

SOCIAL REALISM OF BRITISH NEW WAVE “LEFT” FILMS:  
THE WORKING-CLASS BORDER CHARACTER

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the  
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## Abstract

### SOCIAL REALISM OF BRITISH NEW WAVE 'LEFT' FILMS: THE WORKING-CLASS BORDER CHARACTER

by

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Film and social critics had questioned the “newness” and/or “reality” of British New Wave films; its directors were faulted for making “working-class” films from a privileged, middle-class stance and for copying French New Wave forms. This dissertation identified a subset of New Wave films--New Wave Left [NWL] films--which required more rigorous analysis. By analyzing NWL films through an early New Left lens, this dissertation has shown that such criticism was based on limited expectations and ways of seeing and did not adequately differentiate between *social realist* films which introduced new approaches and *social problem* films which used conventional and melodramatic approaches to dramatize specific societal issues, such as teen violence, homosexuality, and union organizing.

The NWL filmmakers exposed class realities via working-class writers. The social views of the working-class “border” character is a feature of these films. Poetic choices, such as shot amplification and non-conventional edits, encouraged film viewers to take up similar “border” positions that opened oppositional perspectives on the social situation of postwar Britain. Further, in order to reach their goals, NWL film directors argued for and implemented production processes that would free them from industry and union restrictions. These approaches and attitudes formed what was described as the New Left film aesthetic. Though

these films influenced later approaches to social realism in British film, New Left writers at the beginning of the twenty-first century admitted that positive social change would not happen under present capitalistic conditions.

Chapter One describes the social-historical context from which New Left concerns, theories and goals emerged. Chapter Two defines what Raymond Williams and other New Left culturalists meant by a work's committed social realism. Chapters Three and Four look at the literature of the writers whose works were adapted for NWL films and show that this literature only partially accomplished Williams's social realism. Chapter Five examines the early negative criticism of NWL films and then analyzes how NWL films revealed New Left social attitudes and social realist aesthetics that defined the New Left film aesthetic.

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Introduction  
 Social Realism of British New Wave “Left” Films:  
 The Working-Class Border Character

For Mike Mason, Mike Leigh’s film *Naked* (1993) blurred the demarcation of public and private spaces. The characters of various classes exist in temporary urban spaces or move through partially represented cities (Manchester and then London), which emphasizes “the fragmented social relationships of [Leigh’s] characters and the poverty of their attempts at communication and interaction.”<sup>1</sup> Mason referred to John Hill, who contrasted Leigh’s work with conventions used in mid-century social realist films. According to Hill, both the British New Wave and social problem film used certain conventions that were recognized by audiences to “structure and constrain the way in which that subject-matter can be presented in the first place.”<sup>2</sup> From this point of view, like the earlier films, *Naked* is “characterized by an iconography laden with socialist sentiment.”<sup>3</sup> Mason argued that Leigh uses these conventions with a divergence “to promote a critical discourse on the social conditions of urban existence which may superficially appear to be unified, but which embodies a plurality of perspectives.”<sup>4</sup> For Mason, the assumption of social coherence is questioned in that “typical themes concerning community and economics that may form a generic base for social realist narrative are [in fact]

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<sup>1</sup>Mike Mason, “‘Naked’: Social Realism and the Urban Wasteland,” in *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context*, ed. Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2001), 244.

<sup>2</sup>John Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956 - 1963* (London: British Film Institute, 1986), 54. These conventions included Grierson’s early documentaries.

<sup>3</sup>Mason, “‘Naked’: Social Realism and the Urban Wasteland,” 252.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 245.

given a particular post-modern inflection.”<sup>5</sup> This dissertation takes a different stance. Rather than divergence and multiplicity, *Naked* formally coheres social uncertainties through socialist ways of seeing. This film does not take on a socialist “sentiment”; rather, it reflects Leigh’s ideology that can be linked to early New Left social ways of seeing and filmic conventions of a sub group of British New Wave films that reflect early New Left attitudes.

In the last shot of *Naked*, the protagonist, Johnny, having been beaten up in a random attack by a group of teens, limps away from his former girlfriend’s apartment. His girlfriend had suggested that he return with her to their childhood home in the north; in her mind, the offer of love and companionship would end Johnny’s wandering. But this ‘way of living’ would be as inauthentic as the rest of British life. Neither Johnny’s working class background, nor his evident education, nor a loving relationship could repair his sense of alienation. His connection to others remains tentative, not because of any psychological weakness or because Leigh is deconstructing socialist ways of seeing but because the society is inauthentic. As the film ends, Johnny determinedly drags his broken body toward an ambiguous future; his temporary, violent sexual encounters and peripatetic monologues on the soullessness of the post-Thatcherite society would continue. But his desire for social cohesion and authenticity remains.

The terms social “coherence” and “authenticity” are holdovers from an earlier moment that resonates in Leigh’s film. *Naked* was influenced by a “poetic” social realism that had developed at mid century. A feature of this style is the working-class border character who is aware of the degradation of social cohesion within the capitalist, class-based environment. The border protagonist was a feature of a subset of British New Wave films, to be identified as New

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

Wave Left [NWL] films. This working class border protagonist lives within a “traditional” working class community, but he is alienated from it. In NWL films, this character’s isolation is the result of changes in the nature of the postwar working-class; this character struggles with fitting into a society which was no longer capable of providing a basis for an authentic life. Like Johnny, the NWL border protagonist is alienated, without a way forward in a disingenuous society. He is stuck.

The border character idea resonates with social-cultural theories of the early New Left. Beginning in the 1950s and continuing throughout his academic career, Raymond Williams wrote about the complex and dynamic interaction of social change and cultural development across British social groups. Williams’s social-cultural theory is based on three ideas: (1) A moral democracy and authentic social relationships can develop only within a whole society. (2) Cultural production is central to the establishment of a period’s social imagination. And literature (and film) is capable of revealing hidden social dynamics. In this, naturalism can reveal only surface descriptions, while a “poetic” social realism can expose deep social structures. (3) Hegemonic control of production of the arts disallows positive social development. Uncovering this control can lead to positive social change. Williams investigated this dynamic between structural power and cultural agency in *Culture and Society* (1958), *The Long Revolution* (1961), and *Marxism and Literature* (1977), as well as other articles and books.

New Left British social culturalist emphasis on the whole community or whole way of life of a nation is complex, and its influence on realist cultural output in Britain during the last half of the twentieth century should not be denied by post-modernist descriptions of society and culture. The “whole society” idea can be defined as a British social way of seeing and, at mid

century, was emphasized by the common hardships of World War II. In addition, the “whole society” idea emanates from a historical, British socialist view on class relationships. In the postwar era the early New Left moved away from a Marxist emphasis on economics to a focus on how mass media controlled cultural output and affected the values of the working-class. For the New Left the vitality and communal nature of this class was a model that could counteract destructive bourgeoisie individualism.<sup>6</sup> For Williams the “social experience” of the late 1950s was one of “general restlessness, disorganization and frustration.” but he could identify social continuums, and he tried to re-capture social cohesion by seeing the social past, present and future as cohesive, a “long revolution” that was evolving toward a common outcome. He compared 1950s cultural output to the “restlessness and loss of direction” in the poetic dramas of Fry and Elliot; on the other hand, the works of Osborne, Wesker, and Delaney were “new voices and with a different edge.”<sup>7</sup> Though the earlier poetic drama indulged in a mindset of disorganization, for Williams, the drama of the 1950s was “trying to live through the despair.”

For the early New Left there was a vital link between cultural output, social imagination, and positive social change. Cultural production had to be unshackled from the hegemony of capitalist interest in order to be able to expose complex social realities. And this British social realism was linked with the working-class experience. The interrelationship of a whole society, working-class values, moral democracy, and freely developing cultural production were evident

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<sup>6</sup>See Susan Brook, *Literature and Cultural Criticism in the 1950s: The Feeling Male Body* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). Also, see Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780 - 1950*, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), 325-27.

<sup>7</sup> Raymond Williams, “New English Drama,” in *Modern British Dramatists: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. John Russell Brown (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), 33.

in John Grierson's documentary work, as well as Humphrey Jennings's wartime "poetic" documentaries which used complex images to reveal a nation connected in common purpose.<sup>8</sup> This relationship was the driving force of the social realism evident in a series of non-commercial documentary programs--*Free Cinema*--organized by young filmmakers who saw film as art and social commitment. And it was evident in the formal structure of NWL films.

What was the outcome of the New Left approach to cultural work? By the 1970s British socialism as envisioned by the postwar Labour Party had been abandoned and the New Left was forced to retrench. According to Perry Anderson, "Virtually the entire horizon of reference in which generations of the sixties grew up [had] been wiped away -- the landmarks of the reformist and revolutionary socialism in equal measure."<sup>9</sup> New Left socialism was no longer relevant; though writers on the left continued in fragmented ways, there was no consensus on which to build. Eric Hobsbawm and Antonia Polito agreed "that the game [was] up for socialism, at least for now; that capitalism [was] securely in the saddle, and that America, together with its best-known values, is hegemonic."<sup>10</sup> In the field of cultural production, Sinfield described the end of the 1980s as "a bleak period" of Thatcherism with commercial/business and public control of mainstream arts; nevertheless, he held out hope for radical socialist progress through minority cultural activity and the retelling of "a newly persuasive story."<sup>11</sup> Economic problems and

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<sup>8</sup>Lindsay Anderson, "Only Connect," *Sight and Sound* 4 (April-June 1954): 181-83;186.

<sup>9</sup>Perry Anderson, "Renewal," *New Left Review* 1 (January-February 2000): 18-19.

<sup>10</sup>Eric Hobsbawm and Antonio Polito, "Looking Back: Review of The New Century," *Economist* 255, no. 8170 (13 May 2000): 8.

<sup>11</sup>Alan Sinfield, *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain* (London: Athlone Press, 1997), 304-7.

conservative policy touched off hardships for the working class which could act as fodder for realist cultural production. *Naked* was a reaction, from a “border” stance, of social malaise.

But at mid-century British socialists held out substantial hope for positive social change, which could be engendered through committed cultural production and criticism. In defining social realism early New Left culturalists asked two related questions: What are the literary conventions and evolving structures that allow art to be experienced as socially real? And, how is socially realistic work to be critiqued as committed to positive progress? Committed social realist work would need (1) to be defined as “dynamic” so that such work engaged reality at a deeper level than naturalistic descriptions and moved beyond worn conventional forms; (2) to be produced in freely evolving conditions (for film, this meant that the film artist would be allowed to work without constraints from the film industry, government censors, and unions); and (3) to be critiqued radically from New Left perspectives that could encourage positive social change. These themes were taken up by NWL filmmakers in their critical writing, and their early films engaged these core ideas.

Chapter One will describe the social-historical context from which New Left concerns, theories and goals emerged. Chapter Two will define what Williams and other New Left culturalists meant by a work’s committed social realism, and it will examine Williams’s ideas on the complex link between society and culture. Chapters Three and Four will analyze the literature that was adapted for NWL films and consider their commitment to New Left social realism. Chapter Five will examine the early negative criticism of NWL films and then show how NWL films revealed New Left political attitudes and social realist aesthetics and defined the New Left film aesthetic.

## Chapter 1

### British Working Class and the “Whole Society” Concept: Historical Context and Theoretical Scaffolding

This dissertation will examine the social realism of selected British New Wave films--to be identified as “New Wave Left” [NWL]. These films were produced between 1959 and 1963. The “realism” of these films reflected an early New Left way of seeing the changing post World War II British society.<sup>1</sup> In other words, the British New Left and NWL films engaged in a related discourse on the British working class and its place in the larger society. The early New Left--influenced by the writings of Raymond Williams--was a postwar, socialist movement that sought open cultural development in a hoped-for authentic society. These social culturalists looked to the British working class as a model for the rest of society for “positive” social development, in opposition to capitalism and mass media commercialism which perpetuated old class ways of seeing. By the end of the 1950s, though, the New Left found the British working class had changed and feared that traditional class hierarchies were being reproduced.

During the 1950s, the New Left split into two factions with differing descriptions of British society and remedies to social problems. Both factions looked to working-class characteristics as a positive model for the troubled society. These traits included working-class cooperation and humane treatment of neighbors, skepticism toward authority, and, most

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<sup>1</sup>The social realism of New Wave Left films will be defined as a New Left way of seeing British society, culture, and politics. Other contemporaneous films, sometimes identified as New Wave, will be referred to as “New Wave Problem” films. Chapter Two of this work will define “social commitment,” according to the early New Left. Chapters Three and Four will apply these definitions to the literature from which New Wave Left films were adapted. Chapter Five will examine these definitions in relation to the films, themselves.

importantly, a vitality which featured youth and renewal.<sup>2</sup> One faction, though, based positive social change on the values of a traditional, organic, and past working class. The other saw society as a complex and changing formation. Positive change would emerge from a broad and open acknowledgement that social life is an experience, shared by all classes. And since, according to this approach, cultural production reflected and formed social imagination, all groups should have equal access to communication structures. The former faction looked to F. R. Leavis and Richard Hoggart, who saw stability grounded in past forms.<sup>3</sup> The latter faction looked to the writing of Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, and E. P. Thompson, all of whom recognized the influence of past experiences, but felt that positive social outcomes would result from an accurate understanding of the complexity of social relationships as these develop in a free and open society.<sup>4</sup> It is the latter form of New Left thought-- influenced by Williams--that is addressed in this dissertation.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Many writers, looking back on this period, recognized the heterosexual maleness of this ‘vitality’ which was antagonistic to both women and homosexuals. For example (and referred to below), see Susan Brook, *Literature and Cultural Criticism in the 1950s: The Feeling Male Body* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). Brook examines the New Left as a schism between calls for change and universalism. This rupture was represented culturally by the weakened, de-masculinized male character.

<sup>3</sup>Pairing Leavis and Hoggart in opposition to Hall and Williams is problematic. As will be shown, in part Williams’s and Hoggart’s feelings about the working class were in consensus. Further, Hoggart’s northern origins do not readily partner him with Cambridge-born Leavis. But in this context, Hoggart’s attitudes about the organic working class and the “scholarship boy” matched Leavis’s elitist formations.

<sup>4</sup>The relationship between Hoggart and Williams is complex. Certainly, both were concerned with the changes in the working class and the influence of these changes on the rest of the society, but Hoggart’s attitude leans on the Leavis side of academic elitism, while Williams, based on his experiences growing up in rural Wales and later teaching in adult education, came to other conclusions about the need for an open culture for a humane democracy to develop. For an interesting discussion revealing their mutual respect and deep disagreements, see Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams, “Working Class Attitudes - Discussion,” *New Left Review* 1 (January-February 1960): 26–30. During this period, Hall was largely in agreement with Williams though his social concerns were more concrete and his analysis less rigorous.

<sup>5</sup>The complexity of this way of seeing society and culture will be addressed in Chapter Two. Though his ideas changed, Williams’s attitudes were formed early on and were expressed in *The Long Revolution*

In the 1950s the New Left influenced the imagination of academics and artists, who looked to the vital communal qualities of the working class as a catalyst for positive social change. The “angry young men” writers, theatre directors, and filmmakers were inspired by British socialist descriptions of class antagonism and felt, as did the New Left, that new and vital ways of living could emanate from working-class values. At the same time, the New Left sought cultural production and literary criticism that would engender authentic lives despite what they saw as a vacuous social ethos.<sup>6</sup> For the early New Left, committed literature consisted of a social realism that synthesized the writer’s individual feelings and experiences within the larger social effect. In addition, social realism would communicate the totality of social experience, to all classes. But enlightening the working class was emphasized, for it was their vitality and community-centered values which would make positive social change possible.<sup>7</sup>

(1961). His socially based definition of culture described the “whole way of life” of a people “which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour” For Williams, cultural studies must “see the process as a whole, and ... relate our particular studies ... to the actual and complex organization.” Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001), 57–60.

<sup>6</sup>Relative terms such as “productive,” “positive,” “negative,” “healthy,” “authentic,” and “wholesome” are used in a British socialist sense.

<sup>7</sup>The early New Left’s call for change and description of society influenced British socialist thought in the cultural field. Examples are found in the book *Declaration* (Tom Maschler, ed., 1957) and *Conviction* (Norman MacKenzie, ed., 1958), as well as *Universities and Left Review* and the *New Left Review*. For example, New Left attitudes are reflected in the recorded discussion between Christopher Logue, a socialist poet, and several New Left culturalists, including Alan Lovell and Stuart Hall. Authentic, personally connected, and socially realistic work were needed to engender political commitment. Hall called for the critic, writer and audience to work together in a “total situation.” See Christopher Logue, “A Commitment Dialogue,” *Universities and Left Review* 4 (Summer 1958): 17. A New Left focus on the working class is evinced in Alan Sillitoe’s call for committed working-class writers to express personal experiences which engage working-class readers. See Alan Sillitoe, “Proletarian Novelists,” *Books and Bookmen* (August 1959): 13.

Since the Industrial Revolution, British socialists had been encouraged by the authentic communal values of the working class, which prior to World War II had deepened despite (or due to) its harsh experiences. But after the war the early New Left had two major concerns: Postwar prosperity was infecting traditional working-class communal values. And cultural production, as well as realist literary work about class and class relations, were controlled by hegemonic forces.<sup>8</sup> Thus, there was a break in British socialist goals; a hopeful moment of change was contradicted by an erosion of working-class values. This dichotomy was reflected in the social realism of NWL films. These films do not engage in New Left polemic; rather, their social reality is grounded in the general anxiety of the time which is manifest in each film's "border" character. "Border character" is a construct of this dissertation to describe a liminal character who both fulfills and undermines New Left goals. The border character resides in a no-man's land between the settled-old and the changing-new and feels the anxieties of a dissipated class. He wants to relate authentically, but is unable to move forward.<sup>9</sup> The border character reveals a social potential for new and unifying formations, as well as disruption and ambiguity. In the end, he is denied a worthwhile life in a society lacking authenticity.<sup>10</sup> These films take on Williams's concerns with postwar British turmoil, in part, through disturbances of the border character.

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<sup>8</sup>For an alternate summary of British social realism see Samantha Lay, *British Social Realism: From Documentary to Brit-Grit* (London: Wallflower, 2002).

<sup>9</sup>Within NWL films, the border character is male. Though Chapter Five engages in extensive analysis of Jo in *A Taste of Honey* and Mrs. Hammond in *This Sporting Life*, neither can be defined as "border" characters as it is being used here.

<sup>10</sup>Forms of the "border" character are reiterated in British working-class social realist films of the 1970s and 80s. Film director and writer Mike Leigh includes female characters in this.

These contradicting tendencies--growth and disruption--can be understood as integral to New Left ways of seeing society. Susan Brook describes the early New Left “in the flux and transition of postwar culture, while longing for a whole society characterized by unity rather than flux.” The developing position of early New Left socialism occupied “a curious and unstable position between post modern relativism and modernist universalism.”<sup>11</sup> The New Left embraced the fragmentation of postwar British society with its new possibilities for social change. At the same time, it sought a classless and unified society with the potential for national agreement on socialist change. Thus, socialist desire for stability was entangled with both excitement about new formations and concern about how changes might be manifested and controlled. In part, this indecision within the New Left, an unsettlement between wholeness and disruption, gives dramatic drive to the conflicted border state of New Wave films. Williams’s descriptions of 1950s social change as a complex unity within a social disparity, resonates with this reading. This stance will gain new insights on how NWL films were inspired by and reflected the tumultuous social changes of the late 1950s and did so differently than contemporaneous “social problem” films.

This chapter will establish a social-historical context out of which New Left concerns and goals emerged. It will answer three contextually based questions: (1) What were the significant economic, political and social events of postwar Britain affecting social change? (2) How did these events affect the working class as seen by leftist social and cultural critics of the time? (3)

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<sup>11</sup>Brook, *Literature and Cultural Criticism*, 20.

How was the New Left interpreting these changes?<sup>12</sup> The chapter is organized in two sections. The first looks into events after the war which led to changes in the British working class. The second section examines how these changes affected early New Left formations.

Though the content of NWL films refers to the problems of working-class affluence and mass communication, the formative political and economic issues to be discussed in this chapter do not organize these films' plots. Period-specific issues, including homophobia, threats of Soviet nuclear attack, and the end of the empire which led to increased immigration, race riots, loss of global primacy, and loss of confidence in the British pound, are not dealt with directly in these films. Such issues were more directly dealt with in plays by Osborne (for example, *The Entertainer*, 1957) and Wesker (for example, *Roots*, 1959), as well as social problem films of the period. New Wave Left films, on the other hand, explored the effects of a changing working class. Even though few of the events discussed here organized NWL plots, their effect formed the social fabric out of which these films emerged. Nationhood and class identity were in flux and emerging values were questioned. For the border character, dislocation and isolation, as well as blockages to personal growth, resulted in social ambiguity. The border character is an extension of local and international events which formed the social moment; he reflected New Left disruptive ways of seeing.

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<sup>12</sup>Chapter Two will examine New Left culturalism and its overall goals for a humane society. These ideals will be compared with the social realism NWL films and the literature from which these films were adapted. The NWL working-class border protagonist will be seen as the dramatic engine enacting and embodying (physically taking on) social changes and disruptions.

## Postwar Events Impacting the Working Class

From a British context, discussion of social change inevitably turns to class and who controls class description. E. P. Thompson pointed to complex social and historical explanations for mid-20th century class relationships. The evolving and “exploitive relationship” between factory owner and worker during the Industrial Revolution “worked its way out ... in terms of [a] particular complex of human relationships: law, ownership, power.”<sup>13</sup> The class relationships and identity which developed after World War II resulted from a changing social imagination arising from Britain’s weakened international position. Also, in important ways, this relationship was a reproduction of hegemonic forces reaching back to the previous century. This section will identify significant political and economic changes affecting New Left descriptions of class identity and relationships.

**(1) Labour Party and the welfare state.** Britain’s welfare state grew out of wartime expediencies, as well as historical feelings of unfair treatment.<sup>14</sup> After the war the working class “came to share more equally in the overall image of the nation.”<sup>15</sup> Because they viewed their sacrifices as pivotal to winning the war, the working class demanded greater influence in postwar decision-making and in creating an egalitarian society. Labour Party policies addressed ongoing concerns with class inequality and were intended to satisfy a “desire for a fuller social justice, a

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<sup>13</sup>E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the Working Class* (1963; reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 205.

<sup>14</sup>By the end of the twentieth century, the New Left looked to the 1950s as a time of lost opportunities. See Perry Anderson, “Renewal,” *New Left Review* 1 (January-February 2000): 7–24.

<sup>15</sup>Neil Rattigan, “The Last Gasp of the Middle Class: British War Films of the 1950s,” in *Re-Viewing British Cinema, 1900–1992: Essays and Interviews*, ed. Wheeler Winston Dixon (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994), 146.

lessening of class differences, and greater security and peace” and to insure that there would not be a “relapse to pre-war conditions.”<sup>16</sup> Following World War I, according to Thomson, many had looked back to the secure pre-1914 world for models. After 1945, though, memories of the difficulties of the inter-war years and mutual class sacrifices during the war, which included forced savings, rationing, and salary control, sparked a demand for social change. For Thomson, the “instruments of postwar economic planning were ... the direct products of war-time necessities.”<sup>17</sup> Welfare capitalism’s social promise of a good life for all citizens was initiated during the war.<sup>18</sup> In 1942, William Beveridge’s *Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services* outlined a comprehensive social security package that included health, free medical aid, employment, housing, and education and became the basis for the postwar welfare state. Thus, World War II had been “a mighty crucible, melting many pre-war contrasts and softening ... old rigidities.”<sup>19</sup>

But Britain’s welfare state did not emerge solely from wartime expediencies. Change was linked to the struggles of the working class since the Industrial Revolution. Socialist arguments for an egalitarian society were based on long-time memories of lower class injustices and working-class experiences of poverty, unemployment, and harsh working conditions. For example, Robert Tressell’s working-class novel *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* (1918) gives evidence of the institutionalized mistreatment of the poor and working class in pre-World

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<sup>16</sup>David Thomson, *England in the Twentieth Century* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1965), 208.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 208-9.

<sup>18</sup>Alan Sinfield, *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain* (London: Athlone Press, 1997), xx.

<sup>19</sup>Thomson, *England in the Twentieth Century*, 206.

War I England and presents a socialist polemic for equality and humane conditions. Postwar reform was a hedge against a return to such conditions. British-style socialism, based in a common, humane society, found credibility after the war and validated Labour Party goals.

But some socialists argued that Labour's welfare state was ineffective. For Perry Anderson, Labour's nationalization of certain industries marked a defining moment in New Left formation.<sup>20</sup> But these efforts resulted in little change in the social structure. According to Dan Rebellato, the state was already responsible for these industries. Furthermore, they were running at a loss.<sup>21</sup> Former executives and managers were carried over, and there were no advancements in worker control or ownership. Inefficient competition between nationalized industries continued. In the end, only twenty percent of the nation's industries were nationalized. Other radical changes were put on hold and eventually abandoned. Thus, little changed, and for the worker it was another case of "exaggerated hopes" and broken promises.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, other socialist initiatives, such as education reform, resulted in reproduction of traditional class formations.

Labour losses were blamed on party leaders either going too far or not far enough. In any case, postwar socialist change had come at a high price. After 1945, trade imbalances had forced Labour to institute austerity measures, including wartime-style rationing and taxation. Initially, "public discipline and morale" and "Britain can take it" arguments supported these restrictive policies. But conservative slogans such as "Set the People Free" from rationing proved

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<sup>20</sup>Perry Anderson, "The Left in the Fifties," *New Left Review* 29 (1965): 3.

<sup>21</sup>Dan Rebellato, *1956 and All That: The Making of Modern British Drama* (London: Routledge Press, 1999), 14.

<sup>22</sup>Thomson, *England in the Twentieth Century*, 221.

politically effective.<sup>23</sup> And postwar material gains seemed to demonstrate that the cycling ups and downs of capitalism could be controlled. Capitalism had proven to be resilient and able to adapt to economic and social change. As a result, and despite record-breaking support for Labour at the polls, the Tory Party took control of Parliament in 1951:

In 1945, the Labour party won an impressive victory, a mandate for the welfare state and the breakdown of the class system. After an unavoidable period of postwar austerity, an era of affluence was predicted, and a meritocracy that would supersede the reign of the old school tie. But empire doesn't die painlessly, nor privilege gracefully phase itself out, nor liberalism wield power without compromise.<sup>24</sup>

The Conservatives remained in power until the mid 1960s. By that time Labour was a different sort of political party.

As will be discussed, the New Left looked to a radicalized working class for positive change, but, according to Alan Sinfield, the “fundamental expression of the working class was being obscured.”<sup>25</sup> Politics and policy decisions, though, do not explain the complexity of the social forces impacting the working class in the 1950s. Moves to the political right cannot be seen simply as a result of war weariness and desire for better times, or of Labour's half-way measures. Older power relationships held, as the national imagination moved away from socialist ideals.

**(2) International events affecting social imagination.** Both international and local events influenced the social ways of seeing. Global disruptions threatened the formation of a unified, national identity and, at the same time, presented certain opportunities for socialist progress.

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 226. Sinfield points out that this Tory-style freedom applied only to those who could afford to buy what they wanted. See, Sinfield, *Literature, Politics*, 105.

<sup>24</sup>Harold Ferrar, *John Osborne* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 5.

<sup>25</sup>Sinfield, *Literature, Politics*, 245.

Following the war a new national identity was forming which seemed to validate the end of the empire and Britain's new role as a second-class world power. But this was offset by a sense of dissolution and memory of the past. The once-proud pound was no longer a world currency, and the loss of colonies, which had been an economic buffer, created trade imbalances. Additionally, the dissolution of the empire encouraged an influx of immigrants from Commonwealth countries, leading to riots at the end of the 1950s. The saber-rattling of the 1956 Suez incursion was government's reaction to these changes.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the Soviet threat of nuclear missile attack infected 1950s British imagination. Both the Atlee and Churchill governments attempted to use the Soviet nuclear threat and England's geographical closeness to Russia, to leverage Britain's dwindling influence in world politics.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, the threat was deeply felt. Churchill's apprehension of the hydrogen bomb can be heard in his description of Elizabeth's 1952 coronation as "a time when tormented mankind stands uncertainly poised between world catastrophe and a golden age."<sup>28</sup>

Late in the 1950s Mervyn Jones in his essay "The Time is Short" agreed with Bertrand Russell that the "human race has no more than an even chance of surviving to the end of this century."<sup>29</sup> Jones's call for a pacifist response from British socialists was satisfied by nuclear

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<sup>26</sup>Hennessey refers to this action as conceit of Britain's attempt to regain its position as a world power. Peter Hennessey, *Having It So Good: Britain in the Fifties* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 311.

<sup>27</sup>When production of a British bomb became untenable, efforts were made to secure weapons from the U.S. For more, see Hennessey, *Having It So Good*.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>29</sup>Mervyn Jones, "The Time is Short," in *Time*, in *Conviction*, ed. Norman MacKenzie (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1958), 187.

disarmament protests and the Aldermaston anti-testing marches of the late 1950s.<sup>30</sup> These actions revealed not only the country's strong desire for peace, but its intense fear that nuclear testing could not only provoke the Soviets but poison the atmosphere.<sup>31</sup> Clearly, it was a time of emotional extremes. Indelible national memory of suffering during the war was followed by the exhilaration of victory, and then continued economic austerity, and then the nuclear threat of sudden annihilation of the British nation. These severe changes affected basic working-class values and attitudes towards traditional religious beliefs and the church.

**(3) Working-class relationship with the church.** *The Soldier's Return* (1999), the first novel of Melvyn Bragg's contemporary, postwar trilogy, refers to the nuclear threat from several points of view--political, personal, and spiritual. A teacher in a working-class community argues that the Soviet nuclear threat presents an opportunity for positive socialist change. It is the "time of the Common Man" and only socialism can save the world from nuclear holocaust. His young student, Joe, reacts viscerally and tries to imagine God allowing such a thing to happen. Changes in working-class attitudes towards religion and the church are reflected in Joe's questioning, his growing agnosticism while at Oxford, and his father's antagonism to the church following his wartime experiences.<sup>32</sup>

Clearly, postwar British religious life was changing. Hoggart found that fewer working class members attended church, choosing to stay home on Sunday and read *News of the World*. Nevertheless, Hoggart pointed out, religion was a living part of the community, and the working

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<sup>30</sup>Chapter Five refers to the documentary *March to Aldermaston* (1959) directed by Lindsay Anderson and others.

<sup>31</sup>Sinfield, *Literature, Politics*, 239.

<sup>32</sup>Melvyn Bragg, *The Soldier's Return* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1999), 358.

class continued to take part in church activities during important occasions--weddings, funerals, and baptisms--which evinced an underlying belief that life had meaning, though specific explanations were not sought.<sup>33</sup> Though, “intellectual, cultural, and spiritual atmosphere of the time was not obviously religious,” in general, people were not against religion. At the same time, the generation of the 1950s had witnessed the horrors of World War II and “could hardly avoid some nihilism.”<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, there was much being written about the “problems of human relationships [which] suggested fresh awareness of ethics as distinct from mere hedonistic interests, as a foundation, for the good society.” Overall, churches had not supplied adequate “guidance” and had a diminished effect in forming a “good society.”<sup>35</sup>

Working-class ambiguity towards religion after the war is reflected in the third novel of Bragg’s trilogy, *Crossing Lines* (2003). An older Joe enters Wadham College, Oxford and interacts successfully with middle- and upper-class students, which encourages him to examine his religious assumptions. Secular attitudes replace former working-class ideals learned from his mother. But Joe’s transition to the middle class is quite effortless and parallels his easy acceptance by those outside his class, who, in turn, celebrate his provincialisms.<sup>36</sup> This easy assimilation, though, is Bragg’s late-twentieth-century revisionist attitude towards class and mobility. It does not reflect the conflicted and unresolved feelings of the 1950s.

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<sup>33</sup>Richard Hoggart, *Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life, with Special References to Publications and Entertainments*, reprint, 1957 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1971), 112.

<sup>34</sup>Thomson, *England in the Twentieth Century*, 275.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 277.

<sup>36</sup>This harmonious class move by the scholarship boy could be contrasted with David Storey’s *In Celebration* (1969) and *Saville* (1976).

A different aspect of this conflicted mood is exposed in what music critic Robert Christgau correctly described as Colin Wilson's "ravens existence" (*The Outsider*, 1956).<sup>37</sup> Though Wilson's neo-romantic conclusions are not applicable to this study, his theme of alienation within the cultural field is instructive in describing the social moment and the border character. Wilson explored the alienated intellectual and artist-writer who is lost, without values, and isolated from his social group. He is unable to make meaningful connections. This "outsider" gives up his search (examples are male) for meaning in what appears to be a nihilistic world. But Wilson found redemption in Nietzsche's "pure will without the troubles of intellect." The alienated artist and his characters must not rely on reason, but accept the knowledge that humans are trapped in a mechanistic round. Though his descriptions of isolation are relevant to the feelings of the time, according to Hewison, Wilson's point is a neo-romantic throwback to pre-war existentialism and "personalism":

Although Wilson's ideas are more derivative than was realized, his book emphasized the decay of conventionally-held cultural values, and stirred the emotions of those who felt divided from the society in which they lived. Above all, the title of the book and his treatment of its theme in terms of a personality added a new and easily identified character to the chorus of disenchanted fictional personalities who were voicing their dissatisfaction with the way society had developed.<sup>38</sup>

Wilson exposed a certain postwar alienation and social decay. His arguments and conclusions, though, do not explain the alienation revealed in NWL films. As will be shown,

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<sup>37</sup>Robert Christgau, "Living in a Material World: Raymond Williams's *Long Revolution*," *Village Voice*, April 1985.

<sup>38</sup>Robert Hewison, *In Anger: British Culture in the Cold War 1945–60* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 132. See also Wilson's science fiction novel, *The Mind Parasites* (Berkeley, CA: Oneric Press, 1967).

NWL social realism aligns more closely with developments in the New Left and Williams's descriptions of social/cultural disruption and anxieties of the late 1950s.

**(4) Welfare state, working-class affluence and classlessness.** For the New Left, postwar socialist goals that rested on a dissatisfied working class were undermined by this class's growing affluence and its move towards middle-class attitudes. Churchill's Tory Party took control as a result of displeasure with Labour's continuation of wartime austerity, as well as economic prosperity. The title of Peter Hennessy's study *Having It so Good* (2006) sums up the general mood of the decade. In 1957, conservative Harold Macmillan was concerned with whether the successful economy was "too good to be true."<sup>39</sup> The country was employed and experiencing economic growth and mass buying, partly as a result of mass advertising. Traditional working-class communities were being replaced by new housing estates with individual property owners. Owning a home was a way to get away from the crowding of former working-class communities.<sup>40</sup>

Material success was valued at all levels of society. Inequalities in wealth distribution were not frowned upon, so that "the neglected classes of old-age pensioners and the sick were left behind in the race for affluence and status."<sup>41</sup> Thomson's description of the political environment resembled 1990s U.S. Republican's compassionate conservatism in that 1950s

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<sup>39</sup>Quoted in Hennessy, *Having It So Good*, 1.

<sup>40</sup>Stuart Hall, "Sense of Classlessness," *Universities and Left Review* 5 (Autumn 1958): 29.

<sup>41</sup>Thomson, *England in the Twentieth Century*, 260–61.

“ethos was that of a competitive, thrusting, yet liberal minded business society, placing high values upon material success and comfort while remaining humanitarian and tolerant in spirit.”<sup>42</sup>

Classlessness was desired and, for the New Left, could lead to a “whole way of living” or “whole life of a community.” But the bourgeois emphasis it was taking was troubling. Good times had impoverished working-class values and obscured the differences between the working and middle classes. From this point of view a new classlessness enervated the traditional working-class engine of social vitality for the country. Hoggart lamented a blending of classes which was dulling working-class identity. It was losing its cohesiveness, and its members were becoming, in “unhealthy” ways, cynical and alienated and more like the middle class. Traditional working-class individual and group connections were being replaced by a psychological freedom, which had mixed results. Science had “altogether removed the claims of religion,” lowering old barriers and “psychology has justified the utmost ‘broadmindedness’,” but for Hoggart, these changes were also degenerative. Older working-class ways of thinking had evolved into a debilitating freedom to “do nothing” and “express nothing,” which had widened to a freedom to be nothing and/or to believe in nothing and to do what felt good. Former distrust of authority and old style working-class cynicism, both seen by Hoggart as positive traits, had mutated into a questioning of all values. What had been a “cheerful debunking becomes an acid refusal to believe in anything,” and a general mocking of everything,

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 260.

not just the outsider.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, those with opinions were seen as “‘narrow-minded’, ‘bigoted’, ‘dogmatic’, ‘intolerant’, ‘a busy-body’, ‘undemocratic’.”<sup>44</sup>

Traditional working-class values continued but in altered ways. The individual continued to yearn for “rules of conduct which are ‘straightforward’, which are associated with the thought of religion and which apply to public as firmly as to private life.”<sup>45</sup> But each person needed to know that everyone played by the same rules, rather than what was suspected, that all were out for themselves, a belief which led to a debilitating cynicism. At the same time, though, the traditional “us/them” attitude continued, so that the outsider could be cheated, while within the community loyalty continued. Nevertheless, the older sense of belonging to a group had given way to a new “arrogant and slick conformity.” For Hoggart, a hopelessness and suspicion of the outsider, which had always existed, was gaining strength: “There is in the end an emptiness and a purposelessness indicated by such phrases as ‘what’s the use’, and ‘who cares’; nothing seems to ‘add up’.”<sup>46</sup>

Hoggart found that affluence had dulled working-class vitality. Progress had never involved “a desire to lay their hands on the glittering products of a technical society.” Rather, material things were needed to make life “decent”; it was felt that “without them life was a hard and constant fight simply to ‘keep your head above water’ spiritually as well as economically.” Materialism had not been seen as an end in itself. But improved material conditions brought

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<sup>43</sup>Hoggart, *Uses of Literacy*, 274.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 275-76.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 274.

about by both the welfare state and a strong economy prompted internal group splits and middle-class values, including emphasis on the individual.<sup>47</sup>

**(5) Working-class affluence and the socializing role of the family.** Changes were occurring, also, in the traditional working-class family, undermining the family's socializing role in nurturing its children. Hall described earlier community cohesion which had been a guide for working-class teenagers "between the half-way-house of adolescence and adulthood." The family structure had been "warm and friendly and receptive."<sup>48</sup> But following the war, the working-class family as a socializing model had lost ground to welfare state policies. Terry Eagleton contrasted positive interrelationships of the political/public/private arenas of the bourgeois society of the eighteenth century with the disruptive changes in the socializing role of the family in the postwar welfare era. The private sphere was being marginalized, as public institutions of the welfare state assimilated many of the family's traditional roles. According to Eagleton, "State education and social policy take over many of the functions previously reserved to the family, blur the boundaries between 'public' and 'private' and strip the family of its social productive roles." In the end, as older, private, social functions of the family were abandoned, the family became merely a "unit of consumption."<sup>49</sup>

According to Hall, the working-class family had taken-on a corrupting consumer identity and had invested in the success of capitalism and private industry. Prosperity in itself was not a problem, but the working class had lost its moral center and had become mass consumers molded

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 172.

<sup>48</sup>Stuart Hall, "Politics of Adolescence?" *Universities and Left Review* 6 (Spring 1959): 3.

<sup>49</sup>Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism: From 'The Spectator' to Post-Structuralism* (London: Verso, 1984), 116–17.

by mass advertising. The family had become a consuming unit rather than users of needed goods. They no longer identified with their work but were controlled by commercialism and found meaning from the things they could buy. The new working-class housing settlements “were not planned by the people who live in them, but by others with their own versions of what these people needed and what a society or a community is.”<sup>50</sup> This separation was a “conflict ... within the working class (individual opportunity against the concept of the improvement of the whole community)” and led to growing anxiety and “class confusion.”<sup>51</sup>

**(6) Educational reform and the working class.** In part, the new affluence and weakening of the working-class family resulted from Labour’s educational reforms. The Educational Act of 1944 (Butler Act) was to introduce the “great ‘silent’ revolution” creating a more egalitarian postwar society. But these actions would be seen as regressive, reproducing older power structures. Intended to make higher education more available for qualified students of all classes, the Butler Act mandated later school leaving and greater accessibility to academic education for qualified working-class men and women.<sup>52</sup> In large part, Hoggart’s “scholarship boy” is an outcome of this initiative. He is a working-class student who migrated out of his class via higher education afforded by welfare-state policies. He was “uprooted” from his working-

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<sup>50</sup>Williams, *The Long Revolution*, 359. Williams explored these themes of outside forces influencing local decisions in his novel *The Fight for Manod*, 1988.

<sup>51</sup>Hall, “Sense of Classlessness,” 29.

<sup>52</sup>Thomson, *England in the Twentieth Century*, 189.

class origins and suffered regret and loss. For Hoggart, this working-class scholar held hope for positive socialist change.<sup>53</sup>

But Raymond Williams, and others, argued that educational reform, which had produced scholarship boys like himself, had not encouraged positive social change. The administrative positions of major schools were filled by those with pre-war ways of thinking. Thus, the effect of the Butler Act was to replace the working-class identity of the scholarship boy with that of the middle class. The scholarship boy became misplaced in his neighborhood, and any possibility that his education would have positive influence was lost. Rather than new growth the pre-war vitality of the working class was undermined and bourgeois forms reproduced. For the scholarship boy, Oxford and Cambridge meant entrance into the comforts of the middle class.<sup>54</sup> And because these young scholars were needed to run the country's growing postwar professional infrastructure, they moved easily into middle management, and civil service jobs.<sup>55</sup>

As with education, Labour policy opened the arts to the lower class. To some degree, culture became the responsibility of the state through such initiatives as the Butler Act, the Arts Council, and the BBC Third Program. Working-class writers were sponsored by the state, affording them the time to write, which had been the advantage of leisure-class writers. But Williams argued that Labour's cultural initiatives, as with education, were a continuation of the

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<sup>53</sup>Though Hoggart referred exclusively to the male side of this social change, Steedman observed that the Butler Act had also engendered "the scholarship girl" who would write about her journey through the 1950s and 1960s. See Carolyn Steedman, "Writing the Self: The End of the Scholarship Girl," in *Cultural Methodologies*, ed. Jim McGuigan (London: Sage Publishers, 1997), 107.

<sup>54</sup>Hewison, *In Anger*, 40–42.

<sup>55</sup>Thomson, *England in the Twentieth Century*, 189. For examples of this diluting of working-class vitality see David Storey's *Flight into Camden* (1960), *Saville* (1976), and *In Celebration* (1976), as well as Stan Barstow's *A Kind of Loving* (novel, 1960; film, 1963, Schlesinger, dir.).

status quo--art production in the hands of the middle class. For instance, Labour's bourgeois sensibility was reflected in its removal of state support for British documentaries after 1945. Sinfield was correct in writing, at the end of the century, that there was no real change in class relationships; the "democratic social policy" turned out to be more of the same. The Labour Party was made up of the dissident middle class who supported the Arts Council's perpetuation of old culture and the "hegemonic elite."<sup>56</sup>

**(7) Working-class youth violence.** There were other changes in the traditional working class. Young people's increased buying power and educational reform, along with general improvements in working-class affluence, were linked to an increase in juvenile crime and gang membership. A late 1950s government document reported: "It is a disquieting feature of our society that, in the years since the war, rising standards in material prosperity, education, and social welfare have brought no decrease in the high rate of crime during the war: on the contrary, crime has increased and is still increasing."<sup>57</sup> Though British youth continued to display a positive working-class trait--a dislike for the fake, phony, callous, and inhuman--by the late 1950s increased teen buying trends and the effect of mass commercialism on conscious and unconscious behavior resulted in an amorality.<sup>58</sup> In part, these problems were an outcome of wartime experiences, but Hall argued that a rise in youth violence resulted from changes in working-class family values and a realignment of its role within the economy. As shown, affluence, universal and free education, and the welfare state had weakened the family structure.

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<sup>56</sup>Sinfield, *Literature, Politics*, 49–55.

<sup>57</sup>Thomson, *England in the Twentieth Century*, 274.

<sup>58</sup>Hall, "Politics of Adolescence?" 22–24.

For Hall these changes had significant negative effects on the working-class family and their children for two reasons. First, though affluence and free education were progressive, there was no change in established class dynamics, and there were no new opportunities as the traditional class structure was reproduced. Second, for the young, work had become “dull and repetitive,” and there was nothing in politics that engaged youthful imaginations.<sup>59</sup> For Hall, youth clubs were stopgaps, no more than a public affirmation of “their personal woes.”<sup>60</sup> Affluence had blunted development of a radicalized working class indifferent to politics, a condition echoed amongst the young who were acutely aware of their inferior social position.<sup>61</sup>

### **Changing Working-Class Values: Dilemma of the New Left**

Experiences before and after the war and historically felt class differences influenced postwar changes in the society and working-class identity. But how were these changes understood and felt at the time? Which aspects of change were de/emphasized? What conclusions were formed, and on what stances were conclusions based? Later chapters will ask: How did these social ways of seeing and stances influence cultural production and audience views on such cultural output as New Wave films? Answers will be culled from New Left socialist views on society and social change.

The British New Left formed in the 1950s out of several disappointments. Marxist and political solutions to social problems were rejected due to Labour Party failures and regressive

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<sup>59</sup>See Chapter Four for Shelagh Delaney’s descriptions of Salford young people in similar terms. Ken Russell, *Shelagh Delaney’s Salford*, BBC Four (Salford, England, 1960).

<sup>60</sup>See Chapter Five for a discussion of Karel Reisz’s documentary *We Are the Lambeth Boys* (1958) that has a different attitude regarding working-class youth clubs.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

Soviet actions. After the 1956 Russian attack on Hungary and revelation of Stalin's excesses, Soviet-style communism was effectively abandoned in Britain in lieu of humanist goals. But factions within the first, short-lived New Left did not agree on descriptions of social problems, which resulted in conflicting views on needed actions.<sup>62</sup> In general, both New Left factions emphasized the importance of living fully and vitally, and argued that a correct understanding of culture would identify repressive social reproduction and lead to positive change. Both New Left positions were concerned that economic changes during the 1950s were undermining positive traits of the British working class; both emphasized the negative effects of mass communication and the inadequacies of working-class education.<sup>63</sup> These uncertainties would shape socialist views on social change in the following decades.

In the mid-1950s, studies by Hoggart and Williams on culture and class became the focal point of a debate in the *Universities and Left Review* and *New Left Review* journals, and 1958 essay collections, *Declaration* and *Conviction*. Their descriptions, emphases, and apprehensions influenced social realist novels and films, and affected British social realist cultural production

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<sup>62</sup>E.P. Thompson presented a third stance. The British socialist goal, in his view, was "to help people find out their wants, to encourage them to want more, to challenge them to want differently, and to envisage a society of the future in which people, freed at last of necessity, might choose between different wants." Social change leading to a democratic (socialist) state would be based on understanding the history of working-class radicalism, which encouraged a politically engaged working class. See Ryan Kiernan, "Socialist Fiction and the Education of Desire: Mervyn Jones, Raymond Williams and John Berger," in *The Socialist Novel in Britain: Towards the Recovery of a Tradition*, ed. H. Gustav Klaus (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982), 167.

<sup>63</sup>It may be difficult now to see how a socialist movement could address the "problems" of mass media. The fact that the New Left was hopeful it could influence the formation of commercial television makes this a liminal period of interest.

after 1960.<sup>64</sup> The conflict within the New Left over ways of seeing the relationship of the working class and cultural output led Williams to descriptions of a dynamic social realism. This section will (1) show how the idea of the “organic” working class led to hierarchical determinations, and led Williams to put forth formative New Left social descriptions that (2) saw society as a whole way of life in which culture is common; this way of seeing impacted (3) theories on the effect of mass communication on working-class social realism.

**(1) Leavis’s and Hoggart’s “organic” working class.** It had become clear that Soviet-style Marxist economic emphases and Labour Party statist policies would not establish New Left-style socialist humanism. Many British socialists looked to F. R. Leavis’s “stamp upon the word ‘life’” as a way forward.<sup>65</sup> Leavis’s “healing” morality advocated living fully through a vital social order.<sup>66</sup> Socialist imagination had been influenced before and after the war by Leavis’s descriptions of an earlier, primitive, and more vital British working class, which presented a model for British social development. The authentic wholesomeness of a former organic working class opposed an industrial, materialistic, “fragmented, atomized society.” This former entity came from “a time when word, thought, feeling and the body worked in harmony with each other and with their environment.”<sup>67</sup>

British socialism had looked to the working class, since the Industrial Revolution, as a model for positive social change. It was seen as a distinct group, which arose from common

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<sup>64</sup>For a discussion of the complexity of New Left formations see Michael Kenny, *The First New Left: British Intellectuals After Stalin* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995).

<sup>65</sup>Rebellato, *1956 and All That*, 23.

<sup>66</sup>Brook, *Literature and Cultural Criticism*, 43.

<sup>67</sup>Rebellato, *1956 and All That*, 25.

experiences of distressed, everyday hardships and appalling work conditions perpetrated by a ruling class and bourgeois bosses. A unifying working-class consciousness developed between 1790 and 1890 and opposed other classes. According to Thompson, “by 1832 there were strongly-based and self-conscious working-class institutions--trade unions, friendly societies, educational and religious movements, political organisations, periodicals--working-class intellectual traditions, working-class community patterns, and a working-class structure of feeling.”<sup>68</sup>

For socialists, working-class life-style and values offered “an idea of society under which all can unite.”<sup>69</sup> From this point of view, industrialist capitalism was dehumanizing for all classes, while socialism held the promise of a free and collective democracy. And working-class values and positive behavior, such as allegiance to and solidarity within the family and neighborhood, could be extended to larger social relations. Hoggart and Thompson agreed; class traits arising from hardships historically imposed by the capitalist system positioned the working class as the finest social model. If the working class could live laudable lives under horrendous conditions, what might the English accomplish if all worked together? But Hoggart was disturbed by the lost vitality and deteriorating cohesiveness of the working class which he knew as a child. Hoggart’s traditional working class was changing, disappearing. Socialist outcomes were being undermined at the source.

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<sup>68</sup>Thompson, *The Making of the Working Class*, 194.

<sup>69</sup>Raymond Williams, “Working-Class Culture,” *Universities and Left Review* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1957): 32

For Hoggart and Leavis the problem was within cultural production and lower-class education. Leavis's journal *Scrutiny*, along with the Cambridge school (including I. A. Richards and Denys Thompson), opposed a commercially controlled mass media and popular culture that was producing a materialist society of conforming and alienated individuals.<sup>70</sup> The British people needed to be energized via a literature "characterized by its immediacy and its capacity to revivify a reader or spectator, by its 'concrete livingness, the immediacy of sensuous and life charged presentation.'" <sup>71</sup> Despite its positive feeling, the vital life exemplified by the traditional values of an organic working class would require that the mass reader be guided by literature judged to be worthwhile and selected by an elite. Interestingly, this selected literature could only be appreciated by a classless minority of expert readers.

Leavis's elitist attitude, which included the establishment of an organic, ideal community and a top-down control of cultural output by the intelligentsia, was complemented by Hoggart's description of a working class that was becoming false and disconnected from an authentic life. Britain had become "grey and limited" with its "irrelevant romanticism" and "depressed intellectuals." Its youth were preoccupied with television rather than their studies. He contrasted the picture of Britain presented by "Elstree, the British Travel and Holidays Association, the British Council ... or the heroics of such a film as *The Bridge on the River Kwai*" with earlier images which were "a great deal rougher and more resilient" and looked to traditional class

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<sup>70</sup>Brook, *Literature and Cultural Criticism*, 38.

<sup>71</sup>In F. R. Leavis, *English Literature in Our Time and the University* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1969), 97, and quoted in Brook, *Literature and Cultural Criticism*, 39. In addition, Rebellato, Wandor and others point to New Left emphasis on the ability of the "vital" male heterosexual to combat the perceived encroachment into literature of female and homosexual "weaknesses." Discussion of gender orientation, though revelatory, does not necessarily contradict the reading of this dissertation.

values as a way towards re-gaining a previous energy and liveliness.<sup>72</sup> A year after the publication of *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), Hoggart predicted that Britain would become a classless society by the end of the century. He argued that this “could be a great improvement on the old” if accompanied with a renewed understanding of how this change affected peoples’ lives.<sup>73</sup> At the same time, he felt that the British lacked the imagination and emotional commitment needed to meet postwar challenges. Corrective guidance would have to be provided by the intellectual class and the scholarship boy who was best placed to guide his own working class.

In part, the New Left was in consensus on Hoggart’s descriptions of the developing national classlessness, and its causes. But there was disagreement on ways forward and desirable outcomes, which arose from different ways of seeing the interaction of society, culture, and class. For Hoggart, positive movement towards classlessness could be engendered by the scholarship boy, the “earnest minority,” who could “choose and discriminate *consistently*” via “intellectual stimulation.” Positive social change would emerge from journals which addressed interests of intellectual minorities of all classes as opposed to less worthy popular entertainments. Hoggart co-opted the “angry young man” movement as proof of this progress, which disproved “cliches about welfare-state softness.” But Hoggart’s way of seeing was regressive and static. For instance, he described the unexpected popular success of *Free Cinema* amongst young audiences as not an undesirable “modish response” but a powerful reaction similar to the

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<sup>72</sup>Richard Hoggart, “Speaking to Each Other,” in *Conviction*, ed. Norman Mackenzie (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1958), 138.

<sup>73</sup> Hoggart, “Speaking to Each Other,” 121.

“excitements in my own youth in the thirties.”<sup>74</sup> For Hoggart little had changed as he looked back to a traditional community of “persistent old strengths” which would neutralize negative changes in society, such as the status-seeking, mass consumer.<sup>75</sup>

But Hoggart’s and Leavis’s formulations were untenable for others in the New Left. Socialist goals could not depend on an organic working class which never existed or one taking on middle class values. Harold Ferrar addressed this attitude in the era of “Look Back in Anger”:

The egalitarian common man, perhaps a fantasy figure of the socialist intellectuals, instead of overthrowing dead symbols that retarded his liberty, was lining up by the millions for Elizabeth II’s coronation. Many dreams were squashed as that common man declared himself willing to settle for ‘a fridge, a washer, and a telly . . . that’s all I want in life.’<sup>76</sup>

Williams and Hall would find other ways forward, not with a Hoggartian attitude that looked for ways to overcome possible working-class weaknesses, but with a complex way of seeing social change. Williams agreed with Leavis and Hoggart that there were influential connections between social formations and the culture of a society, and that British socialism should not look to traditional Marxist economic theory for social descriptions. Williams also agreed that open access to mass communication would engender worthwhile messages and a healthy and “genuine” democracy.<sup>77</sup> Both Williams and Leavis criticized the control of cultural output by

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 137. The *Free Cinema* documentary programs--analyzed in Chapter Five--was a series of films by new filmmakers that focused on postwar, working-class life. It was started by Lindsay Anderson and other NWL filmmakers.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 136.

<sup>76</sup>Ferrar, *John Osborne*, 4.

<sup>77</sup>For Williams postwar Britain was not a “genuine democracy.” Such a democracy required that “the human needs of all the people in the society are taken as the central purpose of all social activity, so that politics is not a system of government but of self-government, and the systems of production and

powerful capitalist commercial advertisers. But Williams broke from Leavis--see *The Long Revolution* (1961), *The Country and the City* (1973), and “Culture is Ordinary” (*Conviction*, 1958), amongst others. For Williams, Leavis’s literary criticism was “dogmatically selective.”<sup>78</sup> His understanding of the social situation was simplistic, and his solutions were unworkable:

There was an old, mainly agricultural England, with a traditional culture of great value. This has been replaced by a modern, organized, industrial State, whose characteristic institutions deliberately cheapen our national human responses, making art and literature into desperate survivors and witnesses, while a new mechanized vulgarity sweeps into the centres of power. The only defence is in education, which will at least keep certain things alive, and which will also, at least in a minority, develop ways of thinking and feeling which are competent to understand what is happening and to maintain the finest individual values.<sup>79</sup>

This top-down emphasis on “the finest individual values” was middle class and reproduced previous convictions.<sup>80</sup> George Orwell’s high-minded descriptions of English working-class poverty during the inter-war years reflected a Leavisite point of view. Williams pointed out that in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) Orwell emphasized the worst of working-class experiences; he “sought out the lowest doss houses in town” despite having met educated working-class socialists. Orwell was an outsider who wrote from a dominant position about the vitality of the working-class male physique and the moral values of the working-class home and

communication are rooted in the satisfaction of human needs and the development of human capacities.” See Raymond Williams, “The Magic System,” *New Left Review* 1, no. 4 (July-August 1960): 28.

<sup>78</sup>Raymond Williams, “Marxism, Structuralism and Literary Analysis,” *New Left Review* 1, no. 129 (September-October 1984): 55.

<sup>79</sup>Raymond Williams, “Culture is Ordinary,” in *Conviction*, ed. Norman MacKenzie (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1958), 81.

<sup>80</sup>See Chapter Five discussion of documentarist John Grierson who believed that to become worthy citizens and to have correct and full understanding of their world, most people needed help from intellectual artists, such as himself. See Forsyth Hardy, comp. and ed., *Grierson on Documentary* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 189–91.

mother. For Williams, Orwell's middle-class, intellectual, superior position may have authorized his observations and judgments, but they were inauthentic and, therefore, incorrect.<sup>81</sup>

Williams examined the relationship between social life and culture. His writings were an important alternative to Leavis and would guide the New Left away from "established orthodoxy," traditional Marxism, and Labour Party statist approaches. His social democracy emphasized a pluralism and interconnectiveness of social life. His politics of culture informed artistic commitment and "concrete activities."<sup>82</sup>

Williams's break from Leavis is evident in a recorded discussion between Williams and Hoggart in which Williams looked to an evolving, dynamic and complex social-class relationship while Hoggart continued to find rigid formations. In one exchange, Hoggart suggested that conservatism and classism may be a hard-wired quality of human thinking. Williams remolded Hoggart's comment to reflect the socially contextual nature of human consciousness; rather than a genetic rationale, "one notices how many contemporary Conservative MPs would have seemed to a Conservative of say 1900 ... not their kind of men at all."<sup>83</sup> In this way, Williams gently argued that political ideology was based in cultural causes and changes in imagination. For Williams, it was the control of the imagination by mass media and Labour's inability to understand cultural mechanisms and then "to offer some deep and real alternative, of a new kind," which was most troubling. Hoggart's descriptions of static forms--the "three tiered mind" and the "traditional working class"--would lead to literary production and

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<sup>81</sup>Raymond Williams, "The Robert Tressell Memorial Lecture," *History Workshop* 16 (1983): 77.

