless bunker, *Threads*'

concern transcends the politics of individual parties. There are no beneficiaries of nuclear war. The film's ending makes this clear, in its disturbingly enigmatic final reaction-shot of Jane's horrified face at the sight of her newborn child followed by her scream of rejection, implying the tainting of future generations after the bomb. As Daniel Cordle argues, *Threads* led to a swell in CND membership among a specific demographic of teenage and young adult viewers, as well as prompting responses from such viewers as the then-Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock, and, according to some, even attracting the attention of Ronald Reagan.[21]

Thus politics, it is implied, can be a matter of choices on the part of individuals as well as national and global events. It may be true, as a review argued, that the power of *Threads* arises in part from its non-combatant perspective of a Britain caught between feuding superpowers, and that it is both unclear and irrelevant which side launches the bombs that are so meticulously identified by the captions in terms of their megaton capacity and destructive effect.[22] Yet *Threads* also suggests that it is not quite true to insist, as Jimmy's friend Bob does, that there is 'nowt we can do' in the face of the atomic threat. Rather, all kinds of small choices, it is implied, can tend towards the kind of nuclear escalation shown in the film. Thatcher's foreign policy, as well as the decision to allow US missiles onto British soil, is indicted here along with those citizens who voted for and support such Cold War belligerence. It is in this sense that the 'starkly depicted post-apocalyptic wastelands' of the film can be 'read as a metaphor for social collapse in Thatcher's Britain,'[23] since it is not the case that such 'social collapse' can be ignored or pales into insignificance in the face of the bomb. Combatting Thatcherite tenets of inequality and individualism at home and overseas is, the film implies, the first step away from the likelihood of the horrors of the post-attack world that we see in *Threads*. The dramatic device of the anti-war protest is used for a second time in the film, at a moment closer to the blast, to represent a polyphony of voices 'from the crowd'. These voices encapsulate both insular self-destructiveness as well as self-scrutiny, positions that are not

clearly divided up along either class or party lines. While one such voice reminds the 'trade unionist' addressing the rally that Britain's role in the Falklands could itself be seen as 'warmongering' of the kind that consitutes the present threat,[24] another insists, against a TUC call for a general strike, that it is such industrial action which has 'destroyed this country'. The trade unionist himself espouses a conflictual 'Little Englandism' in turn, by claiming to be 'patriotic' in having spent 'years' trying to 'get us out of the bloody Common Market!' As one critic puts it, such a polyphonic technique functions to draw the audience into the debate, since 'At no point do the characters sermonise, they let the viewer interpret the drama for themselves'.[25]

Rather than presenting a hopeless fatalism, as some reviews suggested, *Threads* is a call for spectators to acknowledge the importance of the notion of 'threads' themselves. These are not just the threads of the communications and industry shown in the opening sequence focusing on a spider's web, but the intangible connections that constitute national and international harmony and solidarity. It is just such links that Thatcher would go on to repudiate in her infamous interview with *Woman's Own* magazine in 1987, in her declaration that those who expect help are 'casting their problem on society' when 'there is no such thing as society. There is [a] living tapestry of men and women and people and the beauty of that tapestry and the quality of our lives will depend upon how much each of us is prepared to take responsibility for ourselves'.[26] *Threads* can be seen as a proleptic warning of the danger, represented by Thatcher's words, of failing to acknowledge and of tearing its eponymous social strands. Such danger is invoked by the opening commentary, voiced over our view of the spider's web, beyond which, 'as if seen from a hillside', is a distant image of Sheffield's steelworks, hills and houses. The web's 'magical' filmaments, as Sean O'Sullivan describes them,[27] take on the form of lines of smoke and steam, telephone and electricity cables, and even the winding streets, as the voiceover claims: 'In an urban society, everything connects. Each person's needs are fed by the skills of many others.

Our lives are woven together into a fabric. But the connections that make society strong also make it vulnerable.'

The film shows us that such vulnerability arises not just from external threat, of the kind represented by the nuclear bombs, but from the everyday failure to care for these 'threads', as emphasized here by the uncanny flashforward to the phraseology of Thatcher's interview, in which she claimed that the 'tapestry' is composed only of isolated individuals, in contrast to the different kind of interconnected 'fabric' of 'society' that *Threads* insists upon.[28] It is as if the film's 'post-apocalyptic wasteland' is not just the result of, but the figure for, such everyday failure, as embodied in Thatcher's ministries.

In *Looks and Smiles* and *Threads*, the Thatcher era is represented in terms of its effects. Hines has written about his impetus to write, and claims that, 'I wanted to read about a world I could identify with, where people had to work for a living. Nobody seemed to work in literature.'[29] It is work and the Thatcherite threat to it that is most prominent in both films: in terms of unemployment in *Looks and Smiles*, and, more extremely, in relation to the disappearance of a recognizable world in *Threads*, where barter and primitive agriculture have supplanted all familiar social structures.

