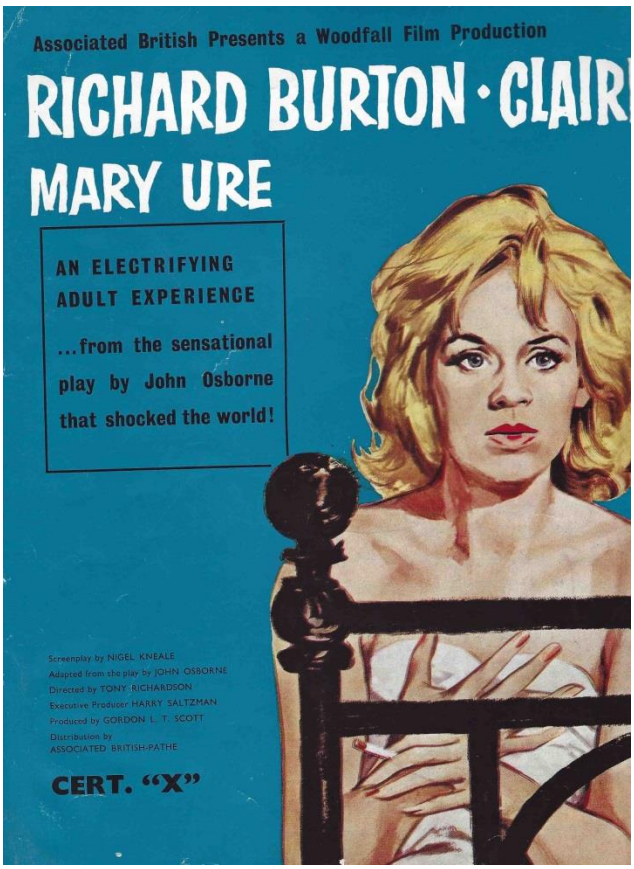
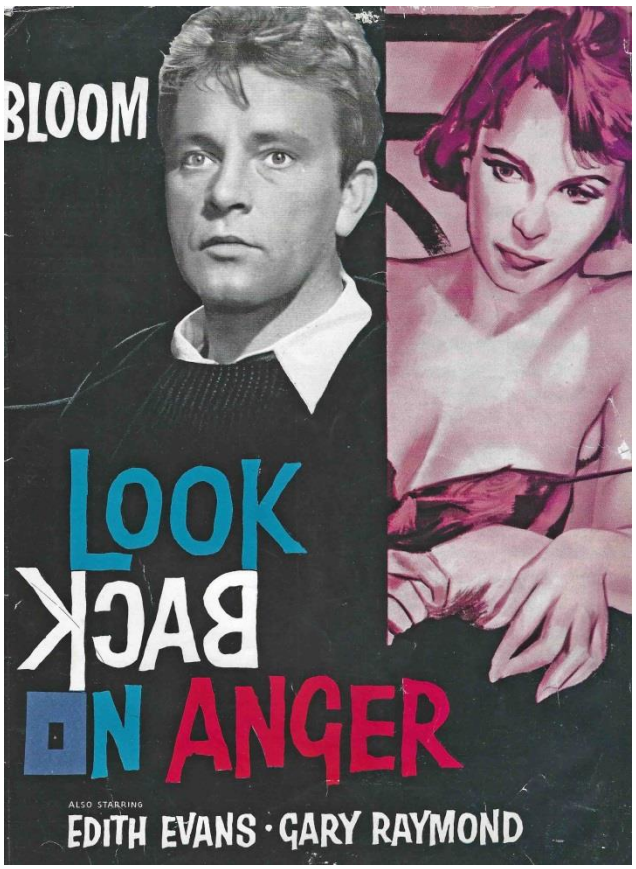
Look Back on Anger





by
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Look Back on *Anger*

A Study of the Drama and Fiction of the 'Angry Young Men'

and the 'New Wave' Film Adaptations of these Texts

by

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Chapter one

Introduction

1.1 Aim of the thesis

This thesis will look at the prose and drama of the 'angry young men', and the 'new wave' films adapted from these. This will include the following: John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* and *The Entertainer* (chapter two); John Braine's *Room at the Top* (chapter three) and Alan Sillitoe's *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (chapter four). These literary and filmic 'texts' illuminate Arthur Marwick's notion of a British 'cultural revolution' in the 50's and 60's:

> It would be wrong to overstate the case for the late fifties and sixties as a time of special social criticism; ... Still, a number of influences, often inter-related, often quite different in strength or in kind, can be detected which together produced that transformation in British ideas and modes of behaviour which can, without quite slipping into bathos, be described as forming a 'cultural revolution'.[1]

The thesis will analyse the texts for evidence of such change in British post-war society, examine the limits of this change, and the appropriateness of the term 'cultural revolution' in describing this change. Thus, the thesis will approach the ongoing critical discussion concerning the extent of change in British post-war society, and the extent to which the cultural artefacts of this period, such as the *angry* texts and the 'new wave' films, can be seen as radical and as evidence of change.[2] By considering the texts in their historical context, an examination can also be made of how representations of class and gender were in a similar period of transition as society itself: the

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[1] Marwick, Arthur (1990) *British Society Since 1945*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, p.120.

[2] An example of the ongoing discussion is the contrasting viewpoints of Arthur Marwick and John Hill concerning to what extent the 'new wave' films can be considered radical in a historical and cultural context. See: Marwick, Arthur. (1984) '*Room at the Top, Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and the "Cultural Revolution" in Britain', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 19, no. 1, pp.127-51; and, Hill, John. (1986) *Sex, Class and Realism: British cinema 1956-1963*, London, British Film Institute.

criticism of the conventions of British society both implicitly and explicitly expressed in these texts is inextricably connected with the social realist style of the texts. They are often seen as breaking new ground in their portrayal of sexual attitudes and class relations, but also unwittingly illustrate what would now be considered as contemporary prejudices. A close reading of the texts will help to illuminate what the texts tell us of society, and an examination of post-war society is also necessary to understand the texts and their representations.

1.2 The texts

Although a comparative analysis will be made of the prose and drama of the 'angry young men' and the 'new wave' film adaptations, the emphasis of the study will be placed on the literary rather than the filmic texts. A comparative approach has several advantages: by setting in relief, an examination of the different societal forces at work in the production of literature and film will be possible. Marwick has observed that 'a commercial film with its massive "open" exposure tells us a good deal more about the *mores* of a society than a novel; specifically what had long been permissible in a novel had for just as long been impermissible in a film'.[3] This aspect of film is illustrated by the way in which the social and political content was to a great extent removed from the film adaptation of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*. A comparative approach also helps clarify the thematic content of the literary and filmic texts, as this is highlighted by contrast. Thematic content is also clarified by considering common themes which *angry* authors and film-makers shared, such as the corrupting effects of a new mass culture. The production of the play and the film *Look Back in Anger* clearly illustrates that, in the period under examination, there was no sharp differentiation between the various media of television, drama and cinema. The play first became popular after an excerpt of it had been shown on television, and the profits from its showing at the Royal Court Theatre financed the formation of

[3] Marwick, Arthur. (1984) '*Room at the Top, Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and the "Cultural Revolution" in Britain', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 19, no. 1, p. 130.

the independent film company, Woodfall, in which John Osborne and Tony Richardson continued their co-operation from the theatre. The *angry* novels from which the 'new wave' films were adapted also reached a wider readership because of the popularity of the films.

As a rule, the protagonists of the *angry* fiction and drama, and 'new wave' adaptations, possess the following characteristics: young, male, white, working or lower-middle class and provincial. The plots normally consider their relationships to one or a number of women, who are often from a higher social class than the protagonist (hypergamy). The texts deal with youth, class, the relationship between the sexes and social mobility, and are for this reason of special interest to social and cultural critics. Jim Dixon of Kingsley Amis' *Lucky Jim* (1954) was the first popular 'angry young man' of fiction.[4] He is typical of this type of lower-middle class anti-establishment protagonist, who reacts against the pretensions and snobberies of middle class academia at the provincial university where he lectures. The film adaptation (John Boulting, 1957) is a farce and lacks the social satire of the novel. Hence the novel and film pair are excluded from this analysis, although brief reference will be made to the novel. Jim Dixon was 'replaced' by Jimmy Porter of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (first performed in 1956) as the 'angry young man' prototype; both the play and the 'new wave' film adaptation (Tony Richardson, 1959) are prominent and important texts which came out of the 'angry decade', and will be examined in chapter two of the thesis. The play-film pair is central to an understanding of the cultural climate of post-war Britain, and the two texts received much attention from contemporary critics; the play's focus being the alienation of man in an acquisitive British post-war society. *The Entertainer,* also written by John Osborne and presented for the first time at the Royal Court Theatre a year after the first showing of *Look Back in Anger,* shares a common theme with the latter, and was also adapted into a 'new wave' film by the same director, Tony Richardson. This

[4] There were earlier manifestations of the *angry* novel, but these did not achieve such a popular success as *Lucky Jim*. Examples include William Cooper's *Scenes from a Provincial Life* (1950) and John Wain's *Hurry on Down (*1953).

play-film pair will also be discussed in chapter two. The thesis, when considering the plays, will mainly examine the written text rather than the 'play in performance', and the study of the film will rely on video cassette recordings, which, although a different media from cinema, enables review and close analysis.

Arthur Seaton and Joe Lampton are, respectively, the two young male working class protagonists of the 'angry' novels *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and *Room at the Top*. They made a great impact in the world of fiction and cinema, both in terms of commercial popularity and as archetypal representations of different types of 'angry young men' in British post-war society. *Room at the Top* (Jack Clayton, 1959) was the first of the 'new wave' productions and the novel-film pair is a natural choice from a chronological point of view as the subject of chapter three. The 'angry' protagonists of the various plays, fiction and film can be seen as reacting to post-war society by opting for non-conforming and individualist lifestyles. Jimmy Porter in *Look Back in Anger* rejects the materialistic 'I'm all right Jack' society and chooses to work on a stall in the market despite his university education. He chooses a type of spiritual individualism in his quest for 'emotion'. The novel-film pair *Room at the Top* is illustrative of the economic and social changes in the post-war period, which provided possibilities for social advancement (class mobility). Joe Lampton in *Room at the Top* is out to grab what he can. He is in one sense the complete opposite of Jimmy Porter, as he does not reject materialist society, but instead exploits it. However, the reader is not necessarily meant to agree with the choices Joe makes. One possible 'reading' of the novel sees a 'distance' between 'Joe as narrator' and 'Joe as *angry young man* on the make'; this 'distance' can be read as part of the structural irony of the novel, so that thematically *Look Back in Anger* and *Room at the Top* might be considered similar. Both can be seen as positing a negation of human values in an acquisitive society. However, the 'irony' in the novel is ambiguous, and this 'ambiguity' will be discussed in greater detail in chapter three. The structural irony falls away to a great extent in the film, leaving the viewer with a different perception of Joe than the reader. In the film, Joe is portrayed as ruthless, whereas in

the novel he is seen as hesitant and introspective. Representations of class and gender in the novel and film are of central importance. The film is often considered as the first British film which handled the subject of sex in a serious manner.