<sup>82</sup>Kenny, *First New Left*, 86.

<sup>83</sup>Hoggart and Williams, "Working Class Attitudes - Discussion," 30.

criticism controlled by an intellectual elite. Williams looked to the evolving “nature of community” as it was controlled by mass communication: “When people say you and I are nostalgic ... I want to get this completely clear. We have learned about community, in our own ways, but we’re not interested in the business of reproduction; it’s the principle that’s important. The fact is that communication is the basic problem of our society.”<sup>84</sup> Williams then pointed out that he was not concerned with simple transmission of messages. Humanist communication, “if it is to be real--between people rather than just units in production or consumers [in] a market--depends on real community of experience and the channels open, so that we are all involved. Not selling a line, but sharing real experience.”

With this statement Williams disengaged from Hoggartian nostalgia and conclusions about the effects of commercialism on the masses, and as Kenny noted, “Despite the suggestion that he and Hoggart concurred about the concept of community, the above comment barely conceals the disparity between their ideas.”<sup>85</sup>

**(2) “Whole way of life” and “culture is common”.** Williams and Hall measured the inadequacies of the Labour Party and the socialist agenda against a complex understanding of society and the possibility of vital communities emanating from a whole way of life. Williams argued for freely developing interactions, allowing a “true” democracy. According to Kenny, “Whereas Hoggart believed in the re-creation of older communal loyalties and values in the face

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<sup>84</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>85</sup>Kenny, *First New Left*, 95.

of an alienating and superficial modernity, Williams investigated the impact of modern values and cultures and their complex relationship with older traditions and ways of life.”<sup>86</sup>

Both Hoggart and Williams looked for inter-relationships between different kinds of working-class communities in order to identify a working-class consciousness or a “high working-class tradition,” which could re-vitalize the socialist agenda. Unlike Hoggart, though, Williams, throughout his career, struggled with the complexities of social formation and change. He described a society as simultaneously evolving from a residual past, establishing a dominant way of living, and changing under the influence of emerging structures. He examined the political outcomes of this complex dynamic of communal relationships and how a “true” democracy could be shaped by communal solidarity. But, he asked, which community best manifested “high” working-class traditions? A mining community? Williams’s own rural Welsh community? He argued that it was impossible to locate a single entity called the British working class, in any period. Rather, culture is common and emerges from a whole way of life of a society.

But the dilemma for the New Left was that the postwar British society had fragmented in significant ways. Williams described “very mixed and probably anxious communities.” There were “discouraging signs ... in places where people have come together. ... The men may be working class at work, but not necessarily at home. The wives may not in their own minds be working class at all.”<sup>87</sup> Certainly, the loss of a possible high working-class tradition was significant, but unlike Hoggart, who looked back nostalgically to a lost and static working class,

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<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 94.

<sup>87</sup>Hoggart and Williams, “Working Class Attitudes - Discussion,” 28.

Williams found that 1950s social problems resulted from obstacles to an evolving social life. Hegemonic class relationships challenged a potential social cohesiveness which he felt could arise out of a whole way of life.

In order to understand how these social “anxieties” were expressed in the social realism of NWL films, a more complete definition of Williams’s “whole way of life” is needed.<sup>88</sup> Late in the 1950s Williams described culture as “ordinary.” British culture, high and low, was potentially available to the entire society. He rejected Marxist base-superstructure formulation in which culture was secondary--floating above a controlling economic base. For Williams, the economy reflected social values and ways of living which are communicated culturally. Similarly, for Williams ideology should not dictate how a society moves forward. Furthermore, he criticized communist elitism which denigrated the “ignorant masses.” For Williams, this was not “what I have known and [seen].”<sup>89</sup> Disagreeing with Leavis, Williams argued that a society’s culture emerges out of a “whole way of life” and not from established definitions validated by an isolated group of moral critics. Rather than describing a static society dependent on an elitist culture, Williams accepted change, and unlike Leavis, did not see modernism and industrialism as necessarily bad for the working class.

Williams struggled with a precise definition and usage of “whole way of life.”<sup>90</sup> Terry Eagleton found that the term was residual, and that Williams’s earlier works were “haunted by an

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<sup>88</sup>Williams’s term was first used in *The Long Revolution* (1961).

<sup>89</sup>Williams, “Culture is Ordinary,” 79–81.

<sup>90</sup>Williams applied the “whole way of life” concept broadly, to the entire society, and narrowly to the working class. *The Long Revolution* uses the broad definition to describe culture as a creative communication. Creativity is interconnected with all experience so that “art is ratified, in the end, by the fact of creativity in all our living.” He defined “communication as a whole social process.... Politics and

uncertain nostalgia for the ‘organic’--a nostalgia which persisted despite Williams’s explicit recognition of its dangers.”<sup>91</sup> But John Higgins counters that “Eagleton’s confidently theoretical description glossed over instabilities and contradictions which had been felt very deeply and very painfully” by Williams, who was struggling with a way to understand his experiences.<sup>92</sup> He could not limit his encompassing understanding of society to any particular, simplified behavioral descriptions, such as working-class speech habits. Additionally, it would be too limiting to think of the whole life of a community in class terms which would hold development to a static idea and suggest guidelines which would limit and/or deny growth.

Williams’s “whole way of life” concept must be seen in the context of his early rural Welsh experiences, which inform his descriptions of British society and what he meant by the potential connection between everyday experiences and the wholeness of a society.<sup>93</sup> His boyhood experiences in Wales of local “cooperative community and solidarity” extended into a feeling for the wider social community via his Oxford education. Social connectedness was also experienced through his father, whose work with the local railway union was not only a reflection of an individual commitment and a local working-class trait, but of an “ordinary” and insightful understanding of larger political and economic events. His father’s commonality of

art, together with science, religion, family life and the other categories we speak of as absolutes, belong in a whole world of active and interacting relationships, which is our common associative life.” See Williams, *The Long Revolution*, 37–39.

<sup>91</sup>Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism*, 21.

<sup>92</sup>John Higgins, *Raymond Williams: Literature, Marxism and Cultural Materialism* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 5.

<sup>93</sup>Williams’s *Border Country* (1960) presents a narrative argument for the “whole way of life.” A scholarship boy returns to his Welsh village to re-discover an emotional and physical unity with his working-class past.

imagination united him to the whole way of life of the society. Out of these experiences Williams extended working-class life, with its complex of traits and communities, to “the high working-class tradition leading to democracy, solidarity in the unions, socialism.” In opposition, Hoggart felt that politics and social cooperation was alien and that positive movement came from the “earnest minority.”<sup>94</sup>

Williams’s views were also formed during his early academic career. His success with working-class adult education informed arguments for an inclusive democracy, which engendered “education and the growth of genuine democratic self-confidence among working people.”<sup>95</sup> Here was a common culture which opposed Leavis’s authoritarian approach to lower class education.<sup>96</sup> Continued support for “a reserved area of elite education” would block “genuinely popular education.”<sup>97</sup> Vital cultural growth required a democratically administered education, not one controlled by a minority of academic elite.<sup>98</sup>

For Williams, the move towards classlessness was potentially positive and could result in a whole society, but ways forward were being hindered by incorrect conclusions about changes in the working class. First, some had argued that education of the masses would cheapen the arts and lead to widespread commercialism and a “chaos of industrialism.”<sup>99</sup> Williams argued that, in fact, there were no masses, just an insistence on seeing individuals as masses in order to

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<sup>94</sup>Stuart Laing, *Representations of Working Class Life, 1957–1964* (London: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1986), 200–1.

<sup>95</sup>Quoted in Christgau, “Living in a Material World.”

<sup>96</sup>Higgins, *Raymond Williams*, 59.

<sup>97</sup>Raymond Williams, *Communications*, 3rd ed. (Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1968), 15.

<sup>98</sup>Hewison, *In Anger*, 179.

<sup>99</sup>For instance, see Leavis, *English Literature in Our Time*.

control them. Further, in his view the problems of commercialism pre-dated open education.<sup>100</sup>

Second, unlike Hoggart, Williams was not concerned that increased affluence and materialism would alter the working class's basic nature. Williams saw this as a distinction between the working class and bourgeoisie:

A culture, a whole way of life, is never reducible to its artifacts. A way of life is a use of resources for particular human purposes.... Here in fact is the present distinction between working class and bourgeoisie. As classes, these are quite distinctly committed to different and alternative versions of the nature and purposes of society, and consequently to different versions of human relationship. This remains the most important cultural distinction of our time.<sup>101</sup>

Hall disagreed, arguing that the working class's consumerist identity was a consequence of its status seeking, so that “‘new things’ *in themselves* suggest and imply a way of life which has become objectified *through them*, and may even become desirable because of their social value.”<sup>102</sup> The “whole way of life” of the older working class was breaking down and would lead to “the degree of anxiety and confusion which attends the new ‘classlessness’.” But Hall found hope even if extreme conditions led to “complete alienation.” He argued that a sweeping recognition of the disparity of ultimate freedoms within an empty consumer, status-based society could lead to general dissatisfaction and the potential emergence of a “whole way of life” and a society of moral relationships.<sup>103</sup>

Williams rejected claims that Labour losses during the 1950s represented a deproletarianization of the working class or that new affluence and middle-class style housing

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<sup>100</sup>Williams, “Culture is Ordinary,” 83–84.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 31.

<sup>102</sup>Hall, “Sense of Classlessness,” 29.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 32.

settlements had created a conservative way of thinking. There had been a temporary (and incorrect) “rejection of socialism as a radically different social order,” which represented unchallenged “ruling interpretations.” Adequate channels to “politically” communicate the actual complexity of social change were needed.<sup>104</sup> But, by the end of the 1950s, the working class had not been deproletarized. Williams was hopeful that “new learning, new responses” could establish “forms we cannot yet envisage (the Aldermaston marches, the local groups on education and services, are early examples)” and would create a “human image” to oppose use of the term “masses.” Nevertheless, by the beginning of the 1960s Williams’s optimism for positive socialist change was flagging. Both Hall and Williams would describe the working class as “consumers” as opposed to “users,” and rather than exemplifying a humane way of being and ensuring “the health and growth of the society,” the working class was becoming an alternative power group.<sup>105</sup> What was worse, due to working-class inexperience, they were exploited by agents of mass commercialism.

Finally, for Williams and Hall social change within a whole way of social life could establish a place for positive outcomes. But it will be shown that it was these feelings of hope butting up against feelings of permanent loss which gave NWL films a dramatic urgency.

**(3) Mass communication and the working class.** Williams’s whole way of life and democratic society depended on open access to communication. The New Left was both hopeful about the unifying potential of modern communication technologies, and at the same time, concerned with mass commercialism and its control of consumer behavior through effective portrayals of the

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<sup>104</sup>Williams, *The Long Revolution*, 361.

<sup>105</sup>Laing, *Representation of Working Class*, 202.

working class as “masses.” In part, the success of mass communication was a result of the welfare state and the improved economy. According to Sinfield, working-class “affluence was destroying [its] dignity and resistance [to commercial influence].”<sup>106</sup>

For both Hoggart and Williams mass entertainment harmed traditional working-class values and did so via the disconnected work of the agent and speculator. These cultural producers were not personally invested in their work or with the “health and growth of a society but in the quick profits that can be made by exploiting inexperience.”<sup>107</sup> Working for others, agents used their talents as artists, which in other contexts could be positively creative, to control the behavior of consumers. Williams asked whether a society should allow these “speculators” to control its “cultural apparatus.” Advertisements were particularly insidious. The working class dealt with commercial messages as brief tags, transposing them into comforting phrases which were not considered objectively or intellectually. As advertisements were repeated, Hoggart found that they were accepted as wholesome progress.<sup>108</sup> However, he also found working-class reactions to be mixed. Indeed, the average person could recognize the advertisers’ attempts to manipulate and consciously refuse “to buy an obvious line.” At the same time, working-class apprehension of commercial messages bred destructive cynicism.

The New Left was concerned with the effects of expanding technologies (television and film) on mass commercialism. By the end of the 1950s British feature films were dealing with working-class subjects, in part, due to advancements in the welfare state and increased lower-

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<sup>106</sup>Sinfield, *Literature, Politics*, 245.

<sup>107</sup>Williams, *The Long Revolution*, 366.

<sup>108</sup>Richard Hoggart, *Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life, with Special References to Publications and Entertainments*, reprint, 1957 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1971), 173.

class confidence.<sup>109</sup> But there was a large decrease in working-class cinema attendance after 1955 because television became more available.<sup>110</sup> Some socialists argued that television programming was aimed at the lowest tastes of working-class and young audiences.<sup>111</sup> The Pilkington Report of 1961 addressed this concern with television's social influence and established public policy for a new third British television station. Though the report did not solidify New Left policy, it encouraged discussion of socialist attitudes towards the medium. For some, the report was elitist because it concluded that popular programming was inferior, and Hoggart, who helped to write the report, was criticized for wanting to undermine public enjoyment.<sup>112</sup> For others, television had only a minimal impact on viewers since it was a benevolent form of entertainment.<sup>113</sup> Alan Lovell praised the report in 1962 in *Peace News* as a “very consistent statement of a philosophy of broadcasting,” and Williams felt it was an idea right for the time.<sup>114</sup>

In 1961, the *New Left Review* published a supplement evaluating the Pilkington Report. The unsigned articles asked questions which reflected the range of New Left thought on television: Should television be a social force controlled from above to form public opinion or

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<sup>109</sup>Raymond Durgant, *A Mirror for England: British Movies from Austerity to Affluence* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 20.

<sup>110</sup>I. C. Jarvie, *Movies and Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), 113.

<sup>111</sup>John Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956 - 1963* (London: British Film Institute, 1986), 12.

<sup>112</sup>Hoggart criticized academic acceptance of popular culture, arguing that a “mature tolerance” by some “writers of intellectual journals who confess they enjoy *Reveille*” and who accept its “roots in the full blooded tradition of British popular art” are misguided. See Hoggart, “Speaking to Each Other,” 130–31.

<sup>113</sup>Laing, *Representation of Working Class*, 208.

<sup>114</sup>Bert Hogenkamp, *Film, Television and the Left, 1950–1970* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2000), 68.

controlled by those who used it? What model should be used--news format or commercial film? Should the focus of the third program be entertainment or should it have a more important social role? Should programming be in three parts, reflecting the pyramid structure of the society--high, middle, and low--with programming aimed at each level? Is television-watching inherently harmful?

The unsigned article "TV and the Community" highlighted Williams's thinking on mass communication. Four approaches towards mass communication were discussed--authoritarian, paternalistic, commercial, and democratic. The writer argued "against authoritarian control of what *can* be said, against paternalistic selection of what *ought* to be said, and against commercial selection of what can *profitably* be said." The author argued for the democratic approach which "assumed a common instead of a fragmented culture." The argument was based on two principles regarding the viewer's rights: (1) to choose what s/he wants to watch, and (2) to contribute to "what is communicated." Targeting BBC paternalism, the writer argued that the public, not a "knowing" minority, should be involved with what is communicated to the public, thus engendering diversity of thought and communication. In a clear reference to Williams's "culture is common" idea, the author saw television as an engine to create a sense of unity, of a common society, when all had equal access. "Universal participation" would discourage social divisiveness and encourage a richness of experience which is "absolutely vital to the development and maturity of our society."<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>115</sup>Kit Coppard, Paddy Whannel, and Raymond Williams, "Television Supplement: Which Frame of Mind?" *New Left Review* 1, no. 7 (January-February 1961): 37. The Pilkington Report and New Left response to it will be re-examined in the next chapter in the context of social realism and commitment. From the New Left point of view, social realistic literature (television, theatre, and film) required open and free access to production.

The unsigned article argued that dividing culture into high and low categories was problematic. Certainly, it was difficult to divide serious from non-serious culture. But more importantly, it was a mistake to judge serious art as worthwhile, and popular art as inferior, escapist entertainment, and then to assign each level of culture to a particular audience. If television were approached this way, speculators would be encouraged to create content for certain audiences and critics to give unequal consideration to each type of production. Further, seeing culture as high or low was a dangerous oversimplification when applied to television, which was the most important communication medium dealing with the greatest variety of popular culture. Such an attitude did not consider popular entertainment seriously or look at actual watching habits of all sorts of audiences. Requiring programs to be “wholesome, innocuous, amusing, rather than attempt to appeal to a deeper, more positive response” implied that the “common” viewer was only interested in being entertained. These disdainful attitudes were unrealistic and harmful to positive social development, and had to change.<sup>116</sup> Williams had argued that a synthesis of high-low culture leading to a “whole way of life” could be obtained by (1) expanding adult education; (2) assigning more public monies for the arts (in the hands of the artists) and adult education; and (3) decoupling advertisements as a main force in forming mass culture.<sup>117</sup>

To summarize, television was seen as a potential engine for creating a common society. Healthy growth within the complex British society was possible if there was a common consciousness. The author noted that “there is no formula (for change) for unknown

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<sup>116</sup>Coppard, Whannel, and Williams, “Television Supplement,” 33–35.

<sup>117</sup>Laing, *Representation of Working Class*, 201.

experience,” but, no matter the formation, a society could not go forward unless all see similarly. A common consciousness will engender a “good community, a living culture.” But for television to contribute to the “common culture,” producers/administrators needed to drop paternalistic responses and to make democratic choices.<sup>118</sup>

In general, *New Left Review* writers agreed with the conclusions of “TV and the Community.” And though the final version of the Pilkington Report did not have a New Left focus, it did criticize certain commercial programming as trivial.<sup>119</sup> New Left attitudes to the growing influence of television revealed a general way of seeing media’s effect on culture in postwar British society. An open, democratic involvement of all opposed the traditional top-down control by a minority, whether organized by benevolent paternalism (such as that of the BBC) or capitalist control of commercial media, which was dangerously effective in forming consumer behavior. For Williams and others, a vital society required a commonality of understanding out of which “healthy” growth and change could emerge.

By the end of the 1950s, despite uncertainty, many predicted positive outcomes, as Williams’s whole way of life attitude sought positive ways towards British socialism. But New Left optimism was flagging. The noble vitality of the working class, which was to act as a beacon for the rest of the society, was being dimmed due to many factors, including the coarsening effects of work that disconnected them from a meaningful life, the homogenizing effect of new housing estates, Labour’s move to the right, and (important to the New Left) the deadening encroachment of mass commercialism. It will be argued that the social realism of

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<sup>118</sup>Coppard, Whannel, and Williams, “Television Supplement,” 37.

<sup>119</sup>Hogenkamp, *Film, Television and the Left*, 67–68.

NWL films reflected these conflictive New Left ways of seeing. As opposed to the social problem films of the period, NWL films presented a darker vision of social change.

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To summarize, from the New Left point of view the British working class was being corrupted by a growing affluence and a capitalist-controlled mass entertainment. As this class became mass consumers they were losing a vitality that had served them, and the country, well since the Industrial Revolution. Though affluence could be seen as an encouragement to classlessness and positive change, New Left socialists were concerned with the sort of society that would develop. Hoggart's solution to society's problems was to look back nostalgically to his industrial north childhood, and merge his concerns with Leavis's elitist way of seeing. In this way, Hoggart was arguing for the positive traits of an organic working class and an intellectual sub-class that emerged from it and would guide the way forward to what he saw as a worthwhile high culture. In contrast, Williams and New Left culturalists argued that positive social change would result from complex descriptions of an evolving social dynamic and the need for a "whole way of life." Despite these disagreements, New Left socialists looked for the formation of a unified, classless society that would lead to a "true" democracy. Williams's way of seeing social construction and 1950s disruptions will inform the following chapters' analysis of the social realism of NWL films.

Chapter 2  
Social Realism as Description and Commitment  
New Left “Realist” Formations

This chapter will define “social realism” from an early New Left culturalists’ perspective.<sup>1</sup> This definition will inform later chapters looking at the New Left perspective on positive social change as defined by Raymond Williams.<sup>2</sup> This work will establish a theoretical ground for the examination of the “commitment” and social realism of selected New Wave films and of the literature from which these films were adapted. British realist films of the late 1950s evincing Williams’s way of seeing British society, culture, and politics will be identified as “New Wave Left” [NWL] films. Other films which have formerly been identified as New Wave will be referred to as “New Wave Problem” films, as these films have more in common with British “social problem” films of the 1950s.<sup>3</sup>

A clear demarcation must be made between the linguistically similar phrases “socialist realism” and “social realism” as Williams and New Left culturalists use these terms. Social realism will be discussed in this chapter. Socialist realism reflects “truths” of Marxist definitions of economic structures which form consciousness and reality. From this point of view, worthy realist literature reflects a Marxist determinacy. “Tendency literature” is a disparaging reference

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<sup>1</sup>The “early” New Left is discussed in Michael Kenny, *The First New Left: British Intellectuals After Stalin* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995). Influenced by the ideas of E.P. Thompson, Richard Hoggart, Stuart Hall, and, especially, Williams, the early New Left moved away from static Marxist and academic views of cultural work. Large changes of the 1950s helped to emphasize the social aspects of mass marketing and how this hurt pluralism and an interconnected social life. This led to “concrete activities” and a politics of culture. See Kenny, 86.

<sup>2</sup>“Positive” will refer to early New Left definitions of progress towards a humane--socialist--democracy.

<sup>3</sup>New Wave Problem films will include: *Look Back in Anger* (1959), *The Entertainer* (1960), *Room at the Top* (1959), *The L-Shaped Room* (1962), and *A Kind of Loving* (1962). These films feature the troubled place of the female as the engine of a commodified society and corrupter of the male protagonist.

to an extreme form of socialist realism in which work is expected to engender awareness of the base / superstructure' dynamic and the destructive nature of production capitalism. Writers are pressured to create "good" work and identify "progressive kinds of writing and reactionary kinds of writing, to take positions on these, and above all, to find ways of producing new kinds of writing which correspond to the needs of the fundamental conflict."<sup>4</sup>

For one socialist writer, socialist realism emanated from "the idea of the Aim, ... this ideal which is all embracing and towards which reality tends."<sup>5</sup> The goal of the Marxist writer is not only to depict the revolution accurately, but to reveal its determined nature, and, then, to "help the reader, by transforming his consciousness, to advance towards the Aim" of Soviet communism. The tendency writer guides the reader to understand that human consciousness is formed by economic and production forces.<sup>6</sup> The most effective literature would express socialist realities with the "aim" of guiding the reader to the inevitability of the revolution, in order to "hasten the coming of Communism."<sup>7</sup> Soviet critics can praise non-tendency realist writers such as Balzac, Chekov, and Tolstoy, but would be critical of them because they were not directly proposing Marxist truths or the "actual concrete means to take."<sup>8</sup> In socialist realism the production of "correct" literature is more important than complex social realist work. Social

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<sup>4</sup>Raymond Williams, "Marxism, Structuralism and Literary Analysis," *New Left Review* 1, no. 129 (September-October 1984): 55. Williams could say this in 1981 because, as he saw it, conditions had remained largely unchanged. He accepted that modern forms of Marxism had dispelled with this form of Marxist literary determinacy and had substituted more complex formations, but he argued that the relationship remained; otherwise, the Marxist tradition would have to be "abandoned."

<sup>5</sup>"Socialist Realism: Extracts from a Document by a Young Soviet Writer," *Universities and Left Review* 7 (Autumn 1959): 57.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

realism, in contrast, is a New Left formation influenced by Raymond Williams's "cultural materialism." It opposes Marxist as well as certain "static" and elitist approaches to realism. For Williams, social realism refers to literature which, rather than passively reflecting a mechanical society, is dynamically related in homologous and evolving ways to each changing social moment and/or social group within a social moment. The term "homologous" will be explained in this context later in this chapter.

Early New Left definitions of culture and its effect on social formations were influenced by Williams's ideas.<sup>9</sup> Certainly, other New Left thinkers--E.P. Thompson, Stuart Hall, and Richard Hoggart--influenced the development of British cultural studies. For these writers, culture and mass communication were central social forces; accurate descriptions were needed to locate agency within extended groups and to expose class hegemony. But more than the others, Williams's complex descriptions of social formations and the place of the working class within the British society aligned with the ways of seeing common to NWL films. This alignment, though, did not reflect Williams's anticipation of positive outcomes. Rather, these films questioned New Left outcomes insofar as they exposed a certain fatalism towards entrenched class hegemony; this troubled theme was taken up by later British social realist films which continued to support these humanist goals, but with an ambiguous sense of how a social democracy was possible within conservative controlled governments and established capitalist structures.

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<sup>9</sup> For other New Left views on realism: In photography, Roger Mayne, "Photographer and Realism: A Statement," *Universities and Left Review* 6 (Spring 1959): 42-44. In theatre, Tom Milne, "Luther and The Devils," *New Left Review* I, no. 6 (November-December 1961): 55-58; Albert Hunt, "The Year's Theatre," *New Left Review* I, no. 7 (January-February 1961): 53-57; and Charles Marowitz, "The Connection and Beyond," *New Left Review* I, no. 9 (May-June 1961): 46-48. In film, Alan Lovell, "Look Back in Anger on Ice," *Universities and Left Review* 7 (Autumn 1959): 56.

Nevertheless, prior to the early 1960s, New Left thinkers saw the possibility of positive social change. It was hoped that growth towards classlessness based on working-class values would lead to a whole society and British-style, socialist, humanist democracy. Coinciding with this hope, the New Left was energized by the possibility of positive social change within a freely developing cultural field. For Williams, Hall, and others, a national feeling, uniting classes, was growing, based on extended educational opportunities and freely available and evolving mass communication.<sup>10</sup> A mood of positive change was reflected in the New Left analysis of the Pilkington Report, which set policy for the nation's new television channel, and in wide support for the Aldermaston anti-atom bomb marches.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the vitality of "angry young men" literature, drama, and film was seen by some as positive ways forward to extend working-class voices. But by the mid 1960s, and throughout the last half of the century, such hopes were modified.<sup>12</sup> By the end of the century, direct political action would be abandoned in favor of rigorous re-assessment of the political and social situation and the place of socialism within the entire system.<sup>13</sup> In brief, this is the present state of British socialism.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>John Higgins, *Raymond Williams: Literature, Marxism and Cultural Materialism* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 109–10. Supporters of New Left humanism and participatory democracy understood communication as a social process and looked for opportunities for extending power to minority groups. Alan Sinfield engages a similar argument; see Alan Sinfield, *Literature, Politics and Culture*.

<sup>11</sup>See the documentary *March to Aldermaston* (1959), dirs. Lindsay Anderson, et. al.

<sup>12</sup>The New Left's call for a national--unified--social feeling was evident in the postwar Labour Party agenda, which nationalized certain industries and health care. These programs were soon co-opted by the political right. See Chapter 1.

<sup>13</sup>Attempts at renewal through re-assessment are evident into the late 1960s. See Raymond Williams, ed., *May Day Manifesto* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1968).

<sup>14</sup>In the "inaugural" issue of the re-serialization of the *New Left Review*, Perry Anderson explained the need for British socialist retrenchment. He summarized New Left successes and eventual loss of viability as a political movement for radical, revolutionary change. Capitalism controlled people's imagination and crowded out socialist ways of seeing. He called for re-assessment: "It is best to leave no ambiguity here. The test of *NLR*'s capacity to strike a distinctive political note should be how often it can shock

Throughout his critical career, Williams worked to understand the complex dynamic relationship between a society and its culture. A complete socially-based analysis would be needed if any forward movement was possible. For Williams, literary criticism needed to analyze and evaluate, and cultural work needed to express the “organising assumptions,” which control and form language, and which block positive social change.<sup>15</sup> As summed up by San Juan, “If there is any fundamental or guiding vision to [Williams’s] project, it is the principle that a historical, processual and relational view of the social totality be applied in order to achieve a democratic and socialized conception of culture.”<sup>16</sup>

This chapter will define what Williams meant by a work’s committed social realism. Chapters Three and Four will look at key literature that, at least in some ways, expressed Williams’s social realism and was adapted for NWL films; Chapter Five will examine how NWL films revealed New Left political attitudes and social realist aesthetics. This approach will emphasize how these films experimented with film conventions and in so doing accomplished something like what Williams meant by a dynamic social realism. Williams contended that literary insights into social realities could not be accomplished via naturalist conventions. Effective social reality required new approaches which exposed new ways of communicating; at one time, he called for a poeticism to replace ineffective naturalistic conventions, which continued to control the social imagination. The “poetic” choices made by New Wave Left film directors and chief cinematographer, Walter Lassally, moved in this direction. Finally, though, readers by calling a spade a spade, rather than falling in with well-meaning cant or self-deception on the Left.” Perry Anderson, “Renewal,” *New Left Review* 1 (January-February 2000): 15.

<sup>15</sup>Higgins, *Raymond Williams*, 118.

<sup>16</sup>E. San Juan, Jr., *Critique and Social Transformation: Lessons from Antonio Gramsci, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Raymond Williams* (Lewiston, UK: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 201.

these films questioned New Left goals and pointed to late-twentieth-century British socialist frustration and retrenchment.

Section One will examine early biographical influences on Williams's way of social thinking.<sup>17</sup> Section Two will examine how these early experiences led to breaks with certain fixed academic and Marxist paradigms, and why Williams looked to "late formalism" to explain the connections between literary structure and social living. Section Three will consider Williams's definition of positive social realist work, as he developed the idea of cultural materialism, which described the way that broad social feeling is integrated into cultural work. Section Four will examine, according to Williams, the components of committed social realist work needed to engender a humane society and overcome social and class disruptions caused by mass commercialism. In summary, Williams called for committed social realist work which supported a "whole way of life" way of seeing. This approach opposed class control which was supported by bourgeois literature that emphasized individual conflict and hid the negative effects of cultural commodification.<sup>18</sup>

One further note: Documents post-dating Williams's 1960s writing will be used to support these definitions. Though Williams consistently rethought and refined his ideas about the social-cultural relationship, his overview of this relationship remained, basically, unchanged following *The Long Revolution* (1961). His feelings about culture and society--influenced by his Welsh background--were evident in earlier publications, though not as fully coherent positions.

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<sup>17</sup>Chapter Three will analyze Williams's novels which drew from his early Welsh experiences.

<sup>18</sup>Higgins, *Raymond Williams*, 124.

This work will use sources beyond Williams's 1950s writings to gain a more complete understanding of his complex meanings.<sup>19</sup>

### **Biographical influences on Williams's New Left cultural formations.**

Williams acknowledged that his Welsh upbringing influenced his feelings about and theoretical formations on society and socialism, and it shaped his commitment to a humane British democracy.<sup>20</sup> These early experiences formed his ideas about the nature of the relationship between literary structures and social meaning, and his feeling that a common British culture could be positively influenced by working-class experiences and values. Based on this, he saw that positive social change would emanate from a freely forming society. But such change required an altered national imagination. He held this attitude from the 1950s on.

Williams's early experiences placed him in two worlds, which allowed him to merge the local and the national. Eagleton saw Williams's mix of "inter-class affiliations and small man radicalism with a particularly strong, if ambiguous, communal emphasis" as a result of his Welsh upbringing.<sup>21</sup> Williams grew up in an eastern Welsh border town with small rural farms and nearby English country house estates. His family did not speak Welsh. His father was a wage earner working for the railway and was involved with the union, union action, and the Labour Party. Williams pointed out that, as was the case with many rail workers, his father was a leader of the village. Thus, from an early age Williams was exposed to both local and national social

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<sup>19</sup>Of particular importance is a post 1960s paper in which Williams clarified his approach to the dynamic relationship of society and culture. These explanations will inform the discussion of the content and structure of New Wave Left films. See Raymond Williams, "Marxism, Structuralism."

<sup>20</sup>See for instance, Anthony Barnett, "Raymond Williams and Marxism: A Rejoinder to Terry Eagleton," *New Left Review* 1, no. 99 (September-October 1976): 50; and, Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism: From 'The Spectator' to Post-Structuralism* (London: Verso, 1984). Many writers point to the influence of Williams's Welsh background, including himself.

<sup>21</sup>Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism*, 51.

feelings, “all of which had consequences,” according to Williams, “for my initial perception of the shape of society.”<sup>22</sup>

Williams’s descriptions of his Welsh upbringing emphasized an ease with which he negotiated the local and wider social environments. In a talk entitled “Welsh Culture,” he expressed a particular Welsh sense of accommodation of difference:

To the extent that we are a people, we have been defeated, colonized, penetrated, incorporated. Never finally, of course. The living resilience, in many different forms, has always been there. But its forms are distinct. They do not normally include, for example, the fighting hatred of some of the Irish. There is a drawing back to some of our own resources. There is a very skillful kind of accommodation, finding new ways to be recognized as different, which we then actively cultivate, while not noticing, beyond them, the profound resignation.<sup>23</sup>

Williams identified with the skillful ways the Welsh could adapt to outside, powerful forces while “finding new ways to be recognized as different.” As such he had what is being called here a “border” feeling for social realities in which local “living resilience” could accommodate wider differences. This outside/inside perspective allowed him to see the possibility of national cohesion.<sup>24</sup>

His Welsh upbringing bred in him not only a sense of a whole society, likened to a community, but a feeling that the working class, which had been formed and strengthened through struggle, could be a positive social force. As a literary critic, social theorist, and novel writer, Williams argued that the values of the working class could empower the whole life of

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<sup>22</sup>Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with the New Left* (London: Verso, 1981), 24.

<sup>23</sup>From *Culture and Politics, Plaid Cymru’s Challenge to Wales* (Aberystwyth: Plaid Cymru, 1975), quoted in Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism*, 50–51.

<sup>24</sup>Williams rejected literary approaches that did not consider society as a central engine of culture. He opposed Leavis, who described T.S. Eliot as emphasizing “the inevitability of failure, the absurdity of effort, the necessity of resignation.” Rather, for Williams, there was always “a class struggle occurring around [Eliot’s] poems.” Williams, *Politics and Letters*, 67–68.

British society.<sup>25</sup> His embrace of the positive traits of the working class can be found in *The Country and the City* (1973). Williams argued that nineteenth-century English country-house poetry blocked a full (in other words, social) understanding. In this study, he defined two kinds of poets, those who denied positive social change because they were supporting the “natural” control of the land-owning elite, and those who moved the society forward by examining the whole social condition which included working-class experiences.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to his early Welsh experiences, Williams’s attitudes toward society and culture were influenced by his exposure to British socialism as a student at Cambridge before the war. Though his pre-World War II [WWII] connections to socialist student activities and the British Communist Party were serendipitous, these experiences were formative. After serving in the British army--he led a tank unit in Normandy--and returning to Cambridge, it had become clear to Williams that 1930s socialism “had been defeated; yet the defeat did not cancel” his initial feeling about socialist humanism; “the validity of the impulse” continued.<sup>27</sup> It was this certainty that propelled him throughout his life.<sup>28</sup> He sought positive social change through an understanding of the link between society and culture, to be gained via committed literary work and analysis.

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<sup>25</sup>See Section 4b in this chapter--“Cultural Commitment: Extending communication.”

<sup>26</sup>Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 41. But Williams pointed out that even these latter poets held attitudes about the poor that were based in the overlord way of seeing. Williams’s analysis was always aware of the deeper complexity of the social situation.

<sup>27</sup>Williams, *Politics and Letters*, 62.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 63. His commitment to the correctness of socialism was reflected in his opposition to Ibsen’s liberal tragedies. For Williams, Ibsen’s individuals were stuck, unable, to go forward or back. Despite the fact that Ibsen’s “goal is always one of individual liberation,” the playwright “angrily excludes the project of social liberation.”

Early on, Williams was critical of controlling structures. Static formations blocked complex ways of seeing social wholeness. He found such structures in academia, political parties, and the commercial mass media. His animosity towards controlling structures is evident in his argument against being recalled by the British military for the Korean War. At his tribunal he argued for “a total retention of autonomy”:

The whole nature of a military organization is such that whereas you may have at the beginning political notions of what the army is being trained to fight for, still, within the necessary functioning of this kind of hierarchical command structure, whatever you believe at the moment of initiation hereafter has no real existence at all; within a war you do not know what is evolving.<sup>29</sup>

For Williams, any military organization is an extreme hegemonic structure that depends on top-down thinking and a compliant, unthinking soldier. Williams viewed any hegemony as a block to social awareness and democratic development.

Chief amongst his arguments was that positive social change was possible if cultural experiences accommodated all classes, as well as popular forms. This attitude was influenced early on by his experiences teaching literature to adult learners through the Worker’s Educational Association [WEA], an Oxford University program. He admitted that his work with the WEA, whose leadership had a decidedly leftist orientation, was formative for his later work. Its basic approach reflected Williams’s bottom-up pedagogical attitude that the study of literature should not arise from any paradigm but should derive from an investigation of the stances being taken and the structures that controlled those stances. But WEA tutors were under “constant pressure from the university ... [to] improve academic standards,” and his students were pressured to produce academically acceptable papers.<sup>30</sup> For Williams, though, the power of the WEA was

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 87.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 79.

that it attempted to establish “a kind of education that made no presumptions,” and it allowed student and instructor to “follow the argument where it leads.”<sup>31</sup> This cultural openness was reflected in his later call for democratic communication in publicly supported television broadcasting.<sup>32</sup>

These early influences led Williams to more detailed understanding of cultural production as a social activity. Throughout his writing he sensed the complexity of any social situation and considered how various systems worked and interacted. In the end, the key to any positive (in other words, socialist) change was a complete and complex understanding of the conditions and interactions of the various players. Despite variations in this idea, Williams held an unwavering sense of these early feelings. He persisted in locating the complexity of the interactive influences of society and culture. To a great extent, his post-1950s work is a deepening of what he had found at an earlier stage.

### **From Late Formalism and Gramsci’s hegemonies to New Left social realism.**

Williams’s work influenced early New Left definitions of social realist work and how such work could lead to positive social change. What did Williams mean by committed realist work? He showed that “realism is a difficult word, not only because of the intricacy of the disputes in art and philosophy to which its predominant uses refer but also because the two words on which it seems to depend, real and reality, have a very complicated linguistic history.”<sup>33</sup> This dissertation focuses “*social* realism” as it developed out of early New Left concerns over changes in 1950s British society, politics, and socialism.

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>See the Pilkington Report referred to later in this chapter.

<sup>33</sup>Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 257.

Despite changes in what is accepted as realism, definitions of realistic work have held two general concerns: 1) “Realism” has been defined as some relationship between works of art and “reality.” One formation describes art as a reflection either of a surface reality (this is a sense that “naturalism” has taken on) or a reflection of an underlying reality which influences and/or controls what is experienced. 2) Realist work has been defined as being useful in a religious, economic, political, and/or social sense. Williams dealt with both of these concerns. The fourth section of this chapter will examine how the New Left saw the usefulness of social realist cultural work in terms of positive social commitment. This section and the next will look at the first concern.

Williams described a direct and inter-effecting relationship of social life and social realist work, which validated his Welsh sense of community within society, and of a whole way of life. But in order to get to what he was feeling, Williams had to break from certain contemporary approaches to literary analysis: Early formalism, elitist academic paradigms, and deep structure arguments.

Williams opposed early Russian formalists who described language as static and literature as unique and, thus, separated from social realities. He rejected the approach of V. Shklovsky, which emphasized an art work’s “literariness.”<sup>34</sup> For Shklovsky, by making a “deliberate break from ordinary language use ... [a work of art] announce[d] itself as literary.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Throughout the following summary of his analysis, Williams looked to what has been called the Bakhtin School of Formalism. Note that Mitchell referred only to early Russian formalist in his overview of “representation,” so that, in general, formalists’ “‘abstract’ theories of art” reveal that “literature is about itself” and see language as signifier. See W. J. T. Mitchell, “Representation,” in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 16.

<sup>35</sup>Raymond Williams, “Marxism, Structuralism,” 59.

Art could tell us about reality by being detached from it. If literature is seen this way, then analysis would proceed from the work's *ostranenie* or unfamiliarity.<sup>36</sup> Not only did this approach identify a discontinuity of text and social life, it saw text as static in form. For Williams this was an insufficient way to see the relationship of art and reality; early formalists did not consider social influences.<sup>37</sup>

Williams broke from other static approaches, which described literature as reflecting determined outcomes. These included the Marxist description of literature as a “superstructure” mirroring the “base” economic realities.<sup>38</sup> The Marxist critic, Lukács, for example, lauded realistic literature which reflected truths about the economic nature of the human condition. For similar reasons, Williams rejected other fixed approaches to literature including French structuralism of the 1960s and American New Criticism.<sup>39</sup> Williams opposed these approaches

<sup>36</sup>Victor Shklovsky, “Art as Technique,” in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, reprint, 1917 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 3–22.

<sup>37</sup>Williams, “Marxism, Structuralism,” 61. Even though Williams rejected Shklovsky’s formalism, both saw literature as a perceptual experience. For Shklovsky, “The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known” (Shklovsky, *Art as Technique*). Here because it is not life, literature can defamiliarize and engender new insights. On the other hand, for Williams literature can create insight because both literature and human perception result from social constructs. He credits some of his early ideas about human perception to John Zachery Young, *Doubt and Certainty in Science: A Biologist’s Reflection on the Brain*, reprint, 1950 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960).

<sup>38</sup>“Reflection Theory” refers to analysis which sees aesthetic work as a mirror which can reveal truths about reality. “Reflection” includes what W.J.T. Mitchell calls an iconic resemblance of the real, as well as underlying--and difficult to see--forces which establish reality. For example, Lukács looked to the narratives of Balzac as effectively containing both iconic descriptions of social life and deeper insights into social truths. For Lukács, Zola’s naturalistic, surface descriptions were not sufficient. See, George Lukács, “Narrate or Describe,” in *Writer and Critic and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. Arthur Kahn (Lincoln, NE: IUniverse Inc.,2005), 110-48; and, Mitchell, “Representation,” 14.

<sup>39</sup>Robert Christgau supported Williams’s break: “Williams has made a valiant if self-aggrandizing attempt to turn back what I’ll call sign-and-structure theory by co-opting it into his own view of culture. ... It’s worth noting how well Williams’s early theoretical impulses prepared him for the Invasion of the Big Frogs. His nonspecialist fascination with lexicography immunized him against the silly semiotic tendency to treat words as synchronic givens. And he’d devised the term ‘structure of feeling’ to capture that lost middle term long before structuralism had had its covertly idealist way with the best minds of the next generation. From the beginning he’s seen it as his mission to get at the synthesis of subject and object

because they were “obstinately local and technical” and, like Leavisism, were limited to “correct” readings.<sup>40</sup> Williams argued that if allowed to evolve freely, society would tend towards a humane democracy.<sup>41</sup> As such, Williams rejected static approaches to literature, which did not take in social processes and historical influences. Such fixed paradigms were “a perceived field of knowledge, indeed of an *object of knowledge*, based on certain fundamental hypotheses, which carries with it definitions of appropriate methods of discovering and establishing such knowledge.”<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, paradigms resolved into absolutes. For Williams, such approaches to literary and/or social analysis are distractions from the complexity of human experience, which must be understood in all its intricacies to allow for positive change.

In addition, Williams broke from approaches which defined literary analysis as, at best, difficult due to the deeply hidden, and difficult to see, forces controlling social imagination. For example, Louis Althusser argued that society was ruled by deep structures or a “system of systems” controlled by the economy. This “binding force of the whole system” is so deep within the social structure, it becomes, “with only limited exceptions, the condition of all conscious life” and the ground for an unquestioned ideology. Because these hidden ideologies are

without which humane and effective politics are impossible.” Robert Christgau, “Living in a Material World: Raymond Williams’s *Long Revolution*,” *Village Voice*, April 1985.

<sup>40</sup>Williams, “Marxism, Structuralism,” 62. Williams also argued that it is incorrect to see a technology or a medium as formative or causal. A technology, in itself, such as television, does not alter social formations; analysis must look to the artistic intentions and the conventions used—the relationship between social practice and art forms. Furthermore, a technology is actually “a constitutive element of material social practice.” See also Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 159–64, and Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Routledge Classics, 1974).

<sup>41</sup>Williams does not describe specific social outcomes. He assumed that a freely developing society would tend towards humanism. This basic assumption is beyond the scope of this discussion, but is accepted as central to the New Left socialist imagination.

<sup>42</sup>Williams, “Marxism, Structuralism,” 52.

unexamined (or cannot be examined), the “deep structures of the society are reproduced as conscious life.”<sup>43</sup> The Frankfurt School also argued for deep, formative structures which controlled consciousness social.<sup>44</sup>

Williams rejected static, paradigmatic, and deep critical analysis. He worked to understand the dynamic interplay of society and culture within a particular historical moment and the structural connection of literature to a changing society. He countered the early Russian formalists’ “hierarchy of specific forms” by delineating “the areas in which these hierarchies are both determined and contested: the full social material process itself.”<sup>45</sup> He turned to the late formalism of the Bakhtin School (including Vološinov, Plekhanov, and Mukarovsky) who, according to Williams’s analysis, identified society as the primary engine in aesthetic formations. Both early and late formalists described the structural nature of language, but, according to Williams, the former led to a rule-bound structuralism, while the latter emphasized historical influences on the formation of cultural work. This approach would lead to Cultural Materialism.

Williams recognized the structured nature of language, but defined language as both a signifying process and a social process, which molded consciousness; and works of art as language are bound up in a social organization and change. Jan Mukarovsky [Prague Linguistic School] described an “aesthetic function” which melded the “internal arrangement of the

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 62-63.

<sup>44</sup>For the Frankfurt School the “total systems” of mass media were controlled by capitalism and “a seamless web of media technology, multinational corporations and international bureaucratic control.” This deep structure is a “consciousness industry.” Socialist progress is considered limited since “the system has the power to co-opt and to diffuse even the most politically dangerous forms of political art.” Even the work of Brecht or Lukács is co-opted by the capitalist commercial machine. See, Fredric Jameson, “Reflections in Conclusion,” in *Aesthetics and Politics*, reprint, 1977 (London: Verso, 2007), 208–9.

<sup>45</sup>Williams, “Marxism, Structuralism,” 60–61.

artwork” and the “collective values” of those who engage with the work.<sup>46</sup> Williams used Mukarovsky’s concept to argue that “aesthetic quality is not or even primarily produced *within* a work of art”; rather, its “aesthetic values are themselves always *socially* produced,” which must have a bearing on the internal structure of the work. For Williams, structural analysis of literature needed to incorporate the primacy of social influence. He turned to Vološinov’s definition of language as a material activity to oppose a static semiotic emphasis. A system of signs is “at once a distinctive material process--the making of signs--and, in the central quality of its distinctiveness as practical consciousness, is involved from the beginning in all other human social and material activities.”<sup>47</sup> Language is both structured--having a fixed, signal quality--and socially developed--having an evolving historical quality. Vološinov synthesized the “expressive and systemic ideas of language.”<sup>48</sup> As such, social feeling (social context) and form together establish a sign rather than a static signal, alone. Williams agreed with Vološinov, who showed that signs were “multi-accentual” or holding myriad meanings depending on the social context.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Jan Mukarovsky. *Structure, Sign, and Function: Selected Essays*, trans. John Burbank and Peter Steiner (New Haven: Yale University Press), 92.

<sup>47</sup> Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 39. Williams referenced Vološinov’s *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, New York, 1973. Two notes on Williams’s use of Bakhtin and Vološinov: (1) It is unclear who authored Vološinov’s work. The controversy involves what Bakhtin described as the dialogic nature of the work coming out of what has been called the Bakhtin School of Formalism. Ideas were shared and then generally used. But the situation surrounding this cultural production is complicated by pressures put on theorists by a repressive government. (2) To some extent the late Russian Formalists wanted to “ameliorate the worst effects of (Marxist) determinism and [early] Formalist abstraction.” Williams used this emphasis to push for social determinants. See Alastair Renfrew, *Towards a New Materialist Aesthetic: Bakhtin, Genre and the Fates of Literary Theory* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing, 2006), 9.

<sup>48</sup> Higgins, *Raymond Williams*, 121.

<sup>49</sup> Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 38–39.

In seeing literary structures as socially formed, Williams broke from descriptions of culture as controlled by inaccessible--deep--forms. For this, in part, he turned to Gramsci's hegemonies. According to Williams, Gramsci was concerned with the "means of production forces and the conditions of the means of production" of cultural work.<sup>50</sup> For Gramsci, human consciousness and imagination were formed by cultural work, and this work was influenced in unhealthy ways by hegemonic forces. By his definition, a hegemony is socially encompassing and is "to be seen as the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes" and is accepted unconsciously. Williams wrote,

Hegemony is then not only the articulate upper level of 'ideology', nor are its forms of control only those ordinarily seen as 'manipulation' or 'indoctrination'. It is a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values.<sup>51</sup>

Further, hegemonic forces were gaining strength in the post WWII era:

In advanced capitalism, because of changes in the social character of labour, in the social character of communications, and in the social character of decision making, the dominant culture reaches much further than ever before in capitalist society into hitherto 'reserved' or 'resigned' areas of experience and practice and meaning. The area of effective penetration of the dominant order into the whole social and cultural process is thus now significantly greater.<sup>52</sup>

The New Left sought ways to overcome these unconscious forces and found traction in hegemonic complexities. Manifestations of this social energy are complex and are opposed by "counter-hegemonic modes" that include residual (old) and emergent (new) ways of seeing. Of course, both countering ways of seeing could be absorbed into what Christgau called an

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<sup>50</sup>Williams, *Politics and Letters*, 304.

<sup>51</sup>Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 110.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 125-26.

“improved hegemony” of the majority class.<sup>53</sup> But Sinfield takes a positive stance and proposes that literature can cut two ways: Literature can further the hegemonic control of the dominant structures, or it can accommodate resistance to that control. If literature is separated from its specific social and historical conditions and is instead understood as revealing higher--and thus, static--truths, then such truths can be co-opted by a dominant culture and used to legitimize its control. But Sinfield argues that literature can cut the other way and question “the process through which the prevailing power arrangements are legitimated.”<sup>54</sup> Williams looked to committed cultural work and radical literary analysis, which could open broad social consciousness to social hegemonies. Formative systems needed to be understood and exposed. Expanding consciousness of these forces was, and continues to be, a New Left objective.

Williams worked to define the link between literature and reality, which could engender a humane society. Rather than a reflection of the “real,” he described a socially realistic literature, potentially linked in dynamically structured ways with how a society communicates. The direct link between literature and social imaginations could give agency to the writer who is committed to positive change. Such a writer could break the hold of old ways of seeing and worn conventions and generate wide understanding of social realities.<sup>55</sup> For Williams, “cultural materialism” pointed to the possibility of freely evolving social communication, which could give rise to a humane democracy.

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<sup>53</sup>Christgau, “Living in a Material World.”

<sup>54</sup>Sinfield, *Literature, Politics*, xxiii.

<sup>55</sup>The committed nature of this sort of writer is examined in section four.

### **Cultural Materialism. A Version of ‘Radical Semiotics’.**

The New Left agenda for a humane and democratic society required an analysis that showed a direct relationship between social reality and cultural work. Two questions must be addressed: (1) What was this need? (2) And what was this relationship? To the first, the New Left needed to define cultural work which effected positive social change towards a humane democracy. The New Left could not accept literary analysis controlled by academic paradigms or capitalist production processes or bourgeois values. Such static formations and overreaching control disallowed positive social change, and each instance could be investigated, only, as a phenomenon but not “as a governing definition of the object of knowledge.”<sup>56</sup> As such, the Marxist base/superstructure formation needed to be rejected because literature could not be isolated into “a specialised area in which we see reflections of the political processes governing society.” Rather, a direct, immediate relationship of the literary and the social was needed, in order to recognize deep controlling hegemonies, and to open work to social variety and change. A humane democracy would become possible because “culture is the ‘whole way of life’ which makes up human society.”<sup>57</sup> Thus, in order to engender a moral democracy, Williams--and the New Left--needed a theoretical approach which understood the link between cultural processes / institutions and cultural production and which recognized the importance of ongoing changes within society, of past structures and of emergent social feeling.

How then did the New Left see this relationship between social change and literature?

Williams recognized the structured nature of language and cultural works, and, at the same time,

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<sup>56</sup>Williams, “Marxism, Structuralism,” 65.

<sup>57</sup>Phil Edwards, *Culture is Ordinary: Raymond Williams and Cultural Materialism* (1999), para 5, <http://www.users.zetnet.co.uk/amroth/scritti/williams.htm>.

he understood such systems as mutable social constructs.<sup>58</sup> Based on this way of seeing, critics would evaluate literature through a complex historical social lens. To develop this description of the direct relationship between realistic literature and social life, Williams turned to Lucien Goldmann's "genetic structuralism." Both referenced late Russian formalists' thinking about language. As with Vološinov, Goldmann emphasized the social nature of literary structure, that the relationship was not one "of content but always of *form*."<sup>59</sup> He went further to show that the complex connection of art and society was one in which literary structures and conventions were homologous to social structure. Williams explained,

A certain disposition of human relationships is always present as the deepest consciousness of a particular epoch, and this disposition is homologous with a specific ordering of the elements of the literary work. Goldmann called this position 'genetic structuralism.' This was in deliberate opposition to orthodox structuralism because he argued that if we are to understand such forms, we must understand them in their processes of building up, stabilizing and breaking down; whereas in other tendencies of structuralism, there was a rejection of any notion of that kind of *historical* genesis and dissolution.<sup>60</sup>

Goldmann's "genetic structuralism" defined the social nature of cultural work as embedded in the changing structure of a society, and not the work's naturalistic content. As will be shown, Williams would modified Goldmann's approach to show that effective literary structures and their conventions were congruent with social change.

Despite his additions to descriptions of the cultural-social relationship, Williams identified Goldmann's approach as based in Marxist reflection analysis. According to Williams, Goldmann continued to support revisionist Marxism which "abandon[ed] the idea of a

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<sup>58</sup>This complex "dance" of forces is discussed in various works. For a summary see, "Dominant, Residual, and Emergent" in Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 121–27.

<sup>59</sup>Williams, "Marxism, Structuralism," 58.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 58.

proletarian revolution and replac[ed] it with the notions of gradual, albeit, radical transformation of the present productive apparatus toward various forms of self government by the collective producer.”<sup>61</sup> Goldman wrote that he sought to “identify certain principles for a dialectical history of literature and thereby, implicitly, to pose the problem of the relationships between literary creation and social life.”<sup>62</sup> Goldman had “attempt[ed] to discover the rules, the structural rules, of specific general forms of drama or fiction,” which would end in Marxist conclusions.<sup>63</sup>

Williams re-focused Goldman’s approach within the term “cultural materialism,” which emanated from Vološinov’s late formalism, Gramsci’s hegemonies, and Goldman’s genetic structuralism, and which resonated with his own Welsh sense of social coherence.<sup>64</sup> For Williams, cultural materialism was an “historical, radical semiology”; it was an integrative “analysis of the constitutive grounds and force of all forms of signification at work in human society” and “within [the] cultural process.”<sup>65</sup> Further, analysis included “quite centrally writing, within the actual means and conditions of their production.”<sup>66</sup> Though he had not developed the

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<sup>61</sup>In the introduction to Lucien Goldman, *Cultural Creation* (St. Louis, MO: Telos Press, 1971), 6.

<sup>62</sup>Lucien Goldman, “Dialectical Materialism and Literary History,” *New Left Review* 1, no. 92 (July-August 1975): 49.

<sup>63</sup>See Williams, “Marxism, Structuralism,” 57–58, and Goldman, “Dialectical Materialism and Literary History,” 49. At the end of his 1975 paper in *NLR*, Goldman wrote: “It has seemed useful to us to make these remarks, both to indicate the level at which a discussion of the truth or falsity of dialectical materialist theses in literary or art history is appropriate, and to point out the direction in which positive studies of concrete facts in these disciplines should be pursued.”

<sup>64</sup>Williams defined cultural materialism in *Marxism and Literature* (1977). For a precursor to this book, see Raymond Williams, “Notes on Marxism in Britain Since 1945,” *The New Left Review* I, no. 100 (November-December 1976): 81–94. Here Williams alluded to cultural materialism as the corrective to a reinterpreted Marxism which would allow for the creation of progressive minority groups.

<sup>65</sup>Higgins, *Raymond Williams*, 135.

<sup>66</sup>Williams, “Marxism, Structuralism,” 65. *The Country and the City* (1973) looked at the hidden ways production can affect literature. The study placed literature of the poet living as a guest in a rich country

term when he wrote *Preface to Film* (1954), the socially inclusive nature of cultural materialism was evident in his early analysis of film.<sup>67</sup> Even at this early stage for Williams, film was not important because it was a new technology. Rather, he saw film as a radical coherence between cultural work and a society.<sup>68</sup> Film was both a product of the wider social structure and an act of social communication and, as such, it was a relational event occurring within the common consciousness of a social group.

Williams's approach was based in academic inclusion. Cultural materialism emphasized that language and art be understood as part of a whole social process. As such, the complex interactivity of multiple social elements must be considered simultaneously. For Williams, "Politics and art, together with science, religion, family life and the other categories we speak of as absolutes, [in fact] belong in a whole world of active and interacting relationships, which is our common associative life."<sup>69</sup> Cultural materialism required a radical broadening of scholarship beyond established academic paradigms. Williams asked:

Can radically different work still be carried on under a single heading or department when there is not just diversity of approach but more serious and fundamental differences about the object of knowledge ...? Or must there be some wider reorganization of the received divisions of the humanities, the human sciences, into newly defined and newly collaborative arrangements?<sup>70</sup>

house--the "happy tenant" of the late seventeenth century--"within an active, conflicting historical process, in which the very forms are created by social relations which are sometimes evident and sometimes occluded."

<sup>67</sup>Raymond Williams and Michael Orrom, *Preface to Film* (London: Film Drama Ltd., 1954). This early publication consisted of two papers, written separately by its named authors.

<sup>68</sup>Also, evident in *Preface to Film* was Williams's break from Leavis's attitudes towards mass culture and descriptions of film and television as "means of passive diversion."

<sup>69</sup>Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001), 55–56.

<sup>70</sup>Raymond Williams, *Writing in Society* (London: Verso, 1991), 211. Williams's cultural materialism" continues to be used. The term is associated with socialist writers, including Sinfield (social change through minority groups; *Literature and Politics*, 1997), and San Juan (radical groups in the Philippines; *Critique and Social Transformation*, 2009).