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[1] Barry Hines, *This Artistic Life*, Hebden Bridge: Pomona 2009, p. v. Thanks to David Forrest and the University of Sheffield Special Collections for their help in completing this article.

[2] Hines later wrote three plays, none of which has been performed or filmed, and a novel, *The Heart of It* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1994), about the events of the 1984-5 Miners' Strike; see Sue Vice, 'Barry Hines' Miners' Strike Plays: A Case Study of Archival Analysis', *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 'Exploring Television Archives', *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 8 (2) 2011, pp. 204-17. The plays are held in the Barry Hines Papers, University of Sheffield Special Collections, Western Bank Library.

[3] Quoted in Julian Petley, 'Ken Loach – Politics, Protest and the Past', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 54 (638) 1987, p. 96.

[4] Hines, *This Artistic Life*, p. 31.

[5] Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, trans. Nathan Haskell Dole, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell 1899 [1878], vol. 3. p. 65. Thanks to Peter Vernon for discussing this with me.

[6] Kevin Connolly, 'Thatcher's tenure shaped by Ireland', BBC News April 8 2013; Dylan Matthews, 'A look back at Margaret Thatcher's economic record', *Washington Post*, April 8 2013.

[7] Ironically enough, recently released Cabinet papers reveal that Thatcher did consider pulling troops out of Ireland in 1981 in response to the IRA prisoners' hunger strikes of that year: see Thomas Penny and Robert Hutton, 'Thatcher considered UK pullout from Northern Ireland amid hunger strikes', the *Independent* 30 December 2011.

[8] Barry Hines Papers.

[9] Alan Travis, 'Thatcher had secret plan to use army at height of miners' strike', the *Guardian* Friday 3 January 2014.

[10] Barry Hines Papers.

[11] Derek Malcolm, review of *Looks and Smiles*, Barry Hines Papers.

[12] See 'Nuclear fallout over Sheffield', http://www.bbc.co.uk/southyorkshire/content/articles/2005/04/22/threads_interviews_feature.shtml, accessed 19 April 2014.

[13] Peter Burt, 'Thirty years ago: The nuclear crisis which frightened Thatcher and Reagan into ending the Cold War', 3 November 2013, http://nuclearinfo.org/blog/peter-burt/2013/11/thirty-years-ago-nuclear-crisis-which-frightened-thatcher-and-reagan-ending, accessed 18 May 2014. Daniel Cordle quotes a Soviet official likening *Threads* itself to the threat inferred from the exercise, '"That's going to happen to us. It is": *Threads* and the Imagination of Nuclear Disaster on 1980s Television', *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 10 (1) 2013, pp. 71-92: 78.

[14] See also Sean O'Sullivan's analysis, 'No Such Thing as Society: Television and the Apocalypse', in Lester D. Friedman, ed., *Fires Were Started: British Cinema and Thatcherism*, London: Wallflower 2006 [1993], pp. 239-40.

[15] Mick Jackson, quoted in the *Sheffield Star*, Barry Hines Papers.

[16] 'Introduction', *Threads and Other Sheffield Plays*, ed. Mick Mangan, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1990, p. 13; O'Sullivan, 'No Such Thing', p. 224; Cordle, '"It's going to happen to us"', p. 82.

[17] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge: Polity 1991, p. 47.

[18] Cordle, '"That's going to happen to us"', p. 75.

[19] 'Nuclear fallout over Sheffield'.

[20] David Rolinson, '*Threads*', BFI Screenonline, http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/730560/, accessed 23 May 2014.

[21] Cordle, '"That's going to happen to us"', p. 90.

[22] John Vorhees argues that 'it hardly matters who detonates the first nuclear bomb', '*Threads* is most powerful film made on nuclear-war aftermath', *TV Times* January 13 to 19, 1985.

[23] Rolinson, '*Threads*'.

[24] Some reports suggest that Thatcher considered the use of nuclear weapons during the Falklands conflict; see David Mann, 'Thatcher Considered Nuclear Arms in Falklands War?', *Observer-Reporter* Friday August 24 1984.

[25] 'Nuclear fallout over Sheffield'.

[26] Interview for *Woman's Own*, October 13 1987.

[27] O'Sullivan, 'No Such Thing', p. 235.

[28] The opening voiceover also represents a flashback, to such invocations of web-like connections as George Eliot's in *Middlemarch*, and E.M. Forster's epigraph, 'Only connect', to *Howards End*.

[29] Hines, *This Artistic Life*, p. 11.