Arthur Seaton in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* is similar to Joe Lampton in his contempt of authority, but unlike Joe Lampton, his contempt for the upper orders means that he has no desire to improve his position by moving up a social class. In this way he resembles another of Sillitoe's 'working class heroes': Colin Smith, in the short story and film *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*. Both Colin Smith and Arthur Seaton despise 'them', the higher classes, and those of their own class who seek to improve their own position by betraying their own class ('us'). A number of commentators consider the representations of class and gender in the novel and film *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* to be radical. In chapter four, the thesis will examine to what extent the representation of society, class and gender are radical in the Sillitoe texts and the 'new wave' adaptations, and to what extent their representations can be seen as reinforcing what may now be termed contemporary prejudice. By comparing the various 'new wave' adaptations with each other and with the prose and drama texts from which they were adapted, it will be possible to differentiate between the concerns of film-maker, dramatist and author. The rest of this introduction will briefly sketch in the contextual background of the texts to be discussed: post-war British society; 'angry young men'; 'new wave' cinema; and the representation of society, class and gender; as well as briefly considering authorship and adaptation.

1.3 Post-war Britain

This thesis is primarily concerned with an examination of literary texts and their filmic adaptations, but the examination will be made mainly from a cultural standpoint. This will involve considering the historical context of the texts, i.e. the economic, social and political

background. In 1945, the Labour Party gained a decisive victory in the general election for the first time. Much of the propaganda of the war effort had been based on an 'all pull together' mentality, which had tended to diffuse differences between the sexes and classes (seen as paving the way for 'social mobility', 'classlessness' and new economic gains and social rights for women). Consequently, after the war, there was a general consensus and expectation in the country that there would be an elimination of excessive inequality and a degree of 'levelling-out' of the classes, and that those at the lower end of society would benefit substantially. Despite a number of economic crises, these expectations were partly fulfilled with the introduction of the welfare state and an improvement in the standard of living (the new 'consumer society' of the fifties and sixties which followed the period of 'austerity' in the years immediately after the war). The 'affluent society' meant full employment and greater spending power, especially for women and youth - the latter being seen for the first time as a socially distinct group with a 'sub-culture' of their own (e.g. the 'Teddy Boys' of the texts). A tentative connection is drawn in the *angry* texts and the 'new wave' films between the negative aspects of a mass culture (eg. television and 'pop' music), and women and youth, whose new-found spending power put the products of an affluent society within their reach. Commentators, though, disagree to what extent there was economic growth in real terms (and corresponding social and cultural change). During the election campaign of 1959 the Conservatives adopted the slogan, 'You've never had it so good' (with reference to the economic upswing), but the truth of the phrase was called into question by political opponents who used the phrase ironically as much as the Conservatives used it in earnest. There was a considerable increase in wages in the 1950s and the 'affluent society' was in full swing by the 1960s. Greater spending power was utilised in the purchase of consumer durables, such as refrigerators, washing machines and electrical appliances. In 1950 a small percentage of households had a television set; by 1960 seventy five per cent of families had one. The rise in the standard of living is also well illustrated by the increase in car ownership which more than quadrupled between 1950 and 1965.

The post-war economic changes in Britain were seen to be paralleled by liberal, social and cultural changes, and are described in a positivist manner by Marwick:

> I intend to concentrate on the great release from older restraints and controls which took place ... . Mention commercial television, women's liberation, the Abortion Act, the lowering of the voting age, and the Betting and Gaming Act, ... ; but all of these were part of the same movement in which paternalistic Victorian controls were lifted from British society.
> (*British Society Since 1945*, 1990, p. 10)

In describing change, Marwick employs a negative/positive cline of: ['older restraints .... paternalistic Victorian controls'/a society characterised by liberal social and political reform]. This thesis will question the usefulness of such a cline as a tool for describing the changes that took place. The acquittal of Penguin Books, who were prosecuted in 1960 under the Obscene Publications Act (1959) for publishing *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in full, marked a watershed in the liberalisation in the censorship of literature. There was also a relaxation in the censorship of film which coincided with the appointment of John Trevelyan as Secretary to the British Board of Film Censorship (BBFC) in 1958, although this was more gradual than the liberalisation of censorship of prose fiction and drama.

1.4 'Angry young men'

'Angry young men', a journalistic catch phrase first popularised in the mid-1950s, was applied to a number of British playwrights, novelists and philosophers such as Kingsley Amis, John Osborne, Alan Sillitoe, Colin Wilson, John Wain and John Braine. The 'angry young men' were neither particularly 'young' nor 'angry'; the authors were a good deal older (in their late twenties and thirties) than their *angry young* protagonists. The *angry* writers were often seen as being critical of society, but they had no well-defined political agenda, although they leaned towards

the left.[5] They often ended up in a rather reactionary position towards the seventies, a position characterised by John Braine, when he remarked that 'Mrs Thatcher is rather soppy and left-wing to my way of thinking'.[6] Their 'protest' was perhaps more social and cultural than political. The *angry* protagonists often explained their individual problems by looking at the 'state of society', but the solutions to their problems were not sought in societal changes, but rather in action taken on the part of the individual. There is then an underlying contradiction in their texts: the individual's problems are caused by 'society', but an individual's problems can only be solved by the individual rather than by communal action. This 'contradiction' can be read as being the expression of a liberal philosophy, one which professes the greatest freedom for the individual with a minimum of societal restraint. The *angry* protagonists can be seen as resorting to 'I'm all right Jack' solutions to solve their problems.

Declaration, published in 1957 and written by various *angries*, illustrates the forces and ideas behind the 'cultural revolution' and also the intertwining threads which connected the various branches of the arts. Later on in this chapter (1.7.1), two essays from *Declaration* will be briefly considered: John Osborne's and Lindsay Anderson's essays 'They Call it Cricket' and 'Get Out and Push'. The discussion will consider how their personal notions concerning class emerge in their work, and how these notions are to a certain extent characteristic of other *angries*. On the whole, the *angries* did not welcome the 'label' that they have been given; for example, Kingsley Amis had been asked to contribute to *Declaration* but had replied:

> I hate all this pharisaical twittering about the 'state of our civilisation' and I suspect anyone who wants to buttonhole me about my 'rôle in society'. This book is likely to prove a valuable addition to the cult of the Solemn Young Men; I predict a great success for it.[7]

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[5] See the various essays in: Maschler, T. (ed.) (1957) *Declaration*, London, MacGibbon and Kee; in which a number of prominent *angries* state their 'position' (usually left-wing).

[6] *Hampstead and Highgate Express*, 4 October, 1985, p.23.

[7] Quoted in Marwick, *British Society since 1945*, 1982, p. 126.

The term 'angry young man' is considered inadequate by some critics, but, as remarked by Kenneth Allsop, 'it would be tortuous to attempt a survey of the British intellectual landscape of the Nineteen - Fifties and deliberately to avoid the phrase'.[8] The very existence of the cult of the 'angry young men' is seen as illustrating a cultural and social shift in Britain - a redefining of Englishness and British culture. The *angry* movement was a 'revolt' against the 'high culture' of the two preceding decades; the texts exhibited an opposition both in style and content to the modernist and neo-romantic texts of the 30s and 40s, which were mainly written by upper-class authors.[9] This opposition to 'high culture' was expressed by Kingsley Amis when he declared in 1951: 'Nobody wants any more poems about philosophers or paintings or novelists or art galleries or mythology or foreign cities or other poems. At least I hope nobody wants them'.[10] The cult of the 'angry young men' had its stylistic roots in 'The Movement' (Amis, Wain, Davie, Larkin, et. al.); although these writers had attended Oxford and Cambridge they were mainly lower-middle class. There was a downward class-shift in the *angry* writers as the 50s progressed; John Braine and John Osborne had mixed-class family backgrounds which were reflected in their works, eg. *Look Back in Anger* (1956) and *Room at the Top* (1958) - this contrasted with the novels of Wain and Amis whose protagonists were lower-middle class, e.g. Joe Lumley in *Hurry on Down* (1953) and Jim Dixon in *Lucky Jim* (1954). The mixed class settings of Braine's novels and Osborne's plays can be seen as forming a link with later working class *angry* authors such as Sillitoe, Barstow, and Storey, who became popular at the end of the fifties and beginning of the sixties. The novels and plays of these writers had working class characters and settings, eg, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958) by Sillitoe; *A Kind of Loving* (1960) by Barstow and *This Sporting Life* (1960) by Storey.

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[8] Allsop, Kenneth. (1958) *The Angry Decade,* London, Peter Owen Limited, pp. 7-8.

[9] See Bergonzi, Bernard. (1993) *Wartime and Aftermath - English Literature and its Background 1939-1960*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp.140-141; and Marwick, Arthur. (1991) *Culture in Britain since 1945* Oxford, Blackwell, 1991, chapter 3.

[10] Quoted in: Marwick, *Culture in Britain since 1945*, 1991, p. 26.

The *angry* writers purposefully adopted traditional realism to distance themselves from the modernism and neo-romanticism of the writers of the 30s and 40s. This traditional realism involved the use of provincial settings which contrasted with the international and cosmopolitan settings of the novels and plays of the upper-class writers of the 30s and 40s, such as the writers of the Auden generation. The different settings also reflected the different backgrounds of the respective groups of writers. The provincial settings and working and lower-middle class characters in the *angry* prose fiction and drama redefined the concept of 'Englishness' in the post-war period. The extent to which the 'realism' of these texts faithfully portrayed society, class and gender will be discussed in the thesis; a discussion also relevant in the consideration of the 'new wave' adaptations of the texts.

In one sense the label 'angry young man' can be seen as inhibiting discussion since critics, especially contemporaries of the *angry* authors, tended to have formulaic 'interpretive strategies' when approaching what they considered to be *angry* texts. This resulted in pre-defined 'readings' of the text. Thus, once an *angry* text has been identified, then it was seen to have certain *angry* characteristics. John Braine's *Room at the Top* is often seen as being critical of British post-war affluent society. Such a reading of the text presumes a structural irony which is not necessarily 'present' in the text; or, rather, it is the *angry* interpretive strategy which 'reads' a structural irony never intended by the author.