### **Commitment and Social Realism.**

New Left cultural studies used literary theory to advance positive social outcomes. Cultural commitment demanded “the connection of literary argument and debate with the broader issues of politics and society” and a “commitment to socialist politics.”<sup>71</sup> A New Left-style humane democracy could only arise out of an evolving, social understanding of social realities. The New Left looked to socially realistic work committed to a complex understanding of society. But this program could not be accomplished via established, naturalistic conventions, which were embedded in hegemonic ways of seeing, and which blocked accurate descriptions of social complexities.<sup>72</sup> Rather, committed approaches to cultural production required a dynamic social realism.<sup>73</sup>

New Left cultural goals for a dynamic realism rested on a three-legged stool--a dynamic structuralism, a commitment to positive socialist change, and effective social realist literature. The first leg--discussed above--required an understanding of realistic literature as a structure, historically and socially formed. The second leg required that realist literature be committed to positive social progress. The third leg sought work that supported the goals of the first two legs by expressing community-wide consciousness of social actualities needed for positive social change.

This interlocking emphasis underpins Stuart Hall’s rejection of *socialist* realism. A committed socialist stance could not be accomplished by socialist realism working to instruct via surface descriptions. Such an approach engaged a one dimensional and static commitment,

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<sup>71</sup>Higgins, *Raymond Williams*, 3.

<sup>72</sup>It was on these grounds that Williams also rejected socialist realism and tendency literature.

<sup>73</sup>Chapter Five will take up Williams’s emphasis on “dynamic realism,” to describe the forms that committed social realist film work could take.

which was “too cheaply arrived at, too little felt ... too casually contemplated ... too easily formulated.”<sup>74</sup> According to Hall, such literature was one-sided and without substance:

The disrepute which has crept over the theories of “socialist realism” marks for us, not a possible beginning, but dogmatic philistinism of the Left in its attitudes towards culture. The sheer inhumanity of this ideology should be understood both in terms of the suffering it forced upon a community of writers, and of the literature it produced, which fails to offer a sustained or moving image of man or human relations.<sup>75</sup>

Rather than the dogmatic approach of socialist realism, Hall engaged the New Left tripartite model: (1) seeing literary structure as a direct relationship of social formations; (2) seeking commitment to positive social outcomes; (3) engaging complex realist literary forms. For Hall, literature held the potential for social truth, not through any surface descriptions but through its complexity. Similar to Lukács, Hall looked to Engels’s preference for “Balzac’s royalist novels” due to their social complexity. And he implied that Balzac wrote as he did with a commitment to enriching the reader’s social morality. For Hall, it was important to focus on “how *life* gets into literature and what it does to our values and attitudes when it gets there.”<sup>76</sup> Hall is expressing here both the New Left emphasis on social realities but, also, the need for commitment to such complex work. Despite Balzac’s middle-class sensibilities, his work could be called committed due to its vitality and socially truthful narratives, positively influencing value formations.

Hall argued for a committed socially realistic literature, which engendered “the moral life of a democracy” and a “socialist humanism.”<sup>77</sup> But his definitions seem ambiguous. In contrast,

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<sup>74</sup>Stuart Hall, “Inside the Whale,” *Universities and Left Review* 2 (Summer 1958): 14.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid, 14.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Stuart Hall, “In the No Man’s Land,” *New Left Review* 1, no. 3 (Winter 1958): 87.

Williams developed a rigorous analysis of literary commitment based on a dynamic interplay of cultural and social forces.<sup>78</sup> Writing is always a social act; to separate writing from its social base,

which in practice includes, always partly and sometimes wholly, elements elsewhere in the continuum, is to lose contact with the substantive creative process and then to idealize it; to put it above or below the social, when it is in fact the social in one of its most distinctive, durable, and total forms.<sup>79</sup>

Literature can expose social reality because it communicates socially at a structural level and can potentially be committed when its structure unmasks controlling forces. In other words, according to Williams, work is committed when it is “confronting a hegemony in the fibers of the self and in the hard practical substance of effective and continuing relationships.”<sup>80</sup>

New Left literary analysis of realist literature is engaged at four loci: (1) Within the direct relationship of literary structures and social reality and evident in how conventions are used; (2) Within the extension of cultural content and production to emerging groups; (3) Within the coherence (or disintegration) of a whole life of a society; and (4) Within a synthesis of the individual character and the social whole, which corresponds with the writer’s awareness of his

<sup>78</sup>Hall is unclear on how life gets “into literature” to “effect value formations.” This ambiguity can be compared to Adorno’s call for “autonomous” work which could lead to the “creation of a just life.” Theodor Adorno, “Commitment,” *The New Left Review* 1, no. 87–88 (September-December 1974): 89.

<sup>79</sup>Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 212.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid, 212. Prof. Judith Milhous (Graduate Center--CUNY) asks about “uncommitted” work which could theoretically use what Williams might identify as “committed” structures. One response might be that, based on Williams’s understanding of Gramsci, such use would be inauthentic and an instance of hegemonic incorporation of radical work by established institutions--Christgau’s “improved hegemony.”

social responsibility.<sup>81</sup> These loci of New Left commitment--to be discussed below--will be applied to analysis of the commitment of the literature adapted for NWL films and the films.<sup>82</sup>

**(1) Cultural Commitment: Conventions and social change.** Cultural commitment is a key component of cultural materialism. Effective commitment would expose the unconscious nature of hegemonic forces. Therefore, for the New Left, cultural work needed to be understood in ways that allowed the unconscious to become conscious. Williams argued that artistic agency would be possible because a work of art is a recognizable social construct. In other words, agency--the potential for an artist to engender social awareness--is possible because the social relationship between language and cultural works can be recognized. Further, conscious recognition is possible because literary communication arises out of socially accepted conventions--new or established; analysis begins at the interaction of literary forms and social acceptance of those forms.

According to Williams, “meaning is always produced” and is based on either established or reworked meanings within a social context.<sup>83</sup> Language is “a socially shared and reciprocal activity, already embedded in active relationships, within which every move is an activation of what is already shared and reciprocal or may become so.”<sup>84</sup> Williams located the structural engine for these direct connections between language and cultural work within accepted and emerging conventions. Literature is effective due to the fact that “a convention is an established

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<sup>81</sup>And it is the work of the committed social critic to expose the manifestations of these relationships. This idea will be applied to criticism of NWL films in Chapter Five.

<sup>82</sup>The term is used currently by San Juan in relation to committed literature: “Agency...creative intentionality, and choice in collective and personal dimensions all operate within what Williams calls ‘structures of feeling.’” See, San Juan, *Critique and Social Transformation*, 232.

<sup>83</sup>Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 166.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

relationship, or ground of a relationship, through which a specific shared practice--the making of actual works--can be realized.”<sup>85</sup>

If works of art are social-cultural coherences, then to communicate effectively, with the least ambiguity, a “tacit consent” or “accepted standard” must exist throughout the social group.<sup>86</sup> As such, conventions are “simply, the terms upon which author and performers and audience agree to meet, so that the performance may carry on” without ambiguity.<sup>87</sup> Or again, “it is of the essence of a convention that it ratifies an assumption or a point of view so that the work can be made and received.”<sup>88</sup> Or again, “The social hierarchy or social norms that are assumed or invoked are substantial terms of relationship which the conventions are intended ... to carry.”<sup>89</sup>

Defined this way, conventions are powerful because they are assumed; and, as unconscious messages, conventions can carry unexamined hegemonies. Williams addressed this problem. The direct and assumed relation between a society and a cultural work can be made known via a radical semiotics “with a very strong stress on forms and conventions.”<sup>90</sup> Understanding the social nature of conventions can expose “ways of seeing” social realities which these conventions “embody and ratify.”<sup>91</sup> Further, analysis of conventions can expose hidden versions of social reality and in so doing expose that which is unexpressed and/or is

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 173.

<sup>86</sup>Williams and Orrom, *Preface to Film*, 15.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>88</sup>Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 179.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 175.

<sup>90</sup>Williams, *Politics and Letters*, 159.

<sup>91</sup>Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 173.

suppressed. What had been claimed by an established order as “self-evident or universality” can be understood as unexamined forms.<sup>92</sup> Analysis can expose how accepted conventions express hegemonic ways of seeing and inhibit new ways of seeing and improved social expressions. Such radical analysis could discern when an outdated convention is incapable of expressing altered social realities and has become clichéd. Criticizing work as “too conventional” would indicate an inability to communicate emerging ways of being.<sup>93</sup>

Thus, the cultural-social relationship can be recognized within conventionalized structures, and as such, author intentionality is woven into the fabric of literary conventions.<sup>94</sup> Since literary conventions can expose changing ways of seeing, the committed artist acquires agency when exposing new realities via reformulated conventions. Changes in how artists use established conventions (which can be seen as new conventions) can communicate social change and “thus relate to the whole social process, in its living flux and contestation.”<sup>95</sup> But Williams pointed out that a change in convention cannot arise solely from the will of an artist; new

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<sup>92</sup>For Williams, realism is historical and class-based. As such, in each era, convention favors certain classes as establishing realism. For example, Williams described the behavior of Restoration Comedy court characters as true-to-life which was viewed by later periods as unrealistically mannered. In the mid-twentieth century, realism was synonymous with the repressed experiences of the working and poor classes which was the result of earlier “realist” work--Büchner’s *Woyzeck* (1879), Hauptmann’s *The Weavers* (Freie Bühne, 1892), and Gorky’s *The Lower Depths* (Moscow Art Theatre, 1902). See Raymond Williams, *What I Came to Say* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989).

<sup>93</sup>For Williams, new conventions could mean established conventions used in new ways or with new intentions. As such, a “method” [or, convention] can be used over long periods but can be applied with varying “intentions” depending on the social context. For example, real shepherds in *The Play of the Townley Shepherds* use their own regional dialect for the purpose of universalizing the religious message; this same convention is used by Shakespeare’s low British characters speaking in local accents, within Italianate settings to create a complex plot and English social structure. Williams, *What I Came to Say*, 226–28.

<sup>94</sup>The following argument will be used in Chapter Five in evaluating criticism describing NWL filmmakers as disingenuously using realist conventions to establish a place in the cultural field.

<sup>95</sup>Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 179.

applications result from changes in social consciousness. An altered or new convention must arise from a social understanding and a “latent willingness” to accept such a change amongst, at least, some group on whom the artist depends.<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, the socialist critic needs to evaluate how a work adapts to established conventions or creates new ones which expose difficult-to-see hegemonies.

Williams’s approach to cultural commitment assumed a social fabric out of which works of art were possible. Recognizing this relationship would give cultural works agency to expose social blocks to social change. Williams needed a way to explain what he was feeling about the unifying nature of social experience. Williams worked to refine precise descriptions of the complex relationship which he felt existed between cultural work and social experience. From early on, his solution was the problematic concept of “structures of feeling.” Certainly, Williams’s affinity to this idea of a common social feeling was influenced by his Welsh background. But it was also a solution to the problem of locating socialist agency within the unconscious hegemony of capitalist forces. “Structures of feeling” describes each subject’s experiences as inextricably connected to a wider social totality. Just as it is impossible to precipitate a dissolved particle from a liquid, individuals are necessarily enmeshed within the larger social solution, “which gives the sense of a generation or of a period.”<sup>97</sup>

This concept, though, was seen as problematic. According to Higgins, modernist and post modernist theory would judge “structures of feeling” as, at best, “amateurish,” and at worst, fatally limited.<sup>98</sup> Higgins, though, made two ameliorating points: First, though “structures of

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<sup>96</sup>Williams and Orrom, *Preface to Film*, 15–39.

<sup>97</sup>Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 131.

<sup>98</sup>Higgins, *Raymond Williams*, 169–70.

feeling” may have been a self-serving concept, “little more than an ingenious instance of theoretical impressionism,” later cultural theorists “re-worked” cultural materialism--which is closely related to “structures of feeling”--to include psychoanalysis, deconstruction, feminism, and post-structuralism. Further, Williams was aware of these approaches and “had arguments on and around these issues, arguments against the ‘eclectic body of work’ associated with Lacan, Derrida, Althusser and Macherey.” Second, according to Higgins,

An author’s thought needs to be understood within its means and conditions of production.... Any claims that our own theoretical vocabulary is indeed superior to Williams’s clearly needs to be tested in practice, rather than simply assumed as a starting point.<sup>99</sup>

Central in this discussion is how “structures of feeling,” as a way of seeing social structure, propelled the New Left cultural agenda. The term “structure” is Williams’s attempt to elevate his personal and complexly understood social experiences to a sociological discipline. Williams needed a rigorous academic concept, which would cohere and justify what he was feeling about the connectedness of a complex society. He was attempting to construct a sociological tool which could describe how social parts fit into a “whole complex” and how aesthetic work must “take its colour in varying degrees from them all.”<sup>100</sup>

To relate a work of art to any part of that observed totality may, in varying degrees, be useful, but it is a common experience, in analysis, to realize that when one has measured the work against the separable parts, there yet remains some element for which there is no external counterpart. This element, I believe, is what I have named the *structure of feeling* of a period and it is only realizable through the experience of the work of art itself, as a whole.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 172.

<sup>100</sup>Williams, *Politics and Letters*, 159.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 159. This excerpt is followed by an explanation of “structure” in the context of social feelings. For Williams, this formulation operated across disparate literary works and was readily recognized, but had not been theorized to his satisfaction.

This definition, though, remains subjective and not academically rigorous.

Nevertheless, “structures of feeling” was an influential idea in the late 1950s if only because Williams and the New Left needed a basis for cultural agency. To attain New Left goals, artistic commitment required the potential for understanding the hegemonies of dominant structures within a broader fabric of social feeling, which would give opportunity to emerging, counter movements. Recognizing the “structure of feeling” of a social moment opened the possibility for both a consciousness of social realities and for the agency of minority groups. Additionally, the mutability of the concept opposed static, structural-based formations and fixed academic elitism. It opened the possibility for positive social change and for extended [or subaltern] groups to produce committed work.

Williams’s insistence on “structures of feeling” arose from both a need and an assumption of cultural agency. In part, its political strength arises from its ordinary (common sense) definition of society as an historic coherence of individuals within a community or nation or society, and of the author who “articulates from the culture and experience of his or her time.”<sup>102</sup> But the work gains agency, and, therefore, allows for effective commitment, at the point that it engages the socially-determined relationship between the “structure or pattern” of the work and the “structure of feeling” of the moment.<sup>103</sup> This coherence of experience within language allows for effective communication, according to Williams. Rather than relying on semiotic explanations or deep controlling ideologies or interpretations based on academic strictures, the early New Left located agency within an understanding of a mutable language resulting from common and emergent social feelings.

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<sup>102</sup>Higgins, *Raymond Williams*, 20.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*

Despite problems with Williams's terminology, this way of thinking enabled the New Left to see cultural work as potentially effective, committed communication. For the early New Left, the British national "structure of feeling" of the late 1950s allowed for the possibility of a humane democracy and argued for cultural responsibility. Finally, this way of seeing permeated the imagination of NWL filmmakers. The potential for change was palpable, and these artists sought forms which could communicate a cohering social feeling.

**(2) Cultural Commitment: Extending communication.** For the New Left, democratic, humane communication was diminished when cultural production processes were controlled by upper and middle classes which dictated depictions of the working-class character. Influenced by Gramsci, Williams, in *The Country and the City* (1973), showed how the writer was restricted by production conditions. In the pastoral idylls of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the poet, who worked and resided within a country house and was cared for by its owner, created limited views on social reality, and excluded the social realities of the laborer of the house.<sup>104</sup> This was the case whether the country house poet outwardly supported the "natural" position of the landed elite, or whether he saw the poor as debased by the overlord attitude. In both instances, the landowner's control was assumed.<sup>105</sup> And, according to Williams, despite myths to the contrary, urban and rural wealth were interconnected, so that an "industrial-agricultural balance, in all its physical forms of town-and-country relations, is the product, however mediated, of a set of decisions about capital investment made by the minority which controls

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<sup>104</sup>This was not universal. For instance, Williams points to George Crabbe's realistic descriptions of country house life.

<sup>105</sup>Williams, *Politics and Letters*, 307. Williams did not deny the worth of country house poetry. Though he advocated for inclusive cultural work, he urged that effective literary analysis had to consider both types of work, for "if you get to the second judgment without the first, the result becomes naiveté" and a loss of effective analysis. The *New Left Review* interviewer felt that all socialists needed that viewpoint.

capital and which determines its use by calculations of profit.”<sup>106</sup> Thus, bourgeois capitalism controlled literary production which produced “disastrously powerful” literary “creations [which] ... were blocks on human freedom or even human progress.”<sup>107</sup>

Closely linked with the problem of limiting the working-class writer, Williams was concerned, also, with bourgeois control of the literary image of the British working class. He criticized middle-class work which, despite any intended commitment to realistic descriptions of the working class, was, in fact, romantically connected to a static idea or cause. For example, the New Left was critical of Orwell’s *Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) for presenting a fixed bourgeois image of the working class.<sup>108</sup> Rather, Williams took a Marxist stance, in which socially realistic work can best be produced by committed working-class writers who had a lived relationship within the social situation. This authentic relationship with working-class life would allow the writer to choose literary forms revealing the lived social reality:

The more significant Marxist position is a recognition of the radical and inevitable connection between a writer’s real social relations (considered not only ‘individually’ but in terms of the general social relations of ‘writing’ in a specific society and period, and within these the social relations embodied in particular kinds of writing) and the ‘style’ or ‘forms’ or ‘content’ of his work, now considered not abstractly but as expressions of these relations.<sup>109</sup>

Thus, the committed working-class writer is radically integrated in a period and, as such, is best situated to utilize literary conventions which express his class’s experiences. The committed working-class writer could expose hidden and disruptive social problems, limiting hegemonies, and unequal class relations, and this writer could establish a moral affiliation with the subject.

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<sup>106</sup>Williams, *The Country and the City*, 295.

<sup>107</sup>Williams, *Politics and Letters*, 307.

<sup>108</sup>See Raymond Williams, *George Orwell* (New York: Viking Press, Inc., 1971).

<sup>109</sup>Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 203–4.

Such committed work required conditions in which the writer could freely choose literary conventions and forms.<sup>110</sup> As was shown in Chapter One, the New Left call for open structures of production and extension of cultural opportunities was evident in their responses to the Pilkington Report. The New Left called for a democratic approach to a new television channel which would establish varied production possibilities, open forums for more voices, and extended social realism. The “democratic” approach was “against authoritarian control of what *can* be said, against paternalistic selection of what *ought* to be said, against commercial selection of what can *profitably* be said.”<sup>111</sup> The desired outcome would be a diversity of thought and greater communication opportunities.<sup>112</sup>

**(3) Cultural Commitment: “Authentic” social context.** For the New Left, literature could, most readily, take committed stances during periods when cultural production was open to social change and communicated by extended groups. Commitment to accurate and varied descriptions of social actualities would be most viable in such an authentic society which incorporates open and evolving cultural production.<sup>113</sup> Authentic conditions would allow literary analysis to expose obstructing structures and engender freedoms which would accommodate communication opportunities for otherwise marginalized groups. In the British case, such authentic work

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<sup>110</sup>See Chapter Three for Sillitoe’s call for the insights of this working-class writer. See Alan Sillitoe, “Proletarian Novelists,” *Books and Bookmen*, August 1959, 13.

<sup>111</sup>Kit Coppard, Paddy Whannel, and Raymond Williams, “Television Supplement: Which Frame of Mind?” *New Left Review* 1, no. 7 (January-February 1961): 34.

<sup>112</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup>“Authentic” is defined here as a New Left ideal, which describes a whole society effect in which social life holds positive, meaningful experiences, which are affirmed by its cultural work. Writers using this term or a variant include Lovell, Williams, Hall, Kiernan, and Kustkow.

focused on socially realistic stories about the working and poor classes, produced by working-class writers.

But inauthentic social conditions of the 1950s blocked the production of socially realistic work. The chief cause was a growing capitalism, enhanced by mass commercialism, which, according to Williams, necessarily dehumanizes.<sup>114</sup> The whole community was being destroyed by both the competing bourgeois individual and industry's need for a predictable supply of "consumers." The joyless consumer worked to be able to buy goods based on desires artificially created by mass advertisements.<sup>115</sup> A New Left break from such a dehumanizing system would need a change in social imagination, so that the "user" would purchase what was needed. But by New Left definitions, positive outcomes were possible only to the degree that social cohesion enabled coherent, shared ways of seeing. Williams's "deep community" was needed for accurate social communication.<sup>116</sup> Such a community could be formed out of its social use of language, which "express[ed] a common meaning by which its people live."<sup>117</sup>

Late in the 1950s, Williams and other New Left writers looked to the working class as the cohesive social force that would open "opportunity for a full response of the human spirit to a life continually unfolding, in all its concrete richness and variety."<sup>118</sup> British-style humanist socialism "assumed a common instead of a fragmented culture" engendered by positive working-

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<sup>114</sup>Williams was influenced by Tressell's arguments in his post-World War I novel, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*.

<sup>115</sup>Raymond Williams, "The Magic System," *New Left Review* 1, no. 4 (July-August 1960): 28.

<sup>116</sup>Williams, *The Long Revolution*, 65.

<sup>117</sup>*Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>118</sup>Raymond Williams, "Working-Class Culture," *Universities and Left Review* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1957): 30.

class values.<sup>119</sup> During this period, despite negative middle-class influences, for Hall and Williams, the British working class remained communal; its cultural contribution was its sense of a whole way of life that could percolate into a “general social benefit.”<sup>120</sup> Working-class conformity, which in isolation resulted in a “narrow ‘respectability’,” according to Williams, would eventually become richer as the “security of the group [grew]” and as the working class became connected to the larger society.<sup>121</sup>

For the New Left, the working class was the engine of social coherence and positive development. Progress was tied to working-class extension and closely related to Williams’s argument that culture was ordinary and was not to be reserved for correct forms or certain groups. Extension would take two broad forms: (1) education for the lower classes, including adult education; and (2) expansion of cultural production into popular forms, which could express the positive ethos of the working class. First, based on his first-hand experiences with adult education, Williams argued that education was ordinary and belonged to all. This view not only validated working-class experiences as a necessary part of the wider social experience, but it confirmed society’s “common meanings.”<sup>122</sup> From this way of seeing, Williams called for “a common education that will give our society its cohesion.” Rather than a “polarization of our culture,” he called for a widening of education to greater numbers. This would require a syllabus growing “from a common culture, rather than being a distinction from it.”<sup>123</sup> A second extension

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<sup>119</sup>Bert Hogenkamp, *Film, Television and the Left, 1950–1970* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2000), 67–68.

<sup>120</sup>Williams, “Working-Class Culture,” 30.

<sup>121</sup>*Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>122</sup>Raymond Williams, “Culture is Ordinary,” in *Conviction*, ed. Norman MacKenzie (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1958), 88.

<sup>123</sup>*Ibid.*

leading to social cohesion would expand culture beyond London and encourage working-class production. Public subsidies of the arts would encourage new works and new audiences, and cultivate new realistic conventions. Such freedom to experiment aesthetically and pedagogically would require that public money be freed from a controlling government and commercial interests.<sup>124</sup>

But by the late 1950s, Williams's "deep community" or "genuine community" made up of "persons linked not merely by one kind of relationship--work, friendship, family--but by many, inter-locking kinds" was becoming inaccessible.<sup>125</sup> This disintegration was expressed by Hall Stuart.<sup>126</sup> For Hall the working class was being objectified through the products it desired and owned, tendencies which were leading to "class confusion" and a disintegration of a whole way of life. Rather than a "genuine broadening out of the idea of working-class solidarity and its development in an ever-widening 'community'," Hall described a situation in which middle-class bourgeois values were causing the disintegration of working-class solidarity and were hindering the development of a "common culture."<sup>127</sup>

Hall's description of teen violence pointed at this loss of social cohesion. In the late 1950s, Hall felt that teenage aggressive self-affirmation and "search for the feel of living" was

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<sup>124</sup>Williams, *What I Came to Say*, 88–91. Williams called for television news programs to be freed from "the new slavery and prostitution of the selling of personalities." The difficulty of social extension is evident in the Arts Council's failure to bring culture into the provinces.

<sup>125</sup>See Raymond Williams, "Realism and the Contemporary Novel," *Universities and Left Review* 4 (Summer 1958): 24.

<sup>126</sup>In the mid-1950s, while both were at Oxford, Hall looked to Williams to get beyond the "elitism of F.R. Leavis's reading of English literary traditions." Hall knew Williams "personally" and, in his own words, was "formed ... intellectually and politically" by Williams's work. Though Hall was later to move towards the structuralism of Levi-Strauss, his early writings reflected Williams's influence. See, Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms," *Media, Culture and Society* 2 (1980): 57–72; and Stuart Hall, "The Life of Raymond Williams," *New Statesman*, 5 February 1988.

<sup>127</sup>Stuart Hall, "Sense of Classlessness," *Universities and Left Review* 5 (Autumn 1958): 30.

not a temporary social occurrence but an indication of “a major social trauma, generalized for a whole generation.”<sup>128</sup> Gang violence exposed a lack of authentic relations on a “human level” and revealed an unfulfilled desire for human connection. Modernization had isolated young people within unfeeling social structures and inauthentic communication. Social disconnection resulted from the “anonymity of human society and its institutions, and from the lack of care,” and “deep social disturbance” was a result of unexamined and “distorted” human communication, which affected personal relationships and family life. Hall’s descriptions reflected New Left attitudes: Personal isolation was a result of the modern age; mass technology and industrial growth had led, inevitably, to an erosion of human connections.

Williams also, saw the late 1950s social disjuncture as an impasse. How could socially realistic work be created during a period of social disintegration? Or, put differently, if social integration is generated by committed, socially realist literature in which the individual is depicted as part of the whole life of the society, what happens to social realism when this whole social life is in question? On the one hand, Williams argued that “reality is continually established, by common effort, and art is one of the highest forms of this process.” But he also recognized that work could be interrupted by “certain kinds of failure and breakdown,” which would come to be felt as ordinary, and, therefore, not recognized.<sup>129</sup> Thus, realistic work was difficult, if not impossible during periods of social disintegration and widespread social anxiety.

This problematic is ameliorated because rather than absolutes, Williams described a looseness between forces which allowed change.<sup>130</sup> Positive traction was possible via authentic

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<sup>128</sup>Stuart Hall, “Absolute Beginnings,” *Universities and Left Review* 7 (Autumn 1959): 21.

<sup>129</sup>Williams, *The Long Revolution*, 315.

<sup>130</sup>In similar ways Eagleton sought social integration through working-class values. He argued that the bourgeois “public sphere” of England’s eighteenth century middle class could be extended to a

social description by marginalized, committed artists. Williams's study of the "long revolution" of British culture revealed that change was inevitable. Even in static times, new institutions continue to develop, and literature can present the actual social conditions of emerging groups to a wide reading public, "first in education, second in means of communication until these have an effective general relation with the real structure of the society, so that both writers and audiences can come through in their own terms."<sup>131</sup> Though Williams saw change as inevitable, at mid-century the society was "far from this."<sup>132</sup> In the end, the committed working-class writer, representing extended and minority groups, was denied positive outcomes by a stratified--inauthentic--society; these writers were limited to exposing social disjuncture from a periphery position.

**(4) Cultural Commitment: Individual/Social Integration.** Williams argued that committed literary realism required characters depicted as individuals through a social lens which encompassed the whole life of a society.<sup>133</sup> But British post WWII realist novels had not integrated the social with the personal. Either the social setting was uppermost, the "aggregation" of the social novel, in which the individual is subsumed into social description.<sup>134</sup>

"proletarian public sphere," which would be a countering force, in which "authentic needs and desires which at present find distorted expression in the family would be given new form and direction." See Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism*, 119–20.

<sup>131</sup>Williams, *The Long Revolution*, 270.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid. This impasse could be overcome by social realist writers who, like Williams, had experienced community, as well as social mobility, and could imagine the possibility of a whole way of life. For Williams, "What they live out may be in fact our future, the actual and probable direction of our society." Williams, "Realism and the Contemporary Novel," 25.

<sup>133</sup>Williams worked for a synthesis of social and individual story in his own literary works. See *Border Country* (1960); *Second Generation* (1964); *Fight for Manod* (1979). For Williams, these works were literary applications of his cultural theories and part of his call for committed social realism.

<sup>134</sup>See Williams, "Realism and the Contemporary Novel"; and Williams, *The Long Revolution*, 300–16.

Or emphasis was on the individual extricated from the whole, so that the social becomes a backdrop for the personal story. Williams argued that social realism required a literature which incorporated the individual experience within the larger social problem, the whole life of a community.

Literature which focused on the individual hid the influence of class power.<sup>135</sup> For Williams, focus on the individual tragedy would lose a wider social “dimension and reference” and could not get to the social realism of the moment, and “what we then see, behind the loss of dimension, is a complacent affirmation of the existing social framework.”<sup>136</sup> For Williams, bourgeois tragedy was not social enough, despite accusations that it was too social, because it tended to focus on the common individual and lost broad social description.<sup>137</sup>

Not only was it necessary for the individual to be depicted within the social framework, but, for the New Left, the writer’s personal commitment to social content must be evident. In a 1958 recorded discussion between *Universities and Left Review* editors (including Stuart Hall) and poet Christopher Logue, it was agreed that the cultural left could not merely take up defensive political positions; the committed left writer needed to oppose the controlling Tory figure’s “absolute certainty.”<sup>138</sup> In fact, the writer’s personal, political, and cultural

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<sup>135</sup>Williams argued that the balance of social overview and personal story was lost in eighteenth century bourgeois drama in which individual experiences reproduced middle-class norms. Lillo’s *The London Merchant* (1731) is a middle-class tragedy with a moral lesson that values property over human life. It “expresses sympathy and pity between private persons, but tacitly excludes any positive conceptions of society, and hence any clear view of order or justice.” Though “the bourgeois tragedians, moved by pity and sympathy” sought realism, the “gap between private sympathy and the public order” disallowed social realism. See Raymond Williams, “From Hero to Victim: Notes on the Development of Liberal Tragedy,” *The New Left Review* 1, no. 20 (Summer 1963): 58–59.

<sup>136</sup>*Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>137</sup>For more on Williams’s take on the tragedy of the twentieth century, see Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy* (London: Verso, 1979).

<sup>138</sup>Christopher Logue, “A Commitment Dialogue,” *Universities and Left Review* 4 (Summer 1958): 17.

connectedness to society had become more important due to the imminent threat of nuclear annihilation. Hall argued,

So it is important that something quite deep and personal of the poet's feelings for his culture, for these objects, should be established in the poem. This must be offered, because the effect of the poem ultimately depends upon how deeply *we* feel about these things.<sup>139</sup>

The same year, Hall argued that all writers were socially embedded, but that the writer on the left needed to be conscious of this condition and act on it. Socialist humanism needed to be interwoven with the writer's public and private concerns:

Our attitudes mirror the realities of power, of status, of success and failure; and these things are both social and personal facts, the very limits of the human condition. The *personal* emotions we generate or stifle, eat their way into our words and our actions and alter their character. The public and the personal life are deeply interrelated, and we must learn to comprehend them as a totality.<sup>140</sup>

Unexamined social feelings are part of any work, but the committed writer must bring these feelings to the surface in order to effect social change.

In addition, to be effective, a writer's commitment could not be overtly political; rather, the writer needed to actively engage a personal and moral social consciousness.<sup>141</sup> Commitment could not be an "official" intellectualization but must remain a personal appeal, at an artistic level, from poet to reader. Hall asks, somewhat rhetorically, whether "commitment only comes off in a poem when one feels the poet, or the image of the poet offered in the poem, in a direct

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<sup>139</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>140</sup>Hall, "In the No Man's Land," 87.

<sup>141</sup>In related ways, Goldmann described the "individual sensibility of the creator" as entwined with the social moment so that commitment is a part of an enormous talent. For Goldmann, the genius writer can synthesize man and his society to express truths about a period: "We may say that a writer of genius is one who needs only to express his intuitions and his feelings to declare thereby what is essential to his period and to its transformations." For Goldmann, though, social change is determined and leads to Marxist outcomes. See Goldmann, "Dialectical Materialism and Literary History," 50–51.

personal contact with the material, the situation, the values which his is invoking?”<sup>142</sup> He then called for “the pressure of some personal engagement with the material” in which the writer’s feelings supported the writer’s political commitment to “come through more clearly.”<sup>143</sup> Hall then turns to Raymond Williams’s ideas to explain his thought:

[Williams’s] view is of a kind of literature which achieves its “realism” because of a certain view that it holds to the nature of the relationship between the individual and society. The two are not polarized, nor is one the background for the other, or a symbol of the other. The two interpenetrate--on the basis of what Graham [Martin] just called “mutual acceptance.”<sup>144</sup>

From this point of view, truths about society would emerge from a work of literature, not because of its capacity to build up ideas into rhetoric, but because whatever insights it offers into “life” must be offered in concrete, and personal terms.”<sup>145</sup>

But in the late 1950s there existed a “crisis of realism” resulting from a mismatch between the New Left’s “call for community,” and a society “crippled” by contradictory desires, which resulted in “the breakaway values that are in fact our living experience.”<sup>146</sup> This disjuncture was evident with the 1950s angry young writers who embraced the “escape” of the individual. Williams pointed to the celebration of “the movement of breaking away, and we do this at a time when so much of the formal emphasis of our social thinking is on closer community, closer mutual responsibility, closer common effort and need.”<sup>147</sup> Similarly, Hall criticized the young British writers of the 1950s who were disconnected from a society they did

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<sup>142</sup>Logue, “A Commitment Dialogue,” 19.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid., 19–20.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid.

<sup>146</sup>Williams, “Realism and the Contemporary Novel,” 24–25.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid.

not trust. Young British writers were engaged in “rage and frustration,” and were alienated within the “frozen matrix of our culture.”<sup>148</sup> The result was realistic novels without a common community, and protagonists who had become isolated, mocking individuals.

Two decades later Robert Hewison, found that the “angry young men” writers of the 1950s had replaced earlier Mandarin writers, but, in fact, were uncommitted and moving to the right.<sup>149</sup> Kingsley Amis’s and John Wain’s heroes were knowing and alienated. And Hall accused Wain of having an “ethic of moral quietism.”<sup>150</sup> John Osborne was angry, nostalgic, and conservative, and he readily accepted the “angry young man” label as “the price of success.”<sup>151</sup> Williams, on the other hand, called for novelists, like him, who had experienced a whole community and social mobility, to recover an “interpenetration” of “idea into feeling, person into community, change into settlement, which we need, as growing points, in our divided time.”<sup>152</sup>

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This chapter has looked at New Left definitions of social realism, chiefly through the writing of Raymond Williams. Williams opposed static, universal definitions including Marxist economic determinacy, as well as the “stuck” quality of naturalist conventions. He proposed a new term--“dynamic realism”--to locate freely evolving work, which communicated social

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<sup>148</sup>Hall, “In the No Man’s Land,” 86.

<sup>149</sup>Robert Hewison, *In Anger: British Culture in the Cold War 1945–60* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 119–23. Representing the aristocratic and conservative intelligentsia, the Mandarin writer valued the nuances of class and pastoral over industrial life. Tradition was needed to support the stasis of ideas and institutions in an idealized time. Nigel Dennis’s *Cards of Identity* opposed this attitude.

<sup>150</sup>Hall, “In the No Man’s Land,” 86.

<sup>151</sup>Hewison, *In Anger*, 136.

<sup>152</sup>Williams, *The Long Revolution*, 314.

change via its structures and conventions. New Left social realism called for a cultural commitment which would engage a new social consciousness and lead to social humanism.

Based on these definitions, this dissertation's main question can now be addressed: Did NWL films fulfill New Left socialist goals for social realism? Chapter Five will show how these films more than any others of the period realized Williams's "dynamic social realism." For Williams, "new 'non-naturalist' conventions--showing character and environment not as fixed forms but as processes of formation, crisis, breakdown, and re-formation--have to be seen not as formal 'anti-realist' innovations but as attempts to signify and realise this new sense of dynamic reality."<sup>153</sup> It will be argued that NWL films engaged in this dynamic social reality, but at the same time these films undermined New Left expectations in that they ended ambiguously, without a sense of positive social movement. The next two chapters will look at the social realism and commitment of the literature, which were adapted for NWL films.

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<sup>153</sup>Raymond Williams, "Realism, Naturalism and Their Alternatives," *Ciné-Tracts* 1, no. 3 (Fall-Winter 1977-78): para. 15.

Chapter 3  
Social Realism of Literature Adapted for New Wave Left Films:  
Alan Sillitoe, the Reluctant Socialist

The following two chapters will analyze literary works adapted for New Wave Left [NWL] films. These literary works exposed a certain social realism, but were not committed to New Left social descriptions or change. It will be shown in Chapter Five that NWL films, on the other hand, in placing the dramatic action in an industrial context and utilizing poetic realist techniques, opened the dramatic action to wider New Left readings. Alan Sillitoe, Shelagh Delaney, and David Storey were not socialists, and there is no evidence that their work was directly influenced by the New Left or Raymond Williams's call for a dynamic social realism, and they were either pessimistic about or indifferent to positive social change. Nevertheless, their background and work pointed towards the sort of working-class literature for which the New Left was calling. This literature was an insider's description of the British working class of the late 1950s; its protagonists sought authentic personal connections within a dysfunctional and class-segmented society. But their work did not fulfill New Left requirements for a dynamic realism as described in the previous chapter. Unlike NWL films which emphasized the alienation or "border-ness" of the male protagonist within a social context, this literature focused on personal dramas and did not establish a rigorous New Left social reality.

"Angry young" British working-class writers of the 1950s may have had working class backgrounds and incorporated realistic descriptions of their class in their work, but they were not committed to positive social change. It will be argued that the literature adapted for NWL films, either rejected working-class mores or found it to be irrelevant to the stories they were telling. Two of Sillitoe's early works were made into NWL films; and more than Storey and Delaney, Sillitoe's early work resonates with New Left perspectives; but his way of seeing the British

working class opposed early New Left goals. In this chapter, Sillitoe's early work will be contrasted with the committed literary work of Williams in order to discover the quality of Sillitoe's working-class realism.<sup>1</sup>

Though working class and realistic Sillitoe was not writing committed social realist works from a Williamsian perspective. It was shown that for Williams realist literature was a form of social communication which needed to recognize the whole life of a society.<sup>2</sup> Williams called for literature that would engage the social imagination and encompass working-class values of unity and humanism and should identify and reject traditional hierarchical ways of seeing. But by the end of the 1950s, early New Left writers such as Williams, Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall feared that such committed literature was impossible as the working class had abandoned its associative, communal feelings, in large part, due to the success of capitalism. The social experiments of the Labour Party had failed and the British Communist Party had nothing to offer. The British society was flawed due to calcified class divisions.

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<sup>1</sup>Were Williams and these writers aware of and/or influencing each other? Though Williams makes no direct reference to any of the three writers investigated here, it is evident that he was aware of their work. In the penultimate chapter of *The Long Revolution* ("Realism and the Contemporary Novel," 1961) Williams judges writers, such as Amis, Osborne and Braine as "deadlocked" within old ideas and systems (p. 269). In fact, for Williams, their success is proof of sterility. Further, several articles in *New Left Review* of the early and mid 1960s are critical of these writers--see for instance "Commitment Dilemma" (*NLR*, 1961) by Stuart Hall; or Albert Hunt's description of Shelagh Delaney's work as creating new anti-dramatic forms ("This Year's Theatre," *NLR*, 1961); or two reviews of Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958) by Rod Prince and Alan Lovell (*NLR*, 1961). It is also clear that these writers were aware of the New Left as seen in their polemical writings; for example, see Alan Sillitoe's "What Comes on Monday?" (*NLR*, 1960). And, though he was not published in a socialist journal, David Storey reflected New Left ideas in his critical writing; see "When Artists Sell Out" (*The Observer*, Sept, 30, 1963) and "What Really Matter" (*20th Century*, Autumn, 1963). As for Delaney, it will be argued that her literary ideas were influenced by her interactions with Joan Littlewood and Lindsay Anderson, both of whom had socialist leanings.

<sup>2</sup>For Williams modern realism included: (1) social extension--featuring middle and lower class subjects; (2) contemporary action, location and time; (3) secular action--expunging the metaphysical; and (4) action addressing an intention. Intention for the New Left was a commitment to exposing class hegemonies. Raymond Williams, *What I Came to Say* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989), 228–33.

In the decades after 1960, according to Jameson, what the Frankfurt School described as “total systems” seemed to have established insurmountable obstacles to New Left goals. From this point of view, the mass media were controlled by capitalist interests, forming “a seamless web of media technology, multinational corporations and international bureaucratic control,” or a “consciousness industry.”<sup>3</sup> Modernism, itself, had been subsumed by capitalism. And socialist progress was challenged. Deep formative systems had rendered positive change, at best, difficult, since the system had “the power to co-opt and to diffuse even the most politically dangerous forms of political art.”<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, Terry Eagleton could not see the potential for positive change, because the eighteenth-century bourgeois public sphere as described by Jürgen Habermas would never evolve into a working-class public sphere. The capitalist system disrupted working-class unity by turning what had been a dissatisfied worker into a passive consumer.<sup>5</sup> The corrupting influence of capitalism is further emphasized by Richard Hoggart; the “New Barbarism” of mass

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<sup>3</sup>Fredric Jameson, “Reflections in Conclusion,” in *Aesthetics and Politics*, reprint, 1977 (London: Verso, 2007), 208–9.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 209. Williams also referred to “deep systems” in various works. For instance see, Raymond Williams, “Marxism, Structuralism and Literary Analysis,” *New Left Review* 1, no. 129 (September-October 1984): 62. Jameson made a similar case in the late 1970s. He discussed the uses of realism in a post-modern world: “The function of a new realism would be clear; to resist the power of reification in consumer society and to reinvent that category of totality which, systematically undermined by existential fragmentation on all levels of life and social organization today, can alone project structural relations between classes ... its emphasis on violent renewal of perception in a world in which experience has solidified into a mass of habits and automatisms.” As stated here, Jameson’s outcomes are not so different from Williams’s concerns with a newly forming mass communication at mid century. See, Jameson, “Reflections in Conclusion,” 212–13.

<sup>5</sup>See summary of this argument in Chapter Two of Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism: From ‘The Spectator’ to Post-Structuralism* (London: Verso, 1984).

culture had perverted positive working-class values.<sup>6</sup> For cultural critic Robert Hewison, what had been an extended group was being assimilated into the middle class, as it earned higher wages and enjoyed a commodity-driven life-style.<sup>7</sup>

Michael Kenny, a University of London professor who writes on politics and society, pointed out that, eventually, for Williams, the working class could not be the model for an ethical society or define his whole way of life.<sup>8</sup> Hoggart's description of the "us" against "them" attitude of the working class could not translate into New Left socialism. It would become impossible to see how so-called working-class values-- "solidarity against greed, sharing against bigotry"--would meld with the larger society.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, any definition of social progress that depended on working-class values would be limited. Accepted descriptions, whether organic or communal, were too one-dimensional.<sup>10</sup>

Not only was the working class an unfit model for positive British social change, but working-class literature could not ameliorate establishment control. Socialist critics questioned whether the working class could produce aesthetically worthwhile social realist literature. For Williams, the cultural contribution of the working class was in its community-centered values; its

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<sup>6</sup>Robert Hewison, *In Anger: British Culture in the Cold War 1945–60* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 178. Note: Hewison is a John Ruskin scholar and writes on British culture; he was a theatre critic for the London *Sunday Times*.

<sup>7</sup>Hewison, *In Anger*, 180.

<sup>8</sup>Michael Kenny, *The First New Left: British Intellectuals After Stalin* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995), 93.

<sup>9</sup>Kenny, *First New Left*, 93.

<sup>10</sup>Williams called for new understanding of community as socially complex and for a "new model of communitarian liberation" requiring new ways of defining community. He emphasized the simultaneity of old, new, and emerging communities and the need for writers, such as himself, who have experienced this complexity. Such cosmopolitan understanding--a "transcendental political perspective"--could lead to a new understanding of community. See Kenny, *First New Left*, 93–94. Also, note Williams's novel *The Fight for Manod* (1979), which explores these complexities of community development.

literature was inferior to that of the middle class. At the end of the century, gender studies theorist Alan Sinfield, in effect, agreed with Williams's early critique. Though Sinfield argued that cultural work is more than the product of any particular class, he differentiated the classes so that "workers have a whole way of life and middle-class people the special creative process."<sup>11</sup> And, as with Williams, Sinfield felt that even positive socialist work produced by leftist, middle-class dissidents, would remain loyal to hidden traditional power structures. Without effective working-class literature, produced by working-class writers, Williams's hope for an "ethos of cooperation in community," by the end of the century, had given way to middle-class individuation and capitalist competition.<sup>12</sup>

The realist literature of the "angry young men" writers of the 1950s seemed to be reflect this social disconnection and entrenched hegemony, and as such, could not fulfill New Left expectations. Hall sought a realist literature that was "alive," real and complex, one that affected value formations, and did so across class barriers. But, for Hall, postwar British art was "wearing absolutely threadbare." He saw no hope for committed art as the future had "all gone grey and opaque."<sup>13</sup> David Marquand, social critic and socialist British politician, had a mixed critique of the political and social importance of the literature of Kingsley Amis, John Wain, and John Osborne.<sup>14</sup> For Marquand, the scholarship-boy protagonist in Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954) was one of the "neurotic misfits cut off from society," unable to engage in political change.

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<sup>11</sup>Alan Sinfield, *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain* (London: Athlone Press, 1997), 242.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 300.

<sup>13</sup>Stuart Hall, "Inside the Whale," *Universities and Left Review* 2 (Summer 1958): 14.

<sup>14</sup>David Marquand, "Lucky Jim and the Labour Party," *Universities and Left Review* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1957): 59–60. Note: Marquand (1934-) is an academic in political studies, a politician who supports progressive politics and the "good society." He has written extensively on "social democracy."

Nevertheless, characters such as Jimmy Porter were useful in combating social conformity and keeping left-wing entities “on their toes.” According to Marquand, youthful anger and dissatisfaction with social conditions raised awareness of the “dangers” of becoming a “complacent society” like Russia and the United States.<sup>15</sup>

Political film critic John Hill, on the other hand, found the “angry young man” work to be commodified and conservative.<sup>16</sup> The new affluent youth were both the market *for* and the subject *of* these works. Further, according to Hill the writers’ anger was conservative and would, in time, become right wing. Angry “Movement” literature resulted in “adjustment and compromise”; fitting-in was the goal. *Lucky Jim* (1954) and *Hurry on Down* (Wain, 1953, also named *Life in Captivity*) settled for political neutrality and not making the same mistakes of 1930s committed socialist authors.<sup>17</sup> Hill agreed with Blake Morrison; for these young writers “to be politically astute in the 1950s ...was to be politically inactive.”<sup>18</sup> Hewison supported Hill’s contention that 1950s working-class writers were reacting to capitalistic control of their lives with a “static, fatalistic view of the world.” Furthermore, for Hewison, working-class literature such as *A Taste of Honey* (play, 1958) and *Room at the Top* (novel, 1957) were not positive social descriptions because they sentimentalized the working class and supported old ways of seeing.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 59-60.

<sup>16</sup>John Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956 - 1963* (London: British Film Institute, 1986), 23.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Quoted from Blake Morrison, *The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1980), in Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism*, 23–24.

<sup>19</sup>Hewison, *In Anger*, 182.

Nevertheless, for the early New Left there was hope; “Movement” writers in the late 1950s were balanced between breaking with the past and giving over to conservative entrenchment. After the fact, Williams expressed the feeling of the period,

I don't think you can understand the projects of the New Left in the late fifties unless you realize that people like Edward Thompson and myself, for all our differences, were positing the re-creation of that kind of union. Perhaps by that date it was no longer available. But our perspective seemed to us a reasonable one, even though it would have been very hard to achieve.<sup>20</sup>

The early New Left rejection of the historically repressive British hierarchical class structure was possible. Their hope for a humanist democracy rested on the class unity that was forged by the commonly felt tragedies of two world wars. And the success of “working-class” writers during the 1950s supported this optimism. At that time, for Williams, it was possible that the right social feeling could be engendered by working-class writers who could influence social change via socially realist literature about their experiences.

Problematic, “angry” literature of the period can be analyzed within the context of New Left socialist goals. Whereas *Lucky Jim* parodied all classes, Wain's *Hurry on Down* took on aspects of New Left commitment. Charles Lumley searches for meaning in a society without a moral compass or coherent national identity. Lumley resembles the Hoggartian scholarship boy who, unsuccessfully, seeks authentic connection in the working class of his past. He turns to the unencumbered life of a window washer and begins a relationship with a working-class girl, but it becomes clear that he is no longer of her world, and Lumley moves onto a series of disappointing jobs. Finally, Lumley falls to a spiritual nadir, working for a successful television comedy show. He is lower than Williams's agent writer as he uses his talents to find old jokes in support of a

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<sup>20</sup> Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with the New Left* (London: Verso, 1981), 74.

commodity-driven mass medium. The best he can hope for is to stop caring and to accept neutrality; he “doesn’t want to take sides in all the silly pettiness that goes on.”<sup>21</sup> Lumley exemplifies Hoggartian alienation--the scholarship boy who rises out of his class via a publicly supported education into a disconnected existence.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, Wain exposed the mythic nature of a wholesome working class, as well as the wasteland of postwar British society driven by mass commercialism.

Finally, “Movement” writers were socially pessimistic and were not committed to positive social change. In part, this is due to the ambiguous social position of their protagonist--the “unmoored” working-class, scholarship boy. Unlike the working-class border character in the literature adapted for NWL films, the protagonists of Amis, Braine, Osborne, Wain, and Barstow are working-class scholarship boys who became “unmoored” and drifted into and then found themselves unhappily trapped within the middle class. For these, the fight for authenticity and personal fulfillment, rooted in class, was abandoned. For example, Braine’s Joe Lampton (*Room at the Top*, 1957) chooses wealth and position over an authentic relationship, and John Wain’s Charles Lumley (*Hurry on Down*, 1953) accepts a diluted sense of self; at the end of the novel he is writing jokes for commercial television.

In contrast, the literature adapted for NWL films exposed problems of the British working class through the experiences of a working-class protagonist. This is an important distinction that moves these films towards New Left social realism. This literature presented

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<sup>21</sup>John Wain, *Hurry on Down* (New York: Viking Press, Inc., 1953), 238–39.

<sup>22</sup>This male-dominated theme is taken up by Steedman, who describes the “structure of feeling” of scholarship boys and girls as quite different. See Carolyn Steedman, “Writing the Self: The End of the Scholarship Girl,” in *Cultural Methodologies*, ed. Jim McGuigan (London: Sage Publishers, 1997), 106–25.

complex working-class experiences, were critical of the materialistic-bent of the working class, and, in varying degrees, supported communal values. These works presented experiences of a working-class protagonist who was both alienated and sutured to her/his class. But it will be shown that the literature adapted for NWL films--especially, Sillitoe's and Storey's--cannot be considered as supporting early New Left optimism nor fulfilling Williams's call for creative work that presented the working class as an engine in social progress. In contrast Chapter Five will argue that working-class "border-ness" in the literature is extended into a New Left-style, committed, social realism in the NWL films.

Sillitoe, Delaney, and Storey drew from their working-class experiences to create authentic, unsentimental stories from a working-class point of view. Nevertheless, this literature cannot be described as "New Left." Though Sillitoe's early writing embraced a broad social understanding of working-class experiences and attitudes in more complex ways than either Delaney or Storey, none of these writers took on the New Left "*ideal of Commitment.*"<sup>23</sup> But, to a greater extent than the others, Sillitoe's early "Nottingham" work exposed complex ways of seeing the British working class through the experiences of a working-class border character who identifies with and is critical of her/his class. This character seeks authentic relationships within a working-class community that was in flux and was being assimilated by middle-class values. New Wave Left films and the literature on which the films were adapted explore the working-class border character who breaks from his/her community and remains sutured to it. But it will be shown that the literature either does not take on wider social views or if a social perspective is engaged such knowing is destructive and individuated and does not lead to positive, committed

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<sup>23</sup>Hewison, *In Anger*, 182.

social change from a broad Williamsian social perspective. Chapter Five will argue that even though NWL films take on a similar pessimism about social progress, they are committed because they construct a “border” position for the film audience that engenders critical, objectified social views.

Williams’s dynamic realism was denied at the moment when positive social change seemed viable. Williams sought a popular and open cultural production and extended education that would lead to humane social structures and a whole way of living. But working against Williams’s outcomes was an expanding industrial/capitalist-controlled commercial mass media that was enveloping the nation’s social imagination. Williams’s literature, though, sought areas of social extension in which positive change was possible through a complex understanding of the social relationships. This chapter will contrast Sillitoe’s “Nottingham” protagonists, who were connected to and isolated from their working-class community, to Williams’s brand of social realist literary work.<sup>24</sup> Arthur Seaton’s (*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, 1958 [SNSM]) and Colin Smith’s (*Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, 1959 [*Loneliness*]) stuttering pursuit of an authentic life becomes untenable. They are stuck in a disappointing existence. Chapter Four will analyze the early work of Delaney and Storey, focusing on the literature adapted for NWL films. In the play *A Taste of Honey* (1958), an adolescent girl abandons her attempt to find authentic connections. Compromise becomes loss, and loss is

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<sup>24</sup>“Nottingham” work refers to the autobiographical Seaton trilogy--*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958) [SNSM], *The Key to the Door* (1961), and *The Open Door* (1989)--and two short-story collections--*The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1959) [*Loneliness*] and *Men, Women and Children* (1973). The “border character” is found in the pre-1960 works.

reclaimed through reconciliation with her mother.<sup>25</sup> The protagonist of Storey's *This Sporting Life* (1960) lives between two deadening forces--working-class provincialism and the empty values of the middle and upper-classes. In this emotional void he becomes cynical and disconnected from both classes; he can find temporary meaning within the cooperation of team Rugby play. These two chapters will show that, finally, this literary work did not engage New Left social change because these writers predicted social failure and/or dismissed social influence as irrelevant to individual experience.

### **Novels of Raymond Williams: Benchmark for dynamic realism**

According to Williams, his literary work was written to explain, exemplify, and argue for New Left dynamic realistic fiction. In his novels, he attempted to ground theory indirectly within the narrative and directly through the characters' arguments. In *The Long Revolution* (1961), Williams called for a socially realistic literature that described the complexity of social conditions, "first in education, second in means of communication," that reflected the actualities of emerging social groups, communicated through the "real structure of the society, so that both writers and audiences can come through in their own terms."<sup>26</sup> As shown, he opposed Marxist tendency literature and *socialist* realism because of its programmatic rhetoric. A complex realism was needed to get to actual depictions of social conditions that included "a place, a community, a type of work, families, collective actions, failures to act, solidarities, divisions,

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<sup>25</sup>It will be argued in Chapter Five that in the film the "honey" of life is irredeemably lost, and it is the filmic ending that reflects the New Left take on middle-class hegemony.

<sup>26</sup>Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001), 270.

factions, struggles, local victories, defeats, changes of mind, [and] emigrations.”<sup>27</sup> Williams’s social realism was a complex, contradictory social picture that synthesized discussion of labor issues with the story of family dynamics and the working-class scholar’s search for place and authenticity.<sup>28</sup> This broad social inquiry was intended as a cultural ground for New Left positive change.

In his working-class Welsh trilogy--based on his own experiences--Williams presented his ideas of positive social formations through the story of two families.<sup>29</sup> According to Laing, Williams sought a fictional form that recognized the nature of working-class intelligence and how its members were connected to family and political commitment.<sup>30</sup> Sinfield contrasted Williams’s attitude to other left writers who treated the working class as incapable of social insight.<sup>31</sup> The inherent intelligence of the working class can be seen in the astuteness of the working-class father in *Second Generation* (1964). Harold Owen is aware of the national context of union action. Local grievances are part of a larger societal causality:

In a real sense, it seemed to Harold, the [local] issue was less important than the total situation, but that didn’t mean that a dispute over the particular issue was irresponsible. People lived, after all, in total situations. It was the whole life that counted.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Raymond Williams, “Working-Class, Proletarian, Socialist: Problems in Some Welsh Novels,” in *The Socialist Novel in Britain: Towards the Recovery of a Tradition*, ed. H. Gustav Klaus (Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1982), 112.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 111.

<sup>29</sup>See, *Border Country* (1960), *Second Generation* (1964), and *The Fight for Manod* (1979).

<sup>30</sup>Stuart Laing, *Representations of Working Class Life, 1957–1964* (London: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1986), 77. Professor Laing is Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Brighton and recently wrote on Robert Tressell’s *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*.

<sup>31</sup>Sinfield, *Literature, Politics*, 257.

<sup>32</sup>Raymond Williams, *Second Generation* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1988), 294–95.

At the same time, Harold senses the limits of his and the union's ability to make radical changes.<sup>33</sup> This self-taught auto worker is capable of expressing Williams's idea that the whole life of the society is a coherence that must be lived locally.<sup>34</sup>

Williams's socially realist literature and its complex descriptions of a whole society were based on his working-class Welsh background, Oxford education, and adult teaching experiences. For Williams, the social realist writer needed a broad, complex perspective in order to capture the social coherence of a whole society and not assume that class differences were irreconcilable. His literature presented an interaction of contradictory social feelings and hidden class identities and was intended to push the reader to broader, more complex ways of seeing the characters entwined within a period-specific, whole social environment. This unifying "structure of feeling" is evident in *Second Generation* in the auto workers' union march through a northern manufacturing city. Descriptions of the march coalesce with the complex energy of the entire city--the police escort, traffic in the streets, people on the sidewalks, Christmas displays in store windows, and the university. This sense of interaction of many social forces is clearly felt at the moment the march ends:

There was still excitement all around them. It was only when the marchers began to merge in the crowded streets of the centre that the sense of the occasion ended. By the time Beth and Peter had got to the crossroads, the city looked normal again, in its undirected press of people and traffic.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Sinfield, *Literature, Politics*, 257 Sinfield contrasts this character with the working-class protagonists in *Loneliness* and *SNSM*, whose rebellions are individualistic and disconnected from any broader social change.

<sup>34</sup>At times, Harold's working-class voice takes on Williams's academic construction. For example, Harold notes that television newscasts are infected with a way of seeing that establishes the union striker as a "character in a play" who is seen as the "villain," and that this foments a mass-mind attitude. Any positive change in this way of seeing, according to Harold "breaks at home or nowhere.... That isn't the system." Harold's acuity is partially explained by his adult education and wife's tutoring.

<sup>35</sup>Williams, *Second Generation*, 204.

Each novel ends in a troubled synthesis of various ways of seeing society that sets the ground for, if not positive change, a hope for such change with a more enlightened public.

Williams's Welsh trilogy follows the lives of two socially committed scholarship boys who reflect Williams's ideas. In *Border Country* (1960), Matthew Price, a newly married academic, returns to his rural Welsh home because his father is dying. Matthew struggles to make sense of his two ways of being--working class and academic. In the end, he reconciles and validates his feelings through a synthesis; his working-class past informs and authenticates his scholarly investigation of social relationships.

Stuart Laing argued that Williams's next novel, *Second Generation*, also reconciles contradictory ways of social seeing; Williams presents a "wide range of social situations and types" that shows the contrastive elements within the industrial city by exploring a variety of relationships--familial, sexual, and political.<sup>36</sup> Like Matthew Price, Peter Owen, a graduate student, and his mother Kate, a union activist, are educated. They suffer social contradiction that, in the end, is synthesized through the authenticity of their class experiences. Kate feels restricted by her domesticated life and turns away from her politically active, working-class husband and has an affair with an upper-class academic with whom she works in a Labour Union committee. But she discovers that Arthur Dean is individualistic and a petit bourgeois; social worth is located within her own class. Similarly, Peter finds meaning and commitment when he lets go of certain academic and class "shadows" and engages authentic relationships built from the values of his class. Academia's static structure and established paradigms get in the way of

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<sup>36</sup>Laing, *Representation of Working Class*, 78.

seeing the problems of society clearly, in other words, in all its complexity. Like Williams, he abandons his doctoral work and commits to “real work, respectable work, work that has currency.”<sup>37</sup> His work would be as authentic and connected as his working-class father’s tireless commitment to the auto workers’ union.

The third novel in Williams’s trilogy, *The Fight for Manod* (1979), explores the collaboration of an older Matthew Price and Peter Owen as they expose international corporate hegemony influencing a local Wales community development project. Peter advocates an outright revolution, while Matthew, who does not deny that illegalities have occurred, accepts that positive social change can come about through various approaches; outside control could be positive for local change. The novel ends hopefully; the powers in London see Matthew’s point; effective community planning requires that power incorporate the needs and feelings of the local people.<sup>38</sup>

In Williams’s novels, social understanding was only possible through an authentic connection to one’s class. In *Border Country*, Matthew is forced to examine his life and the social situation as he moves between classes. In the end, his father exemplifies a complete life as opposed to his neighbor, Morgan Rosser, who, disillusioned by the loss of the General Strike of 1926, abandons the union to achieve material wealth; thus, Morgan betrays his authentic, connected self. But, only Matthew, from his outsider’s position, is capable of understanding British social limitations. He finds hope in his father’s commitment to positive change. Further,

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<sup>37</sup>Williams, *Second Generation*, 307.

<sup>38</sup>Williams’s *The Volunteers* (1985) follows similar themes in a story of international political intrigue.

he locates his own authentic position within his working-class experiences, and, only in this way, can he live “his immediate fate all the way through.”<sup>39</sup>

Williams’s broad social view was expressed through the experiences of the working-class scholar who leaves and then returns to his class roots. Unlike Hoggart’s middle-class scholarship boy, the problems of Williams’s working-class scholar are potentially congruent with wider social problems. He is in the best position to discern social problems because of his dichotomous class experiences and education. The working-class academic becomes aware of his in-between position, and it is this realization that reveals the weaknesses of the social situation. In *Second Generation*, Peter Owen, unlike his working-class father or his middle-class academic mentor (his intellectual father), lives a painfully disconnected existence; and like Matthew Price, he synthesizes a new awareness of how to be authentic and to commit to positive social change. Williams’s protagonists must work through “social, cultural, ideological and generational conflicts” in order to gain new insights about a troubled society and to engage an energized commitment.<sup>40</sup>

Williams’s novels worked through the complexity of social forces. Social progress could not be accomplished through purely socialist means but through recognition of the value of working-class experiences. But authentic working-class values were being undermined by outside forces; factory owners considered profits and not human lives; the union was a confused

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<sup>39</sup>Ryan Kiernan, “Socialist Fiction and the Education of Desire: Mervyn Jones, Raymond Williams and John Berger,” in *The Socialist Novel in Britain: Towards the Recovery of a Tradition*, ed. H. Gustav Klaus (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982), 174. The phrase “living all the way through” is found in other Williams’s novels. It is a call to be uncompromising in making socially connected, authentic personal choices.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 173.

conflagration of local parts. Academia had insights but was limited to ivy-walled, disconnected theorizing. Each institution was isolated and not willing to consider the wider implications of its actions. In *Second Generation*, Peter accuses his dissertation mentor of “being scared, really, of being anyone. It might not fit the institution.” Peter must find “the connection between work and living.” Rather than seeking social realities, his mentor filters social description through established paradigms, from a cloistered and culturally controlling position, all of which blocks valid insights. The university becomes the “respected enemy.”<sup>41</sup>

In addition to seeing social complexities, Williams’s working-class academic is capable of recognizing that a whole and authentic life is opposed by hegemonic forces. Social imagination is restricted by organized academia, and middle- and upper-class ways of being. This control has set a “perfect ... trap” for the working class which holds the key to authentic living.<sup>42</sup> In *Second Generation*, at a political meeting to discuss international affairs with representatives of an African country, Peter points to Dean’s position and the need for the working class to break from class control:

You have this manner that’s the ultimate weapon, that makes the rest of us feel so wrong and ridiculous we simply throw our own strengths away. We give up our causes and our voices to become like you, and then you congratulate us, and what sounds like England tells us we’re right. I tell you the opposite. I tell you you’re wrong. I tell you England must be won back from you, urgently and completely, or we shall all die.<sup>43</sup>

Former colonial nations were learning the same lesson, which would change the international landscape. Positive change, locally and between nations, would need to be radical and would

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<sup>41</sup>Williams, *Second Generation*, 252.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 306.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 318.

begin with conscious understanding of power. The “palliatives” of British “charity” needed to be understood, in order to give way to equality of developed and developing nations. According to the African minister in *Second Generation*, “You will learn with us, as with your own working class, that the only solution, the first stage of solution, is to pay a just price.” This would require that both sides find “common interests” as “comrades,” for “if you see us as competitors, the suffering will continue.”<sup>44</sup> Bourgeois capitalism, the progenitor of colonialism, cannot also establish humane ways of living. From this point of view, the British class system needed to reform by learning the values of working-class authenticity, by “playing it straight, all the way through.”<sup>45</sup>

For Williams social change is difficult; it scars the committed individual, physically and emotionally. The effort towards positive movement can destroy the individual caught in a disintegrating society. In *The Fight for Manod*, the pressure of the effort results in Matthew having a heart attack during the final city planning meeting. Ryan Kiernan, a scholar in Renaissance and modern British literature, showed how *Second Generation* looks at the effect of “subtly enervating hegemonic strategies” on the politically committed. It reveals “a grim initiation in the realities of blockage and containment encountered by the craving for another way.”<sup>46</sup> Harold, the working-class local union leader, suffers from poor health. His marriage is broken, and he is isolated from his educated son, so that “like an invalid, with his glasses off, unshaven, and without his teeth, he looked very much older.”<sup>47</sup> Kate feels she is trapped in her

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 320.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 325.

<sup>46</sup>Kiernan, “Socialist Fiction,” 175.

<sup>47</sup>Williams, *Second Generation*, 286.

dull working-class domestic life. She seeks the freedom of an intellectual life through an affair with a union leader. After much suffering, she realizes that an intellectual life based on middle-class liberal politics is empty of authentic values.<sup>48</sup> Peter is unsettled and suffers from his confused commitment both politically and emotionally. In *The Fight for Manod* those in the fight always carry the hardships of the struggle. Despite personal losses to those on the front line, these works call for a continuation of their efforts for change.<sup>49</sup>

Further, the difficulty faced by those seeking change is balanced by others who are uncommitted, but right thinking. In *Second Generation*, Myra and Gwyn Owen, sister-in-law and brother to Harold, and next door neighbors, support union actions but are not personally involved. Though uncommitted, they are living the complexity of working-class values and become the model for an authentic relationship. As Peter discovers his own strengths within what he knows and feels, he turns from Rose Swinburne--a shallow upper-class intellectual--to Beth--the daughter of a correct-feeling mother:

‘You’re just stupid Mrs. Swinburne,’ Beth said, staring forward, ‘Not because you’re immoral but because you’re nothing. What he had with you he could get anywhere, and the only pity is it was still nothing. I’ve given him nothing either, though at least I’ve tried. And that’s how it is, what you call reversion. We’re trying to begin, that’s all. To begin where we are, and playing it straight.’<sup>50</sup>

Williams presented opposing approaches to positive social change, one, uncompromising and revolutionary, and the other, inclusive and gradual, engendering broad social consciousness and embracing the “long revolution.” The former is judged ineffective. Rather than violently breaking with the present and starting over in new ways, Williams saw positive change as an

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<sup>48</sup>Kiernan, “Socialist Fiction,” 175.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Williams, *Second Generation*, 320.

evolutionary process emerging from a complex and, at times, ambiguous understanding of present conditions. Harold, in *Second Generation*, cannot fully support union demands that seem unreasonable to him; the needs of supply and demand needed to be considered. In *The Fight for Manod*, Peter seeks outright resistance as the solution to corruption, while Matthew's way forward is inclusive and reconciliatory. Matthew has learned from his father's life and death that there must be a compromise with capitalist rapaciousness. Rebellion against the evils of the system would lead nowhere. One must work for a positive existence, even though success might be partial.

Williams's Welsh trilogy tends to be cautiously optimistic; positive social change was possible. This work embraced Williams's Welsh sense of the British future. He created socially realistic forms to make his arguments for a humane democracy. Despite the pain encountered by those committed to social change, the possible outcome was worth it. According to Kiernan, Williams's novels are "an intensely liminal conjuncture of social, cultural, ideological and generational conflicts through which the protagonist must painfully work his way before at last emerging, charged with a deeper understanding of his whole personal and social situation and with the renewed political energy and committed will to transform."<sup>51</sup> For Williams the committed working-class novel could show defeat and yet remain positive in its overviews. Alternatives are revealed which act as "springboards for new struggles or as lessons for final victory."<sup>52</sup> Defeat is expressed in these terms in *The Fight for Manod*; the question about what is

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<sup>51</sup>Kiernan, "Socialist Fiction," 174. Though Kiernan uses the male pronoun, in *Second Generation* Kate, also, chooses authentic relationships with her neighbors, husband, and son.

<sup>52</sup>Williams, "Working-Class, Proletarian, Socialist," 117–18.

to be done to the community is left unanswered, but the ground for the debate is opened. Most importantly, underlying conditions are exposed; hegemonic control is revealed.<sup>53</sup>

Finally, though, for Williams this was the limit of the working-class novel. By the end of the 1970s Williams was not confident that Matthew Price's conciliatory attitude towards capitalist interests could lead towards an authentic British community. Looking forward, Williams sensed a "contemporary sadness" that arose from "the relationship between a wholly possible future and the contradictions and blockages of the present."<sup>54</sup> He would see that New Left hope forged in postwar England was a kind of nostalgia, and that the failures of the Labour Party along with 1950's economic successes and "unproblematic perspectives" had engendered complacency. Consumerism had blunted working-class values. Positive action based on an authentic way people lived had become problematic and was evident in "all of the sadness that came when we began to understand reproduction and incorporation, not just as concepts but as the wearying and displacement of flesh and blood."<sup>55</sup>

At the same time, Williams looked to a broader social picture that inspired hope because culture and society "will continue to change."<sup>56</sup> But he was aware of a need to compromise with a recalcitrant right. His "both-ways" attitude established a vision of the working-class novel as including visions that are both bourgeois and working class, both a "pure passion for a different world" and a recognition of the realities of capitalism. At the end of the 1950s, the positive

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<sup>53</sup>In both *The Fight for Manod* and *The Volunteers* a hidden international capitalist organization seeks to take control of local structures. The exposure of the hegemonic "other" drives the plot towards a positive outcome.

<sup>54</sup>Williams, *Politics and Letters*, 294.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 295.

<sup>56</sup>Laing, *Representation of Working Class*, 270.

attitude of Williams's Welsh novels was met by resignation in the working-class literature of Alan Sillitoe.

### **Alan Sillitoe--The ambivalent "New Left" socialist**

The literature adapted for NWL films dealt in balanced ways with working-class subjects. For Hewison, this literature "indicates a respect for their [working-class] subject matter that neither idealizes it nor fails to criticize the conventional view of life that pretends that such truths are extraordinary."<sup>57</sup> But this literature did not support New Left goals. Rather, it described the degradation of working-class values and the assimilation of the working class into the middle class. In each there is a sense of irretrievable loss. Nevertheless, these works pointed to problems of the social structure identified by the New Left.

Of the three writers to be examined, Alan Sillitoe can most readily be identified as New Left. His New Left leanings are evident in articles he wrote in the late 1950s and 1960s calling for committed working-class literature and a publishing system more accepting of non-traditional work. In the introduction to the 1962 re-issue of Robert Tressell's pre-World War I, anti-capitalist, working-class novel, Sillitoe's descriptions of early-century social problems echoed New Left concerns.<sup>58</sup> These included a call for literature whose social content reached beyond a focus on the individual and for work that reflected working-class values. For Sillitoe, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* (1914) was "the first good novel of English working-class life." It had a "correct perspective by relating [ordinary people] to society as a whole."<sup>59</sup> It was concerned with "class war" in which tragedy arose out of structured denial of self-expression that

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<sup>57</sup>Hewison, *In Anger*, 182.

<sup>58</sup>Sillitoe's introduction is cited as 1964; the edition of Tressell's novel is 1962.

<sup>59</sup>Robert Tressell, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* (London: Monthly Review Press, 1962), 2.

led to a loss of self respect and dignity and then a lapse of morality and a concern only with one's own needs. Solutions could not come from what was given but needed to begin within the "heart" of the working class and lead to revolution.<sup>60</sup>

Like the protagonist in Tressell's work, Sillitoe was politically active. He organized a sit-down strike at the bike factory at which he worked as a young man because of the heavy-handed way management controlled employee leave, and he argued with fellow workers over injustices of the social system.<sup>61</sup> Further, while receiving mandatory military training, he argued for the Labour Party with conservative-leaning recruits from London.<sup>62</sup> But unlike the middle-class Tressell, Sillitoe used his working-class experiences as a platform to argue that social progress in postwar Britain had failed. He rejected both the disruptive hegemony of the ruling class and the elitism of Soviet-influenced British socialism. Sounding like Williams, Sillitoe called for writers to expose social structures that blocked social realities.

A miasma of falsity was spread by those who assumed that their opinions were the same as everyone else's--and therefore the only ones that mattered--such hypocrisy stifling every aspect of life. These purveyors of conformism did not know about the great majority of people, and did not care to consider them as worthy of notice. When they did not fear or hate them, they wanted them to be in perpetual thrall to values which the complacent upper few per cent had decided, because they were their own, were the only ones worth living by. This included those socialists and left-wing commentators who also thought they knew how people ought to live, but would never live like it themselves.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Like Williams, Sillitoe recognized the whole life nature of a society. In an introduction to a memoir on Che Guevara, Sillitoe agreed with the revolutionary's belief in a "common conscience" that can lead to social change by rejecting entrenched power. Sillitoe saw the openings to new possibilities and "a socialist humanity for the whole earth." Alan Sillitoe, "'Che' Guevara," in *Mountains and Caverns: Selected Essays by Alan Sillitoe* (London: W. H. Allen, 1975), 126.

<sup>61</sup>Alan Sillitoe, *A Life Without Armour: An Autobiography* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995), 60–62.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, 235.

Furthermore, like Williams, Sillitoe was concerned with how new communication technology was being used to control the national imagination.<sup>64</sup> Sillitoe argued that social change was hampered by traditional class-based ways of thinking, perpetuated by mass media. New technologies could improve everyone's lives but were being used to support a capitalist-controlled mass media that had "brainwashed" the population to see traditional systems and "cut-throat private business" as reasonable institutions. Similar to Williams, Sillitoe argued that "words" were key to making positive changes, but progressive socialist writers were hampered by the publishing system. Writers who wanted to protest the misdirected use of new technologies were forced to go against publishers who supported their work.<sup>65</sup>

Like the New Left, Sillitoe called for work by committed working-class writers. He urged working-class writers to ignore critics advising them to expand their work beyond their experiences; rather, they should write about what they know and "transpose what is observed to an artistic and absorbing shape on paper."<sup>66</sup> Working-class writers needed to stop focusing on their youth and to expose readers to the social and political condition of their lives. They needed to "break the aura of complacency that television, radio and the press is building up about the great big fact of our modern life: the hydrogen bomb."<sup>67</sup> They must use "art as a hidden persuader" to spur the working class to action which the "crude propagandists of the 'thirties found impossible."<sup>68</sup> Concerned that "proletarian novels" were being read chiefly by the middle

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<sup>64</sup>Alan Sillitoe, "Proletarian Novelists," *Books and Bookmen*, August 1959, 13.

<sup>65</sup>Alan Sillitoe, "Both Sides of the Street," *Times Literary Supplement*, 18 July 1960, 435.

<sup>66</sup>Sillitoe, "Proletarian," 13.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid. See also, Sillitoe, "Both Sides of the Street," 435.

class, he urged working-class writers to create work accessible to the lower class whose imaginations were gripped by pulp magazines.<sup>69</sup>

In New Left fashion, Sillitoe called for artistic freedom unencumbered by literary conventions from the left. In a 1963 article in the *World Marxist Review*, he lambasted Soviet control of the artist. Similar to Williams, Sillitoe argued that the committed writer was valuable only if his goal was to get to the complex reality of his own life and to “relate it to the social life around him.”<sup>70</sup> The effective writer said “yes to life” and pointed at what was working and what needed to change. Echoing Williams’s critique of socialist “tendency” writing, Sillitoe argued that effective writing could not engage socialist rhetoric, for “the more ‘literature’ is expected to teach people directly, the less it can inspire.” Again in New Left fashion, he urged that a socialist society needed open literary production, for “a society stands and falls by the art it produces.” The nonconformist writer must have a place to thrive: “A fair balance has to be achieved, in place of domination.”<sup>71</sup> And, unlike mass media produced on the left or right, only the true artist supplies worthwhile direction in an aimless world.<sup>72</sup>

Though New Left social descriptions and concerns were evident in Sillitoe’s early thinking, he felt that “the country was dead from the neck up, and the body was buried in sand.”<sup>73</sup> For Sillitoe, Tressell-like socialist efforts led to complacency. Sillitoe cannot be seen as

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<sup>69</sup>It will be pointed out in Chapter Five that Lindsay Anderson made a similar argument in his short documentary *O Dreamland* that popular entertainment was degrading to working class sensibilities.

<sup>70</sup>Alan Sillitoe, “Through the Tunnel,” in *Mountains and Caverns: Selected Essays by Alan Sillitoe* (London: W. H. Allen, 1975), 100.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>73</sup>Sillitoe, *Life Without Armour*, 235.

“New Left” for several reasons.<sup>74</sup> First, he engaged in Leavis-style elitism. Though he called for change, and for a politically activated and socially knowledgeable working class, in the end, he was frustrated with his class. Second, Sillitoe’s political statements were contradictory and general. Third, after his early “Nottingham” work describing local working-class conditions, his later *William Posters* trilogy (1965 - 1974) argued for individual fulfillment and social anarchy.

Unlike his later work, Sillitoe’s early stories could have facilitated New Left social realist descriptions because the working-class protagonists remain within the community and are forced to deal with its disjunctions. The Nottingham hero is both settled and unsettled, belonging to and isolated from his social group. He identifies with his class, but chafes against it; he feels connected to the communal “us/them” attitude but, unlike his neighbors, he is aware of social loss. He is both of his class and a ghost within it. Isolated and unable to act, he imagines anarchic destruction of all systems. Sillitoe’s unsettled Nottingham hero will be described as a “border” character who exhibits both “us/them” and “me/them” attitudes.

Sillitoe’s ambiguous commitment to New Left socialism will be examined from three directions: (1) Sillitoe’s work engages a version of Hoggart’s “us/them” attitude that superficially parallels New Left social description. (2) The Nottingham protagonist is frustrated with the social condition of his community and nation and strikes out with a mocking attitude and thoughts of violence. (3) Sillitoe’s Nottingham protagonist takes on an irresolvable “me/them” attitude that establishes him as a border character. Not able to leave the community,

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<sup>74</sup>Tressell, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, 3–4. Though economic conditions were different, Sillitoe’s Nottingham work can be compared to Tressell’s novel. In both, working-class individuals and families protect their advantage against others. Discord is created by a capitalist system; yet, a sense of community continues. Sillitoe does not argue for social change as does Tressell. But both end with little hope for positive change. This attitude is emphasized in Sillitoe’s later *William Posters* novels.

he seeks escape from an inauthentic class through sexual conquest, heavy drinking, minor criminal acts, and thoughts of extreme violence. His insights about social conditions hold the potential for New Left ways of seeing social problems; but his individualistic, ironic detachment disallows commitment to positive social change.

**(1) Sillitoe's "Us/Them" Attitude: New Left social change.** In the mid 1950s Richard Hoggart could still describe the English working class as a unified social group. Hoggart generalized that a working-class "us/them" attitude had grown out of a protracted history of class inequality and mistreatment by the middle and upper classes. Further, this communal connection was "born of living close together, that one is inescapably part of a group."<sup>75</sup> Chapter Two showed that the early New Left looked to social descriptions, such as Hoggart's, that established working-class communal values as the model for wider class coherence that could lead to positive social change.

At the same time, Hoggart pointed to external and internal factors disrupting the traditional "working class." Affluence and job security were eroding working-class values and identity. In addition, Hoggart described factors within the class that were diluting older values. The working-class "I'm alright, Jack" attitude pitted the individual against others; each man could take care of himself and his family. Hoggart described other changes: An older sense of tolerance was giving way to an unencumbered and divisive freedom; the older need to live in the present and to 'have a good time while you can' was giving way to a disconnected "progressivism" and "soft mass hedonism"; older forms of skepticism in which the debunking of authority and the ruling class established a sense of class identity was giving way to "an acid

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<sup>75</sup>Richard Hoggart, *Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life, with Special References to Publications and Entertainments* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1971), 80.

refusal to believe in anything” and a “couldn’t care less attitude”; and, the older sense of group was giving way to an “arrogant and slick conformity.”<sup>76</sup>

But Hoggart ameliorated these dis-unifying tendencies; he showed that his analysis echoed “earlier expressions of alarm”; for descriptions of change “can easily be exaggerated,” and social change always meets resistance. The older sense of the working class was resilient and “in private areas of life, people can still draw to a large extent upon older promptings.”<sup>77</sup> Further, the working-class man was “not so much an individual with ‘a way to make’ as one of a group whose members are all roughly level and likely to remain so.”<sup>78</sup> Finally, for Hoggart, identity to one’s class continued, despite financial security.

Sillitoe’s autobiographical, critical writing, and political action reflected the Hoggartian “us/them” working-class feeling.<sup>79</sup> As shown, he engaged in political acts supporting unionism and socialism. And, as a writer, Sillitoe’s working-class credentials gave him a platform to argue that social progress in postwar Britain had failed. He called for a rejection of both the disruptive hegemony of the ruling class and the elitism of Soviet-influenced British socialism. In this way,

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 171 See also pp. 273-74.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 174–75.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 80. In this passage, Hoggart described the working “man.” As Brook points out, Hoggart’s descriptions of the stay-at-home, working-class woman goes along with a New Left reliance on romantic literary depictions of the working class, featuring male experiences. Further, men are depicted as romantic examples of physical masculinity, while women serve them and keep their homes, so that “women are associated with an anesthetized version of the family which upholds moral values rather than being seen as a terrain for politics.” Susan Brook, *Literature and Cultural Criticism in the 1950s: The Feeling Male Body* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 42.

<sup>79</sup>Sillitoe asserted that he had “never been involved with the class business.” Alan Sillitoe, interview by Alan Winson (London home, 1996). Sillitoe described his upbringing as “poor” rather than working class. Following the postwar Labour Party victory, he read about “an egalitarian society coming about” and “did not quite understand what was meant, never having felt anything except equal .... To be told that I was equal was as impertinent as being informed that I was not.” See Sillitoe, *Life Without Armour*, 86.

Sillitoe engaged in the Hoggartian “us/them” divide. This can be shown in his autobiographical Nottingham work.<sup>80</sup> The Seaton men defied authority, whether it was local law enforcement, the means test man, a union organizer, or the military. Favorite Sillitoe characters include the military deserter and petty thief who challenge authority. See, *Loneliness*, “Noah’s Ark” (1959), and *The Ragman’s Daughter* (1964), in which stealing is a reasonable act against “them.”<sup>81</sup> Clearly, Sillitoe’s working-class protagonists opposed authority on many levels. According to Stanley S. Atherton, lecturer in English and Canadian literature, Sillitoe’s Nottingham characters act

belligerently when threatened by *them*, whether they are directly involved in a personal confrontation or finding themselves affected by the impersonal procedures of government. In the latter case they denounce even the most ordinary powers of government, such as levying and collecting taxes, enforcing law and order and waging war, for they consider the exercise of such power to be further efforts by *them* to ‘live on your back ... [to] tread you down.’<sup>82</sup>

Working-class antagonism to authority is evident in attitudes towards the military and police that “underlines their mental habit of associating government with *them*.”<sup>83</sup> In *Key to the Door* (1961), two working-class children, Brian and Bert, enjoy “the agreeable vision” of a

Nevertheless, his biographical, critical, and literary work denies this position. Possibly, the term “working class” was distasteful to him because of its middle-class origins.

<sup>80</sup>Sillitoe’s Nottingham work, drew directly from his early experiences living in northern England. He wrote about the Seaton family in *SNSM and A Key to the Door* (1960). Nottingham work also includes collections of short stories--*Loneliness* and *The Ragman’s Daughter* (1960). He returned to his Nottingham neighborhood with a third series of short stories published in 1973--*Men, Women and Children*. He revisited the Seaton family in *The Open Door* (1989) and at the end of their lives in *Birthday* (2001), but these two later works do not reflect his earlier feelings.

<sup>81</sup>Alan Sillitoe, *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner* (New York: Plume, 1959). “Noah’s Ark” is an amusement ride in a traveling carnival on which young Arthur stole rides. In *The Ragman’s Daughter* a working-class youth falls in love with the beautiful daughter of a former working-class man who had become rich. Their relationship is based on the thrill of stealing.

<sup>82</sup>Stanley S. Atherton, *Alan Sillitoe: A Critical Assessment* (London: W. H. Allen, 1979), 82.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 84–85.

“copper” drowning when he dives in to save the Guy Fawkes doll they have thrown in the canal.<sup>84</sup> In *SNSM*, as well as in *Key to the Door*, two Seaton cousins desert the military during WWII and elude authorities with the help of neighbors and family. Or, immediately following his incarceration in a borstal for stealing food for his family, one Seaton cousin refused to serve in the military, saying, “Do yer think I am going to fight fer them bastards, do yer?”<sup>85</sup> And Arthur Seaton completed his military service on his own terms. Animosity towards authority in Sillitoe’s Nottingham stories extended to labor unions and the Labour Party. Working-class support for the Labour Party was a result of a greater distrust of “them” who supported the Conservative Party. But the Labour Party, too, was seen as “them.” Brian described the Labour Party as “that sympathetic organization,” but he distrusted it “because all big names seemed like a devil’s threat to hold his soul in thrall.”<sup>86</sup>

Despite similarities to Hoggart’s “us/them” feeling and New Left social descriptions, Sillitoe did not see opportunity for positive change; his working-class literature cannot be a model for New Left positive social change, in the same way as Williams’s due to three factors: (a) For Sillitoe, the English working class was disappointingly becoming middle class. (b) Sillitoe’s working-class stories are local and not concerned with wider social problems. There is no broad social consciousness in Sillitoe’s early Nottingham work; the focus is on the embattled family and local concerns; and wider social ramifications are not considered. And (c) related to the first factor, Sillitoe’s Nottingham protagonists are critical of the working class and reject what this group was becoming; this attitude sets them apart from others and establishes their

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<sup>84</sup>Alan Sillitoe, *Key to the Door* (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1961), 132–33.

<sup>85</sup>Alan Sillitoe, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, 1979 ed. (London: Harper Perennial, 1979), 130.

<sup>86</sup>Sillitoe, *Key to the Door*, 134–35.

border identity within the community. Of course, in similar ways Williams's protagonists were on a border between middle-class academia and their working-class origins. But for Sillitoe the border position does not open insights to positive social change, and in his later novels the male protagonist abandons the community; he sees no chance for positive change within a stagnated English social structure. He opts for anarchy or escape from England in order to fight what he judges as worthwhile battles.

**(a) Working class is moving towards the middle.** Unlike Williams, Sillitoe's Nottingham work cannot be seen as a model for New Left social change, because, for Sillitoe, the working class was irretrievably becoming middle class; self worth was not an outcome of communal identity but was based on the individual's ability to become a successful consumer. For Sillitoe, what had been an integrated working-class community with certain socialist tendencies was being undermined by council housing developments; suburban living was destroying the working-class community.<sup>87</sup> Additionally, the working class was employed, but their new affluence was debilitating, in part due to television, a new technology that led to destructive consumerism. In *Loneliness* immediately on receiving her husband's life insurance money, Colin's mother buys a television. She names her son and his friend Mike the "telly boys." For them, television advertisements were better than posters. The sexually loaded advertisements showed that better things were to be had. Commodities seemed more attainable because they seemed present. For Colin they were "flickering around loose half open packets and tins, making you think all you had to do was finish opening them before they were yours, like seeing

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<sup>87</sup>This theme can be found much later in the work of Melvyn Bragg and the first novel of his working-class trilogy--*The Soldier's Return* (1999).

an unlocked safe.”<sup>88</sup> The community was giving way to isolated individuals, watching TV, in their living rooms, focused on buying--or stealing--what they viewed.

Sillitoe’s negative reaction to change in the late 1950s working class resulted from judgments based on pre-1950’s experiences. His feelings are based in an earlier paradigm rather than Williams’s dynamic descriptions of social realism. Sillitoe admitted that in his first novel he was bringing his “experiences from the Forties up into the Fifties.”<sup>89</sup> For this writer an earlier, and more wholesome, rural way of life was becoming inaccessible. Laing argued that for Sillitoe, the working class had been knit together by the English countryside and community, of which scant semblance remained.<sup>90</sup> This accounted for “the occasionally unstable sense of period in the novel, particularly when the experience of the war seems so very recent.”<sup>91</sup> Sillitoe’s novels’ anti-authority feeling to “not be brought within any national consensus,” is grounded in the 1940s. Sillitoe’s family of WWII deserters were inserted into the 1950s but with a new “rebellious mentality,” they rejected the “bread and circuses” of 1950s social reform. Though Sillitoe could say that a few “show some sign of being beyond the reach of dead symbols and false values,” the Nottingham novels emphasized that good living, accumulation of commodities, supported by commercial television, and suburban living, isolated the working class and blunted the older will of the masses to rebel.<sup>92</sup> As Sillitoe argued, “They are being

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<sup>88</sup>Sillitoe, *Loneliness*, 21.

<sup>89</sup>J. Halperin, “Interview with Alan Sillitoe,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 25, no. 2 (1979): 176. Also quoted in Laing, *Representation of Working Class*, 65.

<sup>90</sup>Laing, *Representation of Working Class*, 65.

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.* 66.

<sup>92</sup>Sillitoe, “Both Sides of the Street,” 435.

neutralized by the message of good living, on the supposition that they will stay content as long as enough bread is being given out.”<sup>93</sup>

**(b) Broad social outcomes are absent.** Unlike Williams’s novels in which the local feeling extends to the wider society, for Sillitoe, the “us/them” feeling does not engage a wider working class or engage a broad view on social conditions. Immediate family and friends are the “us” against authority and everybody else. On *Guy Fawkes Night*, Brian and Bert take their homemade doll beyond the borders of their neighborhood to “cajole” money from others in town.<sup>94</sup> In “Noah’s Ark” two local children leave their neighborhood to beg from outsiders at a traveling fair. And when they spend the money on treats, they feel guilty it was not given to their families.<sup>95</sup> The “us/them” feeling diminishes as a Sillitoe character travels out from the community. For instance, Arthur’s aunt collects money from neighbors for a funeral wreath for an old woman who had died on her street. The further she is from home, the less she receives:

At nearly every house they were given a penny or a ha’penny, and at the end of the street they went on into the next, even though the old woman wasn’t so well-known there. Nevertheless, few people would refuse a ha’penny towards a wreath. So off to another street, and then another, the old woman’s name bringing less response on being mentioned after doors had opened to their knock.<sup>96</sup>

At a distant pub the “publican strode over to throw her out.” The local feeling does not extend to a larger working-class feeling.

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid.

<sup>94</sup>Sillitoe, *Key to the Door*, 132.

<sup>95</sup>Sillitoe, *Loneliness*, 115–16.

<sup>96</sup>Sillitoe, *Key to the Door*, 110–11.

The irrelevance of local feelings is evident in Sillitoe's later *William Posters* trilogy (published between 1965 and 1974) in which the protagonist breaks from his class and country. In a stagnated British society, connection to class is rejected and positive social change is impossible.<sup>97</sup> An authentic life would have to be sought elsewhere. Frank Dawley, Albert Handley, and John Handley represent three versions of this attitude. Dawley leaves a factory job, wife and children, and finds hope for positive social change as a mercenary in the Algerian civil war. He must leave England to find commitment and a vital community. Unlike the British, the Algerians with whom he fights are "proud and competent, dedicated and amiable, endlessly suffering and brave." Theirs is the "the combined effort of a whole people."<sup>98</sup> Though they must "fight to the death," they would not "lose [their] sense of humanity, so that in the future ... [they could] recover tenderness, affection, and sensibility in order to build a free and democratic country for the people."<sup>99</sup> Here was the hope for real change that was absent in Britain. He had found a committed community that would help kindle his own "flame of life" absent in his own country and community.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup>*William Posters* trilogy includes: Alan Sillitoe, *The Death of William Posters* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965); Alan Sillitoe, *A Tree on Fire*, reprint, 1967 (Toronto: Grafton Books, 1986); and Alan Sillitoe, *The Flame of Life*, reprint, 1974 (Toronto: Grafton Books, 1986) William Posters is a mythic working-class rebel. The name is inspired by the ubiquitous signs in working-class communities stating, "Bill Posters Will Be Prosecuted." Like the earlier Chartists and General Strikers, he is always on the run as he fights against entrenched power structures. Bill Posters "is half-forgotten, invisible, or completely ignored, but those wags and sparks whose hearts he lodges in sustain that image, keep his furtive ever-enduring figure alive as it flits at dusk or dawn down slum streets from one harbouring district to another" [*Posters*, 18]. By the end of the novel, Posters is "killed" as he runs from authorities through a half-built working-class housing development; an old wall from a "slumland" building falls on him. In this environment, "undernourished and hunted, he never stood a chance" [*Posters*, 308-9].

<sup>98</sup>Sillitoe, *A Tree on Fire*, 304.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>Sillitoe, *The Flame of Life*, 318.

Albert Handley also breaks from British society in order to gain authenticity. Though he stays in England, he uses the fortune he earned as a painter to isolate his family from the surrounding community. He creates a commune that rejects both authority and neighbors. His brother John commits suicide to escape the vacuousness of British life. John is a “shell-shocked” WWII veteran, who spends a decade searching for metaphysical answers to the human condition in the static signals of a wireless radio. In the end, John finds life in England unacceptable and kills himself after writing an anti-war, anti-government letter to his family. The *William Posters* characters reject English social formations and break from the society. By the time he wrote the *Poster* trilogy, Sillitoe believed that the English working-class experience had no relevance to broad, positive social change.

**(c) Border identity and irretrievable loss.** Whereas the *Posters* protagonists break from society, the early Nottingham characters are stuck and live in a contradiction; they exist both within and without the community. In part, this contradiction is a result of a misalignment of work and after work life. Traditionally, working-class literature depicted work--in the factory and the coal mines--as difficult but with a balancing pay-off. For Hoggart, work was not to be enjoyed but was accepted because the communal life surrounding work made the drudgery of labor worthwhile. Sillitoe refocused this attitude: Work needed to have personal meaning. Nottingham characters had skills that would make work meaningful, but there was no opportunity to apply those skills. In a community without meaningful work and without a worthwhile life after work, existence becomes a meaningless round of weekday work and weekend drunks. Unlike his fellow workers, the border character is aware of this untenable condition.

Literary theorist John Brenkman describes the relationship between work and pleasure that aligns with Sillitoe's way of seeing. Brenkman's analysis of the move from a "collective experience to the culture of privatization" informs the sea-change in the 1950s working-class attitude. He describes a discouraging interaction of a meaningless work life and a mass media that controlled the signification of what was produced and, thus, the social imagination.<sup>101</sup> This analysis reflects Williams's (and other's) concern with capitalism's facile ability to secure its hegemony via its control of the "symbolic dimensions of social life." For Brenkman, this relationship results in "serial" rather than associative relationships.<sup>102</sup> The outcome is a public isolated in a desire for things created by mass media.

For Brenkman, modern industrial production separates the "instrumental body" from the "erotogenic body."<sup>103</sup> When working for a wage, the producer is disconnected from what s/he makes and becomes "instrumental"--another industrial tool. New signification can be applied to what is produced; something that was needed becomes a commodity that is desired. Hoggart described work within a traditional working-class community in which the individual led a split existence but remained whole; at work he was disconnected from what he produced, but away

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<sup>101</sup>Brenkman argues that Habermas's "Bourgeois public sphere" disallows the formation of an associative public arena. This cuts off the formation of counter groups and/or "proletarian public sector." This outcome was exacerbated by capitalism's hidden control of the cultural industries and academic institutions, and capitalism's facile ability to evolve and remain dominant. In this way, the things that are bought (commodities) form the subjectivity of the worker who, as worker, is one aspect of the raw materials, and, as consumer, is re-formed and becomes a reflection of symbolic forms that are controlled by capitalist structures. These social relationships result in **seriality** rather than **associative** relationships. John Brenkman, "Mass Media: From Collective Experience to the Culture of Privatization," *Social Text*, no. 1 (Winter 1979): 94–109. In a later paper, Terry Eagleton follows many of these arguments. See *The Functions of Criticism* (1984).

<sup>102</sup>Brenkman, "Mass Media," 94. For origin of the term "serial" relationships, see Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, 1960.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*, 95.

from work, he was part of a worthwhile, social/cultural associative relationship that included “forms of erotic, aesthetic, and religious experience.”<sup>104</sup> But Brenkman points out--and Sillitoe would agree--serial relationships result when a public is without a communal base and has become isolated by mass communication and desire for products they do not necessarily need. In this situation, the meaning assigned to what is produced is controlled, not by the worker, but by the industrialists/capitalists who oversee the mechanisms of symbolism enhanced by a technologically improved mass media. The worker’s needs become secondary to commercially created desires.

Coherent with Brenkman, Sillitoe understood that the working-class yearning for a council house in the suburbs, a new television, and well-made clothes are outcomes of the disassociation of the 1950s society. In *Key to the Door*, Seaton’s grandfather, Merton, is an example of an associative life. As a blacksmith, Merton exemplified Brenkman’s erotogenic connection to work. It angered Arthur Seaton that the life his grandfather represented “had long ago been destroyed to make room for advancing armies of new pink houses, flowing over the fields like red ink on green blotting paper.”<sup>105</sup> In contrast, Arthur’s uncle Doddoe and later on Arthur, himself, have “instrumental bodies.” Doddoe, who had skills of which he was proud, was forced to work as a day laborer, in a machine-like daze of activity.

Arthur Seaton also exemplifies Brenkman’s disassociated body. Working in a bicycle factory, Arthur becomes an “instrumental” extension of his lathe--disconnected from his work.

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid., 94.

<sup>105</sup>Sillitoe, *SNSM*, 205.

The outcome of his mindlessly, repetitive work is a pay packet. Arthur takes on the mechanistic rhythms of his lathe:

Turn to chamfer and drill, then blade-chamfer, swing the turret until my arms are heavy and dead. Quick as lightening. Take out and fix in, shout for the trolley to take it away and bring more on, jotting down another hundred.<sup>106</sup>

His instrumentality follows him after work, as the smells and noises of the factory envelop the neighborhood.<sup>107</sup> Similarly, in *Loneliness*, Colin Smith is a tool of the borstal governor; his body becomes mechanical as he trains to win an inter-school race.

Significantly though, unlike others, Arthur and Colin are not defeated but liberated by their instrumental activities. Their repetitive actions open the possibility for thinking and for insights about the inadequacies of the system. Working at his lathe, Arthur finds that “gradually your actions became automatic and you forgot all about the machine and the quick working of you arms and hands and the fact that you were cutting and boring and rough-threading to within limits of only five-thousandths of an inch.” He is happy as he gets lost in “a favourable rhythm.”<sup>108</sup> And like Arthur at his lathe, the monotony of Colin’s workouts open him up to an understanding of the hegemonic capitalism that reflects Brenkman’s analysis. His body becomes mechanical,

Flip-flap, flip-flap, jog-trot, jog-trot, crunchslap-crunchslap, across the middle of a broad field again .... [my legs] seemed like electric cable and easily alive to keep on slapping at those ruts and roots.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup>Ibid.,38.

<sup>107</sup>Laing makes this point, also. See Laing, *Representation of Working Class*, 121.

<sup>108</sup>Sillitoe, *SNSM*, 39.

<sup>109</sup>Sillitoe, *Loneliness*, 44–45.

He knows he could win the race, but he refuses to be an instrument of the Governor, and in erotogenic fashion, he runs the race for himself. Early in the story he chooses to lose the race; for, by winning he would run “right into their white-gloved wall-barred hands and grinning mugs and staying there for the rest of my natural long life.”<sup>110</sup>

Despite these social realist insights, Sillitoe cannot be considered a New Left writer because he could not see the working class as a social model for positive change. Arthur and Colin are aware of their instrumentality and recognize the social “realities” that could lead to New Left insights and positive action, but, in both cases the outcome is hopelessness and disempowerment. Arthur sees his life is a meaningless round of weekday work and weekend pleasure and gives into it. His rebellious efforts are reduced to an ambiguous cry, “Don’t let the bastards grind you down.” And after losing the Governor’s race, Colin returns to a life of crime.<sup>111</sup>

**(2) Lies and Anarchy/ Desire and Loss.** Sillitoe’s Nottingham protagonists are alienated within their community. Colin Smith’s and Arthur Seaton’s isolation is expressed in both lying and violent thoughts. While at work Arthur considers violent anarchy against authority. If given a chance, he would “blow up the factory ... because that would be something worth doing. Action.”<sup>112</sup> Hope for progress reverts to frustration and anger. Arthur and Colin act out against “others” with practical jokes, lying, and thoughts of anarchy. For Atherton this daydreaming is “simplistic theorizing or fantasized projections of violent retribution to be meted out to *them*.”<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup>Sillitoe, *Loneliness*, 45.

<sup>111</sup>Sillitoe, *SNSM*, 40.

<sup>112</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup>Atherton, *Critical Assessment*, 87–88.

Rather, these violent thoughts reflect a giving into a frustration with social conditions. Arthur dreams about destroying “them” while on mandatory military training:

I lay on my guts behind a sandbag shooting at a target board I know whose faces I got in my sights every time the new rifle cracks off. Yes. The bastards that put the gun in my hands. I make up a quick picture of their stupid four-eyed faces that blink as they read big books and papers on how to get blokes into khaki and fight battles in a war that they’ll never be in--and then I let fly at them. Crack-crack-crack-crack-crack-crack-crack-crack.<sup>114</sup>

He also wants to shoot the tax and rent collectors, and union organizers.

Arthur’s frustration is expressed in anonymous, childish pranks against authority. He disrupts the factory by placing a dead rat in a woman’s work station; he takes revenge against Mrs. Bull, the neighborhood gossip, with an air gun from his second floor bedroom window and nearly blinds her. Childlike, he does not take responsibility for his actions and can easily convince his boss and the police of his innocence. He may see his actions as protests against mean-spirited neighbors or as a way to “kick down his enemies crawling like ants over the capital letter G of Government,” but his childish behavior cannot engage real change.<sup>115</sup>

These anarchic feelings reflect a sense that if change is to happen it must be in great spurts. At the same time, these are banal expressions of frustration over the impossibility of change. In contrast, Atherton sees the anarchy of Sillitoe’s characters following Williams’s gradualism expressed by the “long revolution.” Working-class rebellion indicates a desire for a big change, so that in time “the lines are clearly drawn.” Rather than demanding large, immediate changes, Atherton describes the working class experiencing social change in small

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<sup>114</sup>Sillitoe, *SNSM*, 132.

<sup>115</sup>*Ibid.*, 204.

accretions of progress toward “the social utopia of their dreams.”<sup>116</sup> Day to day, they “must content themselves with small triumphs, with temporary and individual success in skirmishes with *them*.”<sup>117</sup> But Atherton does not describe Sillitoe’s working class. For his protagonists there will be no gradual evolution towards a British egalitarian-socialism; they have given up.

Since there is no opportunity for positive social change, Sillitoe’s protagonists revert to internal and lonely battles against “them.” Arthur knows that he cannot be “the only one” thinking at his lathe, for “one day they’ll bark and we won’t run into a pen like sheep.”<sup>118</sup> But there is no indication that others are capable of seeing social problems with his clarity. In fact, both Colin and Arthur are practiced liars, not only as a way to displace problems but, more importantly, from a desire to shock others into connecting. Arthur must agree with his married lover who says of him, “Of all liars, you’re the biggest I’ve ever known.”<sup>119</sup> Arthur’s lies indicate a deeper frustration and need for honest connection. For example, he connects with his father when he lies about how he will go blind watching TV. Certainly, Arthur lies to protect himself from retribution for his illicit sexual behavior. But when he lies to his fiancé about knowing a man they meet at a bar, he reveals a desire for authentic connection. In fact, he slept with the man’s wife, but his detailed fabrication of their time together in the army exposes both

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<sup>116</sup>Atherton, *Critical Assessment*, 88.

<sup>117</sup>*Ibid.*, 88-89. According to Atherton, Sillitoe is consistent with Hoggart’s “us/them” working-class descriptions. He sees a continuity between Sillitoe’s Nottingham and *William Posters* works. Frank Dawley (*William Posters* trilogy) reiterates Nottingham working-class anti-authority attitudes. He runs guns for Algerian rebels and combats an international “them,” energized by his English working-class values. Rather, Sillitoe breaks with Hoggart. Dawley runs from his past and tries to connect to an Algerian working class. The World War I veteran, John is so disillusioned with 1950s England that he commits suicide. Handley isolates his family in a compound.

<sup>118</sup>Sillitoe, *SNSM*, 202.

<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*, 20.

his feeling of remorse and his desire to connect.<sup>120</sup> Similarly, he lies to his friend Jack while he sleeps with Jack's wife, but he regrets that his actions separate him from his friend. In both cases Arthur sees himself as the wrong-doer and wants his actions to be exposed, not so much from guilt, but from a desire for an authentic connection to the men he has wronged. Similarly, Colin Smith yearns for truthfulness between himself and the borstal Governor, for an honesty that acknowledges class antagonism. He reasons, since the Governor is educated and should have "twigged" Colin's attempt to communicate the true nature of class relations, but the Governor "didn't respect my honesty at all."<sup>121</sup>

Sillitoe's protagonists are frustrated with the breakdown of traditional working-class, communal values. The change of the working class into commodity-driven individuals is summed up in a pivotal episode in *SNSM* in which a drunken man throws a beer mug through a funeral parlor window. The man wants a black remembrance flower vase that he cannot afford for his mother who had died a few weeks earlier. On seeing this, Arthur's feelings are contradictory; he is "stirred by the sound of breaking glass: it synthesized all the anarchism within him, was the most perfect and suitable noise to accompany the end of the world and himself." But he also recognizes an authentic act arising from grounded feelings of loss that are not recognized by a morally bankrupt community. Like Arthur who looks to the past for a connected existence, the middle-aged drunk "seemed to have a stake in two generations."

The man is grabbed by a young woman in a military uniform, who, Arthur senses, had never "been loved." Arthur understands the authentic action of the drunken man and, along with

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<sup>120</sup>Ibid., 212.

<sup>121</sup>Sillitoe, *Loneliness*, 53.

the gathering crowd, urges him to run. His “us/them” attitude is revealed when he yells at the woman, “What good will it do you to hand him over to the coppers? Your sort won’t let a bloke live.” When a policeman arrives the crowd reverses itself and prevents the man from running.<sup>122</sup> This community is in flux; they reveal both authentic support for a neighbor against authority, but easily submit to it. The woman in the military uniform can only see a drunken criminal, while Arthur empathizes with the man’s frustration.

Commitment to social change and individual freedom are not available in Sillitoe’s Nottingham work. Arthur can lie to himself that he will remain a free spirit. In fact, his only choice is a middle class life that he equates with being caught like a fish. Colin Smith chooses the William Posters route and becomes an outlaw--a second story thief--an occupation that will lead to a larger jail.

**(3) Sillitoe’s Me/Them Attitude.** For Sillitoe, positive change is not possible. Arthur and Colin embrace a bifurcated view of community that includes the unity of its “us/them” feelings and the fragmentation of a vacuous, commodity-filled existence in which support for one’s fellow has become a middle class version of “I’m alright, Jack.”<sup>123</sup> Williams’s “whole way of life” and New Left social cohesion are not possible. Sillitoe’s alienated protagonists could open complex social descriptions, but rather than a commitment to positive change, these characters have given up.<sup>124</sup> In this context, Hoggart’s “us/them” is transformed from a potential leverage to engage

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<sup>122</sup>Sillitoe, *SNSM*, 108–13.

<sup>123</sup>It is this break that NWL film directors emphasized and broadened in a poetic treatment of individual characters within a social moment to be discussed in Chapter Five.

<sup>124</sup>Related to this theme of despair is that of being trapped. Like the fish Arthur catches on the weekends, both he and Colin are caught. This seems to be their natural state. Both feel comfortable when literally imprisoned, as if confinement were their natural state. Colin flourishes while in the borstal, and Arthur, tied to his bed by army officials for returning to barracks drunk, blissfully sleeps the day away.

social unrest, to “me/them” in which “them” includes both authority and wrongheaded neighbors who are unaware of their condition.

Like his characters, Sillitoe, inhabited a border position expressed throughout his writing. Leaving England was a “healing process.” Sillitoe’s need to get out of England is reflected in his interest in maps.<sup>125</sup> He described growing up in poverty, without stable relationships. Maps symbolized escape from an abusive father and would “guide me from the place I was in and didn’t want to be in.”<sup>126</sup> Lacking familial connection, he grounded his imagination in the wider world.<sup>127</sup>

Sillitoe’s critically successful early novels and short stories were written in Spain in the mid-1950s.<sup>128</sup> But it is unclear if he left Nottingham due to conditions that he despised, or as a way of gaining objectivity. During his five years in Spain, England “had been very much rubbed away, and its people and the lives they led almost forgotten. I didn’t want to stay [in England] .... The reality of being there seemed to have no relationship to hopes and expectations.”<sup>129</sup> But he also argued that he left England to gain a clearer understanding of conditions at home. In

<sup>125</sup>Sillitoe, *Life Without Armour*, 20. The “escape” theme is evident in the titles of the “Seaton” novels that followed *SNSM--Key to the Door* (1961) and *The Open Door* (1989). A contrast can be made between Sillitoe seeking solutions in escape, and Williams finding solutions in the local. In Williams’s *Second Generation* (1964), Peter Owens, a scholarship boy, is studying working-class dynamics. His former lover, Helen, disillusioned and upper class, urges him to visit Africa where exciting things are happening. Nothing can be done in England: “I mean, honestly, Peter, don’t you feel you have to get out of this country? I mean everything, literally, is so staid and old and self-satisfied and stuffy, you simply can’t believe it when you come back. ...If you stay here you’ll just die by inches.” For Peter real work--social and personal growth--is local (p.314).

<sup>126</sup>Alan Sillitoe, “Maps,” in *Mountains and Caverns* (London: W. H. Allen, 1975), 72.

<sup>127</sup>Sillitoe, “Maps,” 61. Maps and mapping are featured in his work. In *The Open Door* (1989--the last of the Seaton trilogy), British soldier Brian Seaton organizes a dangerous trip into the jungles of Malaya in 1949 in order to develop military rescue maps of the area.

<sup>128</sup>Sillitoe, *Life Without Armour*, 232.

<sup>129</sup>*Ibid.*

New Left fashion he wrote that England was “waiting for someone to illuminate those views and values which they were being told in a thousand ways were something to be ashamed of and ought never to be expressed.”<sup>130</sup>

Sillitoe positioned himself as both a working-class writer and as an outsider. As an insider he could be considered working class. As an outsider he could draw on class experiences to grasp social problems.<sup>131</sup> Like Williams, who called on scholarship boys like himself to produce socially realistic work, Sillitoe called for a new class of writers, who like himself, possessed insights on correct ways forward. Sillitoe described the “revolutionary” writer--or the “men on the left”--who would arise from the lower classes and expose his class’s unreasonable reliance on God and materialism, perpetuated by mass commercialism, and guide them towards a universal human dignity which they were incapable of acquiring on their own.<sup>132</sup>

Like Leavis, Sillitoe placed himself above his class. His was a superior understanding of the social situation. For Sillitoe, the common man’s will to rebel was “being neutralized by the message of good living, on the supposition that they will stay content as long as enough bread is being given out.”<sup>133</sup> The working-class writer “on the left” could break through commercial media’s diverting focus on the “rat in the streets,” and counter these with images of reality showing men in their homes.<sup>134</sup> Unlike Williams, the writer on the left would reject class

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<sup>130</sup>Ibid.

<sup>131</sup>Sillitoe pointed out that this presented a narrative problem. If his protagonists were working class, how could they express ideas beyond their understanding? In *Loneliness* the solution is to make Colin Smith, a writer and, therefore, ostensibly, more insightful.

<sup>132</sup>Sillitoe, “Both Sides of the Street,” 435.

<sup>133</sup>Sillitoe, “Proletarian,” 13.

<sup>134</sup>Sillitoe, “Both Sides of the Street,” 435. Unlike his novels, Sillitoe’s poem “The Rats” (1960) takes a positive stance on social change. Capitalism, commercialism, and organized religion become the “rats”

connection and look beyond class experiences and live ahead of his time and society to show how life “should be, free--beyond and outside the values of the age he lives in.”<sup>135</sup> This writer would live ahead of his time and society and resist the mind-control of the commercial mass media and the “mindlessness of the God-bent society.” He would gain a firm knowledge of social conditions and show others the way forward.<sup>136</sup> Sillitoe disconnected from his community in order to obtain a superior position, so that he could show the rest the way forward. At the same time, he needed to retain his working-class credentials.

Sillitoe’s Nottingham border characters reflected this connected/disconnected tension that had the potential of resonating with New Left descriptions of postwar social problems. Arthur Seaton and Colin Smith are embedded in local problems, but they are not committed to positive change. They are distressed because they recognize the problem, but are incapable of acting. Both live out the problems of a flawed society. Their struggle is local, ambiguous, and unresolved. This is their tragedy.

Arthur’s social isolation--his border state--is emphasized in one episode. As Brenda and Arthur walk towards a club for a drink, following intercourse in the woods, Arthur--luckily--

scurrying underground, unrecognized and able to trick people into submission. The rat-controlled system would have to be destroyed to bring on an ambiguously defined new age of freedom. Change was possible due to the British people’s innate resiliency and ability to recognize the “rat’s” mind control. They would one day sense the loss of authentic connections: “One day you’ll take your best friend’s hand / And feel his fingers turning into sand.” The outlaw is a model of revolt because he opposes the system--the “rats” are “sensitively finding those who pray / For criminal success by some shop door.” The people desire freedom; but they need to rediscover their “ancient fires of obstinate coke,” so that they can get back to “the rich fields” that were “once tilled with freedom and passion-verse,” and return to “THE LIGHT.” Alan Sillitoe, *Alan Sillitoe: Collected Poems* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993), 22–42.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid.. See also, Sillitoe, “Proletarian.”

<sup>136</sup>Sillitoe, “Both Sides of the Street,” 435.

discovers that Jack, Brenda's husband, is at the bar. Before entering, he sends Brenda home and then sits down with Jack, who is in a dark mood. Jack suspects his wife is cheating. During their conversation, Arthur's feeling swings from fear of being discovered, to sympathy for his "friend," who is in distress. He is "a good bloke," and he "wanted to shake his hand and tell him everything, tell him how good he thought he--Jack--was, that he had guts and that he was alright, that he didn't like to see him suffer because of a looney thing like this, of a woman coming between them."<sup>137</sup>

But his desire to connect is interrupted as he takes up an ironic position, observing the activities at the bar. Jack and others are playing darts. Soon, Jack gets involved in a discussion with the barkeeper and darts players about the local football team. Arthur had "heard all about football before." He is not like the men at the bar; his point of view is not available to them. He floats above their banter and observes that theirs is an unexamined life of work and material accumulation. Jack works overtime so he can buy his wife a television. Arthur's feelings are ambiguous; he likes Jack and is glad that his "friend" is "easier in his mind .... [and] had forgotten his troubles." But he cannot connect with Jack in an honest way, for, in this broken society, he is free to continue his affair with Brenda.

Disconnected from the others, Arthur becomes ghost-like. He leaves the bar, unnoticed. Outside, he listens to the disembodied sounds of the men "floating over the grass lawns and tennis courts, strangled there by the bitter cold." He then disconnects from his body as he hears his own "horse laugh ... it echoed around him, seemed to rest upon the tarpaulined roof of the clubhouse, and slide out of sight down the other side of the slanting roof." This disembodiment

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<sup>137</sup>Sillitoe, *SNSM*, 57.

does not last and he is pulled back when he remembers that he will be meeting Brenda the next evening. He then “lit a cigarette and whistled a tune as he walked. The thought made him feel good.” But such ephemeral joy, like everything in his disconnected life, is shallow and easily shattered. For “straying too close to the side of the lane, he tripped over a tree-root. A dozen curses raced from his lips.” Then, like a weightless and disconnected being “he righted himself... [and] laughed, and walked on.”<sup>138</sup>

For the New Left, positive social change would begin with a clear understanding of social conditions. Sillitoe’s Nottingham border characters’ social unsettledness, matched by a desire for change, could have encompassed New Left social realism. But Sillitoe’s work does not take New Left committed positions. Arthur and Colin are disillusioned and removed from the community. Their stories end with disagreeable settlement, not change. They are aware of the incoherencies of their community; despite this, they remain and compromise. Unlike the decisive *William Posters* characters, there is no release in the early work; actions are unresolved and lives are diminished. Understanding social conditions ends in despair, not commitment. Arthur Seaton may want to continue the fight, but he settles for middle-class values. Colin Smith, like Bill Posters, becomes an outlaw. The dichotomous pressure of living locally while detached from local feelings gives dramatic tension to the Nottingham work, but falls short of Williams’s call for a committed, dynamic realism.