1.5 'New wave' cinema

The cycle of 'new wave' films which were made between 1959 and 1963 used the short stories, plays and novels of the 'angry young men' as raw material for their scripts. Not surprisingly, then, they bear a close stylistic and cultural similarity to their raw material; a similarity actively sought by the film-makers:

> 'It is absolutely vital to get into British films the same sort of impact and sense of life that what you can loosely call the Angry Young Man cult has had in the theatre and literary worlds', declared Tony Richardson.[11]

The cycle includes a dozen or so films, five of which will be considered here. The first 'new wave' film, *Room at the Top* (1959), was directed by Jack Clayton; Richardson, who cooperated with Osborne in the theatre and cinema, directed three of the others to be discussed: *Look Back in Anger* (1959), *The Entertainer* (1960) and *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner* (1962). Karel Reisz directed *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960), which will be discussed in chapter four. Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson had their 'new wave' roots in the Free Cinema movement along with Lindsay Anderson who directed the last film in the 'new wave' cycle, *This Sporting Life* (1963). John Schlesinger was another 'new wave' director who directed *A Kind of Loving* (1962) and one of the later 'new wave' films, *Billy Liar* (1963), which challenges the stylistic parameters prescribed by the cycle. The term 'new wave', though, resists a precise definition, but can be seen as denoting the social realist style in which these films were made. This realist style is inseparable from the content of the films, which considered the 'real' problems of 'real' people. The style involves the commitment to a faithful representation of human reality, usually a working class reality (see 1.7). The portrayal of a working class milieu necessitated extensive location shooting. Stylistically, then, the drama and fiction of the 'angry young men' had much in common with the 'new wave' films.

The fiction and drama of the 'angry young men' achieved literary and commercial success and much media attention in the mid- and late fifties and early sixties. Cinema in Britain in the late fifties was suffering from falling attendance largely due to the popularity of

[11] Tony Richardson quoted in Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism*, 1986, p.40.

television. Television was primarily family entertainment, so it was not surprising that adult films ('x' certificate - for over-16s) gained in popularity towards the end of the fifties, as they catered for a market which was out of television's reach. In 1951 there were 31 'x' certificate films (and none of these were British) which reached the circuits, by 1961 this had risen to 102. The sexually explicit content of novels such as *Room at the Top* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* was suited to this 'x' certificate 'market', and stylistically they also appealed to the 'new wave' film-makers, who had experience filming in the social realist mode during the period of the Free Cinema movement.

Unlike the 'angry young men', the film-makers of the 'Free Cinema' movement (Karel Reisz, Lindsay Anderson and Tony Richardson) had self-consciously adopted their 'label', as one of convenience, designed to give them the opportunity to show their work. They were committed to a renewed British cinema: a social-democratic realist cinema. The *angry* writers as a movement have had the style and content of their intentions and work described and defined mainly by journalists and critics; whereas, the Free Cinema/'new wave' film-makers, such as Lindsay Anderson, have contributed a good deal to the critical debate concerning cinema in Britain; both he and Karel Reisz argued for a new realist cinema in the pages of *Sequence* and *Sight and Sound*. Their 16 mm non-commercial short documentaries in the Free Cinema movement reveal to a certain extent the style and thematic content of their later 'new wave' work. These documentaries focused on ordinary people at work and play. Lindsay Anderson's *O Dreamland* (1953) shows crowds at a seaside amusement park, and his *Everyday Except Christmas* (1957), is a film about the Covent Garden fruit and vegetable market; Karel Reisz's *We are the Lambeth Boys* (1959) shows working class teenage boys and girls at a local youth club. Thematically, the *angry* 'new wave' film-makers took up the concerns of the Free Cinema movement, and also shared common sympathies with the authors of the texts they adapted. An example of this is the

'corrosive effects of mass culture' (Hoggart's 'shiny barbarism'),[12] which is thematic for Anderson's *O Dreamland,* as well as Osborne's play and Richardson's adaptation *The Entertainer.*

Realism, commitment and redefining Englishness have a privileged position in British cinema, a cinema often struggling to attain its own national identity. Its realist tradition is part of this struggle, a consequence of its opposition to the escapism and mass culture of Hollywood:

> ... the struggle to establish an authentic, indigenous national cinema in response to the dominance of Hollywood ... this is bound up with ... fear of an encroaching mass culture, against which must be erected ... a responsible and artistically respectable cinema. ... Thus [there is] a powerful differentiation between 'realism' and 'escapism': between a serious, committed, engaged cinema, and mass entertainment. ... ... within British film culture, ideas of realism, of aesthetic experimentation and of national cinema are bound to a particular social-democratic function of cinema, and thus come to structure and delimit the possibilities of cinema in general in Britain.[13]

The Free Cinema movement traces its roots back to the documentary films of the 1930s, such as Grierson's *Night Mail* (1936), which had its commentary written by W. H. Auden, one of the writers of the 'committed left' of the thirties. Auden and other writers on the left were committed to portraying a new Englishness which not only included the southern English rural idyll, but also the working class milieu of the industrial regions. Auden expresses this idea in his poem 'The Malverns':

> A digit of the crowd, would like to know
> Them better whom the shops and trams are full of [14]

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[12] 'Shiny barbarism': Richard Hoggart discusses the corrosive effects of mass culture and contrasts this with an 'authentic' working class culture in decline in *Uses of Literacy* (1959), London, Chatto and Windus.

[13] Higson, A. (1986) '"Britain's Outstanding Contribution to the Film": The documentary-realist tradition' in Barr, C. (ed.) (1986), p. 74.

[14] Mendelson, E. (1977) *The English Auden: Poems, Essays and Dramatic Writings 1927-1939,* London, Faber and Faber.

Lindsay Anderson expressed a similar sentiment some twenty years later when voicing his personal views on British cinema of the fifties: 'Those good and friendly faces deserve a place of pride on the screens of their country; and I will fight for the notion of community which will give it to them'.[15] The utterances of Anderson and Auden inadvertently exhibit a paternalist attitude, a consequence of their subjective class position.[16] A number of commentators have remarked how the subjective class view of the 'new wave' film-makers puts them in the position of the outsider; Roy Armes comments: 'the university-educated bourgeois making "sympathetic" films about proletarian life but not analysing the ambiguities of their own privileged position'.[17] This 'outsider's view' is illustrated by the manner in which the 'new wave' film-makers represent working class milieus in their films; despite being filmed in a 'realistic' mode, the exterior urban settings of the films are often 'unrealistic' in that they are usually superfluous to the main narrative - they are decorative rather than revealing. John Hill explains the 'poetic realism' of the 'new wave' films in the following manner:

> Despite the claim to realism, the directorial hand is not hidden in the folds of the narrative but 'up front', drawing attention to itself and the 'poetic' transformation of its subject matter.[18]

1.6 Authorship and adaptation

Any viewer of an adapted film who has 'read the book' will first be struck by the 'differences' between the two (and perhaps disappointed because the film 'wasn't the same' as the book). The comparative aspect of the study is concerned, primarily, with these differences, the differences between the 'new wave' adaptations and their *angry* source texts. A consideration of the

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[15] Anderson, L. (1957) 'Get Out and Push' in, Maschler, T. (ed.) (1957), p.157.

[16] Unlike the working and lower-class *angry* authors the 'new wave' film-makers were upper-middle class - see Marwick, A. in 'Room at the Top, Saturday Night and Sunday Morning and the "Cultural Revolution" in Britain', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 19, no. 1, p.132.

[17] Armes, R. (1978) *A Critical History of the British Cinema ,* London, Secker & Warburg, p.264.

[18] Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism,* 1986, p. 132.

differences will help highlight the themes of the literary and filmic texts. Critics often assume that these texts have 'fixed meanings', and conclude that the texts were radical or less than radical in relation to this fixed meaning. However, thematic meaning in these texts is by no means constant: the thematic ambiguity of the novel-film pair *Room at the Top* has already been mentioned. Historical context affects meaning: this thesis will argue that the *sexual explicitness* of the texts once considered by contemporary critics (and some present-day critics) as radical, now seems less so; this seems to be verified by the very devaluation of the term now relegated to cellophane wrappers on the upper shelf of the newsagents. Interpretation of the texts is made difficult by the very devaluation of terms such as *sexually explicit*, *sexually frank*, *adult* etc. This thesis will attempt to avoid the indiscriminate use of such terms, whose meanings have changed radically in the last three decades. Interpretation of the texts will take into account the reception they received by contemporary critics, but will also consider these interpretations from the vantage point of the 1990s. Contemporary critics were impressed with the *sexual explicitness* and *frankness* of the 'new wave' films, and one typical review, in complimenting *Room at the Top,* called it 'the most "*adult*" film on sex ever to be made in this country' (see 3.3.1). Ironically, if this comment had been made in the 1990s, it would be deemed more of a criticism than a compliment, due to the devaluation of the term, which is now taken to mean 'soft porn' rather than 'serious art which depicts an overt sexual physicality'. The interpretation and evaluation of the thematic meaning of the texts, then, is crucial to the aim of the thesis: to determine whether or not these literary and filmic texts are demonstrative of radical or limited social and cultural change in British post-war society; demonstrative of Arthur Marwick's 'cultural revolution' or Jimmy Porter's 'everything is the same'.

Matters of 'authorship' are important in considering why the texts were adapted in the manner they were. In the study of literature it is usually assumed that the author has a privileged position and is responsible for the meaning and creation of the text. 'Authorship' of literary texts is seen as being synonymous with the concerns of the author. In considering the 'authorship' of films the

matter is less straightforward, because of the large number of people involved in production. Authorship of films can be seen as being fragmented and originating from several sources: the director, the producer, the actors, the conditions of production and reception, the screenplay and in adapted films also the author of the original literary text. It is possible in some instances to establish clear-cut reasons why particular changes in the adapted film from the source text were made, for example, by studying censorship reports; but more often than not it is impossible to determine the source of changes made or the veracity of reasons given for changes made: for example, Tony Richardson unconvincingly remarked that he removed the infamous 'no brave causes left' from the film *Look Back in Anger* in order 'to bring the film up-to-date'. Several of the sources of film authorship listed above combine in producing changes in the adapted 'new wave' films from the *angry* source texts. Consider the reinterpretation of Jimmy Porter's role in the film *Look Back in Anger*: this reinterpretation might be attributed both directly and indirectly to a combination of several factors: matters of production and finance, acting, script writing, and directing. Richard Burton was chosen for the role of Jimmy Porter, despite being too old at thirty-five and too 'Shakespearian' to play a working class role, because the film 'needed a star' and because he owed Warner Brothers a film. His unique and forceful acting style resulted in a reinterpretation of the role of Jimmy Porter; a reinterpretation also brought about by script changes - television writer Nigel Kneale was chosen (inappropriately?) to write the script; it seems Osborne did not want the job because he was expected to do it for free. Porter's role was also changed indirectly by the director Tony Richardson: the addition of *realist* exterior scenes made Jimmy seem more affable in these outdoor contexts once he was away from the claustrophobic flat of the play. Thus, the complicated nature of film production precludes a detailed and specific analysis of film 'authorship', and the specific causes of adaptive changes made in the 'new wave' films. Nevertheless, general observations will be made on the processes of adaptation where these are relevant to the aims of the thesis, such as those mentioned above: for example, the appropriateness of the choice of actors such as Burton to play working class roles. The 'fragmentation of authorship' partly explains why cinema can be seen as saying 'more

about the *mores* of a society than a novel'. This does not mean to say that cinema is a mere reflection of society, but rather that it illustrates the interests of different sections of society. Those sections of society involved in the production of 'new wave' films were mostly from the upper-middle classes as were the censors; whereas the authors of the *angry* literary texts were working and lower-middle class, as were the larger part of the cinema audience.