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<sup>138</sup>Ibid., 52–59.

Chapter 4  
Social Realism of David Storey and Shelagh Delaney:  
New Left Reflections

For Raymond Williams a complex analysis of social dynamics would be needed to allow for a free-flow of ideas. In his novels Williams demonstrated a New Left aesthetic that would engender a humanist social democracy; such committed literature would reveal hegemonic controls. Working-class literature, in particular, was needed to expose bourgeois-capitalist forces that controlled cultural production. But Williams described the 1950s as an unheroic decade.<sup>1</sup> The political left had made concessions, class conflict continued, and working-class complacency had led to eroded values. Besides his own, Williams could see no working-class, social realistic literature developing.

It is out of this social context of yearnings and failures that this dissertation asks whether certain literature and the films adapted from these works were committed to social realism. As shown, Alan Sillitoe's work is imbued with New Left social concerns. But Sillitoe did not see the possibility of positive social change. This chapter will show that initially critics identified Shelagh Delaney's and David Storey's works--adapted for New Wave Left [NWL] films--as "working-class." These works were seen as engaging authentic working-class experiences; nevertheless, they did not take on Williams's challenge. This analysis will ground arguments to be made in Chapter Five that the filmic adaptations of this literature revealed what could be defined as a New Left aesthetic.

David Storey's first novel, *This Sporting Life* [TSL] (1960), explored themes found in his later work. But unlike his later work in which the protagonist is an "unmoored" scholarship boy,

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<sup>1</sup>Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with the New Left* (London: Verso, 1981), 135.

in *TSL* Arthur Machin, is working-class. Nevertheless, Machin is representative of Storey's later protagonists who are psychologically complex but whose actions are not influenced by social causes. Shelagh Delaney's play--*A Taste of Honey* (1956)--is an exploration of a young woman's search for authentic human connection and ends with an unfavorable reconciliation with her philandering mother. Throughout her limited work Delaney examined the complexity of human relationships across two generations. Her themes emphasize recurrent human sadness and disconnection, and like Storey, Delaney found that, at best, men and women can obtain happiness in brief moments of meaningful, child-like relationships. Except for Delaney's short story "The White Bus" (1961), like Storey, her work does not engage social realism.

### **David Storey--The Divided Working-Class Male**

Mary Eagleton and David Pierce apply Richard Hoggart's descriptions of the working class to Storey's protagonists. As such, community is important to the typical working-class hero of the late 1950s and early 1960s. They "keep in close touch with ... family and neighbors, [and take] part in the common entertainments of the pub, the club, [and] the football match." Hoggart's working class is "aware of its identity [and] suspicious of outsiders, of affection, [and] of being encroached on."<sup>2</sup> They "are angry and frustrated," and those who leave their working-class community feel a loss.<sup>3</sup> These descriptions resonate with Sillitoe's protagonists, but are misapplied to David Storey's working-class characters.<sup>4</sup> Though these descriptions open

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<sup>2</sup>Mary Eagleton and David Pierce, *Attitudes to Class in the English Novel from Walter Scott to David Storey* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1979), 132-33.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 132-133.

<sup>4</sup>For example, Eagleton and Pierce incorrectly applied Hoggart's us/them formula in describing working-class Victor Tolson (Radcliffe, 1963) as angry with authority and refusing to compromise. This character will be explored later in this chapter. Eagleton and Pierce, *Attitudes to Class*, 133.

interpretations that Storey's work is socially committed, it, in fact, does not focus on working-class realism or advocate for positive social change. His work is not concerned with social causes or effects. Nevertheless, Storey agreed, abstractly, with New Left positions. In 1963, Storey echoed Williams's attitudes when he answered the question, "What really matters in British education":

Education is a social process, one which seeks to persuade those unformed elements of our society to recognize and adopt the disciplines essential to an industrial economy. Its diplomas, certificates and degrees ...are now components of the machinery itself.<sup>5</sup>

British education led to "patterns of behaviour" that unconsciously accepted "systems of moral indoctrination," rather than encourage healthy questioning of "tradition and order."<sup>6</sup> Sounding like Williams, Storey called for quality education to be available democratically to the "elite" working-class student, to "ensure more thoroughly that property and social distinction as such give no prerogative of entry."<sup>7</sup> And, as with the New Left, he criticized the Labour Party's approaches to education.

Like Williams, Storey called for innovative artistic forms that represented emerging ways of seeing reality. Storey called for "a tearing and a smashing open" of old forms. He criticized art that was sentimental and artists who engaged in conventional forms and "determined styles."<sup>8</sup> Osborne, Sillitoe, and Braine, lacking a formal education, were not in control of the conventions

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<sup>5</sup>David Storey, "What Really Matters," *20th Century*, Autumn 1963, 96.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 97.

<sup>8</sup>David Storey, "When Artists Sell Out," *Observer*, 30 September 1963.

they used; and, as such, their writing had become “ossified in their polemical attitudes, dearly bought and therefore not easily abandoned.”<sup>9</sup>

It will be shown, however, that Storey’s early novels do not reflect a New Left commitment to positive social change. In fact, such commitment is irrelevant to Storey’s work. Though his working-class experiences informed his writing, his work is not focused on working-class descriptions. Nevertheless, early on, critics identified Storey as a working-class, realist writer. He was grouped with “angry young men” writers like Braine, Wain, Amis, and Wilson, who emphasized class structure and the welfare state.<sup>10</sup> Storey was seen as a realist writer interested in “the external relationships between man and society,” and his working-class protagonist faced the hardships of a “class structured” society.<sup>11</sup> In his 1966 dissertation, Bernard Lockwood argued that, like Ring Lardner’s focus on American baseball, “Storey used the game of rugby as a convenient device to describe an entire society.”<sup>12</sup> According to William van O’Connor, former chair of the graduate program at UC-Davis, *TSL* focuses on social setting:

Life is grim, and the towns and landscape are desolate. The brutality of the rugby matches seems an altogether fitting response to the squalor and desolation, a symbol of it.... Arthur Machin, not unlike John Braine’s Joe Lampton, knows the taste of ashes in his mouth.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>David Storey, “Marxism as a Form of Nostalgia,” *New Society*, 15 July 1965, 23. For similar reasons, Storey criticized British painter Anthony Caro, whose work relied on established, intellectualized forms rather than new insights. Storey, “When Artists Sell Out”.

<sup>10</sup>Jeanne Riley Froeb, “The Fiction of David Storey, John Fowles, and Iris Murdoch” (PhD diss., University of Tulsa, 1977), 4.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup>Bernard Lockwood, “Four Contemporary British Working-Class Novelists: A Thematic and Critical Approach to the Fiction of Raymond Williams, John Braine, David Storey, and Alan Sillitoe” (PhD diss., Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1966), 143.

<sup>13</sup>William van O’Connor, “Two Types of ‘Heroes’ in Postwar British Fiction,” *PMLA* 77, no. 1 (March 1962): 169.

Others compared Machin to the then popular, success-seeking, anti-hero. For one *New York Times* reviewer, *TSL* was a story of a working-class character's run to the top.<sup>14</sup> In 1962, O'Connor described Machin as one of a group of postwar British protagonist who were "rather seedy young [men] and suspicious of all pretensions. ... There is nothing heroic about him. ... He is a comic figure, with an aura of pathos about him." O'Connor argued that Machin was concerned with wealth, celebrity, "social elevation [and] the attention of fast-living girls."<sup>15</sup> In 1962 the *New York Times* review of Storey's second novel took a more positive stance. *Flight into Camden [Flight]* (1960), identified Storey as a writer of social description whose focus was on traditional working-class values.<sup>16</sup> And as late as 1979 Eagleton and Pierce linked Storey with Braine, Barstow, and Sillitoe, all of whom described a triumphant working class that "was not defeated and ground down but still vital and productive and capable of fighting back."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Malcolm Bradbury, "Winning Was All: This Sporting Life," *New York Times*, 30 September 1960, BR68.

<sup>15</sup>O'Connor, "Two Types of 'Heroes'," 168.

<sup>16</sup>Bradbury, "Winning Was All," BR68.

<sup>17</sup>Eagleton and Pierce, *Attitudes to Class*, 131. Katherine Worth also placed Storey within the mainstream of realist writers. Like Wesker's "plain realism," Storey fulfilled the potential of 1920s and 1930s realistic plays. Also, *The Contractor* and *The Changing Room*, like Wesker's *Roots* are "experiments in the faithful recording of ordinary life." Katherine Worth, *Revolutions in Modern English Drama* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1972), 19. Rosenberg compared *TSL* to other working-class novels of the period, such as *Room at the Top* in which the protagonist cannot find a worthwhile life in a materialistic society. Ingrid von Rosenberg, "Militancy, Anger and Resignation: Alternative Moods in the Working-Class Novel of the 1950s and Early 1960s," in *The Socialist Novel in Britain: Towards the Recovery of a Tradition.*, ed. Gustav. H. Klaus (Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1982), 160–61. J.R. Taylor described *The Contractor* as socialist since it is "about--or somehow related to--the decline and fading-away of a capitalist society." John Russell Taylor, *The Second Wave: British Drama for the Sixties* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1971), 145. Later critics described Storey as a social realist writer. Jeffrey Hill used definitions of social realism to analyze Arthur Machin as a flawed male character who was a product of the British postwar period. For Hill, Storey's novel and Anderson's film reflected the "multilayered crisis" in which there was an "absence of forward thinking and a residual post-imperial complacency." Jeffrey Hill, "Sport Stripped Bare: Deconstructing Working-Class Masculinity in 'This Sporting Life,'" *Men and Masculinities* 7 (5 April 2005): 405.

But comparing Storey with these working-class writers is misleading. According to Janelle Reinelt, much would be missed if Storey were considered only as a realist writer. Storey's work is more "figural than mimetic, more composed than transcribed, more philosophical than social."<sup>18</sup> In 1963, John Bowen, English novelist, playwright, and critic, correctly argued that Storey's early work was more than social description; he could not be linked with the "provincials (Sillitoe, Braine, Barstow, Waterhouse), [because] he has shown in only three novels a largeness of conception that has taken him right out of any grouping." Bowen identified the Storey protagonist--both male and female--as split between "two necessary parts of man, strength and sensibility" and the conflict that this division generates.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Laura Weaver contended that Storey's work examined a split of mind and body, emotion and intellect that arose from "concrete personal experience."<sup>20</sup> This opposition is reflected in Lindsay Anderson's impressions of Storey as athlete and intellect; he was "gentle and shy" and quite large; he played professional Rugby and "theorised eloquently ... yet [he was] skeptical of theories, most of all his own."<sup>21</sup>

Storey's themes reflected the dichotomies of his life. Born in 1933, Storey was raised in a Yorkshire mining town. He described growing up in a "curious" and "isolated community in

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<sup>18</sup>Janelle Reinelt, "Storey's Novels and Play: Fragile Fictions," in *David Storey: A Casebook*, ed. William Hutchings (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), 54.

<sup>19</sup>John Bowen, "Literary Letter from London," *New York Times*, 24 November 1963, 231.

<sup>20</sup>Laura H. Weaver, "Journey Through the Tunnel: The Divided Self in the Novels and Plays of David Storey" (PhD diss., Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas, 1977), 3. Storey's exploration of the divided self is analyzed by several writers of the 1970s. See William Hutchings, *The Plays of David Storey: A Thematic Study* (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988); Froeb, "Fiction of David Storey."

<sup>21</sup>Lindsay Anderson, *Lindsay Anderson on David Storey*, On playbill for AFT production of the play, American Film Theatre's "In Celebration" (1975).

the British Isles.”<sup>22</sup> The town's geographical isolation was matched by the “in-growing” character of its inhabitants who were “obsessively puritanical” and expected “absorption within society.” And as such the wealthy were “relatively indistinguishable in appearance from the comparatively poor.” The community's “simple morality” was that “physical work is good, and mental work is evil,” and its puritanical ethos focused on practical concerns, so that “indolence is not so much deplorable or unfortunate as evil.”<sup>23</sup> As a writer and painter Storey was “viewed not merely with suspicion but with condemnation.” The artist's isolation was seen as a threat to community cohesion. Storey was an outsider who was rejected “more effectively” by his family than the community.<sup>24</sup> Though his father accepted him as a teacher, the family needed to “crush the artist,” to eliminate the threat of the outsider.<sup>25</sup>

Storey won a scholarship to the Slade School of Fine Arts in London, but studying to be an artist produced an “inevitable sundering from both his parents and his native region, about which he [felt] both guilt and compassionate understanding.”<sup>26</sup> His father had sacrificed his life in the mines so his son could become a teacher.<sup>27</sup> But Storey's goal was to be an artist and, not wanting to disappoint his father, as well as needing money, Storey joined a professional Rugby team in the north. The southern (London) female and northern (Yorkshire) male world dichotomy became for Storey “the two main premises, or conditions, from which [his] energy as

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<sup>22</sup>David Storey, “Journey Through the Tunnel,” *The Listener*, 1 August 1963, 160.

<sup>23</sup>Storey, “Journey,” 160.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Weaver, “Divided Self,” 4.

<sup>26</sup>Hutchings, *The Plays of David Storey*, 12–13.

<sup>27</sup>Storey incorporated the working-class male character who becomes a teacher in several of his novels--*A Temporary Life*, and *Pasmore*--and plays--*In Celebration* and *Life Class*.

a writer appeared to spring.”<sup>28</sup> As a student and artist he was resented by the hardworking Rugby players and alienated from the puritanical, provincial West Riding community. On the train to and from the Rugby matches, Storey re-read Wyndham Lewis’s *Rude Assignment* (1950).<sup>29</sup> According to Storey, Lewis understood “the artist as a man isolated in an alien society and therefore of necessity clothed in armour of the most rigid and impenetrable design.”<sup>30</sup> Storey became the “armoured protagonist” who survived the “two extremes of [a] northern physical world and its southern, spiritual counterpart.”<sup>31</sup>

His early experiences informed his early novels that examined people struggling with a mind/body split, or what Laura Weaver called the “divided self.” According to scholar William Hutchings Storey’s character’s divided self eventually led to psychic imbalance and, potentially, madness.<sup>32</sup> Storey sought a synthesis of the extroverted and introverted tendencies. Any connected balance, though, was temporary. Unlike Sillitoe’s hero, Storey’s working-class protagonist is not concerned with class or social problems; social causes do not define the character's problems. Storey’s protagonists’ problems arise from a divided way of being and are not expressed in social terms. Individual action and group process is emphasized; social progress is not necessarily impossible; it is irrelevant.

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<sup>28</sup>Storey, “Journey,” 161. This contrast of northern provincialism and London’s sophistication is expressed from a female point of view in *Flight into Camden* (1960).

<sup>29</sup>According to Hutchings, both Lewis and Storey were “unable to reconcile two aspects of [their] personal [lives]--the physical and spiritual in Storey’s work, and the intellectual and emotional in Lewis’s.” See Hutchings, *The Plays of David Storey*, 16. Laura Weaver pointed to paradoxes in Storey’s comparison of himself to Lewis. Storey’s creativity is an outcome of both passion and control. He espoused, along with Lewis, the importance of objectivity in his writing and yet he wrote from his own experience. The writer’s personal suffering coincided with a desire for objectivity. See Weaver, 24.

<sup>30</sup>Storey, “Journey,” 160.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Hutchings, *The Plays of David Storey*, 13.

Further, Storey's attitude was antithetical to New Left descriptions of a wholesome working class. Like Lewis, Storey saw postwar social problems as residing within the meanness of a static working class. Storey's first two novels reflected the destructive provincialism of his West Riding experiences. In *Flight*, a woman's desire for freedom and authentic connection is denied by male-dominated, class-bound attitudes. Margaret escapes the meanness of her family and lives with a married artist-teacher; but her father, a coal miner, and brother, an academic, force her to return home to care for her parents and her brother's children; this, they demand, is her moral role. According to Laing, *Flight*, fulfilled Williams's goals via an "internal analysis of working-class community with the problems of the 'movement out'."<sup>33</sup> Such analysis may indicate realist social descriptions and local solutions, but unlike Williams's warm view of the working class, the family in *Flight* is repressive. From Storey's perspective, social drivers are secondary to Margaret's problems that are inwardly manifested.

Unlike Margaret, Machin in *TSL* rejects his family's repressive morality and working-class nastiness. He tries to convince Mrs. Hammond--his landlady and lover--that her neighbors are petty and envious of what he has given her:

All they want is to see you in the same miserable dirt as themselves. ... they hate me, they hate you [and your children] ... only you don't want to see it. For some stupid crazy reason you prefer to think like them.<sup>34</sup>

For Machin, working-class values are vacuous. For example, Machin and his father have very different attitudes about money. On being signed for the Rugby team, Machin initially sees his £500 bonus from his father's point of view as "stinking money .... [It] burned a hole in [his]

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<sup>33</sup>Stuart Laing, *Representations of Working Class Life, 1957–1964* (London: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1986), 80.

<sup>34</sup>David Storey, *This Sporting Life* (New York: Avon Books, 1960), 178.

pocket.” But he quickly rejects this limited, class-bound way of seeing when he remembers that it was his money, and he “smiled.”<sup>35</sup> He argues with his father that money in itself “hasn’t got any right and wrong,” and he points to the evils of church-run lotteries. He then asks his father, “Where do ideals get you? Where have *your* ideals got you?” He refers to the impoverishment around them, and in that moment his father could see through his son’s eyes:

He saw the neighborhood without its affections and feelings, but just as a field of broken-down ambition.... [Machin’s] mother looked at him as if she’d been turned to stone. He just sat there, the little man with no trousers, his head shaking from side to side in bewilderment, his face screwed up with inadequacy and self-reproach, half blinded with tiredness and with life-fatigue.<sup>36</sup>

The old miner recognizes the emptiness of his values. As with other working class-fathers in Storey’s literature, he had sacrificed his life for his son, and, in the end, his hard scrabble life had been wasted, because his son was a disappointment and his own values were empty.<sup>37</sup>

Unlike Williams, who rejected descriptions of the working class as “masses”, Storey’s working class is seen as a faceless and mean-spirited Other. Machin’s neighbors and the Rugby fans are a generalized body speaking with a single voice and projecting a herd-like feeling. *TSL* begins and ends with descriptions of the Rugby fans as a single entity: Their “cynical cheer wafts the ground and groans through the stands”; as one, they “accepted the decision,” and were “standing by to be entertained by incidents like mine.” These watching masses engage a primal pain in Machin:

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<sup>35</sup>Storey, *This Sporting Life*, 56.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>37</sup>In *Pasmore* (1972) the sacrifices by the miner-father are dashed when his academic son rejects his family and career during an unexplained mental breakdown. The same feeling of the working-class father’s lost hope is evident in Storey’s play, *In Celebration* (1969).

I could make one mistake, one slight mistake only, and the whole tragedy of living, of being alive, would come into the crowd's throat and roar its pain like a maimed animal. The cry, the rage of the crowd echoed over and filled the valley.<sup>38</sup>

When the game is over, the crowd exits like a great "black curtain."<sup>39</sup> Similarly, Mrs. Hammond's neighbors are faceless and judgmental. The sense of the working-class as masses extends to Machin's few interactions with working-class individuals. For example, Machin is driving to a match and is thinking about the surrounding industrial landscape and his comfortable place in the factory owned by Mr. Weaver. "A paying spectator" sits beside him in the car. They barely speak. The connection is superficial.<sup>40</sup>

On the other hand, in the Rugby world, class divisions are irrelevant and interactions are personal. The owners and players connect in authentic and complex ways. Both struggle with personal problems and interrelate directly between classes. Attitudes arise from the same world view. In contrast to the mean-spirited working class, upper-class characters are complex and human. Machin establishes authentic connections with them. His initial meeting with Weaver's wife is confused by sexual desire; but afterwards Machin is able to share only with her his feelings towards Mrs. Hammond. And though initially, for the factory owner, Machin is little more than a commodity for the Rugby team, he eventually becomes Weaver's confidant.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Storey, *This Sporting Life*, 254.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 241. Storey's attitude towards the English working class is evident in his third novel, *Radcliffe* (1963). A character says that one would "vomit" if he "*understood* the working class" (p. 276). Leonard Radcliffe's upper class father sees power in their day-to-day lives of hard work and play. But for Leonard this is not power, since the working class had no choice; they had been forced into these lives (296).

<sup>41</sup>Whereas, the commodification of Arthur Machin could engage socialist commentary and New Left ways of seeing the class divide, it does not, either in the novel or film.

World views are fluid between classes. Machin can compare the wealthy man to Johnson, the lower-class workman who had helped Machin join the team; he sees both men as weak; both had become “a withered limb of [his] ambition.”<sup>42</sup> Rather, his feeling is a reflection of a divided character; in fact, the wealthy man is altruistic and caring. He is a unifier of the community, as his name indicates. Weaver’s positive communal role becomes evident when his partner, Slomer, dies and Weaver’s control loosens. The team manager, George Wade, predicts that outside business interests, along with impersonal socialist forces, will take over and degrade communal cohesion. The Rugby team will be run by an impersonal committee. There will be no “kingpin any more. We’ll become like all the other big towns--socialist, impersonal, anonymous. The only thing we’ll be known by ... will be the standard of our football team.”<sup>43</sup>

*TSL* presents a benevolent upper-class. There is no indication of a Marxist-style, exploited, labor class. The faceless industrial worker is fulfilled. The factory is described in terms of light and warmth, as an integrated communal object. The smoke towers of the factory are points of reference that unify the landscape. After a night’s vigil at Mrs. Hammond’s deathbed, Machin finds affirmation at Weaver’s factory. He observes the factory as it comes to life; the workers are naturally integrated into the factory’s machinery. “Their voices, their feet, their overalls” mingle with the mechanized process, so that “a line of sparks curved out as the metal screamed under the grinder,” and “the welders moved their flames over the steel.”<sup>44</sup> It is a

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<sup>42</sup> Storey, *This Sporting Life*, 138.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 230. It should be noted that Slomer is not seen as a positive social force. He is depicted as a wizened, old man who is crippled physically and emotionally. He controls others by using money to find their weaknesses. But the source of his evil is not rapacious capitalism; it appears that his degraded personality is a result of his connection to the centers of power in the Catholic Church.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

cooperation of men and machines. Unlike the bicycle factory in which Sillitoe's protagonist in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, Arthur Seaton, engages in an internal rebellion, Weaver's factory is a positive, cohesive part of the community. The workmen are integrated extensions of the industrial process.<sup>45</sup>

Storey's characters are enmeshed in a benevolent hierarchical structure in which actions are not determined by class conflict. In his play *The Contractor* (1969), the workers return to find that the tent they so skillfully constructed was ruined by upper-class party-goers. Though this action could be a contrast of "hard skilled work" opposing "lordly squandering," according to David Craig, *The Contractor* does not take up "ideological positions."<sup>46</sup> Social descriptions do not lead to social conclusions. Class and social conditions are "insisted upon" but do not influence human activity. For instance, Storey's third novel, *Radcliffe* (1963), establishes a conflict between working-class Vic Tolson (an extroverted, unthinking character of action) and upper-class Leonard Radcliffe (a conflicted artist, who is focused on his own internal turmoil); the eventual clash between these characters, though, is not based on class differences but on a psychological struggle.<sup>47</sup>

Rather than class conflict or social problems, Storey deals with the "divided self" that threatens psychological imbalance and insanity. Storey's male characters struggle for a worthwhile life that can be gained via uniting a mind/feeling divide. The writer recognized this

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<sup>45</sup>Storey's attitude towards coal mining is quite different. See his descriptions of the effect of mining on the father in *Flight into Camden*.

<sup>46</sup>David Craig, "David Storey's Visions of the Working Class," in *The Uses of Fiction: Essays on the Modern Novel in Honour of Arnold Kettle*, ed. Douglas Jefferson and Graham Martin (England: Open University Press, 1982), 131.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 130–40.

split in himself; his introverted artistic tendencies conflicted with the mores of the coal mining West Riding community and the extroverted game of Rugby. Even though Storey's divided self was a product of his particular social experiences, he saw this split as central to the human condition and not the result of social causes. As such, there are no particular social adjustments to be made because social causes are less important than this basic human way of being. Laura Weaver argued that in Storey's work "society" and "family" are general human constructs that create psychotic divisions within the individual and that manifest in either extroverted or introverted personalities.<sup>48</sup> Storey acknowledged that his ideas paralleled that of psychologist and social-family theorist R.D. Laing, who theorized that the divided self was caused by the psychotic qualities of any society and family. According to Storey's review of Laing's work, society, in general, "severs heart from head ... pulling one way and another by contradictory forces."<sup>49</sup> For Storey, even though the schizophrenic in the family is considered the destabilizing factor, in fact, society and family are perverse; the insane are "behaving in a totally rational way, to completely irrational premises in which families are based."<sup>50</sup>

The divided self theme is graphically illustrated in Storey's third novel, *Radcliffe*, in which the conflicted self is represented by two characters, one from each class. Working-class Tolson is both sensitive and brutish; he is full of feeling and natural physical ability but incapable of objective, cool considerations. Upper-class Leonard Radcliffe is a disconnected

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<sup>48</sup>Weaver, "Divided Self," 35-44.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 17. Reference is made to Storey's review of Laing's *The politics of experience and the Bird of Paradise* (1970). Storey held these opinions prior to reading Laing.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 18.

intellectual. They are the two sides of the divided self that Storey wants to merge.<sup>51</sup> There is a conflicted relationship in which difference and attraction lead to destruction. In one segment Tolson knocks the sacred objects off the altar of the Radcliffe family church and grabs Leonard, forcing their bodies together in a violent embrace. He both respects and loathes Leonard.<sup>52</sup> But this destructive interplay is not based in class. Significantly, for Storey, class conflict had obscured the nature of man and his existence; such conflict would have to diminish so that a healthy synthesis of self could emerge.

Storey's main characters are divided "between those who can make a society work for them and those who can't."<sup>53</sup> Despair is overcome by recognizing the divided state and by accepting a balance between emotional commitment and objective mental engagement, within a cooperative group effort. Storey sought resolution within "a character where these two elements were in some kind of equilibrium."<sup>54</sup> The "successful" protagonist learns by the end of the novel that, though nothing can be changed, he can live within the situation. By the end of *Present Times* (1984), the protagonist had become a playwright and could "look at the reality, as opposed

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<sup>51</sup>The sensuality in *Radcliffe* has led to comparisons to D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*. See Froeb, "Fiction of David Storey," 15. See also, Craig, "David Storey's Visions of the Working Class," 130. Storey denied this influence, rejecting any writer who, like Lawrence, engaged in self analysis. He preferred the "impersonal narrator" and looked to Wyndham Lewis's detached writing. See Weaver, "Divided Self," 20–21.

<sup>52</sup>Storey, *Radcliffe*, 210.

<sup>53</sup>Ronald Hayman, "Conversation with David Storey," *Drama* 99 (Winter 1970): 52.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, 52–53. See also, Froeb, "Fiction of David Storey," 16–17.

to the fantasy which absorbs the majority of people's lives."<sup>55</sup> The future can be "promising" if one can approach the situation with a cool head and without letting go of one's feelings.<sup>56</sup>

Storey's protagonist experiences the divided self through a reality that supersedes any social lens. *Radcliffe* ends with a didactic argument that any particular social context is irrelevant to overcoming the mental/emotional split. During Leonard's final plea at his murder trial, in which he is convicted of killing Tolson, he argues that the court as a social arbiter has no authority over his actions because he acted out of a "moral authority" that preceded any local social context: "The battle was so intense between us because we could see something beyond it. It was the split between us that tormented us; the split in the whole Western society."<sup>57</sup>

Radcliffe's "something beyond" pointed to a spiritual integration of the divided self.

Storey's mind/body theme in *Radcliffe* is also evident in the destructive relationship between Machin and Ms. Hammond. He is physically extroverted and acts without thinking; she is emotionally introverted and cannot act. Machin is seen as a dangerous animal.<sup>58</sup> For his fans and friends he is "the super ape beyond reproach."<sup>59</sup> He is referred to as "Tarzan," and he identifies with emotionally disconnected men-of-action in pulp fiction. Laura Weaver pointed out that his name equates him to "machines." As a lathe-worker and as a "brutal" automaton on

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<sup>55</sup>David Storey, *Present Times*, reprint, 1984 (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1985), 270.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 270.

<sup>57</sup>Storey, *Radcliffe*, 376.

<sup>58</sup>Weaver, "Divided Self," 42.

<sup>59</sup>Storey, *This Sporting Life*, 212.

the Rugby pitch, he acts machinelike.<sup>60</sup> His animal and machine personas are reflected in the cars he drives--a Jaguar and Humber [an upscale British-made car].<sup>61</sup>

But this description of Machin as the mechanical, unfeeling, unthinking man, is incomplete. He is both brutal and controlling, and insightful and sensitive. Laura Weaver argues that “the end of the novel compresses in a single image Machin’s two selves. ... Machin the super-ape also feels, also cries.”<sup>62</sup> Following Mrs. Hammond’s death, and as he struggles on the Rugby field with an aging body, Machin considers the fragility of life and coming of old age. But he lives both sides of the divided self throughout the novel; he not only acts, but he considers his actions. He celebrates how well the “machine” of his body can accomplish the tasks of the game, and he is sensitive to his own and others’ emotions. For example, he is impulsive and brutish when he playfully grabs Mrs. Hammond’s young child and carries her across a fast-flowing country stream. But he recognizes both the child’s fear and the mother’s concern and distracts the child with a bird’s nest.<sup>63</sup> In another instance he brutally squeezes Johnson’s hand, but immediately feels regret and needs to justify his action: “[Johnson] seemed to be somebody who always had been hurt, and who was always going to be hurt...Why should he blame me for it--making me out to be a bully.”<sup>64</sup> Machin acts are extroverted and brutal and, at the same time, considered and connected. Machin represents both the divided man and the potentially unified man.

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<sup>60</sup>Weaver, “Divided Self,” 42.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 43.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 53.

<sup>63</sup>Storey, *This Sporting Life*, 80–82.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 40–41.

In contrast, Mrs. Hammond represents the irrational, inwardly-focused, psychologically unbalanced individual who is trapped in her unsettled feelings. Some critics describe Mrs. Hammond as a product of her class. Jeffrey Hill described her as “a withdrawn, desiccated, self-pitying woman” who has “stored all the toil and pain of working-class life.”<sup>65</sup> David Craig saw both social and psychological causes to her unsettled state of mind, but emphasized the former.

The two flow into each other to create a tragedy of frustrated revolt against stultified living. People might flower; they have the potential; but it is deadened and locked up, not only through want of the material means of life (space, rest, variety of stimulus) but also because of the habits--the low expectations and the succumbing to limiting roles--which arise when people ‘make the best’, i.e. the worst, of cramping conditions.<sup>66</sup>

For Craig, Mrs. Hammond’s psychological condition resulted from an impoverished society and deadening class attitudes. But Mrs. Hammond’s state of mind is not related to social causes. She is the first of several flawed female characters in Storey’s work who are disconnected from the men who try to love them--see Colin Pasmore’s lover in *Pasmore* and Attercliffe’s wife and daughter in *Present Times*.<sup>67</sup> In the latter, mother and daughter turn to feminist arguments to justify disconnected irrational actions. But actual causes for their actions are not determined. Similarly, there are no reasons given for Mrs. Hammond’s emotional isolation. Jeffrey Hill contends that her psychosis is a result of her guilt over the suicide death of her husband while working at a factory lathe and because she is overworked caring for two children in a confined, rundown house.<sup>68</sup> Both reasons point to social causes. For example, she incessantly cleans her

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<sup>65</sup>Hill, “Sport Stripped Bare,” 415.

<sup>66</sup>Craig, “David Storey’s Visions of the Working Class,” 128.

<sup>67</sup>*Flight* is the only work in which Storey attempted to see the female as a divided self. Margaret takes on aspects of Machin’s male externalization. I feel that Margaret was a forced concept and a strange amalgam of Storey’s male psyche in a women’s body.

<sup>68</sup>Hill, “Sport Stripped Bare,” 415.

husband's work boots that haunt the sitting room. Such an image in a Williams novel would suggest that working conditions at the factory led to the man's death and the wife's disempowerment at the hands of authority. But her state of mind is not the result of social problems. The factory-owner, Mr. Weaver, remembers the man and that his death was avoidable if he had used established procedures; the factory was not held responsible.<sup>69</sup> Industrial conditions had not led to Hammond's death; in fact, there are no social explanations for Mrs. Hammond's fixation on her dead husband's work boots.<sup>70</sup>

Though Storey's flawed female character remains psychologically disconnected, his male protagonist is able to integrate his divided personality, temporarily, when engaged in authentic, small group activities. Hutchings argued that for Storey the traditional family structure was no longer meaningful. This was especially important for the educated son who is cut off from family rituals.<sup>71</sup> For Craig, moving out of the "scruffy life" created guilt in the son who cannot validate his working-class father's sacrifices.<sup>72</sup> But this unmoored scholarship boy is capable of overcoming his isolation from his family and community by abandoning traditional rituals that are no longer valid and by integrating "into a significant unit that transcends the self."<sup>73</sup> For Hutchings, "The contrast between the devalued traditional rituals and the more significant non-traditional ones is a central thematic and structural principle underlying and uniting Storey's

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<sup>69</sup>Storey, *This Sporting Life*, 59–60.

<sup>70</sup>A contrast can be made between Mrs. Hammond's and Colin Smith's [*The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*] reactions to the death of someone close to them. Sillitoe focuses on social causes; Smith's anger is against a capitalist system that killed his father. Storey, on the other hand, sees an unbalanced psyche affecting human actions.

<sup>71</sup>Hutchings, *The Plays of David Storey*, 4.

<sup>72</sup>Craig, "David Storey's Visions of the Working Class," 129.

<sup>73</sup>Hutchings, *The Plays of David Storey*, 17.

diverse works.<sup>74</sup> *TSL*, *The Changing Room*, *The Contractor*, and *Present Times* end with the protagonist finding a sense of worth within a group of men working for a common goal.

By the end of the novel Machin becomes a team player. He recognizes that his self-willed struggle to control play on the Rugby field was as futile as bullying Mrs. Hammond into a relationship. At her deathbed Machin feels connected to the woman because he had transcended his self focus and “gotten hold of something which before had always slipped [his] grasp.... [He] was no longer alone.”<sup>75</sup> He commits to team play on the Rugby pitch. But his connection will be short-lived, as his career is ending. Storey sought an integration of opposing tendencies but understood that the cycle from unsettlement to settlement would eventually return to unsettlement. Lois More Overbeck --a Samuel Beckett scholar--argued that Storey’s plays end with a return to a new normalcy for the protagonist, that resembles the status quo with which the work began.<sup>76</sup> This “new normalcy” is evident in *Flight into Camden*, *Present Times* and *TSL*; nothing significant has changed, goals are lost, and ideals are unobtainable; the family or group will continue, in slightly new ways; only the protagonist has gained a greater understanding of the conditions.<sup>77</sup>

One outcome of Storey’s focus on interiority was works in which causality is subordinated, which establishes what Jeanne Riley Froeb described in her dissertation as Storey's

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>Storey, *This Sporting Life*, 235.

<sup>76</sup>Lois More Overbeck, “What It is to Be a Woman in the Plays of David Storey,” in *David Storey: A Casebook*, ed. William Hutchings (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), 142–43.

<sup>77</sup>Williams’s “long revolution” is irrelevant from this perspective. Further, emergence of temporary groups cannot be related to Sinfield’s argument that radical subculture groups could establish new, progressive structures because with Storey new understanding is individualized.

“plotless” world.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, Reinelt argues that Storey’s plots consist of “non event[s]” in which causes are “unexplainable.”<sup>79</sup> Hutchings refers to Storey’s plotless plays as “invisible events” in which time and space are organized arbitrarily, without a cause and effect logic.<sup>80</sup> Storey’s plots juxtapose each event against a “general flow of ordinary life” in which “fluid social reality” is subordinated to “the dominant interior experience.”<sup>81</sup> Patricia Troxel, a dramaturg and professor of English, extends this idea to argue that Storey’s plotless work is socially committed because its opaque form challenges the reader’s and audience’s way of seeing media control. For Troxel, Storey was fulfilling Williams’s call for realist literature and new forms that exposed social complexity. Rather than developing a traditional “series of contrasts or contradictions as with earlier versions of realism,” Storey developed a “poetic naturalism.” An adept audience would be able to infer the complex social dynamic by responding “creatively to ambiguity and illusion.”<sup>82</sup> Troxel argues that like Jameson, Storey was concerned with realistic literature being controlled by the market place that blocked an “expression of life habits.”<sup>83</sup> Seen this way, Storey’s “unfinished plot is an indirect social message that reflects New Left concerns of who controls the media’s cultural message.

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<sup>78</sup> Jeanne Riley Froeb, “The Fiction of David Storey, John Fowles and Iris Murdoch” (PhD diss., The University of Tulsa, Graduate School, 1977).

<sup>79</sup> Reinelt, “Fragile Fictions,” 54.

<sup>80</sup> William Hutchings, “David Storey’s Aesthetic of ‘Invisible Events,’” in *David Storey: A Casebook*, editor Williams Hutching (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc, 1992), 117–19.

<sup>81</sup> Reinelt, “Fragile Fictions,” 62.

<sup>82</sup> Patricia M. Troxel, “‘We Have No Turning Back’: Authority, Culture and Environment in the Dramas of David Storey,” in *David Storey: A Casebook*, Hutchings William (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), 35.

<sup>83</sup> Troxel, “No Turning Back,” 26–27.

But I argue that Storey's work does not make an appeal regarding media control, nor does its complexity expose social descriptions. Its opacity is just that, and any further reading is adding content that is not there. Troxel's arguments require that the reader ignore the fact that in Storey's work social causes are not secondary but irrelevant to the flawed male psyche. There are no openings to such readings by an adept audience. Storey's *Pasmore* (1972) is a clear example of a causeless plot that has no relevance to social views. The eponymous character experiences an unexplained emotional breakdown, but achieves a temporary sanity; life can be endurable, if, as Froeb puts it, "we are fortunate enough to be able to immerse ourselves in its beauty and find help in others in the compassion of human beings toward one another."<sup>84</sup> The focus is on an "obsessional relationship" that breaks down "partnerships ... the touch of one person with another."<sup>85</sup> In this world a balance of the inner and outer self is needed for the most fulfilled and connected life. According to Reinelt, in *Pasmore* time and space are a reflection of an internal state, not a socially structured reality; realism and solipsism are aligned; social reality is irrelevant.<sup>86</sup> *Pasmore* presents what Froeb calls "a conception of life as completely subject to chance in a world in which the only reality is that which is perceived."<sup>87</sup> In Craig's analysis, Storey does not take a political "view"; rather, he has a "vision" on how to live.<sup>88</sup>

Finally, is Arthur Machin a working-class border character like Sillitoe's Arthur Seaton, who takes positions both within and outside his class? Machin encounters psychological

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<sup>84</sup>Froeb, "Fiction of David Storey," 60.

<sup>85</sup>David Storey, *Pasmore* (Great Britain: Longman, 1972), 170.

<sup>86</sup>Reinelt, "Fragile Fictions," 65.

<sup>87</sup>Froeb, "Fiction of David Storey," 60–61.

<sup>88</sup>Craig, "David Storey's Visions of the Working Class," 125.

borders, not social ones. For instance, after arguing with Mrs. Hammond, he drives out of the city and observes: "From the top of the valley the sight of the town working normally, but without me, made me feel outcast, and outlaw.... From up here she [Mrs. Hammond] didn't count and I might be God."<sup>89</sup> Machin's spatial break is a manifestation of disconnected grandiose feelings. Throughout the novel he straddles a gap between the inward-looking, emotional, fixated individual and the cold, extroverted, machine-man. Machin reflects Storey's investigation of the male psyche. Growing up in West Riding, Storey has said he was "continually torn between the two extremes of [his] experience, the physical and the spiritual with the demand to be effective in both."<sup>90</sup> But his early experiences did not lead him to social conclusions. Despite Storey's realistic descriptions of a North England working-class locale, family, and work, his novels cannot be considered as social realism. Social conditions may have led to his sense of a divided existence, but class and society do not influence his character's actions.

For Williams, deadening class and social forces--the provincialism of the working-class mind, the empty values of the middle and upper classes, and the control of capitalist structures needed to be recognized. In Williams's *Second Generation*, Kate Owen makes a social realist point about Rugby, "There are only two chances for any working man. He can be a star footballer, or the leader of a strike. Then they take an interest in him, not otherwise. He stops being available labour and becomes a man." She recognizes the social reality of the popular

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<sup>89</sup>Storey, *This Sporting Life*, 190.

<sup>90</sup>Storey, "Journey," 160.

sports figure and the “mass anonymity on which the system depends.”<sup>91</sup> Storey is not engaged in this sort of inquiry.

### **Shelagh Delaney--In search of a purpose**

Can Shelagh Delaney’s early work be identified as social realism as defined by Raymond Williams and the New Left? Is it committed working-class literature? After the 1958 success of *A Taste of Honey*, Delaney was identified as one of the “angry” writers, but to what extent did Joan Littlewood’s direction and the Theatre Workshop process impact these descriptions? It will be shown that though Delaney’s play engaged a poetic social realism, it was as a result of Joan Littlewood’s direction. Her second play, *A Lion In Love* (1961) [*Lion*], more closely reflects Delaney’s sensibilities and is an apolitical form of “British naturalism.”<sup>92</sup> Though Delaney had opinions about social conditions, her early work focused on relational problems. But in her short story “The White Bus” (1961), Delaney took a social realist position.

Delaney was born in 1939 in Salford, England, of Irish background. Colette Lindroth reports that she was a “rebellious and often bored student.”<sup>93</sup> At nineteen Delaney saw Gielgud’s production of Terence Rattigan’s *Variation on a Theme* at the Globe and felt that it was no more than a star vehicle for Margaret Leighton and a waste of the actress’s talents; Rattigan’s play gave the actress “nothing to do but parade around showing off lavish costumes and mouthing

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<sup>91</sup>Raymond Williams, *Second Generation*, (London: Hogarth Press, 1988), 300. The next chapter will show that it is problematic to identify *This Sporting Life* as a NWL film. But its connection to Anderson and certain style choices require such analysis.

<sup>92</sup>Stuart Hall, “Beyond Naturalism Pure,” in *New Theatre Voices of the Fifties and Sixties*, ed. Charles Marowitz, Tom Milne, and Owen Hale (London: Eyre Methuen, 1965), 214.

<sup>93</sup>Colette Lindroth, “Shelagh Delaney,” in *British Playwrights, 1956–1995*, William W. Demastes (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 119.

inane lines.”<sup>94</sup> Delaney felt she could write a better play.<sup>95</sup> *A Taste of Honey* was written in a few days from a novel she had been drafting. After reading about a censorship dispute at the Theatre Workshop, Delaney mailed her overly long and disorganized play to Littlewood. It was quickly put into workshop, and in May 1958, it was performed at Theatre Royal, Stratford East. Though the production received mixed reviews, Delaney was lauded as the newest “angry” writer. The play was moved to the West End in February, 1959, and to the Lyceum Theatre in New York in October, 1960.

Reviews were varied. A few critics found the subject matter of the play to be disturbing. One described *A Taste of Honey* as “sordid.”<sup>96</sup> And Hugh Corbett wrote that the characters were “thoroughly unlikable,” though “authentic in conduct.”<sup>97</sup> Several critics focused on the play’s naturalistic working-class language. Corbett described the “deftness of some of the dialogue.”<sup>98</sup> Lindsay Anderson described the play as “unconventional” and its “local accent” as an escape from a middle-class, West End experience.<sup>99</sup> On the other hand, Walter Kerr found that Delaney’s characters spoke “most strangely.” He thought they were “empty-headed chatter

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 120.

<sup>95</sup>Rattigan’s and Delaney’s plays have thematic parallels. Like Helen, the ill-suited mother in *A Taste of Honey*, Rose in *Variation* is a middle-aged, attractive, alcoholic from the north of England who has been married several times. Unlike Helen, Rose is wealthy and famous. Both fall in love with a younger man. Rose’s romance is on and off again, but they eventually get together even though Rose has only a year to live. The superficial parallels here to Delaney’s play--a May/September romance and a strained mother-daughter relationship--may have inspired her to write something better by re-focusing a romantic plot into a realistic play about working-class experiences. But it is unlikely that one was an inspiration for the other because Rattigan’s play opened at the same time as *A Taste of Honey*.

<sup>96</sup>Shelagh Delaney, interviewee, “Shelagh Delaney is Interviewed by ITN in 1959” (London, 1959).

<sup>97</sup>Hugh Corbett, “A Taste of Honey: Review,” *Books Abroad* 34, no. 2 (Spring 1960): 180.

<sup>98</sup>Corbett, “A Taste of Honey: Review,” 180.

<sup>99</sup>Lindsay Anderson, “Review: *A Taste of Honey*,” in *New Theatre Voices of the Fifties and Sixties*, ed. Charles Marowitz, Tom Milne, and Owen Hale (London: Eyre Methuen, 1965), 78.

boxes” who “have been given an aborted college education.”<sup>100</sup> Kerr described a verbal onslaught, a word-filled conflict of two characters, and a sped-up sound track, that “leaves you breathless.”<sup>101</sup> His mixed review of the Broadway production ended with, “Oh my goodness, it is talented.”

Critics also focused on how *A Taste of Honey* reflected working-class life. For Anderson, the play presented “another country” but when it was the actual world of the working-class north; and it was also the world of “a courageous, sensitive and outspoken person.” Further, the play was “truthful” and “buoyant in spirit.”<sup>102</sup> John Gassner emphasized the detailed realistic qualities of the play: “It is a little play made big as life by the sensitiveness of the writing, a sensitiveness without the slightest evasion of reality and with hardly any concession to sentimentality.”<sup>103</sup> The play did not contain stereotypes of the “lower orders [but it] acquire[d] vitality and freshness because instead of prating about sin, guilt, and forgiveness, the author relied on detached observations rather than sentiment.”<sup>104</sup> For Gassner, the play was particularly praiseworthy due to its representation of the humanity of Geof (a homosexual man with whom Jo lives for a while). Delaney “is one new playwright who can avoid sensationalism without

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<sup>100</sup>Walter Kerr, “First Night Report: A Taste of Honey,” *New York Theatre Critics’ Review* 21, no. 18 (10 October 1960): 227.

<sup>101</sup>The language of the characters in the play seems to exceed a working-class education. For example, Geof refers to Ibsen’s *Ghosts* when Jo laments about her father’s mental problems. Jo alludes to *Othello* in describing Jimmie, the black sailor by whom she becomes pregnant. Helen’s younger lover Peter wears an eye patch and is compared to a debased Oedipus in love with his “mother.” Further, the language can be sophisticated. When Peter asks if Helen wants a wedding ring, Jo mocks them: “I should have thought their courtship had passed the stage of symbolism.”

<sup>102</sup>Anderson, “Review: *Taste*,” 79.

<sup>103</sup>John Gassner, “Broadway in Review,” *Educational Theatre Journal* 12, no. 4 (December 1960): 302.

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, 302.

avoiding reality.”<sup>105</sup> For Kerr, the play was not realistic but a “social, psychological and moral strip-tease” without “affectation” or “kindness” in which “standards have vanished”; Jo’s statement, “It’s chaos,” summed up this effect.

Several critics praised the production for its spirited liveliness. For Anderson, the play was “keenly alive to what is preposterous, generous, creative and warm.”<sup>106</sup> Kerr also found hope in the play for in the end “something endearing is left.” Rather than despair, the play is about the liveliness of a young girl; her “restless and inexplicable gaiety ... overtakes” the audience. Similarly, in *Encore Magazine* in September, 1959, Stuart Hall found that the play “humanizes our frustrations, and our bitter cynicism and anger.”<sup>107</sup> But unlike Kerr, Hall thought it reflected real life, not so much with a focus on internal character disturbance, but with an emphasis on redemption via relationships: “In Jo [Delaney] achieves something stubborn and calm, a composition in tough idealism and mature despair. But her real forte is the interplay between relationships.”<sup>108</sup> Hall contrasted Jo’s relationships with her mother and with Geof and found that it is “the tender explorations of all the levels which lie between love and need.”<sup>109</sup>

The play won many prizes and was made into an award-winning film by Tony Richardson. Fame quickly followed for the writer, and critics looked for Delaney’s talents to grow, but subsequent work did not measure up to the critical and popular success of *A Taste of*

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<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

<sup>106</sup>Anderson, “Review: *Taste*,” 79.

<sup>107</sup>Stuart Hall, “Something to Live For,” in *New Theatre Voices of the Fifties and Sixties*, ed. Charles Marowitz, Tom Milne, and Owen Hale (London: Eyre Methuen, 1965), 114. NOTE: *Encore* was a bi-monthly theatre magazine published from the mid-50s to mid-60s. It was critical of West End commercial theatre and initially looked to Devine and Littlewood as the salvation for English theatre.

<sup>108</sup>Hall, “Beyond,” 214.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid.

*Honey*. Gassner wrote, “It will be interesting to see what Miss Delaney will be able to do with more comprehensive and challenging material as her talent matures and her horizons widen.”<sup>110</sup> And as early as 1960 Walter Kerr pondered, “The only thing that puzzles me is why she hasn’t written the *Divine Comedy* and the collected works of Henry Fielding since.”<sup>111</sup> But Delaney wrote only two more plays; *Lion* is an examination of three generations of a working-class family in a Salford-like community. Critics generally agreed it was an unbalanced effort. Delaney’s last play, *The House that Jack Built* (1977), again about working-class family relationships, was not staged.<sup>112</sup>

Delaney’s initial success was due, in large part, to the input of Joan Littlewood. As with Brendan Behan, Delaney looked to Littlewood as a theatrical authority and thanked her for her expertise in getting her play produced. In an interview in 1959 at the Wyndham Theatre opening, Delaney reported that she had received no help in the original writing of the play, but when it went into production “Miss Joan Littlewood [was] the most valuable person I ever met--as far as work is concerned.”<sup>113</sup>

Kerr asked if *A Taste of Honey* was the “author’s play or director’s?” Delaney had gone to Littlewood with “a bundle of manuscripts in her arms, a bundle brimmed with fine things but not yet cohesive enough to function as a play.”<sup>114</sup> Littlewood was delighted in the rough state of

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<sup>110</sup>Gassner, “Broadway in Review,” 299.

<sup>111</sup>Kerr, “First Night,” 227.

<sup>112</sup>*Taste* was Delaney’s only outright theatrical success. *Lion* received mixed reviews and had limited runs in Coventry (1960) and New York (1963).

<sup>113</sup>Shelagh Delaney, “Shelagh Delaney is Interviewed by ITN in 1959.”

<sup>114</sup>Walter Kerr, “‘A Taste of Honey,’ Author’s Play or Director’s,” *New York Times*, 26 November 1981, C13.

the writing; she could make it her own. She “seized the bundle and the opportunity, gathered a group of actors about her, proceeded with dispatch to invent a shape for the piece in rehearsal.”<sup>115</sup> Tom Milne, British film critic, pointed out that Littlewood added poeticism to the play with “music interruptions and swirling music-hall speed of action.”<sup>116</sup> She had done the same for Behan’s *The Hostage*. Kerr pointed out that Littlewood’s takeover of the play was not unusual: “Semi-improvisation was quite commonplace in those days. ... The air of the early 1960s was filled with an urgency to be free of constraints of text, with a passion for spontaneity and a distrust of formal structures.” The Theatre Workshop benefited, but Delaney’s skills were not challenged.<sup>117</sup>

Littlewood sought a theatre for and about the working-class in which all the theatre artists collaborated. She organized an ensemble in which there were no stars; all were paid equally, and the work process “empowered all members of the company”; actor research and improvisation were central to this process; decisions were shared by all.<sup>118</sup> Her objective was “to work with other artists--actors, writers, designers, composers--and in collaboration with them, and by means of argument, experiment and research, to help to keep the English theatre alive and

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<sup>115</sup>Kerr, “Author’s Play,” C13.

<sup>116</sup>Tom Milne, “*Luther and The Devils*,” *New Left Review* I, no. 6 (November-December 1961): 55.

<sup>117</sup>Though not involved with *Lion*, Littlewood probably influenced Delaney’s choices that included music hall effects and “the constant flow of movement across the stage, the dances, the conscious joking, and loose style.” Susan Whitehead, “Shelagh Delaney: British Playwright (1939–2011),” in *British Dramatists Since World War II*, ed. Ed Weintraub (London: Cengage Learning, 1982).

<sup>118</sup>Lib Taylor, “Early Stages: Women Dramatists 1958–68,” in *British and Irish Dramatists Since 1958*, ed. Trevor R. Griffiths and Margaret Llewellyn-Jones (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993), 18. A similar summary can be found in Howard Goorney, *The Theatre Workshop Story* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1981), 112–14.

contemporary.”<sup>119</sup> She insisted that there was no hierarchy in her theatre: “I do not believe in the supremacy of the director, designer, actor or even of the writer.” She insisted that all theatre workers understand and adhere to the “poetry of the author” through a variety of means--“mime, discussion and the precise music of grammar; words and movement allied and integrated.” At the same time, she contended that no one could foretell what the play would become, suggesting that collaborative work allowed for the change of the “grammar” of the text.<sup>120</sup>

Littlewood relied on her actors to vitalize the new play by bringing the words into the moment through bodies in action. According to John Wells (one of the playwrights of *Mrs. Wilson's Diary*, Theatre Royal, Stratford East, September 1967), Littlewood spoke about

‘taking the arse out of it’ by which she meant changing, when necessary, what had been written sitting down at a typewriter, into the same ideas and emotions expressed by someone running about on their feet. She takes a rather sedentary, heavy sentiment that might have crossed the writer’s mind one morning in April and, with the actors, she transfers it into something which is actually dramatic and which had its own conflict, which is the essence of theatre.<sup>121</sup>

Though Wells and Behan appreciated Littlewood’s changes to their work, others did not, especially when the director re-wrote entire scenes.<sup>122</sup> Lib Taylor recognized that “Littlewood’s contribution to the theatre [was] enormous and well attested, but her precise contribution to the shape of the individual plays is unclear.”<sup>123</sup> For Taylor, Delaney’s first play had changed

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<sup>119</sup>Joan Littlewood, “Goodbye Note from Joan,” in *New Theatre Voices of the Fifties and Sixties*, ed. Charles Marowitz, Tom Milne, and Owen Hale (London: Eyre Methuen, 1961), 132–33.

<sup>120</sup>Littlewood, “Goodbye,” 133.

<sup>121</sup>Goorney, *The Theatre Workshop Story*, 113.

<sup>122</sup>Frank Norman was traumatized by the Theatre Workshop process for *Fings Ain't Wot They Used T'Be* (1958). Norman: “With every day that passed my original concept of the play seemed to drift further and further away, until eventually I was hardly able to identify with the antics on the stage at all.” Goorney, *The Theatre Workshop Story*, 112.

<sup>123</sup>Taylor, “Early Stages,” 9.

English theatre and her experimentation with form represented women truthfully. Delaney developed “her own voice,” by working in collaboration with Littlewood, but the process was done within a “framework of theatre strategies developed by the Theatre Workshop” that furthered their “set of political, cultural and theatrical objectives.”<sup>124</sup> In the end, Taylor was concerned with how Littlewood affected Delaney’s growth as a female dramatist.<sup>125</sup>

Feminist critics were drawn to Delaney’s strong working-class female characters, both young and middle-aged, who live independently and on their own terms. For Taylor, Delaney was “subverting the ideology of the family, predominantly by focusing on the role of the mother.”<sup>126</sup> This is best exemplified in the middle-aged characters of Helen, in *A Taste of Honey*, and Kit in *Lion*; both are alcoholics and law-breakers; Helen is described as a “semi-whore.” But both are vitally alive, confident and self-reliant. Taylor pointed to the allegory told by Peg, Kit’s daughter, about the Queen who throws herself into the sea and becomes a rock rather than being subjugated to the King’s male rule. In addition, Nora, a peddler, is smart, independent, self-made person; she knows who she is and what she wants.

Taylor’s feminist interpretation of Delaney’s work is relevant but not complete. Taylor is correct in that Delaney celebrated the independent working-class woman, but central to her early work was the theme of broken relationships and lost lives. In addition Delaney explored a generational divide in which the adolescent, middle-aged, and old experience loss. Delaney discusses these themes in Ken Russell’s documentary “Shelagh Delaney’s Salford” (1961). Her

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<sup>124</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid., 11.

voice-over is illustrated with shots of working-class people in their neighborhoods. Delaney speaks of the “restlessness” of the young who long for escape:

Our young people in Salford--they are the most restless people--and some people not knowing where to go ... and people of my age, young people, want to go somewhere and they know what they want to do. [But] they are tethered. They are horses, like I was, like a horse on a tether, waiting for someone to cut the tether and let me off, let me go.<sup>127</sup>

In the documentary adolescents are shown isolated and disconnected from neighborhood activity. Two young men climb a light pole and observe the activity below; in a grainy long shot, shown twice, a lone male teen stands on the curb, as traffic cuts off his image.<sup>128</sup> In her plays, the middle-aged face a different dilemma than the young. She describes the “sad ... chaos” of the middle aged. Kit and Helen are trapped in a mediocre existence. According to Delaney, in *Lion*, old people are no longer plagued by "restlessness" but "in the middle you get this chaos of middle age where ... it's too late to start again and it's too early to give up."<sup>129</sup> This is what her plays are about; the young yearn to get out and the middle-aged mourn lost opportunities.

In this context Delaney’s independent female characters have no positive models for going forward. She is capable of making her own way, but she will not gain the mutual love she seeks. Jo is insistent in telling Jimmie, Goef, and Helen that she does not need them, but there is no joy in her independence. Helen and Jo in *Taste*, and Kit, Peg and Nora in *Lion*, may represent Taylor’s strong independent women who do not compromise in a male-dominated world, but,

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<sup>127</sup>Ken Russell, *Shelagh Delaney’s Salford*, BBC Four (1960).

<sup>128</sup>It is curious that Delaney is the only discontented female in the film; the “restlessness” seems to reside with the young Salford male.

<sup>129</sup>Russell, *Shelagh Delaney’s Salford*. Delaney was probably referring to *Lion* because it was produced shortly after this documentary was made, and she referred to the three generations featured in *Lion*.

except for moments of child-like bliss, Delaney's strong independent woman faces an isolated and unfulfilled life.

Delaney's work explores the impossibility of viable, lasting relationships. Family structures are ineffective, and affirming relationships are brief. Mother/daughter relationships in both *A Taste of Honey* and *Lion* are complex and realistic, but destructive behaviors return. Geof's positive influence is replaced by the self-centered, alcoholic mother. The inevitability of unhappiness is expressed in the derisive tone in the preface to Delaney's collected short stories:

Sweetly sings the donkey  
As he goes to grass  
He who sings so sweetly  
Is sure to be an ass.<sup>130</sup>

For Delaney, lasting happiness through human relationships can only be "tasted." Having lived through her mother's many divorces, Jo accepts that all relationships are brief. She is not surprised when Jimmie does not return, and she knows that Geof will soon leave her. Delaney's plots circle back to previous behaviors and conditions. At the end of *A Taste of Honey* Helen appears to redeem herself by connecting with her daughter's innocence, when she reminisces about her childhood:

You know when I was young we used to play all day long at this time of year; in the summer we had singing games and in the spring we played with tops and hoops. ... Have I ever told you about the time when we went to the place called Shining Clough? .... Do you know I'd sit there all day long and nobody ever knew where I was.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup>Shelagh Delaney, *Sweetly Sings the Donkey* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1961), Preface.

<sup>131</sup>Shelagh Delaney, *A Taste of Honey* (New York: Grive Weidenfeld, 1956), 86. Terry Lovell argued that Helen's monologue represents a yearning for a purer working-class past as influenced by "the structure of feeling" of Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy*, published at the same time as the play production, and which "epitomized" the moment. More will be said on this in Chapter Five in relation to the film adaptation of the play. See, Terry Lovell, "Landscapes and Stories in 1960s British Realism," *Screen* 31, no. 4 (Winter 1990): 358 and 372.

This contemplative Helen is not the self-centered person who lived for momentary pleasures. Her childhood memory seems to redeem Helen by linking her to Jo's isolation and to the next generation--the children playing outside and Jo's baby. But this is a false note; Helen has not changed; as soon as she discovers that Jo's baby has a Black father she exits for a bar.

Without an adult model, Delaney looked to the innocence of childhood as a desirable, and in a sense, stable state of happiness. Children's play takes on a gravity as the only moments of authentic, supportive, selfless human connection. Human significance is located in the intensely felt connection of children at play. At the open of Act Two Jo and Geof enter playing with brightly colored balloons, and, in the same moment, define their relationship as a successful "marriage." Similarly, *Lion* contrasts the bliss to be found in childhood to middle-aged failure. Nell and Andy survive because she is a prostitute, but like children they imagine becoming a dance team; she remembers her childhood dream of being a ballet dancer. Frank is middle-aged and unhappy with his alcoholic wife who is frequently arrested for improper conduct; his sad state is ironically contrasted with his job--a peddler of inexpensive children's toys.<sup>132</sup> Jo's adolescent "engagement ring" is more honest than the gaudy ring offered to Helen by Peter, the car salesman. Whereas Helen displays her ring in an outward sign of superficial connection, Jo hides hers on a string around her neck as a private sign of an authentic partnership. This action is linked to playing children. When Jimmie empties his pockets, looking for a string to tie the ring around her neck, they find a toy car; like a child, Jo asks, "Does it go?" and he demonstrates; they play in a moment of connected innocence.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup>Shelagh Delaney, *The Lion in Love* (London: Methuen and Co., 1961), 59–60.

<sup>133</sup>Delaney, *Sweetly*, 24.

Adolescent child's play imitates adult relationships, but unlike her mother's flawed middle-aged marriages, Jo's and Geof's relationship is redeeming:

Jo: You see. it's not marrying love between us, thank God.

Geof: You mean you just like having me around till your next prince comes along?

Jo: No.

Geof: Oh well, you need someone to love you while you're looking for someone to love.

Jo: Oh Geof, you'd make a funny father. You are a funny little man. I mean that. You're unique.

Geof: Am I?

Jo: I always want to have you with me because I know you'll never ask anything from me.<sup>134</sup>

Their "alternative" marriage is contrasted with that of Helen and Peter. Unlike the latter, sex and money are not goals or barriers. A sexless relationship and childlike innocence are seen as superior to the randy, alcoholic, material-focused relationships of Jo's mother. According to Delaney, the critics got it wrong; her play is "not about sexual fulfillment but a rest from sex and states that such a rest can only be temporary."<sup>135</sup> Their childlike "play" marriage is seen as more genuine than any of Helen's sanctioned marriages.

At the same time Jo and Geof are aware that their relationship is transitory. Jo tells Geof to leave because it is not good for him to be with her "all the time." But he cannot go while she needs him.

Jo: You'll have to go some time. We can't stay together like this for ever.

Geof: I'd sooner be dead than away from you.

Jo: You say that as if you mean it.

Geof: I do mean it. ... There's no need for me to go, Jo. You said yourself, you didn't want anybody else here and I'm only interested in you. We needn't split up need we, Jo?

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<sup>134</sup>Delaney, *Taste*, 76.

<sup>135</sup>Delaney, *Sweetly*, 131. Note: In the short story "Sweetly," the sickly young girl looks to the beautiful, spirited, independent and celibate nun, Sister Veronica, as a model for living.

Jo: I don't suppose so.<sup>136</sup>

But their sexless relationship does not fit any accepted social form. When Helen returns from her failed marriage, she sends Geof away. Innocence must give way to the inevitable corruption of adulthood. The “sweetness” of Jo’s and Geof’s partnership cannot continue, and the play offers no adult models of a viable relationship.

For this dissertation the key question remains: Did *A Taste of Honey* depict broad social insights? Williams recognized that the popular, middle-class theatre was too focused on surface reality; and naturalism could not expose deeper social realities: “The whole world of inner and normally inarticulate experience, the whole world of social process, which makes history yet is never clearly present on the surface, are alike excluded. The more real it all looks, the less real it may actually be.” He sought “new kinds of dramatic effect which will communicate this underlying reality to the audience.”<sup>137</sup> In 1961 Williams could identify emergence of both “extreme confusion and eclecticism” and “a genuine burst of vitality and energy” in English drama.<sup>138</sup> Williams found that of all the so-called “kitchen-sink” plays, *A Taste of Honey* was the “nearest transcript of an actual way of living, but in its selection of characters and situations [it] moves to the emphasis of disorganization.”<sup>139</sup> In other words, it was naturalistic but its unusual choices exposed social problems. Williams could compare the play's poeticism to that of Fry and Elliot. Further, Williams found that unlike *Look Back in Anger*, *A Taste of Honey* had

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<sup>136</sup>Delaney, *Taste*, 59.

<sup>137</sup>Raymond Williams, “New English Drama,” in *Modern British Dramatists: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. John Russell Brown, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), 28–29.

<sup>138</sup>*Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>139</sup>*Ibid.*, 32.

a positive outcome. It did not expose new social descriptions as it contained the same sense of restlessness and loss of direction as Osborne's play, but Delaney's play gained its hopeful effect without excesses of emotion for its own sake. Of all the "angry" plays, *A Taste of Honey* was most effective in presenting a "new sound: that of ordinary human voices trying to live through the despair... where, almost without artifice, the language of care and love keeps counterpointing the convincing bitterness, and where the play ends in a rooted disorder yet one through which a new life is coming and is given a blessing."<sup>140</sup>

But Williams's critique was influenced by Littlewood's choices that gave the play a social context. The question remains, can Delaney be considered a committed writer from a New Left perspective? Like Sillitoe's protagonists, several of Delaney's rebellious characters engage in protests, practical jokes, and thoughts of anarchy. In the short story "Sweetly Sings the Donkey" ["Sweetly"] (1963), the young protagonist makes up stories of ghosts to scare the other children and lies about a beetle stuck in a girl's hair. Like Arthur Seaton, she imagines violent acts; when a large statue of Jesus is put up in the garden during Easter, she dreams of "demolishing it" because "instead of making you feel agony at the agony of what it is trying to imitate, it makes you feel agony for yourself that you have to look at it," and for the "untalented" man who made it.<sup>141</sup> But whereas Sillitoe's working-class border characters take a stance outside of class and in so doing, reveal social imbalances, in *Lion* cultural contexts are background to failed relationships. There are no social explanations to Delaney's descriptions of the sad state of human relationships. Unlike Sillitoe's male protagonist, who sees himself

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<sup>140</sup>Ibid.

<sup>141</sup>Delaney, *Sweetly*, 60–61.

trapped in a flawed society and rages against provincial working-class values, Delaney's female protagonist seeks authentic, mutually fulfilling relationships.<sup>142</sup> Delaney ambiguously indicates that the problem is within the family structure. Jo is "not frightened of the darkness outside"; rather, she does not like the "darkness inside houses."<sup>143</sup> Her feeling is ambiguous, and the social message is vague. Delaney's work does not identify larger social causes affecting her character's dilemmas as did Sillitoe; and there is no investigation of psychological influences explored by Storey.<sup>144</sup>

Nevertheless, some critics found that Delaney's work coalesced the individual story with the larger social context. For Anderson, *A Taste of Honey* is a commentary on the period because the play's "contemporary poetry" positioned the working-class experiences within the larger social picture: "Its world is ... the one we know and read about every Sunday in the *News of the World*."<sup>145</sup> Its poetry is created by breaking the fourth wall; direct audience address engages a Brechtian sense of social reality by objectifying the characters, allowing audiences to experience the "bitter-sweet truth, a shared story."<sup>146</sup> Tom Milne, editor of *Sight and Sound* and *London Times* film critic, commended Delaney's *Lion* for transforming naturalism into a "luminous vision ... the nearest we have ever got in this country to Tchekov."<sup>147</sup> He used

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<sup>142</sup>Superficial comparisons can be made also between Delaney's isolated, unhappy female and David Storey's similarly unfulfilled, isolated male protagonist. But Storey is working out the internal struggle of the male's dichotomous mental state. Delaney's female protagonist is unfulfilled, loveless, and lonely, but not for psychological reasons. She celebrates her rebellious nature; she is "cheeky" but stable.

<sup>143</sup>Delaney, *Taste*, 22.

<sup>144</sup>It should be noted that, like Sillitoe, Delaney does not use the term "working class." It seems clear, though, that Delaney's Salford can be described as such.

<sup>145</sup>Anderson, "Review: *Taste*," 78.

<sup>146</sup>*Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>147</sup>Milne, "*Luther and The Devils*," 56.

Williams's arguments to show that *Lion* was not naturalism but a poetic form that exposed certain social realities. Delaney had translated “the concrete life of today into terms of poetry that shall at the one time both illustrate that life and set it within the historical and legendary tradition of our culture.”<sup>148</sup>

While some critics found social scope in *A Taste of Honey*, others did not. Gassner argued that it did not engage “large issues with concentrated intelligence and energy.”<sup>149</sup> Stuart Hall agreed; the play focused on individual relationships: “No themes or ideas external to the play disturb its inner form; [Delaney’s] values are all intensive.” This is her “forte,” and “when Jo’s idealism tends to take off, Geof or Helen are on hand to puncture her reveries.”<sup>150</sup> Hall found Delaney’s first play to be better than *Lion* because its naturalism was “under pressure”; *Lion* did no more than “reproduce the naturalism of everyday life.” Its circular development was “surprisingly like life” in its “mature” dealings with adult relationships.<sup>151</sup> Taylor would agree that *Lion* did not contain wider social relevancy:

Although the play’s structure extends familiar notions of naturalism, with unresolved diffuse scenes that intercut apparently haphazardly, the presentation of such closely observed detail allows no space for a selective examination of the

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<sup>148</sup>Milne explored whether “angry” literature fulfilled Williams’s call for poeticism that transcended naturalism and established realism. The writer must extend description into art: “Naturalism simply records, does not allow for the creative scrutiny and imaginative illumination of life which is the keynote of art. Almost immediately writers began to seek to extend their field, reaching away from naturalism towards” a poetic theatre exposing cultural realities. Milne concluded that 1950s “angry” literature was not naturalistic but internal explorations like the work of Anouilh, Sartre, Brecht, Beckett, Giraudoux, and Ionesco who reveal the state of mind of the protagonist; but this is not social description. Nevertheless, Milne argued that “angry” writers exposed aspects of the social problem through a poetry.

<sup>149</sup>Gassner, “Broadway in Review,” 299.

<sup>150</sup>Hall, “Beyond,” 214.

<sup>151</sup>Ibid., 213–14. Hall praised the influence of Brecht on British theatre. British theatre created “a kind of *pastiche* (e.g. *The Hostage*) or a specially British brand of naturalism” which he argued was the basic form of the “angry” movement with its “desire to recreate working-class life, the preoccupation with humanist values and an interest in the attack upon the Establishment values through social criticism.”

rather ill-defined social context. Consequently, the play lacks the political dimensions and critical framework of *A Taste of Honey*.<sup>152</sup>

Similarly, Delaney's other early work did not explore social context. Her short story "Vodka and Small Pieces of Gold," according to one biographer, contains "political reportage" but it was no more than a travelogue; Delaney is a "spokesman for a disaffected younger generation" that will not be implicated with "problems it did not create," and she does not have a "sociopolitical standpoint."<sup>153</sup> Delaney said she wrote the film script for the prize-winning film *Dance with a Stranger* (1985) because of "the social implications of the story, especially what it said about the lack of choices open to a lower-class woman in postwar England."<sup>154</sup> The film told the story of Ruth Ellis, the last woman to be executed in England. But contrary to Delaney's statement, the film focuses on a destructive relationship, not class problems.<sup>155</sup>

Nevertheless, Delaney was aware of social problems. She spoke against nuclear armament--she was arrested along with John Osborne and Vanessa Redgrave in Trafalgar Square in September 1961--and she argued for supporting working-class theatre. Delaney addressed social issues in Russell's "Salford" documentary and showed that she was aware that lost opportunities have social causes. Her feelings about her hometown are complex: "Salford isn't only alive; it's restless with all the coming and the going of the market and docks. ... At the same time it seems to be dying. ... And so much seems to be old and crumbling and neglected." Shots of Delaney walking along active shipping docks are juxtaposed with images of a working-class

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<sup>152</sup>Taylor, "Early Stages," 19.

<sup>153</sup>Whitehead, "Shelagh Delaney."

<sup>154</sup>Lindroth, "Shelagh Delaney," 121.

<sup>155</sup>H. Gustav Klaus, "Shelagh Delaney: Overview," in *Contemporary Dramatists*, ed. K. A. Nerney (London: St. James Press, 1993).

marketplace, children playing in a field with trash, and condemned neighborhoods.<sup>156</sup> She refers to Salford's decay and is aware of the broader social context. In New Left-fashion she identifies a new housing estates that is replacing vibrant, well-established communities:

They're tearing down whole parts of Salford and building them again. But they are not putting the people back there; they are sending them away, far far away, to places where there is no city, sterile places. [It's a] terrible thing to have to start up from scratch in a new place, so new. Nobody knows anybody, and when they're building these places they never think about putting in theatre or something.<sup>157</sup>

Coinciding with this narrative are shots of new high-rise working-class housing void of the humanity shown in previous shots. For Delaney this is "terrible":

Nobody knows anybody, and it takes years and years before you can ever get the same contact that you have when you lived in a little area, down, say down Traffic Road--no neighborliness. It takes years to do this, and I think it is this sort of thing that makes people restless.<sup>158</sup>

She then takes up a second New Left theme: Working-class adolescents have little sense of the future because they lack an effective education. She describes her own failures in school, but because she was "cheeky or conspicuous," she was moved to a grammar school and did as well or better than the middle-class children:

I know back at the secondary school half the girls there and boys were just as capable of doing the same sort of thing that I was doing. ... They have three alternatives: They stay where they are and come to a compromise and it's frightening. Or they get away from it, and a lot get away; they travel; they move; they come down from the provinces and end up in London. To me they're just as lost; they shouldn't be lost, but they are.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup>Russell, *Shelagh Delaney's Salford*.

<sup>157</sup>Ibid.

<sup>158</sup>Ibid.

<sup>159</sup>Ibid.

Delaney acknowledges that she was “lucky”; her writing saved her from a purposeless existence.

Though Delaney points to larger social issues, her analysis is not specific; Salford’s problems are caused by an ambiguous “they.” Delaney’s collection of short stories contains impressionistic effects that hint at a social context. “My Uncle, the Spy”--less than two pages--merely indicates broader issues: An older man tells his niece that he collects “secrets”--true and made up--and then disappears without an explanation. In “Sweetly” a sickly girl encounters a giant statue of Christ and, later, a donkey who like her appears to be escaping its confinement. But neither image develops into a wider social point. These brief poetic impressions are placed within autobiographical stories that do not engage a social message.

In contrast, her short story, “The White Bus” (1961) places generational and relationship problems onto a social canvas via a poetic structure, and it explores British social problems from a working-class and New Left perspective.<sup>160</sup> “The White Bus” relates lost working-class values with the hegemony of middle-class values, and the vacuousness of modern life, and, unlike her other work, it engages poetic literary forms and social commentary through working-class irony. “The White Bus” is divided into two trips; one is a train ride from London to a northern city, like Salford. The second trip is a chimerical “See Your City” bus tour through the northern city.<sup>161</sup> Both trips indicate that social problems are class based and intransigent. In the first trip, young

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<sup>160</sup>The final story in *Sweetly Sings the Donkey* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1961), 165–86. Chapter Five will explore Anderson’s film based on the short story, which extends social realism. His feature films that followed engage social protest and parody--if... (1968), *O Lucky Man!* (1973), and *Britannia Hospital* (1982).

<sup>161</sup>The story refers to a third trip. At the end of her train ride the Girl encounters a priest and group of nuns, accompanying crippled people boarding “The Lourdes Special.” She mockingly asks the priest if anyone with one leg ever came back with two; he blesses her, and she sneers that he is “free” with his blessings. As illustrated throughout this short story, traditional power structures have no viable solutions to social problems. Delaney, *Sweetly*, 169–70.

soccer fans are exasperated with a weakened Britain; in the second trip, England's traditional values arising from upper and middle-class ways of thinking, and observed from a working-class perspective, are found to be vacuous. It ends without hope for progress.

The first trip links the purposeless lives of young people to the weakening of a once vibrant society. Before boarding a north bound train (probably out of London), a young working-class girl--a successful writer like Delaney--encounters a "boy" who is smashing his portable radio on the sidewalk because his football team had lost. Like the losing goal that "trickled in slow motion through [the goalee's] legs," England is inexorably becoming mediocre.<sup>162</sup> The Girl--never named--boards the "British Railways Puffing Billy"--a further allusion to national debilitation--and drinks gin with the young football fans.

At the end of the train ride, she separates from the others and steps onto a strange double decker bus. The story then takes on a dream-like quality. Her inebriated state justifies the literary choices and opens naturalism to poeticism and broad social commentary. The story exposes the hegemony of the middle and upper classes; the bourgeoisie manipulate the cultural imagination by controlling the city's history, urban planning, and the naming of significant relics. The bus tour is run by the Lord Mayor in his official robes, supported by the working-class Mace Bearer. This industrial city was seen recently in a bad light (possibly due to the success of *A Taste of Honey*), and the tour is an effort to correct that impression and to let the public "see [their] city as it really is--a decent place inhabited by decent people."<sup>163</sup> Though the Lord Mayor controls the tour's narrative, his hypocritical comments are filtered through the

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<sup>162</sup>Delaney, *Sweetly*, 166.

<sup>163</sup>*Ibid.*, 170.

Girl's working-class point of view. For instance, when the Lord Mayor complains about the Girl "writing all that sexy stuff about this city, unmarried mothers and things and homosexuals," she quietly tells him to stop feeling her leg.

From an ironic point of view "The White Bus" exposes the continued hegemony of the former upper class, who used the Church as a surrogate. Parks, schools, hospitals, and children and old-age homes had been provided to the lower classes by the "generosity" of the wealthy. Records going back to the 1860s establish that Josiah Armington "combined great business acumen with Christianity and humanity." In an ironic Marxist jab at capital's exploitation of the worker, Armington is praised for founding a worker's home that "stands as a symbol of his interest in the welfare of the men who worked so hard to make him one of the wealthiest men in the world." The lower class had benefited from the largess of their betters and were expected to appreciate upper-class moral lessons. Middle class hegemony replaced that of the former ruling class, and limited what was remembered of the past and present; city archival records contained the history of the powerful, so that "the voluntary effort on the part of wealthy and influential ladies" [who are] closely connected to religious work" is emphasized.<sup>164</sup>

Working-class behavior and cultural imagination are manipulated. Working-class communities are being demolished and replaced by sterile housing projects that are praised for improving working-class lives. The Church is seen as a social engine controlling procreation, child rearing, and the end of life. The Association of Ladies distributes ornamental cards--appropriate for display--that instruct the lower class on how to dress their babies. A small prize is awarded, in Armington's name, for the cleanest worker's house. Power enforces the gap

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<sup>164</sup>Ibid., 179.

between the classes: Workers' families are allowed entrance once a week into the master's home to view the "many priceless treasures"; they are reminded of the "Armington evenings" that belonged to the upper class with the "hall illuminated from top to bottom--the finest orchestras--the finest food and wines--elegant ladies and their escorts dressing in the finest clothes swirling on the dance floor."<sup>165</sup> City institutions provide for homeless children and the elderly, as well as the Lord Mayor's zoo. The Mace Bearer turns to the Girl and sarcastically sings, "The monkey house is nearly full, but there's room enough for you."<sup>166</sup>

However, middle class control of cultural language does not extend to the public libraries that, according to the Lord Mayor, contain "some disgusting books."<sup>167</sup> One book he borrowed was written by a member of Parliament--now in jail for crooked business practices. The book refers to a clergyman who was imprisoned for "perversion." The Lord Mayor argues, illogically, that the priest's sentence was too harsh considering the degenerate books in the public libraries, most advocating for "homosexual practices." And he calls one writer "criminal" for seeing the middle class as narrow-minded. Rather, he argues, it is these books which will lead to perverse practices.<sup>168</sup> Away from the influence of the public libraries, the bourgeoisie control language. The Lord Major tells a story of a woman who was fired from a printing house for calling someone a name. At the moment that she was fired the Lord Mayor had been reading aloud to the head printer from a D.H. Lawrence novel "all the four-letter words such as at one time were

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<sup>165</sup>Ibid., 176.

<sup>166</sup>Ibid., 182.

<sup>167</sup>Ibid., 177.

<sup>168</sup>Ibid., 178.

only displayed on the walls of public lavatories.” While his recitation of profanity was sanctioned, the worker's use of language ("not exactly dirty") was severely punished.<sup>169</sup>

An alternate, socially realistic, working-class history of the community is told by the Girl and the Mace Bearer. While the tour narrator praises the public parks where the “more noted citizens” live, the Mace-Bearer points out the bush under which he was conceived. The schools for the lower classes are praised because boys and girls are separated for fear of improper behavior. But the Mace-Bearer 's daughter who was dating a “Yank” was famous for selling cigarettes, nylons, and contraceptives from a suitcase at school. The Girl remembers her: “She was a bugger.”<sup>170</sup> This oral working-class narrative is coupled to the socially realistic books in the library.

In the final scenes of “The White Bus” the sterility of the middle-class-controlled society is juxtaposed with a working-class wasteland. The Girl leaves the tour and wanders into a graveyard and gets sick over a grave marked, “Ernest Titterington, 1834 - 1854, He Sought a City Fair and High.” As she wonders if in his brief life he found what he sought, it is clear that there is no hope for a worthwhile future. She then walks through the rubble of her working-class community, being replaced by a housing project many miles away. She observes the modernity in the distance--tall buildings, a jet plane, cargo ships, automobile traffic--while behavioral inertia plays out its old routines in the demolished buildings around her. A young boy pleads with a young girl, “Let me,” but she runs away because she feels “daft.” In this demolished landscape, the old actions leading to relationships no longer have meaning. The Girl watches a

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<sup>169</sup>Ibid., 178-79.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 176-77.

married couple clean up their condemned fish and chips shop. He wants to stop working, but she chants an aphorism on the need to get the work done today, or it will never get done. The man, “intoxicated with the rhythms of his wife’s song, sets himself to sweeping the condemned shop.” The Girl walks on “murmuring” to herself.<sup>171</sup>

Like Sillitoe’s working-class border character, the Girl observes what could be described as a New Left social reality; the power structures in the tall buildings and jet planes control a country in decay. From her border position, the Girl, unlike others, is aware of these social conditions. Through her dream-like and superior point of view, she observes the “truth” of the social situation. But this social realist description ends in loss rather than commitment, because nothing positive can be done. Williams’s “revolution” will not be engaged

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Unlike Sillitoe’s heroes, Storey’s and Delaney’s protagonists are not working-class border characters. In *A Taste of Honey*, Jo lives on a border between an authentic relationship and middle-aged chaos. In *This Sporting Life*, Machin lives on a psychological border between feeling and physical action. Neither have the social insights of Sillitoe’s characters. And though the first production of *A Taste of Honey* approached social commentary, its social context resulted from Littlewood’s choices, as well as the director’s reputation as a “leftist” artist. Nevertheless, Delaney engaged a wider social perspective in “The White Bus.” The short story was adapted for a short film by Lindsay Anderson in 1967.

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<sup>171</sup>Ibid., 186.

Chapter 5  
A New Left Film Aesthetic:  
Commitment and Social Realism in New Wave Left Films

The early New Left argued that a democratic, humanist, and classless society would be encouraged by open, free-forming cultural products and by working-class writers creating authentic class novels. This dynamic is reflected in Hoggart's call for films to communicate the complexity of social conditions and by his praise of the vitalizing effect of "'free' films made by such men as Lindsay Anderson and Karel Reisz ... which take a fresh look at Britain and which have evoked a considerable ... response."<sup>1</sup> Hoggart was referring to a program of documentary and short subject films--*Free Cinema*--initiated by Anderson and Reisz to feature their early work. This chapter will argue that certain *Free Cinema* and New Wave films fulfilled the New Left definition of social realism.<sup>2</sup> Williams's arguments regarding the dynamic relationship that links form and convention to contemporaneous "structures of feeling" were matched by an innovative and poetic approach to social realism in a sub-set of "New Wave" films to be identified as "New Wave Left" [hereafter, NWL] films: *A Taste of Honey* (1961), *The Loneliness of the Long Distant Runner* [hereafter, *Loneliness*] (1962), *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* [hereafter, *SNSM*] (1960), and to a lesser degree, *This Sporting Life* (1963). The style and unconventional editing and shot choices of NWL films will be identified as a New Left film aesthetic. Using documentary filming style in poetic ways, these films took views on the urban/industrial landscape that communicated the social complexity of postwar British society.

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Hoggart, "Speaking to Each Other," in *Conviction*, ed. Norman Mackenzie (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1958), 137.

<sup>2</sup>*Free Cinema* was a series of six film programs from 1956 to 1959. Shown chiefly at the National Film Theatre in London, these short films were a precursor to what became known as the British New Wave. The approach to film making opposed industry standards and influenced the early feature films of Rich-

Further, the critical writing of NWL filmmakers--Lindsay Anderson, Tony Richardson, Karel Reisz, and Walter Lassally--supported the New Left call for committed artists and critics, and cultural production under the artist's control.<sup>3</sup> Finally, though these films were energized by the same New Left yearning for a moral democracy, the social reality they presented did not support New Left outcomes.

The first section will analyze critiques of NWL films and show that negative criticism of these films was limited. The second section will analyze the critical writing of NWL filmmakers and their arguments that artists and critics needed to recognize their political and social stances. Further, I will show that NWL films are linked because these four filmmakers were influenced by similar cultural forces, and their critical writing and artistic work overlapped. The third section will analyze the poetic forms of the New Left film aesthetic as inspired by the wartime work of Humphrey Jennings and developed by the NWL filmmakers. Shot layout and editing choices will be analyzed; I will demonstrate how three types of "border" views are established that describe the disintegration of former social values and the difficulty of moving towards New Left social goals. Significantly, though, New Left film aesthetic engaged complex social descriptions and encouraged British film audiences to take "border" views on society.

### **Critiques of British New Wave Films**

American reviews of New Wave films were generally positive, while British reviewers found the films to be disappointing.<sup>4</sup> American critics identified the films in overly generalized

ardson, Anderson, and Reisz.

<sup>3</sup>Cinematographer Walter Lassally wrote about the issues of freedom in British film production and contributed directly and indirectly to many of the *Free Cinema* and NWL films being discussed.

<sup>4</sup>However, American reviewer Stanley Kauffmann found little worthwhile in these films.

terms as both working class and "angry man" but not within a British social context. A. H. Weiler found that *This Sporting Life* "translat[ed] the confusion and unrequited longings of the angry young men and women of our time into memorable universal truths."<sup>5</sup> In nonspecific terms, *New York Times* reviewers judged the films to be entertaining and better than previous "angry young man" films; for instance, Arthur Seaton [*SNSM*] is labeled as both working class and an "exceptional specimen"; or, the characters in *A Taste of Honey* were not "odious" because Delaney "has no rancor in her."<sup>6</sup> The films were praised for revealing the human condition. Though Bosley Crowther pointed to specific realistic scenes, neither Crowther nor Weiler focused on the social aspects of the films.<sup>7</sup> Crowther described the dehumanizing industrial landscape of Manchester--the "cheap tawdry playland of Blackpool and a bleak set of grimy midland docks"--and the *Variety* critic pointed out the "gray drabness of the locals as well as the boisterous vulgarity of Blackpool, saloons and dance-halls"--but did not refer to the working-class context.<sup>8</sup> Several American critics commented on the confusing north England accent; Weiler referred to Richard Harris's "thick Welsh accent" and Rita Tushingham's "North Country accent, which may confuse some."<sup>9</sup> And in a backhanded compliment Crowther saw the "odd sort of verbal flagellation" of Delaney's character as "one of the few joys they can afford."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>A. H. Weiler, "This Sporting Life: Film Review," *New York Times*, 17 July 1963, 19.

<sup>6</sup>Bosley Crowther, "'Taste of Honey' - Bittersweet Sensations Flow in Britain," *New York Times*, 20 May 1962, X1.

<sup>7</sup>Bosley Crowther, "Screen: Different Briton; 'Saturday Night and Sunday Morning' Film Review," *New York Times*, 4 April 1961, 44.

<sup>8</sup>"A Taste of Honey," *Variety*, 31 December 1960.

<sup>9</sup>Weiler, "This Sporting Life: Film Review," 19. And, A. H. Weiler, "Screen: 'A Taste of Honey' Arrives: British Drama Stars Rita Tushingham," *New York Times*, 1 May 1962, 33.

<sup>10</sup>Crowther, "Different Briton," 44.

In contrast, British reviewers focused on the films' impact on society and world cinema. It was generally agreed that New Wave films were breaking new ground and were important because of their serious, realist approach to social problems.<sup>11</sup> There was general praise for the use of the "documentary" camera for realistic depiction of the industrial north and of working-class characters who had their "own existence."<sup>12</sup> New Left writer Rod Prince praised Reisz's "observational" filming, and his use of a "straightforward" and "static" camera held at medium distance that "succeed[ed] in making a serious representation of a small section of working-class life"; his film contained "sociological truth."<sup>13</sup> New Left views are evident when Alan Lovell described Reisz's "anti-style" that undercuts melodramatic effects that would "distort" views and put the audience "completely on [the hero's] side." Reisz has the "confidence in the audience just to assume their co-operation" and allow them to make their own judgments.<sup>14</sup> Further, Tony Richardson's two New Wave films were described as "poetic."<sup>15</sup> Early British critics praised the realistic performances of New Wave working-class actors. Peter Baker reportedly found that Tom Courtney created the "truth" of Sillitoe's runner by "needl[ing] his way into the character with no mannerisms or calculated effects that are obvious."<sup>16</sup> Lovell complimented Reisz's actors for their detailed, truthful performances.

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<sup>11</sup>B. F. Taylor, *The British New Wave* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2006), 23.

<sup>12</sup>Alan Lovell, "Film Chronicle," *New Left Review* 1, no. 7 (January-February 1961): 53.

<sup>13</sup>Rod Prince, "Saturday Night and Sunday Morning: The Novel ... The Film," *New Left Review* 1, no. 6 (November-December 1960): 16.

<sup>14</sup>Alan Lovell, "Film Chronicle," 52.

<sup>15</sup>Don Radovich, *Tony Richardson: A Bio-Bibliography* (London: Greenwood Press, 1995), 109–12.

<sup>16</sup>Quoted from *Films and Filming*, 1962, in Alexander Walker, *Hollywood, UK: The British Film Industry in the Sixties* (London: Michael Joseph, 1974), 127.

There was general agreement on both sides of the Atlantic that there should be “critical acceptance of the British New Wave.”<sup>17</sup> But some British critics found that New Wave films were immoral and presented inappropriate messages about working-class life. Dyer found a core of honesty in Seaton, who held “a contemporary backyard-and-factory conscience” in which lying was used to get to the truth.<sup>18</sup> But Prince and Lovell criticized the lack of “moral or emotional depth” in *SNSM*; Seaton was an amoral character whose actions were not properly condemned; New Wave films did show the working class as a whole in a positive light.<sup>19</sup> A *London Times* critic (September 26, 1962) called on New Wave filmmakers to include more worthwhile subjects; rather than focusing on “discontented youth, the spoilt darlings of the age,” it would be better to show “the ill, the solitary, the virtuous old who are the real sufferers” of the established order.<sup>20</sup>

Early British critics were disappointed, also, that New Wave films had not produced a British film style that rivaled the best of French, Italian, and American cinema. Such criticism can be broken into two parts: First, these films had not appealed to a world market because they were too local. For Dyer, New Wave films were an improvement on past British products; they were true to the social moment in “reproducing its surface,” but they were limited to British concerns. Though Richardson’s work was seen as having wider appeal, there was something “notoriously inbred and exclusive about British” filmmakers, who were regarded as being

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<sup>17</sup>Peter John Dyer, “Saturday Night and Sunday Morning: Film Review,” in *Sight and Sound: A Fiftieth Anniversary Selection*, ed. David Wilson (London: BFI Publishing, 1982), 143.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>19</sup>See Prince, “The Novel--the Film,” 16. And Alan Lovell, “Film Chronicle,” 53.

<sup>20</sup>Quoted in Walker, *Hollywood, England*, 129.

against “universality.”<sup>21</sup> Though the style and content was fine, British filmmakers needed to find a way to make world films. Further, early British critics questioned the artistic quality of New Wave films; in this, Penelope Houston (*Sight and Sound*) was apologetic, while V. F. Perkins (*Movie*) was abusive. For Houston, though New Wave films were not great, they had the “impact of genuine innovation” with new settings and acting talent; she was hopeful they would engender a “specifically British ‘sense of style’.”<sup>22</sup> In contrast, Perkins rejected New Wave films and directors:

British cinema is as dead as before. Perhaps it was never alive. Our films have improved, if at all, in their intentions. We are still unable to find evidence of artistic sensibilities in working order. There is as much genuine personality in “Room at the Top”, method in “A Kind of Loving” and style in “A Taste of Honey” as there is wit in “An Alligator named Daisy”, intelligence in “Above Us the Waves” and ambition in “Ramsbottom Rides Again”.<sup>23</sup>

These filmmakers displayed a “conspicuous lack of talent.” Richardson received the harshest criticism; his work resembled earlier British directors’ “clumsy” use of extraneous styles.<sup>24</sup>

But Perkins based his criticism on subjective taste--“quality” films were what he knew was best--not analytical rigor.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Perkins’s arguments were shortsighted. For instance, he found that the fight scene in *SNSM* was “mishandled” because Reisz, like other British directors, did not like violence, and shot the scene from a distance; he did not want his

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<sup>21</sup>Peter John Dyer, “*SNSM*: Film Review,” 143.

<sup>22</sup>Taylor, *The British New Wave*, 22.

<sup>23</sup>V. F. Perkins, “The British Cinema,” *Movie*, no. 1 (June 1962): 2. According to B. F. Taylor in *The British New Wave* (2006), *Sight and Sound* tended to support and encourage new British film products with a nationalist bent; *Movie*, like Anderson’s *Sequence*, argued that British films were inferior.

<sup>24</sup>Perkins, “The British Cinema,” 7.

<sup>25</sup>For Perkins “the distinction” he was making was “as easy to see as it [was] difficult to explain.” His judgment was based on an ambiguous definition of “quality” films that integrated style and content, such as Antonioni’s *L’avventura* and Godard’s *Breathless* (both 1960).

audience to see “what he was allegedly showing.”<sup>26</sup> Reisz was not British, but more importantly, the scene referred to was not limiting views on violence; rather Reisz was establishing a coherent social realist approach. Distance from the fight forces the viewer to take an objective, ironic perspective on the struggle between Seaton and the avenging soldiers that denies melodramatic identification of hero and villain. This viewer perspective is discussed in the final section.

A couple of decades after the initial releases, there was a renewed interest in British New Wave films.<sup>27</sup> According to Steedman, later critics may have been reflecting “the 1980s’ preoccupation with the 1950s as the decade that might [have answered] the question ‘What went wrong?’”<sup>28</sup> It could be argued that cultural critics on the left were disappointed, as if the New Left project might have moved forward if these films had been stylistically coherent and had dealt authentically with their working-class subject. This later criticism can be grouped under four positions: (1) New Wave films did not address specific social problems. (2) New Wave films were a mismatch of documentary realism and traditional narrative structures. These stylistic disruptions allowed for a fetishization of working-class industrial landscapes and the working-class male and female by the middle-class scholarship boy longing for what he had lost. (3) New Wave filmmakers were disingenuously concerned with establishing new artistic fields in which to flourish. (4) The New Wave had no lasting impact.

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<sup>26</sup>Perkins, “The British Cinema,” 6.

<sup>27</sup>Film critics--British and others-- had “looked down their noses at the British cinema.” While Anderson lauded the work of John Ford, *Sequence* complained about the vacuousness of British cinema. See, Ernest Callenbach, “This Sporting Life: Film Reviews,” *Film Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (Summer 1964): 45.

<sup>28</sup>Carolyn Steedman, “Writing the Self: The End of the Scholarship Girl,” in *Cultural Methodologies*, ed. Jim McGuigan (London: Sage Publishers, 1997), 107.

**(1) New Wave films did not address important social issues.** This critique points at a contrast between the New Left call for broad social descriptions and those who felt that New Wave films should have focused on specific social problems. The latter critical attitude incorrectly aligns NWL social realism with contemporaneous issue-centered “social problem” films which were, for the most part, studio productions that featured star actors. These films addressed specific social issues, such as homosexuality (*Victim*, dir. Basil Dearden, 1961), unions (*The Angry Silence*, 1959), prison reform (*The Criminal* [aka *Concrete Jungle*], 1960), or a combination of social issues. *Flame in the Streets* (1961) dealt with racial, immigration, adolescent and union issues.<sup>29</sup> Social problem films were formed as conventional melodramas; for example, in *Flame in the Streets* a group of young white factory workers are presented as a bigoted and dangerous teen gang; following Hollywood convention, they denigrate black immigrants and throw firecrackers at their feet. Social and relational issues are tied together, and the film ends in a resolution of both. Assumptions about class and gender relations are not examined. According to Colin McCabe, social problem films formed a “classic realism” in that by the end all conflict is resolved.<sup>30</sup> The conventional solutions of these films are “comforting,” not “disturbing”; thus, *Victim* exposes society’s “incorrect,” anti-gay laws, but the tone of the film remains within the established social structure.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>*Flame in the Streets* (Roy Ward Baker dir., 1961), starring John Mill and Brenda de Banzie, from a play by Ted Willis, “Hot Summer Night.”

<sup>30</sup>John Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956 - 1963* (London: British Film Institute, 1986), 61. McCabe’s screen theory argues that the “truth of a film’s reality” is imbedded in the invisible story telling. It seems that though screen theory could be applied to any “committed” film, McCabe’s conclusions are more appropriately applied to social problem films, than the social realism of NWL films.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 61.

The final section of this chapter will argue that, unlike social problem films, NWL films present a social realism that is complex and open-ended; these films represent what could be called a New Left film aesthetic. Williams argued that “all art is made” out of a “vital area, from [a] structure of feelings that is lived and experienced but not quite yet arranged as institutions and ideas, from [a] common and inalienable life.”<sup>32</sup> With a similar sentiment Reisz argued that documentaries should not solve specific social problems but develop a sense of “social humanism.”<sup>33</sup> In a similar fashion, NWL films do not deal with specific social issues; rather, they are complex descriptions of social degeneration as seen from the stance of a working-class border character who is forced to adapt to unacceptable social change.

**(2) New Wave films were incoherent.** As suggested earlier by Perkins, New Wave films were denounced for mixing dissimilar styles. For John Coleman [*New Statesman*, September 28, 1962], *Loneliness* lacked unity because Richardson borrowed heavily from the French. The film was a “mish-mash of styles” that included Chaplinesque scenes of sped-up action, a parody of a television commercials, a comic montage of the squandering of the insurance money, a dreamy treatment of a solitary run through the Borstal woods, ‘ironic cross-cutting’, and flashbacks at the end of race.<sup>34</sup> The *Monthly Film Bulletin* reviewer agreed that “even if such borrowings were justifiable they would still have to work in themselves in a way they certainly don’t here.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>John Higgins, *Raymond Williams: Literature, Marxism and Cultural Materialism* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 84.

<sup>33</sup>Karel Reisz, “A Use for Documentary,” *Universities and Left Review* 1, no. 3 (Winter 1958): 24.

<sup>34</sup>Quoted in *New Statesman*, September 28, 1962, in Walker, *Hollywood, England*, 128.

<sup>35</sup>Quoted in Radovich, *Tony Richardson*, 111. On the other hand, *Films and Filming* found Richardson to be “the finest director working in Britain today” and described his “anti-style”: He applied “all kinds of techniques to all kinds of circumstances” (November, 1962). For others, Richardson’s early films had been unfairly lambasted; For Horne, *Loneliness* was a “gentle comedy” that had “staying power.” See William I. Horne, “‘Greatest Pleasures’: ‘A Taste of Honey’ (1961) and ‘The Loneliness of the Long

Such arguments pointed at two imbalances: First, there is a mismatch between a story about individuals and documentary shots of the working-class environment that resulted in a sort of deceitful naturalism. For Higson, New Wave film realism combined a “thin” narrative with rich documentary footage. “That long shot from the hill” was inserted ineffectively into classical Hollywood narratives.<sup>36</sup> As such the “narrative space” in New Wave films verged on becoming an “historical place.” Rather than a story, *SNSM* is a “reality of its events” about an individual; even worse, the film does not have enough dramatic substance to hold the richness of the documentary images.<sup>37</sup> Second, New Wave realist, documentary images are “proclaimed as politically progressive because they extend the conventional social discourse and deal positively with working people, within an iconography of authentic sounds and images,” but these realistic images are not used up in a “rational communicative framework.” Without a coherent style the viewer is not fully engaged by the story, but is left with fetishist views on disconnected pieces of actuality. Certain viewers--especially the scholarship boy who longs for his lost working-class vitality--are encouraged to fetishize the acts of the working-class male.<sup>38</sup>

John Hill extended Higson’s argument by arguing that *Free Cinema* and New Wave films align views on the social world with the protagonist's interiority. For instance, as Colin and Mike (*Loneliness*) watch television, the point-of-view shot shows the politician sped-up; this

Distance Runner’ (1962),” in *The Cinema of Tony Richardson: Essays and Interviews*, ed. James M. Welsh and John C. Tibbetts (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1999), 114.

<sup>36</sup>See Andrew Higson, “Space, Place, Spectacle,” *Screen Education* 25, no. 4/5 (July/October 1984): 2–21, and *Waving the Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>37</sup>Ibid. 8.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 20. Others argue that because New Wave films focused on behavior and environment, and the plotting was so thin, these films were naturalistic, not socially realistic.

indicates the boys' feelings. Similarly, Seaton's feelings are featured when, at his lathe in the bicycle factory, he observes his fellow workers. But Hill argued that the composition and editing of such shots indicate character subjectivity *and* "something more"; the filmmaker is intrusively stressing that this is "indeed" what the protagonist is feeling.<sup>39</sup> Such subjective shots had been used cohesively in French New Wave to reveal the egoism of the characters, but, according to Hill, this is not the case in New Wave films. The subjective mode of the British films is interrupted by points-of-view not available to the characters, so that neither the reality of the character nor the social reality is presented.

Higson's and Hill's analysis is limited when applied to the sub set of NWL films. Rather than consisting of incoherencies, these films present a complex view; they combine naturalistic documentary views with a working-class story within a "poetic" view of social reality. This approach is supported by the intentions of NWL filmmakers who had been calling for production freedom and wanted to break from the restrictions of the studio and from the studio stricture of technical perfection. Their early films, rather than being disingenuous or incoherent, were influenced by the socially committed films of the British documentary movement, especially the wartime films of Humphrey Jennings. This work formed what will be described in the next section as a New Left film aesthetic.

**(3) New Wave films presented middle-class views of working-class experience.** This sort of criticism found that the left-leaning, realist goals of New Wave filmmakers were undermined by who they were and what they really wanted. They were duplicitous in three ways: They were middle class and, therefore, did not have authentic views on their working-class subjects; they

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<sup>39</sup>Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism*, 134.

were not creating realistic films via new forms but used new content with old conventions; and they were interested largely in opening a new position in the filmic art field.

First, it was argued that New Wave films were disingenuous because the filmmakers were middle class. For Lovell, financial success had distanced New Wave filmmakers from their films' working-class subjects.<sup>40</sup> Perkins had argued that postwar, working-class reality was obstructed by the filmmakers' undisclosed middle-class ways of seeing; therefore, these films were not authoritative.<sup>41</sup> Higson would agree, contending that New Wave filmmakers had taken a superior, middle-class point of view that was unconsciously accepted by the predominately middle-class audience.<sup>42</sup> Hill, referring to the New Wave "beauty" shots of working-class squalor, argued that these were an outsider's view and could not represent an actual working-class experience. Thus, the films were incapable of presenting the social messages they were claiming; they were not only an outsider's observation, but they encompassed the "very sensation of class differences."<sup>43</sup> Further, Terry Lovell argued that New Wave social observations were inspired by Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy* (1957).<sup>44</sup> The audience for these films was the "scholarship boy" reminiscing about a lost vitality.<sup>45</sup> As such New Wave films reproduced bourgeois social formations and presented a middle-class fantasy of the working class.

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<sup>40</sup>Terry Lovell, "Landscapes and Stories in 1960s British Realism," *Screen* 31, no. 4 (Winter 1990): 358.

<sup>41</sup>Perkins, "The British Cinema," 6.

<sup>42</sup>See, Higson, "Space, Place, Spectacle"; and Higson, *Waving the Flag*.

<sup>43</sup>Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism*, 135–36.

<sup>44</sup>Lovell, "Landscapes and Stories," 358.

<sup>45</sup>Steedman discusses scholarship boy Tony Richardson's appropriation of Delaney's *A Taste of Honey* in the service of British film realism. See, Steedman, "Writing the Self," 120.

For Higson, the middle-class viewpoint of New Wave films was grounded in John Grierson's documentary approaches. The 1930s Grierson School documentaries were state-funded and, therefore, state sanctioned. Grierson saw the working class as part of a bourgeois national identity:

Documentary sets out to produce a new image of the 'national community' as a complex network of social groups through the devices of montage and the public gaze. The image can be seen as relatively progressive, in that it tentatively articulates 'the nation' and 'ordinary people' as the same, rather than seeing the nation only in terms of the upper classes, as in the heritage film. The 'ordinary people' are inserted into an already formed bourgeois public sphere, however. This sphere is extended, democratized even, to the extent that a new public enters it, but the relations which exist between different social groups are hardly altered. Indeed, for the state, the function of official documentary is to win the consent of this new public for the existing order.<sup>46</sup>

Higson argued that New Wave filmmakers established realism using this documentary approach that blocked authentic views on the working class and supported middle-class hegemonies.

For Hill, New Wave films depicted a middle-class idea of class difference and sexuality that undermined working-class realism.<sup>47</sup> The much-praised sexual explicitness of these films was a traditional way of seeing the working-class, especially women. The female character's arch materialism was at the root of the social problems that the films explored. A "satisfactory" ending required that the "bad" behavior of the female characters be regulated through marriage.<sup>48</sup> Since New Wave films reflected a middle-class fascination with working-class free sexuality, social messages were "uneven"; this discrepancy between the image and the message resulted in

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<sup>46</sup>Higson, *Waving the Flag*, 196.

<sup>47</sup>Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism*, 172–3.

<sup>48</sup>John Hill, "Working-Class Realism and Sexual Reaction: Some Theses on the British 'New Wave,'" in *British Cinema History*, ed. Curran James and Vincent Porter (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble Books, 1983), 303–11.

unintended, ambiguous endings, so that “the solution to the problem which the film provides is only partially ‘satisfactory’.”<sup>49</sup>

Second, New Wave filmmakers were accused of being disingenuous in using working-class images and problems to open a new sense of reality. According to Williams, “realism” requires a constant breaking into new “realisms” through “new contents” aligned with “new forms.” Change “undermines habitual versions of dramatic reality and thus communicates new and more fundamental underlying realities.”<sup>50</sup> Higson would agree that film realism was a process of changing conventions; but he found that New Wave films and the series of *Free Cinema* programs of documentaries dealt with reality in conventional ways.<sup>51</sup> And Petrie concluded that New Wave films were naturalistic because these filmmakers introduced changes in content, but not in filmic formations. “Kitchen sink” films had introduced new characters, settings, and problems (housing, homosexuality, race), but they did not invent new approaches to dramatic realism.<sup>52</sup> For Hill, the realism of these films was “exhausted.”<sup>53</sup> Others described New Wave as “melodramatic” or as no more than a “reaction to a conventionally happy ending,” a reaction which did not engage social reality.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism*, 135.

<sup>50</sup>Duncan J. Petrie, *Creativity and Constraint in the British Film Industry* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1991), 63. Petrie refers to Andre Bazin’s and Siegfried Kraucauer’s ideas on film realism. The author is a research officer at BFI. See also, Williams, “A Lecture on Realism” *Screen*, Spring, 1977.

<sup>51</sup>Higson, “Space, Place, Spectacle,” 16.

<sup>52</sup>Petrie, *Creativity and Constraint*, 149.

<sup>53</sup>Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism*, 58.

<sup>54</sup>Robert Kolker, *The Altering Eye: Contemporary International Cinema* (Oxford: Open Book Publishers, 1983), 67.

Third, as new artists, New Wave filmmakers were considered disingenuous because they were interested in opening a place in the filmic art field. Like Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), for Hewison, New Wave filmmakers were middle-class outsiders using the working class.<sup>55</sup> Higson argued that British New Wave filmmakers were ambitious and insincere in using classic British documentary conventions within classic film narrative forms in an attempt to establish greater social realism:

The authenticity of place and character, for instance, is achieved by breaking some of the studio conventions of classical cinema—shooting on location in actual British landscapes, using unknown, or unglamorous, or non-professional, or untrained performers, and so on.<sup>56</sup>

This disjunction of disparate “realistic” elements used within established conventions was exacerbated by the self-serving “poetic” camera, which attempted to foreground “artistry rather than the ‘reality’.”<sup>57</sup> For instance, in *A Taste of Honey* when Jo is beside a canal, the scene is not about the character; rather, Lassally is demonstrating how well his camera can transform this dismal place “into objects of ‘comfortable contemplation’.” This squalor can only take on beauty when seen from the outside; this is not a working-class experience.<sup>58</sup>

Despite these arguments, NWL filmmakers were committed to using working-class writers to create social realist films in an open system of production. They were critical of cultural and governmental hegemony, and their published opinions on film opposed the attitudes of established British critics. Their left-leaning articles in *Sequence, Sight and Sound*,

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<sup>55</sup>Robert Hewison, *In Anger: British Culture in the Cold War 1945–60* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 198.

<sup>56</sup>Higson, “Space, Place, Spectacle,” 188.

<sup>57</sup>Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism*, 135.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, 136–38.

*Universities and Left Review* and the *New Left Review* aligned with the concerns of New Left culturalists. Like the working-class border protagonist in their films, NWL filmmakers took an outsider's stance; their arguments opposed film industry control; and they attempted to break free of institutional processes. Further, it is overly simplistic to say they were products of British middle-class life. Reisz (Czechoslovakian) and Lassally (German) were of Jewish heritage and escaped Nazis persecution as children. Reisz's family died at Auschwitz. He attended a Quaker school and served as an RAF pilot at the end of the war. After Cambridge, he became a teacher and then wrote a seminal book on film editing.<sup>59</sup> He co-edited *Sequence* with Anderson and then was the editor for *Sight and Sound*.<sup>60</sup> Lassally's father was a well-established German industrial filmmaker and worked in England after his family escaped Berlin. From early on Lassally wanted to be a lighting director (cinematographer) and wanted the freedom to create outside of industry control.<sup>61</sup> Richardson, born in northern England, was the son of a chemist and went to a less famous public school. Despite his upbringing, he did not see himself as middle class and "consciously react[ed] against his middle-class background." He complained that he was "eternally damned by being born lower middle class."<sup>62</sup>

More than the other NWL filmmakers, Anderson rebelled against middle-class ideas and best exemplified the artist on a social border. His critical writing and film work were anti-establishment and revolutionary. Born in India, he was raised in a military family and attended

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<sup>59</sup>*The Technique of Film Editing* (1953) was re-published in 2010.

<sup>60</sup>Tom Milne, "Karel Reisz: Obit," *Guardian*, 28 November 2002.

<sup>61</sup>See Walter Lassally, "The Cynical Audience," *Sight and Sound* 26, no. 1 (Summer 1956): 12–15; Thomas Erskine, "Lassally, Walter: Film Reference."

<sup>62</sup>Simon Kavanaugh, "He Directs the Kitchen Sink Revolt," *Odham Chronicle Standard*, 19 September 1963. Richardson also wrote that he "like[d] the idea [he] was born in the North.... I love the black cities, the wild moors, the bleakness and the solidity and the humour."

public school and Oxford. In a homophobic society, Anderson struggled with his sexual orientation.<sup>63</sup> Occupying a social border, Anderson rebelled against the liberal bourgeoisie in his writing and in the plays he directed at the Royal Court Theatre. His early films reflected both social protest and a love for his country, as well as a recognition of the problems of middle-class cultural and political control.

Describing NWL filmmakers as “middle-class” obscures their nuanced stances. Anderson is accused of denigrating the working class in his documentary *O Dreamland* (1953), which depicts the mass entertainments of a British amusement park. For Hill, while Jennings’s *Spare Time* presented a “respectful dignity” of the working class, Anderson’s documentary was an “aggressive criticism.” Fragmented images of working-class bodies are seen over barriers, and their faces are juxtaposed with carnival dummies; the mismatching and repetition of raucous unpleasant sounds held the associative editing together and indicated the “spiritual emptiness of a modern mass culture.”<sup>64</sup> Also, Hill pointed to Anderson’s reference to the working class as “moronic.”<sup>65</sup> But Anderson’s film was criticizing the vacuousness of middle-class commercial values. For Reisz, *O Dreamland* bemoaned the demeaning quality of mass entertainments. If socialists believe that the worker must be freed from oppressive jobs, the ensuing boredom must not be assuaged with “‘candy-floss worlds’ and ‘sex in shiny packets’” which “corrupt[s] our

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<sup>63</sup>This was a theme of Lambert’s biography of Anderson. See, Gavin Lambert, *Mainly About Lindsay Anderson* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000).

<sup>64</sup>Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism*, 152.

<sup>65</sup>In “A Possible Solution” (1948) Anderson referred to a “moronic mass audience” who wanted to see “stagnated” commercial entertainments. Rather than describing the working class, he was arguing that film tastes were engendered by a pandering commercial film industry. Filmmakers needed to raise the quality of British films. “Moronic,” though, is a reflection of Anderson’s untempered rhetoric.

leisure.”<sup>66</sup> The film industry wrongly assumed that working class “life [was] hard, meaningless and dull” and that “morons need[ed] moronic entertainment to keep them moronic.”<sup>67</sup> Similarly, Cornelius argued that *O Dreamland* focused on the problems of mass entertainments, not the audience; in fact, the working-class children and adults in the film are not entertained by the animated mannequins. Anderson’s film criticized a limiting of social imagination as reflected in British popular entertainments.<sup>68</sup>

Critics also judged New Wave films as products of auteur directors. But NWL films, in particular, were formed by varied artistic visions of committed artists working to create contemporary social statements. This collaboration was a complex dialectic of forces which included the director’s vision, the working-class writer’s experiences, the northern actor’s accent, and the cameraman’s poetic view of the environment. The actors’ authenticity was formative to the working-class themes. After the New Wave, a star like Laurence Harvey could not have played Joe Lampton. According to Durnant, these actors “[gave] authentically ‘proletarian’ performance whoever direct[ed] them.”<sup>69</sup> Finney, who played Seaton, had worked in a factory prior to acting school and, according to Walker, “possessed the naturalistic vitality of a working-class environment where survival bred swift response and not too much care for other people’s feelings.”<sup>70</sup> And for Anderson, Richard Harris’s authentic class experiences were central to the

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<sup>66</sup>Reisz, “A Use for Documentary,” 24.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 24.

<sup>68</sup>Paul K. Cornelius, “Images of Social Dysfunction in Films of Lindsay Anderson” (PhD diss., University of Texas, 1988), 43.

<sup>69</sup>Raymond Durnant, “Loved One,” *Films and Filming*, February 1966, 20.

<sup>70</sup>Walker, *Hollywood, England*, 83.

reality of *This Sporting Life*.<sup>71</sup> According to Storey, Harris brought an “organic” reaction to the character of Machin; it was his certainty that controlled many decisions.<sup>72</sup>

As shown, NWL filmmakers were accused of being disingenuous for using realist techniques to gain recognition. Reisz acknowledged that he and the other New Wave filmmakers were, in part, attempting to “buy success.” But more importantly, Reisz noted that they were opposing traditional approaches to filmmaking in order to create something new:

It is difficult to see now how big the resistance to all this was from the industry. It needed cracking open; you look at it now and it all seems a holiday, but actually it was quite a struggle. [And in the end] the commercial cinema tried to and did absorb us.<sup>73</sup>

Furthermore, their commitment to film criticism impacted British film journals and influenced the social realist films they made. Anderson described the motivation for *Free Cinema*:

There is surely a great difference between our enthusiasm then, and the ambition that inspires young people forty years later. We were not careerists. We had no desire to establish ourselves as journalists or even as filmmakers. We were certainly not doing it for profit. But it seemed important to say what we thought and felt. Right opinions should be heard.<sup>74</sup>

Anderson may sound defensive here because Richardson, whose influence was central to the success of these films, was often accused of being a “careerist.” But, as will be shown, Richardson, like the other NWL directors, was trying to produce films with artistic merit.