This thesis has chosen to look at three plays, two novels and a short story and their film adaptations. As already discussed, it will be concerned, primarily, with content rather than form. The different genre of the 'new wave' source texts, and the confines of the thesis, limits a consideration of the formal aspects of adaptation which will only be briefly referred to where relevant. For example, where formal aspects of adaptation relate to a change in content; for instance, the efforts of Richardson to adapt the realist conventions of drama to those of British cinema by partly moving Osborne's plays from their confined interior settings to urban exterior settings. This formal aspect of adaptation is of interest to this study, as it also involves the question of how 'real' the representations of working class exterior settings were when they were superfluous to the main narrative. The extent to which a filmic adaptation is 'faithful' to the source literary text will depend on the film-maker's interpretation of the source text. The structures of film and literary texts differ to such an extent that 'cinematically all material has to be recreated, and is only as good as its recreation'.[19] The structures of film are seen as having more in common with those of fiction than of drama. Scriptwriter Nigel Kneale expresses this sentiment when he was interviewed on the adaptation of *The Entertainer*:

> Transferring a play to the screen is always treacherous ... It may seem straightforward but in fact a film has more in common with a book than a play. Film is literature not drama. But if you must put a play on the screen it is particularly dangerous to use the same actors and the same director. The result tends to be far too near the original play.[20]

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[19] Tony Richardson talking about adaptation of *Look Back in Anger, Financial Times*, 1 June 1959.
[20] *Evening Standard*, 10 May 1960.

In film adaptation of literary texts the source text (novel, play and short story) will often be seen as being less important than the target text (the adapted film). Film-makers do not necessarily see faithfulness to the source text as a virtue; rather, they attempt to promote their own concerns and 'rewrite' the texts in the adapted versions. The 'demands of the marketplace' often involved a toning down of the public aspect of the *angry* texts, i.e. their social and political content, and a corresponding increase in the private aspect, usually involving sexual explicitness of private relationships. On the release of Richardson's film *The Entertainer,* Alan Forrest wrote that the film 'doesn't communicate anything political or social because the film's script throws away all the fire and guts and truth of the play'.[21] *Look Back in Anger,* the other 'new wave' film on which Osborne and Richardson co-operated, also had much of its political and social content amputated. This and other aspects of adaptation of both of these films will be considered in chapter two.

1.7 Society, class, and gender

Representations of society, class and gender in the texts will be considered, and a comparison of texts will highlight thematic concerns of both authors and film-makers. Within the broad scope of this thesis, an examination of these different representations will not attempt to be comprehensive; this will mean that important areas of study will receive what might seem like scant attention. For example, 'class' is usually defined by the relationship between capital and labour; a portrayal of the *working* classes seems obviously to involve a portrayal of their *work* and *workplace*. Despite the professed realism of the texts under consideration, none of them make any thorough attempt at such a portrayal. This aspect of the representation of class will therefore not receive much attention; the analysis will instead concentrate to a great extent on the interaction between representations of society, class and gender. This will involve looking at

[21] *Tribune*, 12 August, 1960.

private relationships, and how the male and female are gendered in relation to each other, and how portrayal of society and class *displaces* the real theme of the majority of these texts: the gendering of the male. This concentration on private relationships reflects the subject matter of the texts. Other interesting areas of study concerning aspects of gender such as family and homosexuality will receive less attention.

The *angry* texts and the 'new wave' films utilise a social realist style often associated with 'committed' art, and are often considered radical in their representation of society, class and gender, it might, however, be suggested that change was limited: Jimmy Porter's wife, Alison, in *Look Back in Anger,* expresses the idea of limited change in post-war Britain to her 'Edwardian' father Colonel Redfern: 'You're hurt because everything is changed. Jimmy is hurt because everything is the same'.[22] If we follow Alison's line of reasoning in relation to the texts themselves, it might be said that the *angry* texts and the 'new wave' films are both radical **and** conservative. In relation to content and style, they were radical when compared with the 'drawing room comedies' of the stage theatre and the cinema of the previous generation. The theatre in the immediate post-war period has been described by Arthur Miller as being 'hermetically sealed off from real life',[23] and according to Lindsay Anderson, cinema in this period 'was an *English* cinema (and Southern English at that), metropolitan in attitude, and entirely middle-class' (Maschler, *Declaration*, 1957, p.157). Seen in this perspective, then, the *angry* texts and the 'new wave' films made a radical break, but their radicalism was limited because they also reinforced contemporary values and norms. To reiterate on the 'aim of the thesis': are the *angry* literary and filmic artefacts illustrative of radical or limited cultural change? The eminent social historian and cultural critic Arthur Marwick has made his view explicit on this matter in several publications,[24] concerning what he sees as radical cultural

[22] Osborne, J. (1991) *Look Back in Anger*, London, Faber and Faber, 1991, p. 68.
[23] Quoted in Taylor, J.R. (1975) *John Osborne, 'Look Back in Anger' - a Casebook,* London, MacMillan, p. 102.
[24] See also *Class: Image and Reality in Britain, France and the USA since 1930 (1980, new edn 1990), ch. 14; and* 'The 1960s: was there a "Cultural Revolution"?', in *Contemporary Record*, vol. 2, no. 3, Autumn 1988.

change - what he terms a 'cultural revolution'. To recap on his position (already referred to in 1.1):

> These various influences came together to help create distinctive *cultural artefacts*: 'experimental' theatre, pop art, pop music (above all), and certain 'social-realist' films, ..., which were both products of the Cultural Revolution and serve to define and extend it.
> (*Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 19, no. 1, p.130).

Not all critics share this view though; some critics have seen the *angry* cult as a retrogressive and reactive one:

> The emerging literary culture was to a large extent reactive; novelists wanted to get back behind modernism to Edwardian or Victorian or eighteenth-century models, while poets reacted against modernist *vers libre* or the neo-romantic excesses of the early 1940s, favouring strict forms and a cool, rational tone. These retrogressive attitudes have something in common with the nostalgia for more secure times evident in some older writers, and can, I think, be attributed to the wartime sense of personal and collective disruption, persisting beneath the surface of returning prosperity, and to a pervasive unfocused anxiety in the postwar world.[25]

This hypothesis is interesting in its contrast to Marwick's. The realism is seen not so much as a stylistic innovation, and a vehicle for new representations in a changing society, but as one pointing the way to insular tendencies in British cultural trends - the provincialism of the texts being a re-identification of a culture made insecure by the retreat from Empire, and the encroachment of American cultural and economic influence. On a rereading of the centrally important texts *Look Back in Anger* and *The Entertainer* with this hypothesis in mind, the nostalgic element of music hall and the sympathetic Edwardian figures (Alison's father and

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[25] Bergonzi, *Wartime and Aftermath - English Literature and its Background 1939-1960,* 1993, pp. 139-40.

Archie Rice's father, Billy Rice) encourage a new understanding of the text 'missed' by the majority of contemporary critics.

1.7.1 Representation of class

The texts under consideration all discuss class in one aspect or another. There is a broad consensus that the class system *exists* in Britain, but little agreement among historians, cultural critics and social scientists about what constitutes class. This thesis is not concerned with establishing *who* the working classes were or are, but rather *how* the authors and film-makers *represent* class in their literary and filmic texts. Although they were very concerned with 'class', they used it in much the same way as the layman uses the word, often using it metaphorically or symbolically. The working classes are often seen in the *angry* texts as a repository for an 'authentic' culture, and also as a repository for male sexuality (seen from a male point of view). As a working definition of the working classes in post-war Britain, the thesis will employ Arthur Marwick's:

> Of the total employed population, well over 60 per cent did manual work of one sort or another, ranging from unskilled roadwork to the craftsmanship of the engine driver or mechanic. Manual workers and their families formed the working class, with which would usually be included small shop-keepers and publicans in working-class areas.
> (*British Society since 1945*, 1990. p. 37)

Thus, Arthur Seaton in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, who is a lathe operator in a Midlands bicycle factory, is clearly working class, as is Jimmy Porter in *Look Back in Anger* who runs a sweet stall in the market.[26] Marwick divides the middle class into two, lower-middle and upper-middle. The lower-middle classes were composed of 'essentially clerical and other

[26] Although it might be argued that sweet stall owners are small shopkeepers and thus belong to the lower-middle classes.

types of white-collar worker, and the upper-middle class of local businessmen and the more prestigious professionals' (p. 37). Jim Dixon in *Lucky Jim*, with his minor post at a university, is the archetypal lower-middle class type whereas Jimmy Porter's wife's family (the Redferns), with their colonial background, are archetypal upper-middle class. There is of course always the 'grey zone' between the various classes - Joe Lampton in *Room at the Top* is from working class stock, but plans to join the upper-middle classes (his wife Susan's family are upper-middle class). Although he 'moves up' in society by leaving his clerical job at the town hall (lower-middle class), to take a managerial position in his father-in-law's firm, he never quite manages to establish himself in their world.

In their respective essays in *Declaration*, Osborne and Anderson freely discuss the working and middle classes, generally discussing the former in positive and the latter in negative terms. John Osborne draws from his own mixed-class family background, and it becomes immediately apparent to a reader conversant with his plays, that his memories about his family and his own highly subjective ideas about their 'class', are freely employed in his plays. It is sometimes assumed that membership of a particular class gives one a privileged position as spokesman for that class, and that membership give one's views a certain objectivity and authenticity. Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy* is, in academic circles, considered to be a seminal work on working class culture, and its 'authenticity' guaranteed by the mere fact that Hoggart himself was working class and writing from memory about 'real' life experience. A 1995 reading encourages the view that it was not so much an 'authentic' view of the working classes, but rather a subjective and nostalgic view of a partly illusory working class culture; a construct of the period used as a smokescreen from which behind mass culture ('shiny barbarism') could be attacked with impunity.

Osborne is also an 'opponent' of mass culture, but his subjective autobiographical memories, as recounted in 'They Call it Cricket', relate to class *manners*, although this in turn is indirectly

related to culture. Osborne's mixed class background makes him an 'authority' on the temperament of both the working and lower-middle classes. He relates that his purpose in writing plays is to 'give them [his middle class audience] lessons in feeling' (Osborne, 'They Call it Cricket', 1957, p. 65), and it is his working class mother's family who know how to express *feeling* by '"talking about their troubles" in a way that would embarrass my middle-class observer' (p. 82). His father's family is middle class and they cannot express their feeling by talking loudly, and 'whenever there was an argument it was characterised by gravity and long stretches of silence' (p. 82). In the essay, when speaking of his mother's family, Osborne describes an 'authentic' working class culture of pubs, drinking, singing and piano playing, which formed a backdrop for this expression of *feeling*: 'they bawled and laughed and they moaned' (p. 82); he contrasts this with the 'civilised' culture of his father's middle class family symbolised by 'playing cricket' (p. 83). We meet these contrasts in *Look Back in Anger* and *The Entertainer*: Jimmy Porter in *Look Back in Anger* plays the trumpet and fools around with Cliff in their 'music hall sketches', he 'talks about his troubles' and 'bawls' and 'moans' throughout the play. This contrasts with his upper-middle class wife, Alison, her 'long stretches of silence' and her reserved manner when she does speak.