Critics questioned the “newness” and/or “reality” of New Wave films; its directors were faulted for making “working-class” films from a privileged middle-class stance. Such criticisms

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<sup>71</sup>Lindsay Anderson, “Sports, Life and Art,” *Films and Filming*, February 1963, 16.

<sup>72</sup>Ronald Hayman, “Conversation with David Storey,” *Drama* XCIX, no. Winter (1970): 51.

<sup>73</sup>Karel Reisz, interview by Alan Winson (New York City, 1995).

<sup>74</sup>Lindsay Anderson, *Lindsay Anderson - In His Own Words* (1991), <http://www.library.stir.ac.uk/lindsayanderson/onSequence.htm>

were based on limited and unexamined expectations. More can be discovered about these films when they are examined through a New Left lens. Unlike social problem films, the realist goals of NWL films engaged a wider social mindset that encompassed confused and disjointed feelings about the loss of a “whole way of living.” These films examined society through the working-class experiences of the border character and were formed by a complex, “poetic” realism.

### **Commitment of New Wave Left filmmakers.**

The NWL filmmakers were working within a moment of cultural and social change, and they experimented with new forms in order to communicate an evolving social reality. They were committed to making a new sort of social realistic film and to redeeming British cinema. In general, they agreed on how to make films and the sort of social realist films that needed to be made. For Reisz, they were a group in that they had the “same kind of interest”:

[*Free Cinema*] films did obviously fulfill some kind of thirst in the audience. ... There was the social side of it, of course; but there was also the thing [that] these were not industry aims, and the early Woodfall films were not industry films. They were definitely produced and directed by the creative people; they were not the Rank organization buying a book and commissioning it. So from that point of view those movies changed the structure of film-making, the relationship between money and talent, changed it in England fairly radically .... It did change things.<sup>75</sup>

But even before *Free Cinema*, they were committed to addressing the continuing problem of government and industry control of cinema production. Williams referred to “external organizations” or oppositional groups that “begin with attacks on prevailing art forms and cultural institutions, and often with further attacks on the general conditions which are believed

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<sup>75</sup>Reisz, interview by Alan Winson.

to be sustaining them.”<sup>76</sup> New Wave Left filmmakers coalesced as an "oppositional group" through Anderson's influence and their work in *Sequence* and *Free Cinema*. Their ideas about film criticism and film making formed three arguments: (1) They argued that film was an art form and criticized the poverty of British cinema. (2) They supported arguments calling on writers/poets and critics to engage social issues. (3) They called for a revitalization of the British cinema and for changes in production structures; they protested restrictive governmental, union, and industrial control of the British cinema. They argued for independent and inexpensive films.

**(1) Re-forming British cinema as art.** In *Sequence* and *Sight and Sound* Anderson, Richardson, and Reisz argued that traditional British cinema needed to change. According to David Wilson, “The *Sequence* generation--Lambert, Houston, Anderson, Reisz and Richardson--knew what they wanted of cinema and were not afraid to say so. [They were] a literary, and literate, generation who enjoyed the cinema and relished its capacity to astonish.”<sup>77</sup> The success of these “oppositional” writers is evident when Anderson, Houston, and Lambert took over BFI’s conservative *Sight and Sound* and, like *Cahiers du Cinema*, demanded that cinema “must be taken seriously.” For Reisz, by the mid 1950s there was a wide divide between “high brow and low brow response to cinema. ... The cinema columns in the literary sections of the serious papers were given to the second eleven novel reviewers and treated like fodder for the plebs.”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780 – 1950* (1958; reprint New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1983), 71.

<sup>77</sup>David Wilson, ed., *Sight and Sound: A Fiftieth Anniversary Selection* (London: Faber and Faber, 1983), 17. In 1947 Lambert, Peter Ericsson, a fellow Oxford undergraduate, and Anderson took over the Oxford Film Society’s journal, *Sequence*. Anderson wrote most of the articles. Anderson and Richardson wrote for *Sight and Sound*, edited by Lambert, as well as for *Universities and Left Review*.

<sup>78</sup>Reisz, interview by Alan Winson (New York City, October 19, 1995).

The *Sequence* critics praised films that had a moral commitment, were socially realistic, and were artistically “poetic.”

Anderson’s early critical thought was influenced by the work of American director John Ford. Anderson admitted that he had “fallen under the spell of the poet Ford.”<sup>79</sup> The cover of the first issue of *Sequence* was a shot from *My Darling Clementine*. For Anderson, Ford controlled his films’ artistry in that his films were based on a “language of style.” And he was a committed director who created a “moral poetry.”<sup>80</sup> In 1948 Anderson praised Ford’s *The Grapes of Wrath* for its “heroic size, its subtle simplicity, its intimacy and its poetry.”<sup>81</sup> Anderson learned from Ford that a film’s visual and verbal poetry was “its own justification.”<sup>82</sup> For Anderson, film poetry was a synthesis of style and content. A film could become “living poetry” with the right combination of “expressive camera, sympathetic music and design, skilled actors, and above all by creative direction--direction which gathers all these elements together and gives them unity and life.”<sup>83</sup> Anderson saw poetry also in Vigo's *Zero for Conduct* (1933) and *L'Atlante* (1934), and Minnelli's *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944). But such general descriptions do not adequately define what Anderson meant by the “poetic” film; Andrew Sarris found his use of “poet” and “poetry” to be redundant. For Hedling, Anderson’s essays in *Sequence* raised film to a high art, but his vague, subjective descriptions of the complexity of the “harmony

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<sup>79</sup>Anderson, *Lindsay Anderson - In His Own Words*.

<sup>80</sup>Lambert, *Mainly About*, 47. Anderson first wrote about Ford in *Sequence* in 1950--“*They Were Expendable* and John Ford.”

<sup>81</sup>Lindsay Anderson, *The Diaries* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd, 2005), 55.

<sup>82</sup>Lambert, *Mainly About*, 48–49.

<sup>83</sup>As quoted from Anderson’s 1948 article in *Sequence*, “Creative Elements” in Erik Hedling, *Lindsay Anderson: Maverick Film-Maker* (London: Cassell, 1998), 12.

between expression and substance” rang of Leavis-style elitism. Nevertheless Anderson identified one aspect of Ford’s filmic poetry in which the individual experience is raised to a universal importance. This broader humanity is established in Ford’s camera style and editing, when “spontaneous close-ups, the silent pauses and the long takes ... transcend their narrative motivation.”<sup>84</sup> Such “transcending” points to Williams’s call for realist work that reflects wider social descriptions; it begins to define the poetic quality of NWL films to be discussed.

Richardson’s critical writing had a different emphasis; he preferred directors who creatively teased out human behavior from the filmed moment, and he was critical of directors who controlled the film product. In “The Metteur en Scene” Richardson criticized the self-conscious film director who created superficial, audience-pleasing effects:

The *metteurs en scène* jump and pirouette, do their *entrechats* and *grande battlements* in the arc lights and great follow-spots of their ego. ... If sometimes they seem vain and showy and mannered, often how exciting, how brilliant, how clever they are.<sup>85</sup>

He criticized Max Ophüls’s *La Ronde* (1950) as “the most sophisticated and magic of window-dressers.”<sup>86</sup> He was most critical of the inventive talent of Orson Welles and the stagy, self-serving direction of Elia Kazan. Except for Brando’s performance, the acting in *On the Waterfront* was theatrical and melodramatic because of the director’s heavy hand.<sup>87</sup>

Richardson’s highest praise was for the director who created something new, experimented with

<sup>84</sup>Hedling, *Lindsay Anderson: Maverick Film-Maker*, 16.

<sup>85</sup>Tony Richardson, “The Metteur en Scene,” *Sight and Sound*, October-December 1954, 109.

<sup>86</sup>Richardson, “The Metteur en Scene,” 65.

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*, 65. Richardson and Reisz were critical of Kazan’s work because it was socially and stylistically insincere.

form, and made a personal statement, in order to establish a deep sense of human reality. These included Eisenstein, Vigo, De Sica, and Buñuel.

Richardson was concerned with how the film artist accomplished reality by engaging in the moment of filming. He rejected constructed films and praised directors who could create artistry by teasing out reality and incorporating chance in the film making process. Documentary realism was matched by poetic artistry in the opening scorpion sequence in Bunuel's *L'Age d'Or* in which "surrealism is born out of despair; its only power is to hasten the general cataclysm by its own prophetic chaos."<sup>88</sup> Here was the poetic synthesis that establishes filmic art--the "chaotic" of documentary realism effectively incorporated into the story.<sup>89</sup> He found poetic reality in the nature film *The Great Adventure* (dir. Arne Sucksdorff, 1953), because it embraced the chance and chaos of the filmed moment. In contrast, Disney nature films anthropomorphized the subject and lost the relationship of the animal to the environment. Richardson praised the "poetic" sweep of Sucksdorff's film, which had the "linear grace and delicacy" of certain paintings; the director brought "poetry to ecology ... with a poet's eye--a poet's passion."<sup>90</sup> On the other hand, documentary realism was missing in John Huston's *Moby Dick* (1956). The direction was "pure routine"; the melting down of the whale was "most

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<sup>88</sup>Tony Richardson, "The Films of Louis Buñuel," *Sight and Sound* 23, no. 3 (January/March 1954): 125.

<sup>89</sup>According to his daughters, Richardson orchestrated conflict: "When papa had people round--and that was constantly and abundantly--it was in expectation of major drama, conflict, tension and, if God was good, total chaos. His role in all this was to act as a sort of mischievous catalyst, furtively stirring the ingredients of his pot and then feigning amazement when it boiled over and made a mess. He'd cast people for collision courses and then say, 'Whatever happened to old so-and-so, making such an unseemly scene?'" See Sally Vincent, "Big Daddy," *Independent Magazine*, 25 September 1993, 44.

<sup>90</sup>Tony Richardson, "The Great Adventure: A Film Review," *Sight and Sound* 24, no. 3 (March 1955): 141.

perfunctory” and the hunt “artificial.” Richardson longed for the documentary realism of Visconti’s *La Terra Trema*.

Richardson’s sense of poetic realism becomes evident by comparing his “Metteur” essay with Francois Truffaut’s “Une certaine tendance du cinéma français” (“A certain tendency in French cinema” in *Cahiers du cinéma*) of the same year.<sup>91</sup> Both were critical of their national cinemas; but whereas Truffaut was responding to the French tradition of the well-made, literary film, Richardson focused on social issues, denouncing the limitations of the traditional British class-based films. Though they defined the “metteur en scene” director similarly, they each pointed to very different examples of directorial excellence; whereas Truffaut looked for the auteur director’s stamp on film style, Richardson commended directors who combined documentary chance and artistry to produce social reality.<sup>92</sup>

For Reisz the British documentary tradition was central to the development of a world class British cinema. Certainly this tradition influenced NWL film form. According to Anderson their initial documentary efforts were “thrust towards drama, towards the feature film.”<sup>93</sup> Of the three NWL directors, Reisz was the most knowledgeable about the practice of film making and was well-positioned in the film industry. In the mid-1950s, as chief film officer of the Ford Motor Company, he secured financing for non-commercial films about ordinary

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<sup>91</sup>Francois Truffaut, “A Certain Tendency in the French Cinema,” in *Movies and Methods: Volume II*, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 226–35.

<sup>92</sup>Both *Cahiers* and *Sequence* writers argued for a renewed national cinema. The former wanted apolitical films to “remove film from the realm of social and political concern.” NWL films were moving in the opposite direction. See Jim Hillier, “Introduction,” in *Cahiers du Cinema: The 1950s New-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave*, ed. Jim Hillier (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 6.

<sup>93</sup>Lindsay Anderson, *Free Cinema 1956 - ? An Essay on Film by Lindsay Anderson* (Thames Television, 1985), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IX33mYO4K1w&feature=youtu.be>

British life that populated the second *Free Cinema* series--“Look at Britain.” Reisz looked at film from practical and aesthetic stances; he preferred realistic behavior within a broad social context. He emphasized the “authentic power” of the long shot to create human emotions over the close-up that featured the actor’s performance. De Sica made editing choices in *The Bicycle Thieves* (1948) that emphasized human actualities without trickery. Rather than following Griffith’s traditional order--the long shot followed by a close-up on the actor, “popping in to fill the dramatic vacuums,” which emphasizes performance--De Sica first shows the young boy in close-up as if he were walking by his father, followed by a long shot revealing the large distance between them; thus, the actor’s performance is de-emphasized in favor of the overall emotion of the moment in the larger social space.

De Sica has to some extent broken away from the traditional, without ... being theatrical. He is simply not interested in mechanical pace, and prefers to get his effects through an eloquent composition of his long shots rather than isolating his characters by taking the camera near them.<sup>94</sup>

And like Richardson, Reisz called for the filmmaker to be inspired by the “reality in front of him to modify and enrich the conception he started with.”<sup>95</sup>

**(2) Commitment debate.** In the late 1950s New Left writers argued that artists had a social responsibility to create committed work and that the critic needed to acknowledge her worldview. This was similar to earlier debates that pitted content against form--for instance, Russian Formalism opposing Sartre’s “engagement.”<sup>96</sup> *Cahiers du Cinema* auteur critics focused on how a director handled form and style; New Left culturalists such as Williams, Hall, and

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<sup>94</sup>Karel Reisz, “Editing,” *Sight and Sound* 19, no. 2 (October 1950): 79.

<sup>95</sup>Reisz, “A Use for Documentary,” 65.

<sup>96</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre. *What is Literature?* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949).

Whannel, and film critics such as Houston, Anderson, and John Dyer argued that film is a social process, and no matter who the director is, all films contain social meanings; therefore, the artists and critics must recognize and acknowledge their point of view. Auteur writers argued that critique of a film's commitment would revert to literary analysis and focus on plot.<sup>97</sup> Social theorists saw film as a complex relationship between form/content and cultural communication and argued that unexamined ideals led to social control.<sup>98</sup>

For Hall "commitment" was a slippery idea; he considered three dynamics: First, the committed writer and critic needed to contextualize their work within the postwar moment; otherwise, it would become a "simple, crude rallying cry" and not rigorous analysis.<sup>99</sup> Second, commitment was to be applied to literature that dealt with "human situations and values." Third, the commitment of the writer and critic should be considered separate from that of their work. The writer's commitment informs how "human values are embodied in the work"; analysis of the "committed" work, though related, is a different question. Writing can be "doubly" committed, as with Wesker's "socialist" message, or work can manifest a "cool" commitment such as

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<sup>97</sup>Ian Cameron argued in *Film* in September/October, 1960: "To judge a film on anything other than style is to set up the critic's own views on matters outside of cinema against those of its maker." Quoted in Terry Bolas, *Screen Education: From Film Appreciation to Media Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 120. For "commitment" advocates, style was integral to content. See Houston, "The Critical Question" (1960); Anderson, "Stand Up, Stand Up" (1956) [re-published as "Commitment in Cinema" in *ULR*, (1957)]; Anderson, "Get out and Push" (1957); Peter Dyer, "Counter Attack" (1960); Osborne, "They Call it Cricket"; Hall's review of *Declaration*, "In no man's land" (1957).

<sup>98</sup>Lovell and Hillier argued that Anderson's and Lambert's praise of particular directors required theory. But this created a "crisis in liberalism" because theory would limit artistic freedom. See, Alan Lovell and John Hillier, *Studies in Documentary* (New York: Viking Press, 1972), 155. Similarly, for Hedling, Anderson's early "auteur" criticism becomes a "cultural pleasure, permeated by relativist postulates, since all arguments theoretically-speaking were of the same relevance." Such criticism did not consider that auteur directors worked within a "system of division of labour." See Hedling, *Lindsay Anderson: Maverick Film-Maker*, 48. Later, Anderson would call for committed, social realist films.

<sup>99</sup>Stuart Hall, "Commitment Dilemma," *New Left Review* 1, no. 10 (July/August 1961): 67.

Arden's *Sergeant Musgrave's Dance*. Finally, for Hall, and Williams, committed literature would not make political arguments as was done with Soviet *socialist* realism; New Left "social" realism engaged broad and complex ways of seeing "which are not available to us in any other way." Likewise, the "committed" critic would not make political arguments but would establish a social perspective by analyzing the interaction of form and content:

Either we believe that literature merely refers to and confirms the values which we share with the writer, in the terms in which we already understand them, or we are obliged to examine again how and why the ... "aesthetic" alters the values, or forces us to see them in a quite new way. ... Prose work is an imitation of the world, an attempt to dramatise the values we already know, and by dramatisation, to make us know them in ways which it is impossible to know by other means.<sup>100</sup>

For Hall, "commitment" would bind form and content, rather than "make a treacherous dichotomy between them." Anderson would agree in that criticism should not focus on film style, for "style and commitment are inseparable."<sup>101</sup>

Reisz called on the film critic to engage rigorous and penetrating views of the British film industry.<sup>102</sup> A year earlier Anderson had argued that film was a highly developed art and that British cinema critics should not automatically praise British cinema out of a sense of loyalty. Furthermore, in New Left fashion, Anderson showed that all criticism is committed to a point of view even when that view is hidden and/or denied by the critic.<sup>103</sup> Supporting Anderson,

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<sup>100</sup>Stuart Hall, "Commitment Dilemma," 67.

<sup>101</sup>Lindsay Anderson, "Stand up! Stand up!" *Sight and Sound*, Autumn 1956, 63.

<sup>102</sup>Similarly, Dryer called for critics to have "taste for clear logic and moral stringency," which is "the basis of all good criticism." John Dyer, "Counter Attack," *Film* 26 (November/December 1960): 8–9.

<sup>103</sup>Anderson, "Stand up! Stand up!" 69. [Reprint of Lindsay Anderson, "Commitment in Cinema Criticism," *Universities and Left Review* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1957): 44–48.] In 1968 Richardson banned reviewers from the opening of his film *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. He decried critics as "the most personal, the most superficial and with the least good will in the world"; they did not respect cinema as an art or understand their job. He argued for the critic who considered both "the sort of cinema we can have, and finally, the sort of society that we have." Tony Richardson, "Charge of the Light Brigade: Why

Houston called for critics to commit to a point of view that included political and social perspectives. A critical “standard” needed to be developed that would “assess in detail the social and moral content of a film by analyzing the impact it makes upon us.”<sup>104</sup> Of course, such analysis assumes that the critic understands the film medium.

In 1958, poet Christopher Logue and New Left writers discussed the nature of a poet’s commitment. It was determined that rather than taking overt political stances, the poet must “cut” through his prejudice and create work that is committed and personal.<sup>105</sup> In the same year, Tom Maschler asked “angry young men” writers to “define their positions in relation to society.”<sup>106</sup> Hall found that Anderson’s response to Maschler’s query accurately described the “triviality and deceit of our cultural life.”<sup>107</sup> In “Get Out and Push,” Anderson argued that art was a form of communication that must express “the problem of the community.”<sup>108</sup> And in program notes to Anderson’s *Every Day Except Christmas* (1957) he wrote that British cinema was capable of taking “confident and healthy action,” but the committed filmmaker must “make people—ordinary people, not just Top People—feel their dignity and their importance, so that they can act from these principles.”<sup>109</sup> Anderson argued for freely developing mass media that

Critics Are not Asked,” [*London*] *Times*, 9 April 1968, 11. See also, Tony Richardson, “Tony Richardson on the Refusal to Invite Reviewers to His Latest Film,” *Listener*, 2 May 1968, 568.

<sup>104</sup>Penelope Houston, “The Critical Question,” in *Sight and Sound: A Fiftieth Anniversary Selection*, 137.

<sup>105</sup>Christopher Logue, “A Commitment Dialogue,” *Universities and Left Review* 4 (Summer 1958): 19. For Williams, Arthur Miller was successful when he put internal conflict in a social setting. See Raymond Williams, “The Realism of Arthur Miller,” *Universities and Left Review* 7 (Autumn 1959).

<sup>106</sup>Tom Maschler, ed., *Declaration* (New York: Dutton and Co., Inc, 1958), 8.

<sup>107</sup>Stuart Hall, “In the No Man’s Land,” *New Left Review* I, no. 3 (Winter 1958): 87.

<sup>108</sup>Lindsay Anderson, “Get Out and Push!” in *Declaration*, ed. Tom Maschler (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1958), 143.

<sup>109</sup>Lindsay Anderson, “Free Cinema,” *Universities and Left Review* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1957): 52.

represented working-class values and experiences and would lead to a unified British “community.” He called for cultural work to identify traditional power structures and to include detailed social description of all classes. And rather than seeing the worth of all points of view, the artist needed to take a stand based on “true liberal” beliefs. Similarly, Reisz argued for film artists to commit to a left-leaning “humanist energy”:

If the film artist is to throw his weight effectively into this movement, he will have to start afresh. He will have to learn to look at faces again, not because they illustrate something or because they are picturesque, but because they are there. He will have to forget about the clean white overalls and ‘projecting Britain.’ He will have to trust his own responses to reality, and he will need freedom to do that. He will have to learn to see ... as an artist. He will have to criticise and affirm, to protest and celebrate.<sup>110</sup>

New Wave Left filmmakers recognized the poverty of British cinema, preferring the films of Italy, France, the United States, and Japan; they called on the film director and writer to redeem British cinema through new content, editing style, and production processes. Their commitment to change was a product of common experiences. They submitted articles to the same journals, Richardson and Anderson directed and ran the Royal Court Theatre, and all were involved with *Free Cinema* and Woodfall Films. Their Royal Court experiences set the tone of their commitment and of New Wave social realism.<sup>111</sup> For Reisz, the activity of the Royal Court reflected the social moment to which they were all reacting:

There was the young novelist writing from the provincial university point of view, from the working class point of view and so on. There was the pop music, in other words the social change that had been brought about by the ‘45 Labour government was just beginning to flower. And the Royal Court and Woodfall were manifestations of that.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup>Reisz, “A Use for Documentary,” 66.

<sup>111</sup>Hedling, *Lindsay Anderson: Maverick Film-Maker*, 49.

<sup>112</sup>Reisz, interview by Alan Winson.

The Royal Court “attitude” supported the artist’s right to experiment and to break from established forms. English Stage Company was formed to establish new work, free from commercial pressures. The idea that productions had the “right to fail” grew from Richardson’s desire to break molds; for George Devine productions could “fail well,” as long as they were fully attempted; in fact, large audiences were an indication of an unwanted commercial success. Like Peter Brook, Devine sought the artistic freedom that Arts Council funding would provide so that audience support was not needed.<sup>113</sup>

Early Woodfall Film productions embraced the Royal Court’s “right to fail” attitude and its opposition to professionalism and conventionalized art. Richardson sought new approaches to film realism through experimentation and lucky chance occurrences in the moment of filming. Reisz described Richardson as an “improviser” who “loved the process of shooting and the ... unexpected response of the actor.”<sup>114</sup> Richardson sought a free hand for the director, cameraman, and actor and argued for film processes that were unencumbered by traditional forces. He advocated for ways to loosen traditional top down control so that the director would have the freedom to experiment; and he fought industry restraints and demands for technical perfection. Richardson’s description of Anderson’s *Free Cinema* manifesto reflected his experiences at the Royal Court:

The best thing that *Free Cinema* ever said was that perfection was not an aim. I think so many things can disappear with perfection. In the same way I’d prefer to have a Constable sketch than a Constable painting. The sketch isn’t perfect but it

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<sup>113</sup>Dan Rebellato, *1956 and All That: The Making of Modern British Drama* (London: Routledge Press, 1999), 113. See also, Peter Brook, “Oh for Empty Seats,” in *The Encore Reader*, eds Charles Marowitz, Tom Milne, and Owen Hale (London: Encore Publishing Company, 1965), 68–74.

<sup>114</sup>Reisz, interview by Alan Winson.

has a freshness, and a vision that often painting, when they're so-called perfected, don't have.<sup>115</sup>

This attitude aligned with a director who sought film reality out of chance occurrences.

Furthermore, NWL filmmakers were influenced by Royal Court writers who supported the political left. Houston argued that all major thinking in the arts since WWII had been “oriented towards the Left” and in the 1950s the Royal Court Theatre and Joan Littlewood’s Theatre Workshop were where “politics and culture [met].”<sup>116</sup> For Anderson, the Royal Court tradition had a “naturalistic bias” that emphasized the “social perspective” and a style “characterized in ethic by a kind of non-schematic progressive conscience.”<sup>117</sup> Many Royal Court writers, directors and actors actively protested nuclear bomb proliferation; Anderson produced the influential documentary *March on Aldermaston* (1959) supporting New Left ideals.

**(3) Calling for a change in production structures.** British filmmakers were limited to a certain kind of commercial product. In the late 1950s *Sight and Sound* editors asked British film directors what sort of film they would make if they had a “free hand,” indicating that they did not.<sup>118</sup> Filmmakers dealt with an entrenched film union and industry, which prided itself on its professionalism and technical perfection. Film was considered both as entertainment and as a powerful social instrument that supported upper-class mores; as such, film needed to be censored. According to Roy Armes, all western art moved towards the status quo in order to keep society on track, “but the British film industry constitute[d] an extreme example. ... British

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<sup>115</sup>Tony Richardson, “Tony Richardson on the Refusal to Invite Reviewers to His Latest Film,” *Listener*, 2 May 1968, 569.

<sup>116</sup>Houston, “The Critical Question,” 131.

<sup>117</sup>Philip Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre: 1965--1972* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), 31–32.

<sup>118</sup>“A Free Hand,” *Sight and Sound* 28, no. 2 (Spring 1959): 60–64.

cinema offer[ed] a perspective which reflect[ed] the thinking of those in positions of power and authority.” The majority of British filmmakers saw “their role as that of making the cinema an ideal servant of the needs of a class society.”<sup>119</sup> The “free hand” of the director was further constrained because after WWII, the British film industry reacted to decisions made by Hollywood studios which, effectively, controlled the British film market and audience taste.<sup>120</sup> If more vibrant film realities were to develop then studio and union control, and government censorship needed to change.

Film censorship in England began early in the twentieth century.<sup>121</sup> The British Board of Film Censors [BBFC], established in 1912, controlled films at the point of distribution and though rules were relaxed in the 1930s, they were more stifling than the American Hays censorship laws.<sup>122</sup> The BBFC’s stated goal was to uphold “the moral well-being of the lower classes who formed the majority of cinema audiences.”<sup>123</sup> These standards were applied through the 1950s, when aspects of social realism were disallowed. For instance, Lorenza Mazzetti’s

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<sup>119</sup>Roy Armes, *A Critical History of the British Cinema* (New York: Oxford, 1978), 3–4.

<sup>120</sup>In the 1940s and 50s Hollywood dominated British studios, film production and distribution. The official reaction of public support of domestically produced films was a failure. For instance, Armes, *Critical History*; Ernest Betts, *The Film Business: A History of British Cinema, 1896–1972* (New York: Pitman Publishing, 1973); Robert Murphy, *Sixties British Cinema* (London: British Film Institute, 1992); and, Walker, *Hollywood, England*.

<sup>121</sup>Film censorship paralleled theatre censorship. The Royal Court’s legal battles are well documented. See Hewison, *In Anger*; Gresdna Doty and Gilly Harbin, eds., *Inside the Royal Court Theatre, 1956–1981. Artists Talk*. (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1990); Harold Ferrar, *John Osborne* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973); Kenneth Tynan, “‘The Royal Smut-Hound’,” in *Look Back in Gender: Sexuality and the Family in Postwar British Drama*, ed. Michelene Wandor (1965; reprint London: Methuen & Co., Ltd, 1987), 73–87.

<sup>122</sup>Derek Hill, “The Habit of Censorship,” *Encounter*, July 1960, 52–62. Non-governmental, the BBFC’s board and president are not connected directly to the film industry, but often were politically connected. The Board was created as a compromise to take control from local councils whose censorship decisions made distribution difficult. For political reasons, governments did not want to get involved.

<sup>123</sup>Petrie, *Creativity and Constraint*, 52.

*Together* (1956)--part of *Free Cinema*--was not allowed to make a film about Teddy Boys unless it “uncategorically condemn[ed] them.”<sup>124</sup> According to Richardson this led to voluntary censorship of “certain political, social and religious subjects”:

The result is the anaemic feebleness we see so often on the screen. The cinema is reduced to purveying commercial fantasies devoid of any real connection with human beings and the society they live in.<sup>125</sup>

For John Trevelyan, secretary of the BBFC in the late 1950s, people went to the cinema “to be entertained rather than to receive social comment.”<sup>126</sup> According to Richardson, though censors defended abhorrent scenes in horror films because of their “distance from reality,” they found his early films were “too ‘real’”; audiences “must not recognize their own world and must not relate what they see on the screens back to their social experience. It would be too disturbing.”<sup>127</sup>

Social realist films were also hampered by union rules that raised costs and restricted distribution. Union rules limited the distribution of *Free Cinema* to film societies, art houses and, at times, television.<sup>128</sup> Union rules also limited creative choices. Lassally described the British film union’s “dead hand” policies and cited an independent director/producer who could not make his inexpensive film because he was forced to use the unions and studios.<sup>129</sup> The unions were reluctant to allow location shooting with small crews and demanded professionally “slick” cutting and camera work that did not allow invention or spontaneity; an artificial pace

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<sup>124</sup>Derek Hill, “The Habit of Censorship,” 57.

<sup>125</sup>Tony Richardson, “Notes & Topics,” *Encounter*, September 1960, 65.

<sup>126</sup>Derek Hill, “The Habit of Censorship,” 60.

<sup>127</sup>Richardson, “Notes & Topics,” 65.

<sup>128</sup>Walker, *Hollywood, England*, 33.

<sup>129</sup>Walter Lassally, “The Dead Hand,” *Sight and Sound* 29, no. 3 (Summer 1960): 113.

was imposed at the “expense of atmosphere, poetry and emotional involvement.”<sup>130</sup> *Free Cinema* films “were undoubtedly far richer” because crews were limited to those technicians who were required to accomplish the task.<sup>131</sup> Because of early success, Woodfall Films and Richardson secured union and industry concessions. Richardson felt that he had been “very lucky in the cinema”; from his first film he “had complete freedom” and worked with technical crews who for the most part agreed with his “ideas, enthusiasm and aims.”<sup>132</sup>

Aesthetic control was also a matter of financing.<sup>133</sup> The success of *SNSM* gave Woodfall Films a sort of “blank cheque,” giving its directors control over later productions.<sup>134</sup> A year before Lassally, Richardson argued that less costly films freed the independent director’s “hand”; the Hollywood and British film industries had a “mollusc-like tenacity” to cling to the “easiest and most conventional ways of doing things,” which led to British films that were “totally without vitality.”<sup>135</sup> Richardson called for inexpensive films that would allow the director to work in “a way [that had] never been done before. ... Only then can the economic blackmail [of the film industry] be reduced and imagination really freed.”<sup>136</sup> For instance, *A Taste of Honey* was produced on a “shoestring,” which engendered realist effects. For Richardson, “everything

<sup>130</sup>Lassally, “The Dead Hand,” 114.

<sup>131</sup>Walter Lassally, *Itinerant Cameraman* (London: John Murray, 1987), 22.

<sup>132</sup>Tony Richardson, “A Free Hand,” *Sight and Sound* 28, no. 2 (Spring 1959): 64.

<sup>133</sup>Rivette called for a “spirit of poverty” in French cinema, and for “new directors taking those risks making films with ... whatever turns up, without putting their scripts forward for approval by the censors and perhaps without even putting them to the producers and the distributors.” Jim Hillier, ed., *Cahiers du Cinema: The 1950s New-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave*, 40.

<sup>134</sup>George Lellis, “Recent Richardson--Cashing the Blank Cheque,” *Sight and Sound* 38, no. 3 (Summer 1969): 130.

<sup>135</sup>Richardson, “A Free Hand,” 64.

<sup>136</sup>*Ibid.*

that [made] for believability [was] worthwhile.”<sup>137</sup> If a scene is placed in a “dingy flat [he] would rather find a dingy flat than build an artificial one in a studio.”<sup>138</sup> Real locations would force crew and actors to improvise “out of the difficulties of real conditions” and somehow “lead to something on the screen that [was] more true.”<sup>139</sup> Unencumbered by union and industry control and with a limited budget, the realist aesthetic would be encouraged.

### **New Left Wave “Poetic” Film Aesthetic**

According to Reisz, Woodfall directors were making films about “what was happening in our society.” They were energized by the “vitality” of the mid-1950s; their films were an aspect of the “culture renewing itself.” As such NWL directors sought “access to areas of experience that [the British film industry] had rejected.” They were breaking from “the traditional Pinewood films, Dickie Attenborough playing the working class,” which were “perpetuating old myths” and needed “to be swept away.”<sup>140</sup> They saw film as art in which a realist approach required a “poetic” aesthetic.

The NWL attitude resonated with the New Left call for committed realist films that engaged the complexity of social change by experimenting with new styles of filming, by challenged the structures that controlled the film industry, and by adapting literature about and by the working class. In *Preface to Film* (1954), Williams argued that film was capable of creating social realities in ways that theatre had not, and could not. The theatre’s “naturalist

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<sup>137</sup>Stephen Watts, “British ‘Honey’ on a Realistic, Low Budget,” *New York Times*, 14 May 1961, X7.

<sup>138</sup>Watts, “Realistic Budget,” X7.

<sup>139</sup>Colin Young, “Tony Richardson: An Interview in Los Angeles,” *Film Quarterly*, Summer 1960, 12.

<sup>140</sup>Reisz, interview by Alan Winson.

habit” was aligned with bourgeois sensibilities and ideologies.<sup>141</sup> Williams called for a poetic lyricism that could engage a “new depth of experience.”<sup>142</sup> Film seemed suited for such social realism due to the camera’s capacity to record actualities and to tell dramatic stories. Williams argued that film could accomplish a “total expression” of drama; De Sica’s *The Bicycle Thief* (1948) and Renoir’s *Le Bête Humaine* (1938) contained “genuine naturalism” and accomplished “film as total expression.”<sup>143</sup> Film approached the social complexity of literature in Italian neo-realist lyricism, German expressionism (*The Last Laugh*, dir. Murnau, 1924) and Soviet formalism (Pudovkin and Eisenstein). But British feature films had not established an effective social realism because they were limited to established naturalistic, theatrical forms. British studio films reproduced Hollywood-style verisimilitude; they depended on quality theatrical performance of probable behavior that led to the “false actuality” of *Brief Encounter* (1945) and *The Third Man* (1949).<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, film’s capacity for naturalistic details led to filmic “spectacle” which blocked realistic social description.<sup>145</sup>

Late in 1960 Williams found signs of “total expression” in at least one British film. Ken Loach had created appropriately ambiguous social meaning in his television film, *The Big Flame* (1969)--a morality play about a strike in which union members take control of the docks. In the

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<sup>141</sup>Raymond Williams, *What I Came to Say* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989), 231.

<sup>142</sup>Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with the New Left*, (1979; reprint London: Verso, 1981), 207–8. Williams’s prose remained conventional. Further, he had called for a new Expressionism in film, but would find this approach untenable.

<sup>143</sup>Raymond Williams and Michael Orrom, *Preface to Film* (London: Film Drama Ltd., 1954), 39–41.

<sup>144</sup>Williams and Orrom, *Preface to Film*, 49–50.

<sup>145</sup>*Ibid.*, 29–30.

end the union loses its struggle, but a valuable lesson is learned.<sup>146</sup> For Williams, Loach generated complex messages by struggling with “the problem of consistency” in matching naturalistic methods with a desire to reveal the underlying but apparent social reality.<sup>147</sup> In one scene a documentary depiction of a picket line is complicated when the camera crosses over the police barrier and takes an official view of the strikers. The mobility of the film camera and creative editing choices had opened “poetic” possibilities.

For the early New Left, social realism was not evident in *Free Cinema* or NWL films. But it will be argued that these films contained poetic, social realist complexities that were the result of the filmmakers’ experiences with *Free Cinema* and of the influence of the British documentary tradition. According to documentarian Paul Rotha, up to the 1940s the British social documentaries of John Grierson formed the only “coherent movement in the young art of the cinema.”<sup>148</sup> Grierson argued that the documentary needed to be used to mold society. While studying in the United States, Grierson was influenced by Walter Lippmann’s arguments that the vacuous messages of commercial mass media had undermined the effectiveness of representative democracy. For Grierson the “directive” documentary required “the discovery within the actual of the patterns which gave it significance for civic education.”<sup>149</sup> The documentary could reveal social truths that made “the artist a sort of public relations officer for the more serious

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<sup>146</sup>Bert Hogenkamp, *Film, Television and the Left, 1950–1970* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2000), 143. Loach’s final contribution to the BBC’s *Wednesday Play* series.

<sup>147</sup>Williams, *What I Came to Say*, 239.

<sup>148</sup>Paul Rotha, *Documentary Diary* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1973), xiii.

<sup>149</sup>John Grierson, *Grierson on Documentary* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1966), 291.

sociologist.”<sup>150</sup> Film art was secondary to the documentary’s sociological purpose of a Leavis-style education of the masses.

Though Anderson and Reisz agreed with Grierson that mass media could not be “abandoned to irresponsible commerce,” they argued that the social realist documentary needed to address ongoing social issues, not didactically, but aesthetically.<sup>151</sup> Rather than a sociologist, the filmmaker is an artist who must accomplish realism with images and editing that establish a poetic truth of the sociological facts.<sup>152</sup> Higson identified a tendency in British culture that placed art over sociology:

There was always an undertow running against the most ardently voiced educative-sociologistic tendency within the movement that sought to acknowledge and foreground the aesthetic work of the text. This we may call poetic realism: it involves a more perfect conjunction of surface realism and moral realism, a conjunction which transcends ordinariness, which makes the ordinary strange, even beautiful—but, above all, which has emotional depth and integrity.<sup>153</sup>

Similarly, for Roger Manvell “realistic” as a concept was limited and did not adequately describe British social realism. More than creating accurate descriptions, British films of the period were attempting an “understanding and humanity.”<sup>154</sup>

New Wave Left social realism was influenced less by Grierson than by the wartime documentaries of Humphrey Jennings.<sup>155</sup> According to Anderson, Jennings’s films

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<sup>150</sup>Grierson, *Grierson on Documentary*, 291.

<sup>151</sup>Anderson, “Free Cinema,” 52.

<sup>152</sup>Reisz, “A Use for Documentary,” 66.

<sup>153</sup>Higson, *Waving the Flag*, 191–92.

<sup>154</sup>*Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>155</sup>Jennings had worked in Grierson’s G.P.O film unit. See, Hedling, *Lindsay Anderson: Maverick Film-Maker*, 47–48.

communicated a social feeling of the shared experiences of WWII. His four war films were “true to their time”; they showed intimate human connections that were free “from the inhibitions of class-consciousness” and revealed the united “doggedness” of the British people.<sup>156</sup> In *London Can Take It* (1940) shots of ordinary people engaging in everyday activities are juxtaposed with “unostentatious” images of royalty; the bombing was a common experience.<sup>157</sup> Furthermore, his wartime films encompassed British history and culture, as part of a world united.<sup>158</sup>

But most important to the New Left film aesthetic was Jennings’s poetic style. Seemingly disparate images and sounds were juxtaposed to produce subtle messages which, according to Anderson, required multiple viewings to comprehend.<sup>159</sup> Anderson compared Jennings’s film style to paintings that established emotions about the “transfigured landscape.”<sup>160</sup> For Anderson, Jennings used a complex layering of poetically connected images of “peculiar intimate observations” of the daily activities of ordinary people “reinforc[ed] and amplif[ied]” by “shots of “landscape and background.”<sup>161</sup> Jennings synthesized seemingly unrelated shots in unique ways; he “delighted in simile” and “loved to link one event with another, the past with the present, person to person.”<sup>162</sup> For Anderson, *A Diary for Timothy* (1945) was a masterpiece. It told the story of four representative “characters” who experienced the war at home. It is a

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<sup>156</sup>Lindsay Anderson, “Only Connect,” *Sight and Sound* 4 (April-June 1954): 183.

<sup>157</sup>Anderson, “Only Connect,” 182.

<sup>158</sup>*London Can Take It* is narrated by an American war reporter, Quentin Reynolds.

<sup>159</sup>Anderson, “Only Connect,” 186.

<sup>160</sup>*Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>161</sup>*Ibid.*, 182. He used similar language in his “manifesto” for the first program of *Free Cinema*.

<sup>162</sup>*Ibid.*, 183.

poetically edited film about a cooperative British people, existing within a common social feeling.<sup>163</sup> Anderson wrote, “The [final] sequence [was] not a long one and there [were] unfortunate intrusions from the commentator; but the effect [was] extraordinary, and the implications obvious.” As the film ends the complexity of shots is united by the simplicity of a baby’s yawn.<sup>164</sup>

Inspired by Jennings’s work, Anderson called for an opening of British cinema that would allow artists to make films “with as much freedom as if they were writing poems.”<sup>165</sup> But British society had changed. Jennings had been inspired by the “hot blast of war,” and his choices were knitted up with the wartime sense of a nation-as-community, fighting a common enemy.<sup>166</sup> Though NWL filmmakers sought a similar freedom to create socially relevant, poetic films, the society had changed. Nevertheless, a residual sense of a common community persisted and commingled with the conflicting feelings of class disassociation and loss of vitality. New Wave Left films engaged this altered social reality.

*Free Cinema* linked Jennings’s poetic documentaries to NWL films. Following British documentary tradition, *Free Cinema* presented films that tended to take positive views on social conditions. For example, Anderson’s *Every Day Except Christmas* celebrated and lamented a changing working class; *We Are the Lambeth Boys* (dir. Reisz; camera Lassally, 1958) [hereafter, *Lambeth Boys*] commended the behavior of working-class teens; and *Wakefield Express* (dir.

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<sup>163</sup>Ibid., 186.

<sup>164</sup>Ibid., 182.

<sup>165</sup>Lindsay Anderson, “A Possible Solution,” *Sight and Sound* 3, no. 2 (Summer 1948): 9.

<sup>166</sup> Anderson, “Only Connect,” 182. Jennings’s war films were *Words for Battle*, *Listen to Britain*, *Fires Were Started*, and *A Diary for Timothy*.

Anderson; cameraman Lassally, 1952) honored the social unity of Yorkshire's patchwork communities. Despite the difficulties faced by the immigrant in *Refuge England* (dir. Robert Vas; camera Lassally, 1959), the film ends with renewed hope in a new and accepting country. The muted social message of *Momma Don't Allow* (dirs. Reisz and Richardson; camera Lassally 1956) contrasts the vitality of working-class youth with upper class awkwardness.<sup>167</sup>

A few *Free Cinema* films anticipate the cynicism of NWL films. *O Dreamland* and *Nice Time* {dirs. Claude Goretta and Alain Tanner, 1957) condemn mass entertainment; *Together* and *Lambeth Boys* introduce an alienated protagonist. Hogenkamp argued that the New Wave protagonist did not have the means or the will to change himself or society and for these reasons this form of social realism was not reproduced by later socialist filmmakers.<sup>168</sup> But it is the alienation of the protagonist that delineates NWL social realism. In addition, these films take on mixed perspectives that generate ambiguous social seeing and result in undetermined endings that expose a society in flux. The filmic expression of this dynamic social realism will be identified as the New Left film aesthetic. It contains three elements: (1) The NWL poetic point of view is complex. Shot choices that are socially motivated cohere with shots that promote the story and establish a complex social picture. (2) These varied shots are unified by the alienated border character. Views are taken by and on the border protagonist, and wider views are taken on

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<sup>167</sup>According to Richardson, he and Reisz did not "comment" on or "analyze" teen activities; rather, they developed a "genuine and poetic expression of the individuals themselves." But *Momma Don't Allow* took a point of view on class relations; before two upper class couples enter the dance hall, they secure their car's hood ornament and are then seen as interlopers at the working-class dance. See, Tony Richardson, "London Letters: Free Cinema," *Film Culture* 2, no. 8 (1956): 17.

<sup>168</sup>Hogenkamp, *Film, Television, and the Left*, 140.

the larger social situation through which this character moves. (3) The open endings of New Wave Left films are disturbing; the way towards a moral democracy is undetermined.

**(1) Complexity of the NWL “poetic” shot choice.** New Wave Left filmmakers used “poetic” to describe their goals, but were not clear on what this meant. Most generally, the “poetic” of NWL films is that which allows the story to take on a social sense through the juxtaposition and composition of “social” shots. “Social” shot choices and edits complicate the story-telling but are not disruptive; they are cumulative and evoke the broader social reality of the story. The poetic complexity of the NWL film aesthetic is built in two ways: First, the story takes on social relevance through documentary-style shots of the working-class landscape and people. Second, shots are framed to show the characters physically trapped within a social context; attempts at escape lead back to a trapped state. The outcome of the NWL poetic is that the viewer is placed in a border state that engenders new or supports already held New Left sorts of social seeing.

The New Left film aesthetic takes on social relevancy by melding the film story with documentary-style overview shots of urban/industrial England and shots that mix “real” people and characters within those landscapes. Such shots force a non-conventional, social perspective on the story by lingering and amplifying the urban/industrial landscape. As shown, NWL films were criticized for “that long shot from the hill.” But, rather than this sort of shot being indulgent, NWL films were employing British documentary style--as developed by Grierson, Jennings, and others, and later by *Free Cinema* directors--to establish a poetic of social observation that cohered with the story being told. With Jennings, shot amplification was used to construct a complex argument about a country at war and a society coming together afterwards. This poetic celebration of the accomplishments of the English people is evident in *Family Portrait* in which shots of factory smokestacks and London's iconic buildings are

juxtaposed with shots of farmlands, forests and seacoasts. New Wave Left films reinterpreted such shots to reflect a very different and troubling social reality.

In one sequence of *Lambeth Boys* shot amplification coheres documentary realism and story-telling into a complex social picture. The sequence depicts the boys visiting a public school to play cricket; but on a social level class differences are exposed, and the boys inhabit a “border” position when they take views *on* their community. The return trip can be divided into two parts. As they leave the bucolic grounds of the public school, the camera takes views on the boys in the truck, and ambiguous point of view shots are taken from the moving truck on the passing scene. As the truck passes through London’s West End, the sound of the boys singing and commenting on the passing scene is complicated by several shots of the city’s iconic structures and statues; again the point of view is undetermined. The boys shout out to the people they pass. The response is friendly [Figs. 5 and 6]. The mood changes as they enter Lambeth; as the truck passes through a dark tunnel, the singing stops; the boys observe their community [Fig. 6]. Shots of the street and its people are “amplified,” which deepens the story into broad social observation; one extended shot focuses on the unvaried view of “Lambeth” chimneys [Fig. 8]; the sequence ends with a lingering shot of the people in the street from the unambiguous viewpoint of the boys in the truck. This sequence extends the local story of work and leisure into a broader social feeling and juxtaposes working-class ways of being with that of other classes. The trip physically cuts through social demarcations, and shots of iconic structures and statues in the urban landscape extend social description into the past. [Fig. 4] The boys are transformed from boisterous extroverts to observers capable of taking border views *on* their community.

In *SNSM*, shot amplification reveals how the working-class erotogenic and working bodies overlap and in so doing coalesces social description and story. In one sequence Seaton is

fishing and complaining about the upcoming work week; the shot cross-fades to a ten second static shot of the bike factory surrounded by the working-class neighborhood [Fig. 9]. Both the cut and framing of the second shot emphasize the extension of work into leisure; the community is “framed,” integrating home and work.<sup>169</sup> Shot amplification is also used earlier in the film. After a night of boozing, Seaton and Brenda climb the stairs to the bedroom; this shot is followed by a static shot held for over ten seconds of a working-class street during the day [Fig. 10]. This is Brenda’s neighborhood. The street is quiet, well ordered and empty except for a woman sweeping the sidewalk. The calmness of the shot contrasts with the excesses of the night before, but the lingering camera amplifies the shot and places the action of a cheating wife within a larger working-class feeling of order and propriety.

In addition to extended shots of landscape, NWL films establish a complex social picture by poetically juxtaposing the story with shots of “real” people. This is evident in *SNSM* in the documentary-like shot of two older factory workers in the opening sequence and later when an overview of the factory floor segues to a woman preparing for tea break [Figs. 11, 12, and 13].<sup>170</sup> In *Every Day Except Christmas* and *This Sporting Life*, shots of a real people looking into the camera lens were used to stress the social base of the story [Figs. 15 and 16]. In each, documentary reality authenticates the social realism of the dramatic action.

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<sup>169</sup>See earlier reference to John Brenkman, “Mass Media: From Collective Experience to the Culture of Privatization,” *Social Text*, no. 1 (Winter 1979): 94–95.

<sup>170</sup>Richardson used real borstal boys in the riot scene in *Loneliness*. According to Lassally, it is difficult to tell the difference between actors and inmates except during the dinner scene; the latter were always hungry. He used two cameras—one for tracking at the edge of the action and a hand-held. He did not mind if the stationary camera came into view; the goal was spontaneity. Walter Lassally, interview by Alan Winson (BAFTI: London, England, 1996).

Another theme borrowed from early British documentaries is that of children playing in working-class landscapes. Such images can be found in *Spare Time* (1939), *The Singing Street* (1952), *Wakefield Express* (1952) and *A Family Portrait* (1951) [Figs. 17-20]. “Playing children” were used in three ways in NWL films to establish social realism: They act as naturalistic elements of working-class life, as reflections of the border protagonist’s immaturity, and/or as a poetic social extension of the story into metaphor. In *Together*, “playing children” take on a maliciousness that reflects broad social disconnection.<sup>171</sup> The story is about the friendship of two young deaf men in a working-class neighborhood; one is mentally challenged and is watched over by the other. Mazzetti incorporated a working-class landscape and a mix of sound and silence to establish a complex social message about working-class rejection of the outsider. The film opens on working-class children playing in a vacant lot; and then, as they do throughout the film, they run towards the deaf men and gleefully torment them. At the end of the film one of the men is sitting on the wall of a bridge; he is startled by the children and falls into the river. His friend returns but cannot hear the shouts below him. The film ends with several disturbing, poetic, and socially evocative shots and sounds of the river being dredged of sludge, of the children playfully running away, and of the confused man on the bridge waiting for his friend. Like NWL films, *Together* comments in poetic manner on the social condition, and it ends ambiguously.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>171</sup>Anderson and Lassally contributed to *Together*, which was probably inspired by Carson McCullers’s *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. See Lindsay Anderson, “Free Cinema 1: Introduction,” in *Free Cinema DVD Notes*, pamphlet (London: British Film Institute, 15 August 1977).

<sup>172</sup>For Richardson, the “poor streets, the bomb sites, the warehouses take on an almost mysterious beauty.” See Richardson, “London Letters: Free Cinema,” 17. Further, childish maliciousness is seen briefly in *This Sporting Life*, in which children in a rock-strewn field attack Machin’s Jaguar [Fig. 21].

“Playing children” are used also to reflect the border character’s immaturity and to expose social loss. Seaton’s child-like nature is evident when he chases his younger brother with a toy gun, when he “escapes” his pursuers by driving a carnival bumper car in circles, when he hides like a naughty child after shooting the neighborhood gossip with an air gun [Fig. 23], and when he plays a schoolboy prank on a woman at work. He is doubly identified as a child as he pedals his bike around a group of children playing in the street who separate him from two men on the curb at work on a more mature motor cycle [Fig. 22]. The theme of “playing children” is most complex in *A Taste of Honey*. The play ends with new hope, as the singing of the offstage children reminds Helen of a connected past. In contrast, the ubiquitous children in the film embody a postwar feeling of loss and abandonment. As in *Together*, “playing children” are a poetic complication inhabiting a complex social feeling. This poetic description reveals a society that is incapable of nurturing its children toward a fulfilled and connected adult life. But, more than this, the image of “playing children” carries a sense of social stasis--an incapacity for positive social change. Two social messages are established: The working class was taking on middle-class values that rejected authentic human connections, and postwar youth, having lost hope for a positive future, looked to the past for authentic models. As will be shown, this feeling extended across classes.

On one level “playing children” is a visual metaphor of how the postwar generation is dissatisfied with the middle-class, consumer social model. In *A Taste of Honey*, Helen leaves her daughter, Jo, and marries Frank, the car salesman. As she and Jo approach Frank’s car a group of children surround Helen, who is weighed down with her baggage and birdcage; they impede her progress. In the next shot, the children harass Helen as she gets into the car; Frank yells at them as other children enter the shot from the top of the frame [Figs. 24 and 25]; Jo watches

passively from above. On an emotive level the children's actions reflect Jo's feelings; the camera angle separates mother and daughter and aligns Jo with the fury-like movements of the children. But this action is also a rejection of consumerism and middle-class values; more than just Jo's feeling this is a total action which raises Jo's loss to a larger social loss.

"Playing children" reflect the characters' experience of abandonment in a society lacking mature standards of behavior. Jo is pregnant but cannot turn to her own mother for a mature model of motherhood; Geof, the gay art student who shares a flat with Jo after Helen leaves, has a confused sense of self in a culture that denies homosexuality. Additionally, "playing children" haunt their attempts to establish a mature, authentic relationship. In one sequence Jo and Geof take a bus trip to the countryside and are followed by the "playing children." On a hill above an urban landscape Geof attempts to make love to Jo; on the edge of the frame, the children circle them commenting like an immature Greek chorus about the silliness of Geof's effort; simultaneously, they communicate the innocence and authenticity of his attempt at human connection. In both this scene and the next, in which the couple is in a cave with their faces lit by candles, Jo and Geof seem to hang in space, weightlessly buoyed by the poetic sound and movement of the "playing children" [Figs. 26 and 27].

Another aspect of the New Left film aesthetic is the framing of characters within an urban/ industrial landscape that visually establishes escape and entrapment. For example, in *Loneliness*, Colin and Mike steal a car and pick up two girls. They abandon the car and climb to the top of a ridge overlooking the town on one side and an industrial pit on the other. As they climb, the car is at the bottom of the frame and a train cuts through the middle of the frame, which separates the characters from the working-class landscape at the top [Fig.28 and 29]. The train and car promise both escape and entrapment. Later, the train will take them to the seaside,

but the holiday will end in penury; the stolen car, which facilitated escape, promises imprisonment. This escape/entrapment continuum is formally evident in what follows: the four have paired off and sit on a hill; they discuss escaping their working-class existence. Before them is an open pit with an industrial landscape beyond. As they leave, it is revealed that they had to climb through a fence; the frame is diagonally cut by lines of barbed wire. [Figs. 30 and 31]. Further, the escape/entrapment theme is evident in a pair of shots in *Loneliness*. The shot of Colin and his girlfriend walking across the wet sand of a beach at sunset is matched by Colin running over puddles at the borstal. Both shots frame the characters against a natural watery background indicating freedom; but the seaside holiday ends when the money runs out, and Colin's run ends back at the borstal [Fig. 32].

In *SNSM*, entrapment is both literal and poetic. Seaton is held and beaten by two soldiers for cheating with their brother's wife; an unknown drunken man is held by neighbors after he throws a beer mug through a funeral parlor window because he wanted an urn for his recently deceased mother [Fig. 33]. Seaton and others are trapped behind their lathes [Fig. 34]. But only Seaton is trapped pictorially by the urban landscape. He is framed within the walled entrance of his home, which is "guarded" by the neighborhood gossip [Fig. 35]. Similarly, his image is encased by the walls of an urban structure when he learns that Brenda's attempt at an abortion was unsuccessful. The sequence opens with Seaton and Brenda in the sun; factories are below them. On learning that the abortion did not work, Seaton walks away and is framed between the darkened stone walls of a city monument [Figs. 36 and 37]. Further, Seaton is isolated when he is framed within a "landscape" of faces. During a drinking match with a sailor, Seaton is trapped behind a table; he is framed by happy faces. In the sequence that follows, Seaton pushes his way

through the crowded bar looking for the bathroom; his expression of misery is juxtaposed by the smiling faces swimming around him [Figs. 38 and 39].<sup>173</sup>

Unlike Seaton, Jo is liberated by the urban-industrial landscape [Figs. 40-43]. Her mother, though, inhabits contemporary, interior spaces, closed, inner rooms--bedrooms, the dance hall, the saloon, her new husband's suburban house. As when she leaves with Frank, whenever Helen is outside she is awkward and burdened by the things of her interior spaces. Early in the film when they change apartments, Helen is seen struggling up a steep sidewalk carrying her belongings and a birdcage--a sign of entrapment which she carries the two times she switches abodes. In contrast, Jo moves effortlessly through the city-scape [Fig. 44].<sup>174</sup> Unlike her mother, who inhabits closed spaces, without windows, Jo's sun-filled living quarters engage the outside, and curtains replace doors.

Jo floats through a Victorian landscape that links her to a child's idea of a wholesome past. Whereas Seaton is framed as "trapped" within a twentieth century industrial landscapes, Jo is framed by eighteenth and nineteenth century waterways and arches. She walks along the Manchester Ship Canal, the Bridgewater Canal, and across the Baron Swing Aqueduct. She is framed beneath the Stockport train viaduct, completed in 1840. Further, this Victorian landscape is poetically matched by the film's whimsical musical refrain--an eighteenth century children's skipping game song, "When the Big Ships Sail on the Ally Ally Oh." These poetically complex elements suggest a child's dream of a wholesome past that simultaneously denies positive

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<sup>173</sup>Clearly, Seaton is not the only working-class person with these feeling of isolation, but the contrast between this character and others around him emphasize his experience of his community which the viewer is encouraged to consider.

<sup>174</sup>Delaney revisits this landscape in Ken Russell's "Shelagh Delaney's Salford" (1960, BBC).

movement forward. The young characters are outsiders in a society focused on consumption; they find comfort in the coherency of an English past--albeit, one based on industrial conquest.

This study has made few analytical references to *This Sporting Life*. Although Anderson's critical writing and documentary work influenced NWL film style, and though his first feature film contains elements of the New Left film aesthetic, it does not represent NWL social realism. Like the novel, the film describes psychological turmoil; despite several documentary-style shots, the film does not engage social views.<sup>175</sup> For example, in a sequence in which Machin takes Mrs. Hammond and her children on a trip to the country, a panning shot follows Ms. Hammond as she watches Machin play with her children. Opening on Machin's Bentley, the camera follows Mrs. Hammond, who enters the shot from the right and crosses to the left in front of the car; the shell of a church is revealed in the background; she turns and looks at the church [Fig. 46]. This shot juxtaposes symbols of consumer excess and spiritual emptiness with the story of a working-class woman who is struggling with the death of a husband killed during an industrial "accident" and who is rejected by judgmental neighbors. But rather than being expansive, this shot remains an over-packed metaphor of a state of mind; it does not resonate with broad social descriptions.<sup>176</sup>

**(2) Working-class border character.** Poetic complexity and social description are also constructed via the border views of the protagonist on the situation around him and the more ironic border views made by the documentary-style camera on this character and the working-

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<sup>175</sup>See Figure 45--a characteristic New Wave shot: Machin stands on a hill, followed by a shot of the town below. But these shots are about the character's state of mind and are not social realism.