In his essay 'Get out and push', Lindsay Anderson describes his background as being 'upper middle-class' (1957, p. 157). He describes British cinema as being 'emotionally inhibited' (p. 157) and preoccupied with representations of the middle classes. In order to revitalise British cinema he sees the necessity of including the portrayal of working class environments in British films. He notes that 'the number of British films that have ever made a genuine try at a story in a popular milieu, with working class characters all through, can be counted on the fingers of one hand' (p.158). Anderson wanted to depict 'those good and friendly faces' (the working classes) on the screen. This sentiment suggests the view of the paternalistic outsider, a tone echoed in Anderson's Free Cinema short film *Every Day Except Christmas*; a similar tone of paternalism towards the working classes can also be found in the 'new wave' films, where Hoggart's 'shiny

barbarism' of modern mass culture is portrayed as being unfit for working class consumption and as eroding traditional working class culture. This 'theme' which Hoggart details in his *Uses of Literacy* is a central concern of the plays and prose of the *angry* authors and the 'new wave' film adaptations.

Osborne and Anderson's essays in *Declaration* reveal that they have a subjective understanding of class, and that their portrayal of class owes more to their own personal philosophies than to an objective analysis of society, as for example a tendency to sentimentalise about 'authentic' class culture - a tendency which also reveals itself in their work. Ironically, Hoggart, who is himself guilty of this same misdemeanour, warns of the dangers involved in a sentimental approach to working class culture:

> A middle-class Marxist's view of the working-classes often includes something of each of the foregoing errors. He (...) has a nostalgia for those 'best of all' kinds of art, rural folk-art and genuinely popular urban art (...) and part-patronising working class people beyond any semblance of reality.
> (Hoggart, *Uses of Literacy,* 1959, p. 17)

Anderson and Osborne were by no means Marxist, but rather vaguely on the 'left', yet the description fits them well as it does other *angry* authors and 'new wave' film-makers. Osborne had 'romantic' notions about the working classes and their 'authentic' popular culture. In *The Entertainer* the tradition of the music hall is idealised and portrayed as being symbolic of an authentic and popular culture, one which is being corrupted by the new mass culture.

The construction of class in the *angry* literary and filmic texts, then, is to a great extent intertwined with other representations, such as 'authentic' working class culture and mass culture. These representations of class and culture are also inextricably intertwined with the representation of gender with which they have a symbiotic relationship: Jimmy Porter is

frustrated by the timidity and faintheartedness of his wife, Alison. He mocks these characteristics in her by calling her, 'Lady Pusillanimous ... This monument to non-attachment' (p.21). Jimmy Porter's aggressiveness towards his wife is overtly characterised in the play as class conflict, but a close analysis shows that this 'class conflict' hides a deeper misogyny.

1.7.2 Representation of gender

David Lodge in the introduction to the Penguin Twentieth-Century Classics edition of *Lucky Jim* asks: 'Is this contrast between the two women [the two main female characters, Margaret and Christine] sexist? *Of course* it is' (my italics).[27] Although the presence of sexism in *Lucky Jim* (which is similar to other *angry* texts in this aspect) might seem obvious to David Lodge (although he does not seem to attach much importance to this aspect of the text), critics, on the whole, tend to ignore sexism in the *angry* texts or interpret it in other ways. D. E. Cooper, for example, terms the negative portrayal of women in the novels and plays of *angry* authors as not so much an 'attack (on) women, but a much wider target, effeminacy'.[28]

In his discussion of Britain's 'cultural revolution' Marwick looks at the two films *Room at the Top* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, and considers them to evince 'an openness and honesty concerning sexual relationships',[29] an openness which is seen as relating directly to the revolution in British social attitudes. As mentioned in 1.3, Marwick unwittingly employs a negative/positive cline ('older restraints .... paternalistic Victorian controls'/a society characterised by liberal social and political reform), when measuring social and culture change in post-war Britain. This view, though, does not take into account the views of an important section of the critical community, who choose to interpret the social and cultural changes in a different manner. Not all critics see the 'sexual frankness' of the 'new wave' films in such a positive light.

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[27] Amis, K. (1992) *Lucky Jim*, London, Penguin Books, (p. xvi).

[28] Cooper, D. E. (1970) 'Looking Back on Anger' in Bogdanor, V; and Skidelsky, R. (eds.) (1970), p. 257.

[29] Marwick, A. (1984) 'Room at the Top, Saturday Night and Sunday Morning and the "Cultural Revolution" in Britain', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 19, no. 1, p.148.

Molly Haskell has the following to say:

> Another English male image by which women could be properly put in their place was the peacock and his 'birds'. ... Sexual strutting, generally identified with a non-U background, often got by as a form of social criticism. The lower-class rebels - rock stars, rugby players, victims - the antiheroes of *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner, Look Back in Anger, Billy Liar, Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, Room at the Top, This Sporting Life, Help!, If* and *A Hard Day's Night* ... are all male, and the women, when not shrill mothers or coarse wenches, are merely bystanders. ... Because of their alibi as social discontents, the most swinish antiheroes ... are heroic compared to those around them. Even Laurence Harvey's ruthless climber in *Room at the Top* is made out to be an exonerable victim of class prejudice, ...[30]

Interestingly, Molly Haskell sees the class position of the *angry* protagonists as no more than an 'alibi'. The 'sexual strutting' in these films, and also in the *angry* literary texts, is done by characters from the lower orders. Hypergamy enables a misogynist and aggressive gendering of the male to masquerade as social criticism (class conflict). Hypergamy serves also another function: it has been a tradition of literature to express sexuality in stereotype characters taken from socially subordinate groups (consider the sexually virile gypsies and working class protagonists in novels such as: *Moll Flanders*, *Tom Jones*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *The Virgin and the Gypsy*). 'Class as theme' is used to displace the more important theme of the *angry* texts and 'new wave' films, 'sexuality and gendering of the male'. The displacement can be seen as taking place because of the confines enforced by society on the portrayal of sexuality. The expression of a 'forbidden sexuality' in this manner is remarked on by Hoch: '*Someone* had to serve as the source of the repressed desires, and the men of the lower classes and castes were (and are) the obvious targets'.[31]

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[30] Haskell, M. (1973) *From Reverence to Rape,* New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, pp. 331-332.

[31] Quoted in Hill, J. 'Working-class Realism and Sexual Reaction' in Curran, J. and Porter, V. (eds.) (1983) *British Cinema History*, p.370.

1.7.2.1 Gender - and the 'gaze'

It can also be argued that the structure of film is itself patriarchal, positioning women as 'the other', as object of man's attention; thus film, by its very form, reinforces values which it might overtly criticise. The function of the 'gaze' has been described by Mulvey:

> Traditionally, the woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium, with a shifting tension between the looks on either side of the screen.[32]

The 'gaze' of the spectator identifies with the male protagonist's gaze in the same way the reader identifies with the subjective view of the male in British post-war realist fiction. Mulvey terms this pleasure in looking by the spectator scopophilia, the Freudian term for looking at another as an erotic object. She also notes how the display of woman as erotic object interrupts the flow of the narrative:

> The presence of woman is an indispensable element of spectacle in normal narrative film, yet her visual presence tends to work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation.[33]

This is of special relevance for the 'new wave' film adaptations as their sexual explicitness usually stems from scenes not present in the literary texts, and in the film versions often fall outside the main narrative. Examples include the sexually explicit opening scene in *Look Back in Anger* and the bathing beauty contest and the 'love in a caravan' scenes in *The Entertainer*.

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[32] Mulvey, L. (1989) *Visual and other Pleasures,* Basingstoke, MacMillan, 1989, p. 19.
[33] Ibid.

1.7.2.2 Gender, culture and class

Throughout the *angry* texts and 'new wave' films, there is a correlation between gender, class and culture. Negative aspects of a mass culture are associated with a construction of gender and class. Misogyny in the *angry* texts is termed by Cooper as an attack on 'effeminacy'; an effeminacy which 'is simply the sum of those qualities which are supposed traditionally ... to exude from the worst in women: pettiness, snobbery, flippancy, voluptuousness, superficiality, [and] materialism' (Cooper, 'Looking Back on Anger', 1970, p.257). This ignores, though, that these 'traditional qualities' are part of the ideological construct of a patriarchal society, and when these qualities are negatively associated with women by the *angry* authors, they uphold the norms and values of such a society. Cooper's astute observation can also be applied to the 'new wave' films. In *The Entertainer,* Archie Rice's working class wife and young mistress are both portrayed in different ways as being emotionally alienated by mass culture and in *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner* Colin Smith's working class mother is associated with the negative aspects of the consumer society. Although the authors and film-makers may be deemed radical in their explicit criticism of mass culture, this criticism involves a construction of gender and class which is less than radical.

Chapter 2 Look Back in Anger and The Entertainer

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will consider John Osborne's two plays, *Look Back in Anger* and *The Entertainer* and Tony Richardson's 'new wave' film adaptations of them. It will consider to what extent these 'texts' can be seen as evidence of social and cultural change in Britain during the fifties and sixties, and to what extent the texts contributed to social and cultural change.

The play *Look Back in Anger* (first staged in 1956) makes a good starting point for the study of the period as seen from both a social and a cultural standpoint. It heralded a breakthrough for British drama, which by the mid-fifties had stagnated. The new type of social realist drama was termed 'Kitchen Sink' and included plays by John Osborne, Shelagh Delaney, Arnold Wesker and others, whose settings and characters were working and lower-middle class. Jimmy Porter, the central character in *Look Back in Anger,* came to be seen as the archetypal 'angry young man', symbolic of new cultural trends. This is commented on by John Russell Taylor:

> Jimmy Porter still seems to be the extreme embodiment of a particular state, and therefore a key figure in the study of a period when that state of mind was the most influential in intellectual and artistic circles.
> (*John Osborne, 'Look Back in Anger' - a Casebook,* 1975, p. 19).

The Entertainer was first performed at the Royal Court Theatre in 1957. It was directed by Tony Richardson who also directed the film adaptation, and Laurence Olivier (Archie Rice) and Brenda de Banzie (Phoebe Rice) played in both the play and the film. In *Look Back in Anger* working class Jimmy Porter vainly seeks an emotional response from his middle class wife Alison; similarly, John Osborne seeks an emotional response from his audience: he wants to teach them *to feel*. Archie Rice is the antithesis of Jimmy Porter, being a product of the society which Jimmy Porter rejects. Middle-aged Archie is devoid of emotion and lives in a cold

relationship with his wife Phoebe; he seeks solace, but finds no warmth in the arms of a string of young girls. The ability to express emotion is related to class, society and culture in both plays. Material needs were catered for in post-war Britain by new-found affluence (the consumer society), and the introduction of the welfare state, but both plays see this new society as alienating the individual.

Commercialism and mass culture are seen as eroding traditional popular and working class cultures. Representation of 'authentic' working class or popular culture is symbolised in *The Entertainer* by the music hall, equated with the expression of 'real' emotion. In a 'note' to the play, which is illustrative of Hoggart's warning concerning the misrepresentation of the working classes (see 1.7.1), Osborne expresses that the 'dying' music hall was 'truly folk art'?[34] In *The Entertainer* we see the contrast between an 'authentic' popular culture, the music hall, as represented by Archie's father, Billy Rice, who was an established music hall artist in his day, and the same music hall now corrupted by a modern mass culture and in a state of decay as symbolised by Archie Rice. Modern mass culture alienates, and this results in an inability to express emotion. Archie Rice expresses this inability in himself: 'look at my eyes. I'm dead behind these eyes' (p.72); but the audience, or for that matter, the whole nation, are without feeling and emotion: 'I'm dead, just like the whole inert, shoddy lot out there. It doesn't matter because I don't feel a thing, and neither do they' (p.72). Archie Rice's music hall has been corrupted by the frills of a new mass culture, such as the 'nudes' who in Billy's eyes are 'third-class sluts' (p.72). This corruption of a traditional culture is emphasised by the name of the show in which Archie Rice is appearing, '"ROCK 'N ROLL NEW'D LOOK"'. The author's views regarding new mass culture are explicit in his stage-note description of the music hall at the beginning of the play: 'Music. The latest, the loudest, the worst. A gauzed front-cloth. On it are painted enormous naked young ladies, waving brightly coloured fans, and kicking out gaily' (p.

[34] Osborne, J. (1990) *The Entertainer,* London, Faber and Faber.

12). The music hall, blues and jazz are seen in *Look Back in Anger* and *The Entertainer* as being mediums through which 'real' emotion can be expressed. They are being replaced by a superficial mass culture encompassing television, pop music, and cinema.

2.2 New Drama and social realism

Harold Ferrar sees the 'social realism' of *Look Back in Anger* as being directly linked to its historical context, and considers it a radical response of a disillusioned 'intellectual youth' responding to a reactionary British society '[built on] privilege [which would not] gracefully phase itself out'.[35] He sees a parallel with the realistic theatre of Shaw et al., which he sees as the response of a 'liberal democratic imagination' to an 'entrenched ruling class' which 'bitterly resisted' change (p.4). The play seen in this light was not so much experimental as one which built on social realist traditions, or what Katherine Worth terms 'a second flowering of the plant germinated by Shaw' (*John Osborne, 'Look Back in Anger' - a Casebook,* 1975, p.101); however, she points out that 'the description of Osborne as a social realist is misleading' (p.101). Osborne does not tackle social problems head on in the play, but uses an agenda of social inequality as part of the emotional rhetoric of Jimmy Porter. This can be seen as part of Osborne's overall design to teach his audience 'to feel'. Although the 'situation' and language of the play can be considered as 'real' when compared to the plays of Rattigan and Coward, the naturalism of the play is limited. Jimmy Porter is proud of his working class roots, but he is not 'rooted' to his environment in terms of work, family or dialect, unlike Arthur Seaton of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. Arnold Hinchliffe remarks that Osborne 'does not use language to characterise Jimmy Porter: rather Jimmy is offered as a spokesman for a generation'.[36]

[35] Ferrar, H. (1973) *John Osborne,* New York, Columbia University Press, p. 5.
[36] Hinchliffe, A.P. (1984) *John Osborne,* Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1984, p. 8.

2.3 Society, class and gender in *Look Back in Anger*

The intellectual left had expected the coming of a 'New Millennium' with the installation of Labour in 1945, but felt disillusioned with the return of the Conservative Government led by Winston Churchill after the election of 1951. Jimmy Porter, who is working class, has a university education, but still feels dissatisfied and rails against a society which he sees as being stifled by its caste-like class system, and its institutions of Church, Government and Royalty. To consider to what extent the texts under examination were radical or not in a historical context, it will be of benefit to look at the explicit and implicit ideology of these texts. To establish a text's implicit ideology a question can be '[asked of the text] what it tacitly implies, what it does not say'.[37] Overtly, in the person of Jimmy Porter, the text can be seen as radical, as criticising society, and of being evidence of a society undergoing rapid change; but, unwittingly, the contradictions inherent in the make-up of Jimmy Porter's character can be seen as illustrating the limits of that change. He criticises snobbery in others, but is himself a snob, especially in his relationship with his friend Cliff. The play is critical of the caste-like class society in Britain, but in its patriarchal representation of women upholds the same system of values which it attempts to criticise. The overt ideology of the play is expressed in the 'public' rhetorical voice of Jimmy Porter; its implicit ideology being expressed in its 'silences' and 'contradictions', and in the 'private' voice of Jimmy Porter which, it might be argued, is the dominant thematic voice of the play. The supposed class warfare which Jimmy Porter wages against his middle class wife, Alison, illustrates a poorly camouflaged misogyny.

2.3.1 'Public' and 'private' voices[38]

As mentioned above, Katharine Worth speaks of Jimmy Porter's 'emotional rhetoric', which can be equated with a 'private voice', and 'an agenda of social inequality', which equates with a 'public voice' of the play. The public and private voices merge and oscillate in *Look Back in*

[37] Macherey, P. (1990) 'The Text Says What it Does Not Say', in Walder, D. (ed.) (1990), p. 217.

[38] Alan Carter uses these terms to classify Osborne's plays into two groups, but here the terms are used differently. See Carter, A. (1969) *John Osborne* , Edinburgh, Oliver & Boyd, chapters 5 and 6.

Anger. Jimmy's anger reaches a crescendo in his bitter and angry tirades, his private voice, aimed at Alison. This suggests that the real theme of the play is not so much a public one but a private one, not so much the 'state of England', but rather his private relationship with Alison. The 'realism' of the play is directly related to the dualism of the public and private; the individual's private life is a consequence of the public environment in which he/she lives. Porter's private anger towards his wife is legitimised by his public anger, his scathing and satirical reference to various institutions of the Establishment, the media, the Church and others. Ironically, neither Osborne nor Porter are ideologically 'committed', but without the 'public grievance', which legitimises Porter's anger, he could not use bitter rhetoric as a weapon against his wife and still retain the attention and sympathy of the audience. Jimmy's 'sincerely felt concern' about the state of society can be seen, then, as a subterfuge to gain the audience's sympathy and attention in order to get at the meat of his real contention - his wife. Implicitly, if we put Jimmy's misogyny to one side, his anger is not so much with society, or even his wife, but rather with himself and his inability to adjust to relationships with the opposite sex. If Jimmy is 'the embodiment of a particular state', it might be argued that he is the embodiment of a crisis in male sexuality of the period.[39]

2.3.2 Explicit social criticism or implicit misogyny?

It might be said that Jimmy Porter is Hamlet's heir, in that he carries on a several hundred-year-old misogynist literary tradition. Several critics of the play have noticed the similarity between *Hamlet* and *Look Back in Anger*: both plays draw a parallel between the 'frailty' of women and the 'sorry state of society',[40] although few have remarked the misogynist similarity between the two. Their victims are womanly passive (Ophelia and Alison) and manage to look beautiful and desirable even when they are being trod upon. Several reviewers of the film also remarked that

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[39] Michelene Wandor in discussing *Look Back in Gender* also sees Jimmy as symbolic of a 'male psyche in crisis'; *Look Back in Gender, Sexuality and the Family in Post-War British Drama*, London, Methuen, p.8.

[40] See for example Mary McCarthy's essay, 'A New Word' in Taylor, J.R. (1975) *John Osborne, 'Look Back in Anger' - a Casebook,* London, MacMillan.

Burton's performance detracted from the social realism of the film in that his performance was 'Shakespearian'. The crescendos of Jimmy's anger aimed at Alison, 'I would like to see you give birth to a child and it would die', resemble Hamlet's 'Get thee to a nunnery wouldst thou father bastards'. These are similar in their rage and irrationality. Jimmy's anger has its source in the fact that 'something is rotten in the state of England', and like Hamlet matters of state and family (public and private voices) are intertwined. There is a similar logic of rhetoric in both: Alison's 'pusillanimity', a negative effeminate trait characterises not only women, but also the ruling classes, and is indirectly responsible for the 'demise' of England; similarly the crisis of state in *Hamlet* is brought about by the 'frailty' of women. Is Jimmy Porter, then, and indirectly Osborne, a critic of British society, or is his 'public voice' an 'alibi' for his private misogyny, as Molly Haskell suggests (see 1.7.2)? To answer this question this chapter will consider the logic of Jimmy's rhetoric, his public and private voices, and also consider the portrayal of Helena.

If we agree with Ferrar in seeing the play as being cast in a traditional realist mode, its 'newness' might be explained by its use of language, a view Osborne held: 'Although *Look Back in Anger* was a formal, rather old-fashioned play, I think it broke out by its use of language' (*John Osborne, 'Look Back in Anger' - a Casebook,* 1975, p.66). In drama a character can use rhetoric to make an indirect and personal appeal to the audience, which may involve a redressing of a situation of public urgency. The use of rhetoric can be seen as part of Jimmy's 'music hall style', the style of a music hall patterer, which Osborne utilises in the building up of Jimmy's character. This style which involves stand-up comedy and various kinds of tomfoolery can also involve lampooning the styles of different kinds of public voices, such as the rhetoric of the political agitator. The diction of a music hall patterer was working class, and his rhetoric might contain different elements such as, 'gags', exaggerations, sexual innuendoes, and rhetorical questions for

comic effect.[41] In *The Entertainer,* Archie is a professional music hall entertainer, and his music hall style is carried over into his private life where his son Frank acts as his 'feed' for a number of 'gags'. Similarly, in *Look Back in Anger*, Jimmy's friend Cliff acts as his feed when they 'perform' in the flat. Jimmy, like Archie, carries over his 'music hall style' into his normal everyday speech. In both plays, then, there is no definite line of demarcation between the music hall patter and the normal language of the main protagonists. The 'music hall style' starts the play off in a light and humorous vein, in which Jimmy is given the opportunity to amuse other characters in the play as well as the audience. In this way it can also be seen as part of the 'logic of the rhetoric' - Jimmy is given the opportunity to gain credibility and the sympathy of the audience in this 'public mode', before reverting to the anger and bitterness of his private voice. His anger towards his wife seems rational once the logic of the public rhetoric has been established. In the film, Jimmy's anger towards his wife seems irrational and is it not preceded by the anger of his public mode of voice; this is the consequence of editing much of the political and social content out of the film.