<sup>176</sup>In the novel Weaver is an integral part of the community. In the film, he is presented as a wealthy industrialist who controls those below him. The fourth estate is represented by a sneering sport reporter

class community. These border views expand the drama of the individual story and encompass Williams's dynamic social realism. The border view calls for a break from habitual or conventional filmic ways of depicting the working class and opens altered views on changes in working-class values, community cohesion, and class relations. This border character is not evident in Jennings's wartime films or in most of *Free Cinema*. These documentaries represent people who are connected to their communities in uncritical ways. The characters in *Momma Don't Allow*, *O Dreamland*, and *Every Day Except Christmas* are linked to their social groups. In *Refuge England* an immigrant begins as an outsider but finds his place in the community. On the other hand, the "Lambeth boys" begin to see themselves beyond their community, and the deaf mutes in *Together* are rejected as outsiders.

Each NWL film presents a different version of the border character. Seaton is the most complete example; his sense of belonging to his community while having views not available to others defines his dramatic action. Colin becomes a border character by the end of the film, unlike in Sillitoe's short story, in which he inhabits a border position throughout. As he loses the race, he inhabits his place as social rebel and criminal. From the beginning, Jo and Geof are social outsiders; their interactions with the larger community are minimal; like the children who float in and out of the frame, they are abandoned. But, rather than taking on a border view, Jo and Geof are focused on Jo's inner turmoil. But at the end of the film Geof is expelled from Jo's life and the community of children, and he takes on a border position; in contrast, Jo continues the flawed relationship with her mother.

controlled by Weaver. And the working class is small-minded and reactionary; they are disdainful of Mrs. Hammond's new wealth and are a factor in her breakdown and death [Fig. 47].

Three border views are presented in NWL films. First, the border protagonist can have a subjective view on his community.<sup>177</sup> Second, the camera can have a view *on* the border protagonist in which, simultaneously, he is connected to and separated from others in the community. Third, the film audience is encouraged to take views on the working-class within a social landscape; thus, the viewer is persuaded to take up a border position. An analysis of the opening sequences from *SNSM* will illustrate these views, which are created via shot choice, framing, and editing. The film's first shot pans across a busy factory floor. A wide view is taken on many workers at their lathes and the foreman as he hands out pay packets. The pan ends with a three quarter shot of Seaton at his lathe.<sup>178</sup> The next shot is a close-up of Seaton's thumb pressing a button on his lathe, followed by the theme music. Subjective shots follow that indicate Seaton's views on factory activity, and the camera takes views on Seaton. The three border views are summarized in these opening shots. This first panning shot, though jarring, merges two border views. The "documentary" camera takes a view on the general social situation and then transitions into a shot that takes a view on the border character, who is shown as different from those around him. In so doing, the viewer is invited to consider the *story* as taking place within a real working context.

In the opening sequence, Seaton's border point-of-view is constructed by his narration and by matching shots of his view of the factory workers. His attitude is presented as reasonable, though he alone is shown seeing the situation this way. He takes a positive view on a young Black worker who lives in the present; he views the foreman passing out pay stubs, and,

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<sup>177</sup>Though the "border" view is not defined here as male, in NWL films it is taken-on only by the male protagonist.

<sup>178</sup>This is the Raleigh bike factory in which Sillitoe worked as a young man.

then, the man he is cuckolding. Seaton's border view is complicated when he views two older workers who, according to Seaton, have given up; here the style changes; the shot reads as documentary footage; Seaton has taken a view on real factory workers; his point of view has extended the story to include an extra social reality [Fig. 11]. But rather than being disruptive, this shot expands the story-telling; it announces both that this character is different, and that the film is committed to presenting a complex social reality.

Whereas Seaton inhabits a border position from the beginning of the film, Geof occupies it at the end of the film, in the moment that he takes views *on* the situation. After leaving Jo with her mother, Geof joins the children, who have built a bonfire in the yard below her apartment. In a close-up, Geof, in an amused trance, watches the fire and the children playing and singing. He looks up and then backs into the shadows. Cut to Jo walking down the stairs towards the children. Cut to Geof stepping out of the shadows as if to go to Jo; but he stops. Cut to Helen carrying beer bottles walking towards Jo, from Geof's point of view; his dark silhouette fills the right half of the frame [Fig. 48]. The film's penultimate sequence is an ironic and complex juxtaposing of childish sweetness and adult loss; Geof puts down the baby basket he had made for Jo and walks away through a darkened alley in which children are playing and singing "Ally Ally Oh" [Fig. 49]. Geof has taken up a border position; he is no longer a member of this group of "playing children"; an authentic relationship with Jo is impossible. In similar fashion, Colin commits to a border position when he takes a view on the "truth" of the class situation, and he stops running. His border position is established as the spectators--public school visitors and borstal personnel and inmates--yell for him to finish the race; but he is no longer one of them. The frantic edits at the end of the film as well as the composition of the ending shot of the race illustrate this break [Fig. 50].

Views are taken on the border character as “other” in conventional ways, as when Geof visits the public birthing center and is rejected by the “real” mothers, or when Jo disengages from the dodge ball game at the beginning of the film, or when views are taken on Colin as he loses the race [Fig. 50]. And as shown, such views are constructed by framing the border character within the urban landscape. Further, views are taken on the border character via unusual camera angles. In the first sequence--and in later shots--Seaton is shot from an acute angle, with the camera below his lathe; Seaton’s head and arms loom at the top of the frame with the lathe in the foreground, below him. This extremely angled shot establishes a complicated view *on* the protagonist that places him in a border territory; he is both part of the social environment and separated from it. Similar, extreme views are taken on Jo, who demands to be seen as unique [Fig. 43].

A third type of border view invites the film audience to occupy a border position. In *SNSM*, unconventional and at times disturbing edits encourage the viewer to consider the dramatic action expansively. When Seaton’s thumb pushes a button on the lathe, the action seems to trigger the film’s thematic music. Seaton “announces” the end of the sequence when he throws down a rag which emphasizes the physical cut to the titles. Or, when Seaton is disappointed that Doreen refuses to kiss him, he slams a garbage can lid down; the action and banging sound initiates a cut to activities in the factory. *Loneliness* uses sped-up action and star burst accents; such breaks in convention could disturb audience expectation, but in the context of the films’ expansive poetic approach such stylistic disturbances can be taken as an invitation to the viewer to take border views on the social situation. This idea will be expanded below.

**(3) Unresolved endings: Moral democracy is unobtainable.** In addition to disturbing edits, undetermined endings of NWL films encourage the viewer to take on broad social ways of

seeing. In *SNSM*, as Doreen and Arthur exit a movie house decorated with Hollywood posters, she says that the ending of the film was predictable--a metacognitive recognition that this film will not end conventionally. As shown, "social problem" films and other New Wave films resolve the dramatic action: Schlesinger's *A Kind of Loving* (1962) ends with the scholarship boy's acceptance of his middle-class future. The sequel to *Room at the Top* (1959) adds nothing new; according to Bosley Crowther, *Life at the Top* (1962) "takes on at once the somber aspect of a catalogue of bleak I-told-you-so's, and it never really changes that complexion through its hard, unrelenting two-hour flow."<sup>179</sup> The ending of *This Sporting Life* supports Storey's existential message of the temporary nature of human connections. In addition, the social realist literature and plays investigated in this study end with the possibility of positive change. Williams's novels end with signs of forward movement; Sillitoe's novels end determinedly with exile or revolution. For Stuart Hall, the theatre audience could sense a positive sense of the future at the end of *A Taste of Honey*:

In spite of the impossibilities, the misunderstanding between mother and daughter, and between Jo and Geof, in the play, some sort of an image of relationships, built upon love and acceptance, comes through. In that sense, the play begins where we are, with the botched civilization; but it takes us out into the unknown country beyond that. It humanizes our frustrations, and our bitter cynicism and anger.<sup>180</sup>

But the film ends enmeshed in the frustrations of a "botched civilization." New Wave Left films end in ambiguity and, in so doing, open the stories about individuals to a consideration by the viewer of the vagaries of a complex and flawed society.

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<sup>179</sup>Bosley Crowther, "Screen: 'Life at the Top': Climber's Career After Marriage Explored," *New York Times*, 15 December 1965.

<sup>180</sup>Stuart Hall, "Something to Live For," in *New Theatre Voices of the Fifties and Sixties*, ed. Charles Marowitz, Tom Milne, and Owen Hale (London: Eyre Methuen, 1965), 114.

The final sequence of the film *A Taste of Honey* expresses unredeemable personal and social loss. After Geof leaves, Jo climbs down the stairs and stands by the bonfire built by the children to celebrate Guy Fawkes Day [Mischievous Night]; she is in a daze as the children dance around her. Her mother returns from the bar carrying bottles of beer and meekly invites Jo back to the apartment for some “tea” and then exits. Geof watches the exchange from the shadows; he puts down the cradle he had made for Jo’s baby and leaves. In the final shot of the film a child hands Jo a sparkler and lights it with his flame; Jo stares at the gentle shards of light [Fig 53]. In this moment Jo regresses; she is accepted as one of the children; the chance for a fulfilling and mature relationship has been lost; she has succumbed to her mother’s vagabond existence--ennui replaces growth. But this feeling extends to a larger social pall. The children’s fire and their “Ally, Ally, Oh” refrain are residual holdovers of the past; social stagnation is evident in this gathering of postwar “playing children,” left alone in a “botched” society.<sup>181</sup>

Of course, this Victorian children’s song and the Guy Fawkes celebration in this film cannot be construed as class-based; rather this song and this event are aspects of a poetic reaction to a postwar social malaise that positions the film as broad social commentary. These “playing children” and Jo are not trapped by the past. Rather, Jo turns back because she is giving up. An interesting contrast to this Guy Fawkes celebration is the more naturalistic event at the end of *Flame in the Streets* referred to earlier, in which a racially mixed community celebration is melodramatically hijacked by group of white teen thugs; its ending of reconciliation is intended to be

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<sup>181</sup>For Hill, “what brings [Jo and Helen] together is ... a resigned acknowledgement of things as they are ... an adjustment to second best.” See, John Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism*, 166–67. But theirs is not an adjustment; it is a loss of hope; the poetic ending resonates with social questions beyond the scope of particular relationships.

positive and instructive.<sup>182</sup> The end of *A Taste of Honey* is wholly different; it takes on a poetic complexity that opens its social meaning to broad social interpretations. Though identified as a working-class film, unlike *SNSM* and *Loneliness*, *A Taste of Honey* has no iconic working-class markers, no overview shots of an urban-industrial landscape, no children playing in a working-class street with back-to-front houses. Rather, this film engages New Left themes by expanding the working-class experience into a British experience. This is evident in the use of the English past as class-common marker of a broad social disintegration.

By contrast *SNSM* is a “working-class” film; but it also ends in confused state. The ending sequence is prefaced by an unconventional edit that encourages the viewer to occupy a border position. Seaton and Doreen are heard talking as they walk, hand in hand, down towards a suburban housing community. This seems to be a conventional ending in which decisions have been made and the dramatic action resolved. But, disturbingly, the camera pulls back to reveal that, in fact, Doreen and Seaton are sitting at the top of the hill; there has been no resolution [Figs. 51 and 52]. He rises and throws a rock at a nearby shed; he has no intention of settling into a conventional marriage. His revolution against an ambiguous authority will continue. Seaton continues to occupy a complex border position that encompasses residual, present and emerging social conditions. As he looks down on the middle-class housing development, he remembers how he and his cousin had picked berries on this hill when they were children. His residual feelings of an authentic past conflict with the vacuousness of the encroaching cookie-cutter houses below. And these feelings are available only to him; Doreen knows what she wants and watches him dreamily. In a reiteration of the beginning of the film, the camera shoots

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<sup>182</sup>A further example: There is a brief view of the celebratory fire at the end of *A Diary for Timothy*. This is a conventional image to depict a nation coming together after winning the war.

up at Seaton, isolating him from Doreen and the suburban scene below. The viewer is invited to take up a similar isolated position. Seaton must get married and take up a middle-class life. But this is not desirable social progress.

*Loneliness*, like *A Taste of Honey*, ends in a sense of social dissolution. Colin decides he will not give over to “the company of bastards,” but his future is ambiguous, as this is an inconclusive answer to his search for meaning. Further, the film viewer is shocked into seeing Colin’s situation broadly. As he finishes the race, a conventional montage of past images “summarizes” his fevered thoughts--Colin’s dying father, Colin being caught by the police, Colin with his girlfriend, and so forth. But surprisingly, the montage includes shots not seen previously--police viciously beating Colin and a macabre death mask of Colin’s father. It is disturbing that information has been held back, but by extending the story the viewer is encouraged to take up a border position. The extra shots point out that all films tell partial stories; there is much that is not told. In a different way, the final shot of the film expands the scope of Colin’s decision into social realism and encourages the viewer to take on an ironic position. A reprise of the borstal inmates singing “O Jerusalem” plays as the camera pans, waist high, along an assembly line table of boys dismantling WWII gas masks. Layers of death mask shapes float through the frame as they are handled by the silent workers [Fig. 54]. The film ends in an ironic freeze--an ‘abstract painting’ of a country mired in remembered values while a lost generation dismantles the refuse of a deadly war and a defunct empire.

The working-class border protagonist exists within social contradictions; he is presented an unacceptable choice between a middle-class life or the values of a lost past. This character, unlike others in his community, sees more and yearns for authentic connection within an inauthentic society; in the end he is isolated from a community that formerly felt like home. The de-

sire for authenticity arises from memories of a more cohesive and robust past, in which working-class values had given life authenticity, but such memories are a tease; the promise of social connection is hollow. Thus, NWL films end in frustration; there can be no calls for change, no suggestion of how to move forward. Finally, the viewer, like the border character must struggle with a complex social description that denies positive outcomes.

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When New Wave films were new, several British critics found that these films were stylistically incoherent; and New Left writers did not find social merit in these films. This chapter has re-examined NWL filmmakers and has found that they were committed to artistic control of the film making processes, and worked to wrest power from studio producers, unions and critics. Their early work established a New Left film aesthetic--a poetic style featuring "border" views. Certain shots typical of NWL film are not fully used up by the dramatic action but ride along with the story and construct a complex social reality that coaxes the viewer into an ironic, border position. Further, contrary to the hopes of some leftists critics, NWL films did not reveal a positive socialist future. As Anderson wrote, they were not interested in propaganda but in the "life around us ... the poetry of everyday life."<sup>183</sup> Though sympathetic to New Left desires for "positive" social change, they could not present a social reality that encompassed progress towards a British "whole way of life" or a moral democracy. Rather, NWL films reflected a society that was in an undetermined flux.

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<sup>183</sup>Anderson, *Lindsay Anderson - In His Own Words*.

## Conclusion

### New Wave Left Social Realism: Beginnings and Endings

Raymond Williams did not find that NWL films fulfilled what he described as dynamic social realism. The social pessimism of NWL films may have affected New Left attitudes towards these films. Nevertheless, it has been shown that NWL filmmakers embraced New Left cultural goals and social descriptions in their writing and film work. A New Left film aesthetic developed out of the directors' film criticism and their early experiments in documentary form. Finally, did the New Left film aesthetic influence later social realism in British films? A complete analysis of this question is beyond the scope of this conclusion. The purpose here is to indicate broad outcomes of the New Left film aesthetic rather than flesh them out.

Lindsay Anderson found that New Wave work had no lasting impact on the directors themselves or on later British social realist films. In his introduction to a proposed book on *Sequence* Anderson wrote:

The British lack of response to films which questioned the *status quo* was clear: 'Working-class' subjects were relegated to television, while radical and anarchistic habits were largely discarded. The tradition which had started with *Sequence* came to an end.<sup>1</sup>

Following the New Wave period, Richardson and Reisz largely abandoned the social realist style they had started with *Free Cinema*. After *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, Reisz directed a film starring Albert Finney as a psychotic killer (*Night Must Fall*, 1964); this was followed by *Morgan! A Suitable Case for Treatment* (1966; featuring David Warner), about an artist who plays out his fantasies. Reisz's subsequent films were based on varied subjects that featured fine acting and were praised for their quality. Richardson's films that followed the

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<sup>1</sup>Lindsay Anderson, *Lindsay Anderson - In His Own Words* (1991), <http://www.library.stir.ac.uk/lindsayanderson/onSequence.htm>.

NWL period were *Tom Jones* (1963, Lassally, cameraman), which won the Academy Award for best picture; *The Loved One* (1965), about a Los Angeles funeral parlor; and *Mademoiselle* (1966), starring Jeanne Moreau, who portrayed a murderer in a rural French village.<sup>2</sup>

Even though Reisz's later work cannot be categorized as social realism, he saw evidence that the New Wave was important at the time and afterwards:

The films did obviously fulfill some kind of thirst in the audience and the commercial cinema tried to and did absorb us.... It definitely changed one aspect of British film making. There was the social side of it, of course; but these were not industry aims, and the early Woodfall films were not industry films. They were definitely produced and directed by the creative people; they were not the Rank organization buying a book and commissioning it. Those movies changed the structure of film making--the relationship between money and talent--changed it in England fairly radically.<sup>3</sup>

The "radical" changes in British film grew from NWL experiments and opened opportunities for social and political content in later social realist films. Anderson's political commitment is evident in the films he made after *This Sporting Life*. in which he expanded NWL social realism into radical, angry, satirical, social protest. After the New Wave period Anderson directed three politically committed films with Malcolm MacDowell--*if...* (1968), *O Lucky Man!* (1973), and *Britannia Hospital* (1982). The, at times, bizarre and fanciful content of these films grew out of earlier work but cannot be considered social realism as that style has been defined here. But in the late 1950s, Anderson wrote that he no longer supported New Left arguments.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Richardson was having an affair with Moreau at that time, and it is rumored that the film was an excuse to be with her. Jean Genet is given screen writing credit, but wrote very little, according to Richardson. Tony Richardson, *The Long-Distance Runner: An Autobiography* (New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1993), 205–6.

<sup>3</sup>Karel Reisz, interview by Alan Winson (New York City, October 19, 1995).

<sup>4</sup>Joseph Gelmis, *The Film Director as Super Star* (Garden City, NJ: Double Day and Co., 1970), 96. Anderson did not see himself as political, but he was disappointed that there was no connection between the new political left and the new theatre of the 50s. In any case, he felt that politics and art did

Erik Hedling pointed out that after making the anti-nuclear bomb documentary--*March to Aldermaston* (1959)--Anderson no longer took part in New Left activities, but “the public Andersonian image would, however, always carry the traits of his political activities during the 1950s.”<sup>5</sup> In 1965 Anderson directed *The White Bus*, based on a Delaney short story. This film is a summary and development of the New Left film aesthetic. It has not received sufficient analysis and will be discussed below.

Finally, did NWL films influence later British film directors who dealt with working-class social realism? Filmmakers fitting this category include Mike Leigh, Kenneth Loach, Alan Clarke, Danny Boyle, and Gary Oldman (a single effort--*Nil by Mouth*, 1997). To some degree, NWL film elements can be found in later social realist films, but with an emphasis on the working-class family and the whole society.<sup>6</sup> This is most evident in Leigh’s work, in which border character experiences are extended to focus on the dynamics of the working-class family and/or deal with society as a coherent totality in which class was one of many elements of a larger ineffective society. Leigh’s stories are organized around the dynamics of both working-class and middle-class families as microcosms reflecting larger social deterioration.

New Wave Left films had featured the individual border character existing within a working-class community. The working-class family was assumed as a social base, but even though changes in the traditional working-class family structure influenced border character

not go together. Despite this, he wrote from a political standpoint and his “Get out and push” was basically a New Left argument. His film critique established the New Left film aesthetic.

<sup>5</sup>Erik Hedling, *Lindsay Anderson: Maverick Film-Maker* (London: Cassell, 1998), 46.

<sup>6</sup>British social realism went in other directions after the British New Wave, as evident in Lay’s term, “Brit grit.” See Samantha Lay, *British Social Realism: From Documentary to Brit-Grit* (London: Wallflower, 2002). Working-class violence is evident in *Scum* (1997, Clarke), which was banned by the BBC for its graphic brutality and questionable veracity, and *Made in Britain* (1982, Clarke).

choices, the problems of the traditional working-class family were not the focus of NWL films. But as working class communities were dismantled and as social structures were irretrievably taken over by capitalistic forces, a desperate sense of social loss led to entrenchment within the stories of single families in opposition to outside forces.<sup>7</sup> This is particularly evident in Leigh's films; see, for instance, *Bleak Moment* (1971), *Hard Labour* (1973), *Home Sweet Home* (1982), and *Meantime* (1983).

The other social realist trend that emerged was an emphasis on whole society descriptions. In the 1950s socialist description linked the vitality of the working-class community to core British democratic characteristics and values. This feeling was evident earlier in 1950s British feature films, which celebrated working-class communal vitality--see the Ealing comedies, *Whiskey Galore!* (1949), *Passport to Pimlico* (1949), and *Titfield Thunderbolt* (1953). But the New Left social model had to change as the working class took on bourgeois values. The blurring of class demarcations led to social description in later social realist films that emphasized the larger social structure, though earlier assumptions of working class vitality persisted.

This merging of the working class within a larger social situation was reflected earlier in *A Taste of Honey*, in which the view of the working-class as the engine of social realism was giving way to social descriptions that engaged a complex mix of social effects. Chapter Five

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<sup>7</sup>As shown, initially, the early New Left looked for a classless society to assure broad dissemination of socialist goals. The postwar, socialist society would be re-vitalized by a vibrant, "traditional" working-class community. Social cohesion would be established via an equal and robust education and a freely evolving social imagination, supported by open cultural communication and a mass media that would develop from the bottom up so as to give voice to all socioeconomic levels. It was assumed that with a free-forming cultural production, liberal-leaning, moral democracy would develop and undermine media hegemonies. But with Right-wing successes this way of seeing was abandoned. See, for example, Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Routledge Classics, 1974), 58.

showed how references to an earlier time and landscape had expanded this film's social realism. A comparison of two single shots in the films *A Taste of Honey* and Jennings's *A Diary for Timothy* can demonstrate how early on social emphasis was extending beyond the working class; this social broadening effect is expanded in later social realist films.<sup>8</sup>

Jo is pregnant and scared about becoming a mother, not only because her mother was a poor model, but because she fears that her child will have mental problems. Geof seeks out Jo to give her a baby doll with which to practice mothering skills; he finds her in a courtyard; she is staring at a lone child--the only time in the film a single child is featured--who appears to be mentally challenged; this image is bound up with her mother's story about Jo's father being "a bit stupid...not very bright"[Fig. 56].<sup>9</sup> But this shot stands out from the rest in the film; it is a documentary-style shot of a mentally challenged child and is out of place in this poetic film of Victorian landscapes, nursery rhymes, and a Greek chorus of "playing children." When Jo asks where his parents are, the image could be interpreted as making a naturalistic point about proper child care. Or, this image of the lone child could be understood as making a plot point, emphasizing the potential inferior genetic make-up of Jo's unborn baby. But both interpretations would be out of a balance with the poetic and social realist style of the rest of the film. So, what is going on here?

Rather than focusing on the problems of child welfare in postwar northern England, this is an instance of shot amplification. As such it coheres stylistically with the film's poetry and resonates with Jennings's poetic story of a unified English social experience. But, whereas

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<sup>8</sup>Professor Daniel Gerould of the Graduate Center, CUNY, suggested in his play study class that analysis can start at the point of most confusion. Analysis of this scene started in such confusion.

<sup>9</sup>Shelagh Delaney, *A Taste of Honey* (New York: Grive Weidenfeld, 1956), 43.

Jennings's society was moving forward after a hard won war, the shot in Richardson's film exposes a society falling apart. A comparison of this image and the final shot of Jennings's Timothy can illustrate how both these films assume a common English society, but take up opposing views regarding social progress. At the end of *A Diary for Timothy*, the narrator (Michael Redgrave) asks a series of questions about Timothy's postwar world that indicate a hopeful wariness about the future:

What are you going to say about it? And what are you going to do? ... [Some see] unemployment after the war and then another war and then more unemployment. Will it be like that again? Are you going to have greed for money or power, ousting decency from the world as they have in the past? Or are you going to make the world a different place, you and the other babies?<sup>10</sup>

These questions reflect broad social issues and resonate with early New Left ideals. The fresh face of the well cared-for baby and the narrator's questions imply that a socialist approach could lead to "decency" and a moral democracy for all classes [Fig. 55]. There is little of that feeling in the searching face of the abandoned child in the NWL film; it is one of loss and confusion, and is reminiscent of the deaf mute, who at the end of *Together* searches for his friend drowning below him. While both Jennings's and Richardson's films announce a common society with a common history and a common future, *A Taste of Honey* points to social malaise and a middle-class future that features "greed for money" and lack of "decency"--a feeling that is reiterated at the end of the film in Jo's face of resignation [Fig. 53]. A former feeling of working-class integrity is irrelevant to the society-wide loss of hope of an entire generation.

In the post-NWL film, *The White Bus* (1965), Anderson continued to tell a social story through the working class, and he, too, blurs class difference in reaching for broad messages

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<sup>10</sup>*A Diary for Timothy* (1945). Crown Film Unit. Script by E.M Forster. Narrated by Michael Redgrave. Produced by Basil Wright. Directed by Humphrey Jennings.

about social disintegrate. This short film could be seen as a segue between the New Left film aesthetic and the later social realist work of Mike Leigh.<sup>11</sup> The complex elements of *The White Bus* extend poetic social realism and engage a self-referential recognition of film as a social product. The forty-minute film was directed by Anderson and co-written with Shelagh Delaney. Hedling, incorrectly described *The White Bus* as “Gothic and surrealistic.”<sup>12</sup> Rather, *The White Bus* contains elements of the New Left film aesthetic that is a complex comingling of class feelings over a broad period of time; these ways of seeing are filtered through “border” views of the new working-class which comes together to describe a common, troubled society. The film builds on Delaney’s short story which describes a Salford-like northern English city in transition. But, Anderson’s film is less pessimistic than Delaney’s work or NWL films (see Chapter Three for a discussion of Delaney’s short story). The film is a satirically dark view of the social dissonances of England at the mid century, but it holds a sense of hope about moving forward. Creative shot choices and shock edits used in *The White Bus* would be used in Anderson’s later political protest films; and its socially poetic choices and social attitude echo in Mike Leigh’s later portrayal of working-class life in the British welfare state.

*The White Bus* is a segue film which emphasized whole society descriptions but did so by utilizing NWL social realist elements, although with new outcomes: (1) Past social realist images are re-purposed to describe a changing social reality. (2) The working-class border character

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<sup>11</sup>This film is based on a short story by Delaney of the same name found in the collection, Shelagh Delaney, *Sweetly Sings the Donkey* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1961), 165–86. A working-class girl [from here on the Girl] returns from her boring secretarial job in London to her North England city and boards a peculiar “See Your City” bus tour, peopled by a mix of middle-class British citizens. See Chapter Three for more on Delaney’s story.

<sup>12</sup>Hedling, *Lindsay Anderson: Maverick Film-Maker*, 56. *The White Bus* can be viewed online at [http://dangerousminds.net/comments/lindsay\\_anderson\\_white\\_bus](http://dangerousminds.net/comments/lindsay_anderson_white_bus)

continues as an observer of social change and acts as a conduit for the audience towards a skeptical social imagination; significantly, this working-class character is female who moves effortlessly between classes. (3) The ending of the film is less ambiguous than both NWL films and Delaney's short story, and it is more hopeful in establishing ways forward as an aspect of British resolve.

**(1) Re-purposed former social realist images.** Anderson achieved effects with complex references to past work. *The White Bus* plays with images from traditional British documentary, *Free Cinema* and NWL films; it includes overview shots of a working-class community, factory chimneys, "playing children," and iconic London statues. But this short film expands the New Left film aesthetic through a creative juxtapositions of complex and fanciful images. Anderson was inspired by Jennings's imaginative choices that referred back and forward in time, but *The White Bus* has even greater filmic complexity. Black and white interacts with color, creating a sense of shot amplification in which color shocks with its added realistic information. In addition, Hedling showed how Anderson used allusion, quotations, and intertextuality for varied effects.<sup>13</sup> For instance, Francisco de Goya's "Le mannequin" (1791) is enacted, possibly as a warning about social control [see Fig. 57]. The film also quotes from the work of Jean Vigo (*Zero for Conduct*, 1949), Akira Kurosawa, and includes a French New Wave type scene in which a woman is chased by a group of men around a city square. References are made to early British documentary, *Free Cinema*, and NWL films. When the bus tour visits a natural history exhibit, the director alludes to his own *O Dreamland*, as if to compare the vacuousness of the working-class amusement park to the dusty, middle-class museum. At the end of the film a

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 69.

violent emergency rescue drill, enacted for the bus tour, echoes Jennings's *Fires Were Started*. A young working-class protégé pianist plays a classical piece--an allusion to Myra Hess's performance in Jennings' *A Diary for Timothy*. In each instance, Anderson re-purposed these images to communicate a social reality consisting of diverse elements.

**(2) The working-class border character takes on a new face.** Anderson's *The White Bus* re-worked the working-class border protagonist so as to get to a broader social reality. Patricia Healey plays a London secretary [the Girl]; but rather than being strictly working class, she identifies herself as a writer and could be a stand-in for Shelagh Delaney. Like the NWL border character, she is a conduit for the audience, who is encouraged to take on new and, potentially, committed views on society. She is with the tour but is isolated from the group; at one point when they are all watching the fire drill, the others turn into life-sized dummies; she alone walks away. But unlike Smith (*The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*) and Seaton (*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*), she is not sarcastic or angry; with calmness and equanimity, she observes a seemingly strange world which is a poetic evocation of Anderson's and Delaney's deeper sense of social reality.

**(3) Ambiguous endings shift to semi-hopeful social descriptions.** Delaney's short story ends in despair as the Girl walks through a graveyard and a desolated working-class community that is being dismantled and replaced by sterile apartment blocks. In contrast, Anderson's film has a socially positive ending. Instead of the destroyed working-class community, the Girl walks through a vibrant neighborhood. Walking away from the tour, she passes through a group of children playing in an open lot; she enters an active working-class community at dusk. She observes through street level windows--not voyeuristically, but as an invitation to the film viewer--a young girl playing classical piano and, at another window, an old

woman shaving an old man. She then enters a fish and chips shop, and as she eats, she listens to the man and woman closing for the night. As with the short story, the man is heard saying that they should stop working for the night, but the woman insists that their work cannot be delayed.

This ending looks forward to Leigh's working-class films of the 1970s and 1980s, in which the early New Left sense of despair is replaced by a feeling that authentic relationships are possible, if only within the microcosm of the family. A similar positive mood is set in *The White Bus*. The Girl is a new sort of effective working-class border character because she is a writer. Her complex social imagination allows for a considered understanding that cuts across class difference and points to the potential for positive change. Anderson develops this encouraging mood in his next film. The young public school characters in *if...* recognize the need for change; armed revolution becomes a positive metaphor for a generation that will not accept the status quo.

The hopeful ending of *The White Bus* can be compared with socially cautionary films directed and written by Mike Leigh, which portrayed working-class families as both troubled and resilient during the difficult economic times of the 1970s and 1980s. For example, Leigh's *Meantime* (1983) reveals the indignities of the welfare state in a run-down working-class high-rise complex. And the director is brutally honest as he contrasts the conflicted working-class family with that of a sterile, suburban, middle-class couple. Despite the obvious failures of the working-class parents and of society in dealing with unemployment and adequate housing, the two working-class brothers in *Meantime* gain a sense of self worth, and a communal vitality emanates from the working-class family structure. The vitality of their humanity is contrasted with a childless, upper middle-class couple who live in a suburban house and are concerned with little more than work and home decorating. The formerly working-class wife is utterly

disappointed with her life and ends drunk on the floor of the childless, second floor bedroom she is re-designing.

By the beginning of the twenty-first century the New Left vision was frustrated. The co-optive nature of hegemonic capitalist forces had prevented the development of cultural structures that could produce complex realistic and dynamic social descriptions. Well before writing *Marxism and Literature* (1977), Williams could see that traditional approaches to Marxism and the social practice that resulted from such approaches had been and would be inadequate to bring about actual, positive, socialist change in Britain.<sup>14</sup> He developed the idea of “cultural materialism” to describe the relationship between art/language and society/economy in part to avoid Marxist dogma, which Gramsci feared.<sup>15</sup> For Williams, if there was to be positive social change, Marxism needed to describe how cultural structures and social groups--not economic forces--establish the social imagination.

The late 1950s and early 60s can be seen as the first postwar arc of a British socialist experiment. Labour Party victories after the war produced continued austerity and halfway social measures, and voter dissatisfaction led to a resurgence of conservative Tory control. Nevertheless, in 1959 Williams held out hope for positive changes; but a decade and a half later he predicted that the time for change was “very short,” even though “theoretically, we are now very much better furnished than in 1959” for that change.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Raymond Williams, “Notes on Marxism in Britain Since 1945,” *The New Left Review* I, no. 100 (November-December 1976): 81–94. But he had this attitude earlier.

<sup>15</sup>For a discussion of this topic and the link to Williams, see Joseph A. Buttigieg, “The Exemplary Worldliness of Antonio Gramsci’s Literary Criticism,” *Boundary 2* 11, no. 2 (Winter 1982): 24–26.

<sup>16</sup>Williams, “Notes on Marxism,” 91–93.

In 1989, in what seems now a desperate attempt to acquire some traction for the future of cultural materialism, Williams called for socialists to define the looming problems of world ecology as a capitalist problem. The environmental problem was not based on production per se, which could have positive outcomes if approached correctly; rather it arose from wasted human effort in the pursuit of profit, in the using-up of human and natural resources for capitalist purposes:

The root cause is not in the isolated forces of production, but in the mode of production as a whole. Its most evident damage has been in the relentless drive for profit and the accumulation of capital, but underlying this has been a basic orientation to the world--at once its resources and its peoples--which defines it as raw material.<sup>17</sup>

Twenty-five years later, the world is faced with a worsening environmental collapse and an economic system that refuses to recognize the need for basic structural change.

At the beginning of the new century, the New Left recognized that socialist opportunities had evaporated in Britain. In February, 2000, Perry Anderson wrote that the new British socialism begun in the 1950s had been defeated by the versatility of capitalism. The struggle by the artist and critic on the left to wrest control of cultural production from capitalist interests was over. The only way forward was retrenchment and uncompromisingly truthful, not hopeful, assessments of social and economic conditions.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Raymond Williams, *What I Came to Say* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989), 169.

<sup>18</sup>Perry Anderson, "Renewal," *New Left Review* 1 (January-February 2000): 7–24. In 2001, Mark Shiel had a similar message: There was no viable opposition to international capitalism except in certain local practices and specific issues. Capitalistic practices had become entrenched via globalization. Further, Hollywood had overtaken global cultural imagination. According to Shiel, the only conduit for social change was through the "democratizing potential of information technology and the Internet." But even in this area capitalistic interests controlled via megacorporations and conglomeration. See Mark Shiel, "Cinema and the City in History and Theory," in *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context*, ed. Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2001), 18.

Ways of seeing of the 1950s may have been partially reproduced, but by the end of the century, the New Left could not envision how the committed socialist artist could affect positive social change. The possible end of British-style socialism brought deep frustrations with it. This is evident in Leigh's Thatcher-era films in which the hope for a socialist agenda in Britain is lost. For Leigh this policy continued with Blair's Labour party. In *High Hopes* (1988) Leigh explored the difficulty of being a socialist in this environment. The ranting of Morris in *Secrets and Lies* (1996) and Johnny in *Naked* (1993) is a reflection of the director's own disappointment and sadness at the encroaching "deadness of the material world."<sup>19</sup> For Leigh the capitalist, materialist world had won; it created a deep sense of loss: "It is hard to know where to put it, where to take it, where to go with it. It is very frustrating and very worrying and very sad."<sup>20</sup>

Leigh's frustration is an extension of NWL films' ambiguous feeling of loss. Mike Mason takes another approach to Leigh's work. For Mason, Leigh's *Naked* is a "post modern inflection" that exposes "the social conditions of urban existence which may superficially appear to be unified, but which actually embodies a plurality of perspectives." Seen this way, social reality becomes multiple and problematic as a concept; the protagonist

has no ties, no affiliations; no community can fully claim his loyalty or offer him the narrative resolution of a unifying, if threatened, ideological stasis. In keeping with the post modern condition, Johnny has, literally as well as metaphorically, no home to call his own.<sup>21</sup>

But much can be lost with such an analytical approach. By equalizing all social points, post-modernist multiplicity denies any place for social connection and coherence; from such an

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<sup>19</sup>Will Self, "Art Zone: Mike Leigh Interview" (London: BBC Two, 2005).

<sup>20</sup>Self, "Art Zone: Mike Leigh Interview."

<sup>21</sup>Mike Mason, "'Naked': Social Realism and the Urban Wasteland," in *Cinema and the City*, 252.

extreme viewpoint any pressure for positive social change is lost; and the possibility of Williams's complex social cultural analysis is undermined.

Another approach is to analyze *Naked* from a New Left film aesthetic perspective. Rich insights, which are closer to Leigh's actual socialist feelings, can be uncovered if Johnny is seen as a working-class border character in a new age of social disintegration and extreme socialist hopelessness. He appears to have insights that others do not, and he is frantic to communicate what he is seeing. Like Seaton, he is a jokster and fornicator who uses language and bodily contact to become more human and more connected. Johnny's barbs and lies are hurtful, but like Seaton, he points at deep social realities. Sex for him is violent, but it is an attempt to break through the isolation that has encrusted his fellow beings.<sup>22</sup> Like Colin he has chosen the way of the criminal as an authentic reaction to an inauthentic time. And the theme of escape and capture is evident from the beginning of the film. Like Jo, he moves through an urban landscape reminiscent of the past and of social connection; but more than in *A Taste of Honey*, the landscape of the past is in decay. And the rich new commercial buildings are empty of life.

Like NWL films, *Naked* ends in ambiguity but with a greater desperation. Nevertheless, *Naked* is not a film about social meaninglessness and multiplicity; it is shot through with a yearning for social coherency that has been lost. Leigh's disappointment with the Thatcher and governments springs from his yearning for social authenticity. The film's dramatic action is

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<sup>22</sup>There is a spiritual quality to this film that reaches beyond modern views to ancient Greek mythology and Christian beliefs in redemption--not through suffering, but social understanding. Such analysis is beyond the scope of this dissertation. For instance, Johnny is also gentle and empathetic; one night he walks through the "desert" of the modern city. In one scene he quietly talks to a deeply sad young woman in her apartment; when he probes too deeply, she angrily kicks him into the cold night; on leaving he takes on a Christ-like visage [Fig. 58].

Johnny's intellectual and spiritual search for and desire for "home," for a place where he can rest.

The concerns of the New Left at the beginning of the twenty-first century were not new. The struggle between citizen agency and capitalistic hegemony has persisted in British social ways of feeling. J. P. Mayer's 1947 study of British film audiences reflected the feeling that culture and a moral, democratic society are linked and that the committed film is vitally important in a struggle against social dominance by a ruling minority:

It is still possible to make the film medium into an active and dynamic instrument of an all-round citizenship. Film ... is taken here only as an example of making more explicit a possible and perhaps even necessary cultural policy for the modern democratic mass state. Such a cultural policy is and indeed *must* be compatible with the freedom and spontaneity of the creative power which alone differentiates man from the robot.... It is therefore up to State and Society to decide which road we are to follow, and it is the citizen's task to see to it that this decision does not go wrong.<sup>23</sup>

This hope for a citizen-focused culture is a British characteristic; it is reflected in the New Left aspiration for a vital, active, informed public existing within a common culture. Williams argued that the idea of a mass audience had no meaning and, like post modern approaches to cultural analysis, encouraged capitalist hegemony. Rather a complex, hopefully scientific-based understanding of social generators was needed to see the deep and evolving reality. For the New Left that reality was bound up in what was in each social time a palpable feeling about a British spirit; this "feeling" is heard in Mayer's "spontaneity of the creative power" and in Silltoe's "ancient fires of obstinate coke," [see Chapter 3, footnote 134], and it

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<sup>23</sup> J. P. Mayer, *British Cinemas and Their Audiences: Sociological Studies* (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1948), 249. This work and *Sociology of Film* (1946) were by Mayer, a sociologist, who in the 1940s analyzed several hundred responses to a questionnaire in a popular film journal which asked how films influenced one's life. See Mark Glancy, "The Hollywood Woman's Film and British Audiences," in *British Women's Cinema*, eds. Melanie Bell and Melanie Williams (New York: Routledge, 2010), 57.

points to an ideal British characteristic that seeks democracy through communal vitality and social coherence.

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*Night Mail*. Dirs. Basil Wright, Harry Watt. Verse W. H. Auden. GPO Film Unit. 1936.

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*Thursday's Children*. Dirs. Lindsay Anderson and Guy Brenton. Camera Walter Lassally. Narrator Richard Burton. World Wide Pictures. 1955.

*Free Cinema*

*Wakefield Express*. Dir. Lindsay Anderson. Camera Walter Lassally. Wakefield Express Ltd.. 1952.

*O Dreamland*. Dir. Lindsay Anderson. Camera John Fletcher. 1953.

*Momma Don't Allow*. Dirs. Karel Reisz, Tony Richardson. Camera Walter Lassally. BFI Experimental Film Fund. 1956.

*Together.* Dir. Lorenza Mazzetti. Camera Walter Lassally (additional photography). Writer Denis Horne. BFI Experimental Film Fund. 1956.

*Every Day Except Christmas.* Dir. Lindsay Anderson. Camera Walter Lassally. Graphic Films, Ford Motor Company. 1957.

*Nice Time.* Dirs. Claude Goretta, Alain Tanner. Camera John Fletcher. BFI Experimental Film Fund. 1957.

*March to Aldermaston.* Dirs. Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz, et.al. Narrator Richard Burton. 1959.

*Refuge England.* Dir. Robert Vas. Camera Walter Lassally, Louis Wolfers. BFI Experimental Film Fund. 1959.

*We Are the Lambeth Boys.* Dir. Karel Reisz. Camera Walter Lassally. Graphic Films, Ford Motor Company. 1959.

#### New Wave Left

*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning.* Dir. Karel Reisz. Writer Alan Sillitoe. Camera Freddie Francis. Woodfall Film Productions. 1960.

*A Taste of Honey.* Dir. Tony Richardson. Writer Shelagh Delaney. Camera Walter Lassally. Woodfall Film Productions. 1961.

*The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner.* Dir. Tony Richardson. Writer Alan Sillitoe. Camera Walter Lassally. Woodfall Film Productions. 1962.

*This Sporting Life.* Dir. Lindsay Anderson. Writer David Storey. Camera Denys Coop. Independent Artists. 1963.

*The White Bus.* Dir. Lindsay Anderson. Writer Shelagh Delaney. Actor Patricia Healey. Holly Production Company. 1967.

#### British New Wave

*Room at the Top.* Dir. Jack Clayton. Novel John Braine. Actors Simone Signoret, Laurence Harvey. Romulus Films. 1959.

*Look Back in Anger.* Dir. Tony Richardson. Camera Oswald Morris. Writers John Osborne, Nigel Kneale. Actor Richard Burton. Woodfall Film Productions. 1959.

*The Entertainer.* Dir. Tony Richardson. Camera Oswald Morris. Writer John Osborne, Nigel Kneale. Actor Laurence Olivier. Bryanston Films. 1960.

*A Kind of Loving*. Dir. John Schlesinger. Camera Denys Coop. Writers Willis Hall, Keith Waterhouse. Novel Stan Barstow. Actor Alan Bates. Vic Films Productions. 1962.

*The L-Shaped Room*. Dir. Bryan Forbes. Actor Leslie Caron. British Lion Corporation. 1962.

*Billy Liar*. Dir. John Schlesinger. Writers Keith Waterhouse, Willis Hall. Actor Tom Courtenay. Vic Films Productions. 1963.

*Girl with the Green Eyes*. Dir. Desmond Davis. Actors Peter Finch, Rita Tushingham. Woodfall Films. 1964.

#### Social Problem

*I'm All Right Jack*. Dir. John Boulting. Actor Peter Sellers. Charter Film Productions. 1959.

*The Angry Silence*. Dir. Guy Green. Writer Michael Forbes. Actor Richard Attenborough. British Lion Film Corporation. 1960.

*The Criminal* [aka *Concrete Jungle*]. Dir. Joseph Losey. Writer Alun Owne. Actor Stanley Baker, Sam Wanamaker. Merton Park Studios. 1960.g

*Victim*. Dir. Basil Deardon. Actor Dirk Bogarde. Allied Filmmakers. 1961.

*Flame in the Streets*. Dir. Roy Ward Baker. Writer Ted Willis. Somerset Films. 1961.

*The Leather Boys*. Dir. Sidney J. Furie. Raymond Stross Productions. 1963.

#### Post British New Wave

*The Knack...and How to Get it*. Dir. Richard Lester. Camera David Watkin. Writer Charles Wood. Play Ann Jellicoe. Actor Rita Tushingham. Woodfall Film Productions. 1965.

*Darling*. Dir. John Schlesinger. Camera Ken Higgins. Writer Frederic Raphael. Actors Dirk Bogarde, Laurence Harvey, Julie Christie. Vic Films. 1965.

*Morgan! A Suitable Case for Treatment*. Dir. Karel Reisz. Camera Larry Pizer. Writer David Mercer. Actor David Warner, Vanessa Redgrave. Quintra Films. 1966.

#### Lindsay Anderson, Director

*if...* Camera Miroslav Ondricek. Writer David Sherwn. Actor Malcolm McDowell. Memorial Enterprises. 1968.

*Home*. Writer David Storey. Camera Andy Phillips. Actors John Gielgud, Ralph Richardson. PBS. 1971.

*O Lucky Man.* Camera Miroslav Ondricek. Writer David Sherwn. Actor Malcolm McDowell. Memorial Enterprises. 1973.

*In Celebration.* Writer David Storey. Camera Dick Bush. Actors Alan Bates, Brian Cox. The American Film Theatre. 1975.

*Britannia Hospital.* Camera Mike Fash. Writer David Sherwin. Actor Malcolm McDowell. EMI Films. 1982.

Walter Lassally, Camera

*Another Sky.* Dir. and Writer Gavin Lambert. 1954.

*A Girl in Black.* Dir and Writer Mihalis Kakogiannis. 1956.

*A Matter of Dignity* Dir, and Writer Mihalis Kakogiannis. 1958.

POST NEW WAVE LEFT

Mike Leigh, Director / Writer

*Bleak Moments.* BFI Production Board. 1971.

*Hard Labour.* BBC. "Play for Today." 1973.

*Nuts in May.* BBC. "Play for Today." 1976.

*Abigail's Party.* BBC. "Play for Today." 1977.

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*Meantime.* Channel 4 Television Corporation. 1983.

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*Naked.* Channel Four Films. 1993.

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*Career Girls.* Channel Four Films. 1997.

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*Vera Drake.* Les Films Alain Sarde, UK Film Council. 2004.

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## Ken Loach, Director

*Poor Cow*. NFFC, Vic Films Productions. 1967.

*Kes*. Writer Barry Hines. Kestrel Films Ltd, Woodfall Film Productions. 1969.

*The Big Flame: The Wednesday Play*. BBC. 1969.

*Family Life*. EMI films and Kestrel Films. 1971.

*Looks and Smiles*. Writer Barry Hines. Kestrel Films and British Lion Film Corp. 1981.

*Riff-Raff*. Channel Four Films. 1992.

*Raining Stones*. Channel Four Films. 1993.

*Carla's Song*. Writer Paul Laverty. Channel Four Films. 1996.

*Bread and Roses*. Writer Paul Laverty. Parallax Pictures. 2000.

*The Navigators*. Parallax Pictures. 2001.

*Sweet Sixteen*. Writer Paul Laverty. BBC. 2002.

## Alan Clarke

*Scum*. Dir. Alan Clarke. Writer Roy Minton. BBC. 1977.

*Made in Britain*. Dir. Alan Clarke. Writer David Leland. Actor Tim Roth. Central Independent Television. 1982.

*The Firm* [TV]. Actor Gary Oldman. BBC. 1989.

*Elephant* [TV]. BBC Northern Ireland. 1989.

## Other Post New Wave Left

*Trainspotting*. Dir. Danny Boyle. Writer John Hodge. Novel Irvine Welsh. Channel Four Films. 1996.

*Nil by Mouth*. Dir. Gary Oldman. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation. 1997.

## Miscellaneous

*The Last Laugh*. Dir. F.W. Murnau. Actor Emil Jannings. UFA. 1924.

- Le Bete Humaine*. Dir. Jean Renoir. Writer Émile Zola. Paris Film. 1938.
- This Happy Breed*. Dir. David Lean. Eagle-Lion Distributors Ltd.. 1944.
- Brief Encounter*. Dir. David Lean. Cineguild. 1945.
- The Bicycle Thieves*. Vittorio De Sica. Produzioni De Sica. 1948.
- The Third Man*. Dir. Carol Reed. Writer Graham Greene. London Film Productions. 1949
- Whiskey Galore*. Dir. Alexander Mackendrick. Writer Campton MacKenzie. 1949.
- Passport to Pimlico*. Dir. Henry Cornelius. Writer T.E. B. Clarke. 1949.
- The Titfield Thunderbolt*. Dir. Charles Crichton. Writer T.E.B. Clarke. 1953.
- Express Bongo*. Dir. Val Guest. Writer Wolf Mankowitz. Actor Laurence Harvey. Val Guest Productions. 1959.
- Hell is a City*. Dir. Val Guest. Actor Stanley Baker. Hammer Films. 1960.
- Beat Girl* [aka *Wild for Kicks*]. Dir. Edmond T. Gréville. Willoughby Film Productions. 1960.
- Coronation Street*. Granada Television. 1960-2010.
- Shelagh Delaney's Salford*. Dir. Ken Russell. BBC. 1960.
- Sanctuary*. Dir. Tony Richardson. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation. 1961.
- Only Two Can Play*. Dir. Sidney Gilliat. Novel Kingsley Amis (*The Uncertain Feeling*). Actor Peter Sellers. British Lion Film Corporation. 1962.
- Heavens Above!* Dirs. John and Roy Boulting. Actor Peter Sellers. Charter Film Productions. 1963.
- Mademoiselle*. Dir. Tony Richardson. Writers Marguerite Duras, Jean Genet. Actor Jeanne Moreau. Woodfall Films Productions. 1966.
- Dance with a Stranger*. Dir. Mike Newell. Writer Shelagh Delaney. Goldcrest Films International, NFFC. 1985.

## Figures



Fig. 1. *Night Mail*. Dirs. Wright and Watt. 1936. [73:54]. British documentary tradition. Sorting the mail on the train.



Fig. 2. *Momma Don't Allow*. Dirs. Richardson and Reisz. 1956. [2:12]. *Free Cinema*--1st program. Work before play.



Fig. 3. *Every Day Except Christmas*. Dir. Lindsay Anderson. 1957. [7:10]. *Free Cinema*--3rd program. Greengrocery and flower business in Covent Garden.



Fig. 4. *We Are the Lambeth Boys*. Dir. Karel Reisz. 1958. The trip home, passing iconic statues of the past.



Fig. 5. *Lambeth Boys*. [37:26]. Interacting with Londoners on the way home.



Fig. 6. *Lambeth Boys*. [37:29]. Greeting the boys in the city following day at public school playing cricket.



Fig. 7. *Lambeth Boys*. [39:53]. Arriving home and "Not so much to shout about." Taking on border views of the neighborhood.



Fig. 8. *Lambeth Boys*. [40:07]. Travelling shot of unvaried chimneys, followed by 25 second shot of Lambeth street scene.



Fig. 9. *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. Dir. Reisz. 1960. [23:10]. Weekend contrast with work week. Working-class landscape--the factory within the community.



Fig. 10. *SNSM*. [11:49 - 12:10]. Brenda's street after night of heavy drinking and illicit sex with a married woman.



Fig. 11. *SNSM* [2:18]. Documentary realism within the story.



Fig. 12. *SNSM* [24:24]. Seaton's factory. Same one that Sillitoe worked in as a young man.



Fig. 13. *SNSM* [24:36]. Documentary realism: Tea break on the factory floor.



Fig. 14. *This Sporting Life*. Dir. Lindsay Anderson. 1963. [55:00]. Rugby match within industrial landscape.



Fig. 15. *This Sporting Life*. [55:23]. Documentary shot of face at Rugby match adding element of social realism by engaging the documentary camera.



Fig. 16. *Every Day*. [19:18] Real face engaging the documentary camera



Fig. 17. *Spare Time*. Dir. Humphrey Jennings. 1939. [05:48]. Traditional British documentary and "playing children."



Fig. 18. *Wakefield Express*. Dir. Lindsay Anderson. 1952. [16:24]. Working-class landscape framing "playing children."



Fig.19. *Family Portrait*. Dir. Humphrey Jennings. 1950. [08:44]. British documentary images of the working class. "Playing children" in the urban landscape.



Fig. 20. *Shelagh Delaney's Salford*. Dir. Ken Russell. 1960. [05:10]. "Playing children." Later documentary images of the working class.



Fig. 21. *This Sporting Life*. [1:58:30]. NWL image of "playing children" and the nastiness of the working class. Focus is on Machin's inner turmoil, not social reality.



Fig. 22. *SNSM*. [04:11]. Identifying Seaton with the "playing children."



Fig. 23. *SNSM*. [51:33]. Seaton's immature nature, indicating lack of positive social change



Fig. 24. *A Taste of Honey*. Dir. Tony Richardson. 1961. [49:00]. "Playing children" as tormentors of middle class.



Fig. 25. *A Taste of Honey*. [49:00]. Helen and Frank going off to get married and tormented by "playing children" who are reflecting Jo's feelings.



Fig. 26. *A Taste of Honey*. [65:12]. Jo and Geof floating above the urban landscape, buoyed by the "playing children."



Fig. 27. *A Taste of Honey*. [66:22]. A romantic moment in the caves. Shot is lit only by the candle.



Fig. 28. *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*. Dir. Tony Richardson, 1962. [23:38]. Framed in the urban/industrial landscape.



Fig. 29. *Loneliness*. [24:02]. Framed in the urban/industrial landscape.



Fig. 30. *Loneliness*. [24:56]. Escape and trapped.



Fig. 31. *Loneliness*. [25:24]. Escape and trapped.



Fig. 32. *Loneliness*. [1:06:16]. Matching shots of freedom, soon to be lost.



Fig. 33. *SNSM*. [49:18]. Seaton is sympathetic to a trapped man.



Fig. 34. *SNSM*. [00:37]. Seaton is one figure amongst many trapped at his lathe.



Fig. 35. *SNSM*. [23:46]. Seaton framed within the urban landscape.



Fig. 36. *SNSM*. [56:23]. Seaton floating above and trapped within the industrial landscape.



Fig. 37. *SNSM*. [57:25]. Seaton framed within the urban landscape.



Fig. 38. *SNSM*. [8:05]. Trapped behind a table, in a drunken stupor. Contrast facial expressions of two drinkers and others around them.



Fig. 39. *S.N.S.M.* [08:50]. Seaton isolated from those around him.



Fig. 40. *A Taste of Honey.* [17:00]. Jo placed within the industrial landscape.



Fig. 41. *A Taste of Honey*. [17:23]. Jo placed within the industrial landscape.



Fig. 42. *A Taste of Honey*. [17:30]. Jo placed within the industrial landscape.



Fig. 43. *A Taste of Honey*. [62:40]. Jo framed by the Victorian landscape. Signs of independence but looking to the past.



Fig. 44. *A Taste of Honey*. [06:20]. Fitting in with the urban landscape.



Fig. 45. *This Sporting Life*. [1:58:52]. Machin isolated but not a border character.



Fig. 46. *This Sporting Life*. [52:07]. Indications of social realism but only internal turmoil.



Fig. 47. *This Sporting Life*. [1:38:55]. Evils of too much money for the working-class sensibility.



Fig. 48. *A Taste of Honey*. [ 95:05]. No forward movement. Returning to previous conditions. And establishing the border character.



Fig. 49. *A Taste of Honey*. [95:44]. Geoff as a border character.



Fig. 50. *Loneliness*. [1:02:00]. Colin as a border character.



Fig. 51. *SNSM*. [86:22]. Tricking the viewer.



Fig. 52. *SNSM*. [87:54]. Uncertain ending. Creating the "border" viewer.



Fig. 53. *A Taste of Honey*. [95:58]. Uncertain ending. Creating the "border" viewer.



Fig. 54. *Loneliness*. [1:43:00]. Uncertain ending. Creating the "border" viewer.



Fig. 55. *A Diary for Timothy* (1945). [38:25]. A future of hardships but great potential.



Fig. 56. *A Taste of Honey*. [72:30]. The mentally challenged child as a sign of social malaise.

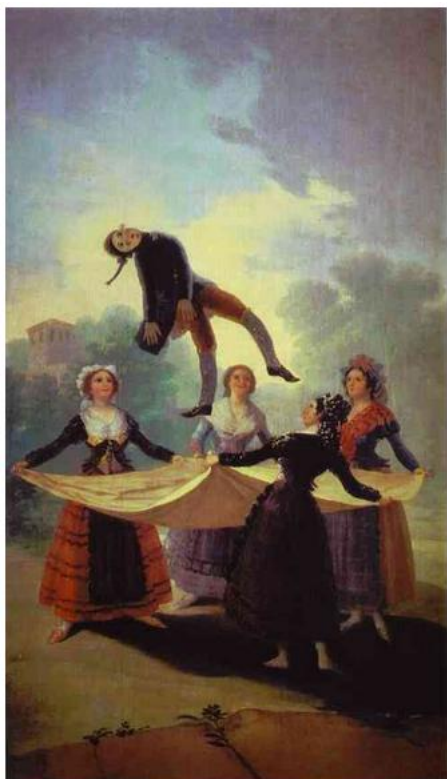


Fig. 57. Francisco de Goya's "Le mannequin de paille" - 1791 - Retrieved from <http://fr.wahooart.com/Art.nsf/O/6E3T9B> Referred to in Lindsay Anderson's *The White Bus*. 1967. [20:02].



Fig. 58. *Naked*. Dir. Mike Leigh. 1993. [89:36]. Search for meaning in a capitalistic society.