As noted by Hinchliffe, Jimmy's language is one which typifies a generation rather than one which is particular for the *character* Jimmy or for a particular social class. The colloquial diction is employed in both the public and private voices, but it is used in a broad cultural and academic context. Jimmy, in the same style as other *angry young men,* cocks a snoop at the cultural establishment. Jim Dixon in *Lucky Jim* used low diction to satirise high culture: 'filthy Mozart' [42] and 'Brahms rubbish' (p.36). This can be seen as a kind of intellectual one-upmanship, an attempt at 'intellectual social mobility' - the newly culturally-enfranchised working and lower-middle classes attempting to establish a position for themselves. Jimmy Porter is more forceful and extreme in his burlesque of high culture: 'There's a particularly savage correspondence

[41] For an example of this kind of music hall rhetoric see music hall artist Dan Leno's 'political rhetoric' - a lampooning of the political agitator in: Chanan, Michael. (1980) *The Dream that Kicks,* London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, chapter 3.

[42] Amis, K. (1992) *Lucky Jim,* 1992, p. 63.

going on in there about whether Milton wore braces or not ... Oh yes, and then there's an American professor ... who believes that when Shakespeare was writing *The Tempest*, he changed his sex' (pp. 77-8). In his use of colloquial diction, buffoonery, his cocking a snoop at British society and his amorous escapades, Jimmy Porter resembles other *angry* protagonists such as Colin Lumley Jim Dixon, and Billy Fisher [43] (and a string of picaresque young male heroes stretching back to *Tom Jones*). Porter differs, though, in his 'non-British' 'loss-of-humour' - his change from the buffoonery of much of his public voice to the bitter invective of his private voice. None of the other *angry* heroes are very angry. The *angry* young heroes retained their comic viewpoint (of British society and manners), and it might be argued that this was an important ingredient, if the author wanted to retain the reader's sympathy. It might be said, that the film adaptation of the play fails in this aspect (retaining the audience's sympathy), as the 'comic viewpoint', which is present in the stage version, disappears, and is replaced by a 'surrealistic' uptight buffoonery, such as the scene when Jimmy and Cliff create a disturbance at the theatre where Helena works.

The rhetoric of Jimmy's public voice gives credence to the irrationality of his private voice: his verbal attacks on his wife Alison. The logical structure which legitimises Jimmy's shift from the humorous satire of public grievance to the private bitter misogyny is as follows: something is rotten in the state of England. People who belong to the privileged social classes such as the Bishop of Bromley are responsible for nasty things such as H-bombs (p.13). Alison's father belongs to the same social class: 'Is the Bishop of Bromley his [Alison's father] nom de plume' (p.14) - said in music hall banter. Those who belong to the same social class as Alison's father are also socially irresponsible. They are either active in bringing about a sorry state of affairs (such as the Bishop of Bromley), or like Alison, indirectly responsible because of their impassivity, an impassivity which is a characteristic of the middle classes (see 1.7.1). This

[43] In John Wain's *Hurry on Down*, Kingsley Amis' *Lucky Jim* and Keith Waterhouse's *Billy Liar* respectively.

impassivity is illustrated by Alison and her brother, who is described as 'the Platitude from Outer Space' (p.20), and Alison as 'The Lady Pusillanimous' (p.21). At this point, Jimmy's drift from his public to his private voice is signalled by the author's note: 'His cheerfulness has deserted him' (p.21). Jimmy's attack on his wife towards the end of Act 1 is legitimised by the idea that Alison symbolises everything that he hates - the upper classes - lack of involvement - or interest in the suffering of others. In the drift from a public to a private voice Jimmy retains the hyperbolic music hall style, but the humorous tone disappears, and is replaced by an unpleasant hyperbole of 'guts and butchery' when speaking of Alison and women in general. The imagery of 'guts and butchery' also enables the logic of the rhetoric to function in that Alison, whom Jimmy criticises in several ways, is used as a premise to infer that women in general are in possession of similar qualities. Thus in the first crescendo of hate against Alison in the first act:

> She has the passion of a python. She just *devours* me whole every time, as if I were some over-large rabbit. That's me. That bulge around the *navel* - if you're wondering what it is - it's me. Me, *buried alive down there*, and going mad, smothered in that *peaceful looking coil*, ... You'd think that this *indigestible mess* would stir up some kind of tremor in those distended, *overfed tripes* - but not her! (my italics - p.38)

Alison is related to women in general by a similar kind of imagery:

> When you see a woman in front of her bedroom mirror, you realise what a refined sort of *butcher* she is. Did you ever see some dirty old Arab, *sticking* his *fingers* into some *mess of lamb fat and gristle*? ... Thank god they don't have any women *surgeons*! Those *primitive hands* would have your *guts* out in no time. ... She'd drop your *guts* like hair clips.
> (my italics - p. 24)

This imagery is repeated throughout the play when Jimmy speaks of Alison, her mother or women in general: old python coil (p. 50); worms, bellyache, laxatives, purgatives, purgatory

(p.53); slaughter (p. 54); today's meal (p. 83); bleed us, give your blood, to let yourself be butchered by the women (pp. 84-5).

2.3.3 The construction of gender in the play

So far this chapter has considered the 'logic of rhetoric' of the play: its representation of society and class which provide an 'alibi' for the author's subjective construction of gender. The construction of gender will now be considered more closely by looking at Jimmy's relationship to the two women in the play. Other commentators have also remarked the connection between Osborne's construction of society and that of gender, and how the former is employed as a *subterfuge* masking the latter:

> A large part of Jimmy's behaviour can be explained by 'the unresolved Oedipal situation in which he is enmeshed,' indeed, by the classic pre-Oedipal neurosis when the child decides to turn his fear and resentment toward his mother into masochistic enjoyment. Thus all references to *social iniquities* are really 'a *subterfuge masking* his underlying *predicament with women*' to which Osborne 'knowingly or unknowingly, gives dramatic context'. (my italics)
> (Hinchliffe, *John Osborne,* 1984, p. 22)

The play and other *angry* texts of the fifties and sixties can be seen as being radical in their 'openness and honesty concerning sexual relationships' (*Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 19, no. 1, p. 48). In the play this 'openness' is symbolised by the double bed which remains on the stage the whole time and is important in various scenes such as when Helena 'seduces' Jimmy. The explicitness concerning the complicated sexual relationships between the four main players also suggests openness. Jimmy, Alison and Helena are involved in a menâge á trois and it is hinted throughout the play that there is some sort of attraction between Cliff and Alison. The formal elements of the type of social realist genre in which the *angry* texts are written can be seen as restricting the extent to which they can be regarded as 'open' or radical. The subjective

viewpoint of the male protagonist in the *angry* texts often involves a negative portrayal of women. In chapter one (see 1.7.2.2) it was mentioned how D. E. Cooper has noticed Osborne's and other *angry* authors negative portrayal of women; he called it an 'attack [on], effeminacy ... the sum of those qualities which are supposed traditionally ... to exude from the worst in women: pettiness, snobbery, flippancy, voluptuousness, superficiality, materialism' (p.257). Osborne's stereotype portrayal of women include the *effeminate qualities* listed by Cooper. Alison, the middle class wife of Jimmy, who is insulated from the shocks of the world behind her ironing board, is depicted as *petty*, *superficial*, and a *snob*, or as described by Jimmy, 'Lady Pusillanimous ... wanting of firmness of mind ..., having a little mind' (p.22). Helena is the femme fatale, another traditional stereotype, *voluptuous* and alluring, using deceit to capture Jimmy from her friend.

Flaws in the play's social realism have been commented on by Kenneth Allsop. He describes the 'Porter set-up [as being] extravagantly implausible' (Allsop, *The Angry Decade, 1958,* p. 112). He mentions several details, including: 'Why should Alison be slaving at an ironing-board like a Clifford Odets tenement woman'? (p. 113). However, this seems to miss the point. Osborne is not so much interested in portraying 'reality', as in exploiting the 'genre' to give credence to his own subjective construction of gender. The 'contradictions' ('flaws in the play's social realism') express the implicit ideology of the play. Osborne employs 'realism', not so much as a vehicle to tackle 'social problems' in the manner of Shaw, but rather as a means by which he can didactically present his own individualist concerns. Women are portrayed as restricting the individuality of Jimmy, who resents his dependency on women: 'and all because of something I want from that girl downstairs, something I know in my heart she's incapable of giving' (p.84). The subjective construction of gender forms a framework design for the play. Each of the three acts begin with 'tableau-like' scenes depicting stereotype gendering of men and women from a male point of view - showing women voluntarily (and happily) doing domestic chores. While the women are making things more comfortable for the men, the 'radical' Jimmy and his friend are

engaged in the British middle class ritual of reading the posh Sunday newspapers. The intellectual and masculine nature of this pursuit is emphasised by Jimmy's pipe smoking (the others being 'less intellectual' than Jimmy do not like his pipe smoking). Alison's lack of intellectual ability, her passiveness and superficiality is emphasised by her constant ironing. Jimmy criticises the women throughout the play for their lack of feeling and their lack of intellectual activity: he is upset because '[nobody has] read Priestley's piece this week' (p.15). In an unintentional parody of a male chauvinist, Jimmy also likes her doing housework as it sometimes arouses him sexually: 'There's hardly a moment when I'm not - watching and wanting you ... I still can't stop my sweat breaking out when I see you ... leaning over an ironing board' (p. 33). It is also somewhat ironic that Jimmy criticises Alison's family for being middle class, while he is doing his best to be middle class himself (reading the 'posh' Sunday newspapers). Jimmy never suggests a new domestic order in which chores are shared so that his wife could be given the chance to partake in intellectual activities. The only objection he makes to the women doing the housework is when they make too much noise, interfering with his intellectual pursuits such as listening to a Vaughan Williams concert on the radio: '(they are) banging their irons - the eternal racket of the female' (p. 25). To cement the traditional domestic roles into place in the first act, Jimmy prevents Alison doing her housework by making a violent attack on her in which she burns herself on the iron. Unlike the role of Joe Lampton in *Room at the Top*, there does not seem to be any hint of irony intended in the role of Jimmy Porter. Osborne's autobiographical views concerning sexual roles and class characteristics in *They call it cricket* confirm this.

2.3.3.1 Helena - a female stereotype

Helena is given some of the worst of Cooper's *effeminate* stereotypical traits: pettiness, snobbery, voluptuousness and superficiality; and being a *femme fatale* she is also deceitful, manipulative and conniving. Helena is initially portrayed as an independent woman. Jimmy first

describes her as 'that bitch' (p. 39). 'Now and again, when she (Helena) allows her rather judicial expression of alertness to soften, she is very attractive' (p. 39); this is the 'author's' description[44] of Helena and suggests a view that women are more feminine and attractive when they are not attempting to assert authority and independence. Similarly, when Helena has submitted to Jimmy and assumed her symbolically submissive role behind the ironing board, she is described as being 'more attractive than before' (p. 75) by the 'author'. Both the 'author' and Jimmy find women more attractive in their traditional feminine roles, but cannot reconcile their sexual attraction with the repugnance they feel at the limit of women's intellectual and emotional involvement, a consequence of the traditional sexual roles which are thrust upon them. The contradictions in the make-up of the women's characters are not so much a social reality, but more the subjective construction of the role of women by the author.[45]

The 'femme fatale', Helena, manoeuvres Jimmy into bed by being dishonest towards her friend. She is also a hypocrite: early on in the play she had criticised Jimmy's behaviour and taken Alison off to church, but has no qualms about having an adulterous affair and foregoing church for Jimmy's sake at a later point in the play (p. 78). She describes Jimmy 'as a savage' (p. 46), and advises her friend Alison 'to get out of this mad house' (p. 47). It seems that Helena constantly schemes to take Jimmy off her friend even though he treats her like dirt. It is she who is responsible for Alison's departure - she sends a telegram (p. 61). After Alison leaves, Helena stays on, much to Alison's surprise (p. 69). Her real motives are revealed towards the end of the play when she admits to Jimmy that she had 'always wanted [him] - always' (p. 86). The single

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[44] The 'stage direction notes' are at times highly personal, for example: 'Blistering honesty, or apparent honesty, like his (Jimmy Porter's), makes few friends' (p. 10). The description of the female characters in the stage directions implicitly expresses the author's views concerning women in general.

[45] Contemporary reviewers (of the film adaptation) also noticed the contradictions inherent in the make-up of the women characters in the play, Nina Hibbin writes: 'But although he (Jimmy Porter) expresses himself in *social* terms, his hate is entirely personal. ... Why did he marry the girl if he despises her background so much? ... Above all, why, at the very second of shouting out against everything Helena stands for, does he make violent love to her and take her on as substitute wife? This makes the whole argument pointless and irresponsible' (*Daily Worker*, 30 May 1959).

and ‘independent’ Helena starts a sexual relationship with Jimmy and then immediately adopts a submissive role (behind the ironing board); now willingly submissive she recants her own beliefs (not going to church). This might suggest that her independence and that of women in general, is a sham, an expression of lack of fulfilment rather than an inherent quality. Jimmy’s independence, on the other hand, is threatened by sexual involvement, and he fights to retain his independence (in contrast to women who ‘fight’ to **lose** their ‘independence’). Jimmy’s independence is threatened by the sexual appetite of Alison which will ‘devour [him] whole’ (p. 37). Women willingly give up their independence (which is seen as an ‘unnatural state’), to assume their ‘natural’ roles behind ironing boards. Helena’s sexual frustration is symbolised by her lying prone on the bed holding the bear (representing Jimmy whom she has captured from her friend). Her submissiveness is characterised by her liking of his pipe smoking (p. 75), and her wearing his shirt (p. 75). As mentioned above, her submissive role has made her more attractive (p. 75). After Jimmy and Helena start their relationship both Jimmy and Cliff continue to despise her, which they admit to each other while she disappears to wash Cliff’s shirt (p. 83). Jimmy says to Cliff that he is ‘worth half a dozen Helenas’ (p. 84). Alison is passive and submissive at the beginning of the play but for Jimmy it is not enough - he wants to see her completely humbled to establish his complete dominance over her: ‘If you could have a child, and it would die ... . Please - if only I could watch you face that’ (first ‘crescendo of hate’ at end of Act 1, p. 37). Thus, her final sacrifice (the loss of her child at the end of the play) signals her complete submission and leads to their reunion, ‘I’m in the mud at last. I’m grovelling’ (p. 95).

2.4a Promotional material for the film (Plates 1-3)

Plate 1. Sexual explicitness used as a marketing ploy. The term 'adult' is now no longer equated with serious art.

Plate 2. Despite the lack of 'violence' in the film, this was written in bold letters as a selling point, along with 'sex' and 'X' certification.

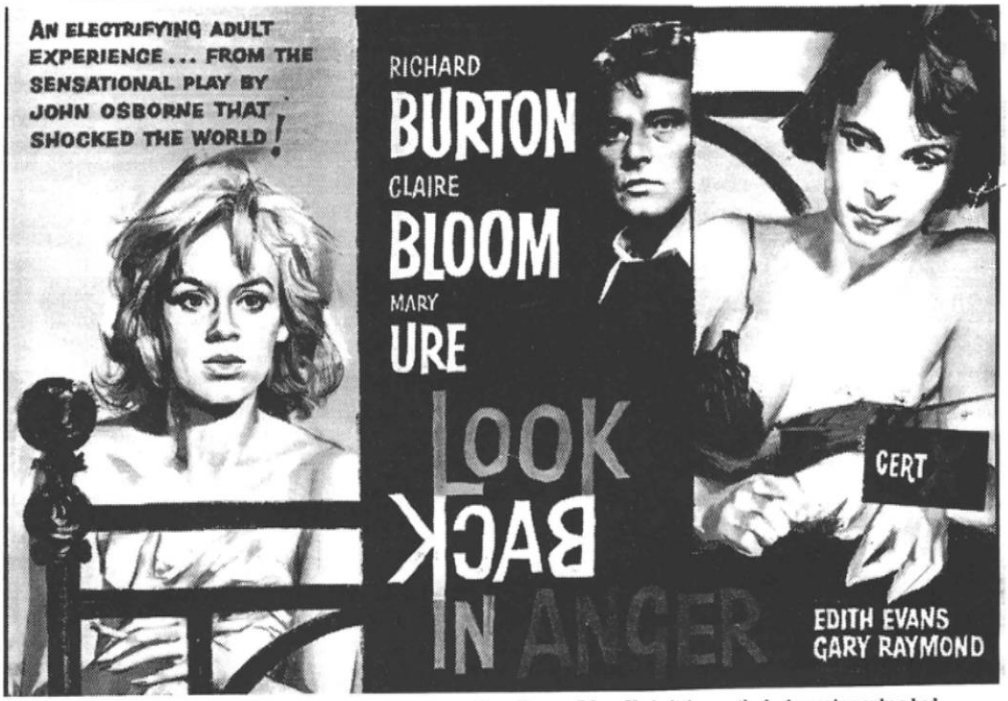

Plate 3. 'Sex' is used as the main selling point here. Alison Porter (Mary Ure) sitting on the bed wearing only a bed sheet, and Helena (Claire Bloom) also in bed, her brassiere strap alluringly fallen from her shoulder. These scenes do not represent the actuality of the play or film and are used as a marketing ploy to lure the public into the cinema.

2.4 Loss of 'public voice' in the film adaptations

This discussion of the play, *Look Back in Anger* from a historical perspective (the misogynist reading of the play), has been made possible by the thirty year gap between this evaluation and its writing. The majority of contemporary critics,[46] enmeshed in the same ideology as Osborne, read only the 'public voice' of the play - its critique of society - but not its 'private misogynist voice', which reinforce the patriarchal values it overtly criticises. Inadvertently, the 'private voice' of the play surfaces in its adaptation to the screen. To what extent was the film adaptation radical in its representations of society, class and gender, or, as discussed in chapter one (1.7): how did they serve to define and extend Marwick's 'cultural revolution'? In a discussion of two other 'new wave' films, Marwick concentrates on new representations of sex and class: '[there was] an openness and honesty concerning sexual relationships; a ... clear-sighted perception ... of British society and its class structure' (*Journal of Contemporary History*, 1984, p.148). It has already been argued that despite its overt critique of society the play constructs the female gender in a misogynist fashion, and uses class as an 'alibi' in the process of doing so. Are the same tendencies to be found in the 'new wave' film adaptation to a greater or lesser extent, thus questioning the plausibility of Marwick's hypothesis?

There is a consensus of critical opinion that towards the end of the 60s there was a liberalisation in the censorship of the cinema: in the form of increased 'sex and violence'; but, this consensus does not conclude that 'explicit sex', channelled through representations of class, represents an 'openness and honesty concerning sexual relationships', or 'a clear-sighted perception ... of British ... class structure'. Molly Haskell's viewpoint has been referred to briefly (see 1.7.2): she equates the 'liberalisation' of cinema with a worsening of woman's position in society: 'from a woman's point of view, the ten years from, say, 1962 or 1963 to 1973 have been the most

[46] Some critics, for example Nina Hibbin, saw the contradictions inherent in the play and film, but did not explore these in depth.

disheartening in screen history' (*From Reverence to Rape*, 1973, p. 323). John Hill explains the 'openness' of the 'new wave' films as a response to an industry in crisis: 'a possibility of innovation ... subject to the demands of financial success';[47] Seen from Hill's perspective, the challenge from television and the pressures for liberalisation of censorship put on the British Board of Censorship by an industry in crisis were important factors in bringing about an increase in the sexual explicitness of films towards the end of the 50s and in the beginning of the 60s. There was a dramatic increase in the number of 'x' films (for over 16s) released during this period compared with the early and mid- fifties, and a corresponding increase in the extent of sexual explicitness permitted. A quick glance at the press-book[48] for *Look Back in Anger* (plates 1-3) illustrates that the film was marketed, not so much as a 'serious film' dealing with 'real' people and 'real' problems, but with an appeal to sensationalism - to aspects of 'sex and violence'. The discussion of the film *Look Back in Anger* will concentrate on the emphasis on 'sex' in the film: the emphasis on personal relationships (private voice), and the removal of its public voice. An examination of the prominence of the private voice will help to clarify the meanings in the play constructed by the oscillation of public and private voices. Similar tendencies can also be spotted in the other Osborne/Richardson film, *The Entertainer*, so it will also be of benefit to consider the emphasis of the private voice in this film. After a brief introduction sketching in background details of the two films, a discussion of the loss of the public voice in the films will be considered by looking at the opening scenes of *Look Back in Anger,* and by looking at the additional sexually explicit scenes in *The Entertainer*.

Look Back in Anger was the Woodfall film company's first production, released three years after the play's first performance (1959). It starred Richard Burton in the main role as Jimmy Porter; Mary Ure as his wife Alison, Claire Bloom as Alison's friend Helena, Gary Redmond as Jimmy's friend Cliff and Edith Evans as Mrs Tanner. The script was adapted by television

[47] Hill, J. quoted in Cook, P. (1985) *The Cinema Book,* London, British Film Institute, p. 48.
[48] Press book for *Look Back in Anger* (1959) A. B. Pathe, London.

scriptwriter Nigel Kneale. On John Osborne's 'insistence', the film version retained the same director as the play, Tony Richardson. Osborne was not so pleased about Nigel Kneale being given the job as scriptwriter, and he comments that Richardson and Kneale in adapting the play 'were ripping out its obsessive, personal heart'.[49] By this Osborne presumably meant that Jimmy Porter's central role is somewhat diffused, although he remains very prominent in the film. Despite the film-makers' attempt to bring some of their own Free Cinema concerns to the adapted film, Burton's powerful characterisation of Jimmy Porter dominates the film. The 'obsessiveness' of Jimmy Porter in the play is emphasised by the claustrophobic atmosphere of the Porter's one-roomed flat, which remains 'on stage' throughout; the setting echoes the close and stifling aspect of Jimmy and Alison's relationship, which inhibits Jimmy's freedom. In the film this claustrophobic atmosphere is diminished by the addition of exterior settings, but this is counterbalanced by Oswald Morris' close-up photography work which emphasises the 'anger' of Burton, and Burton's own portrayal of Jimmy Porter which is marked by its bitter invective. Several contemporary critics, although heralding the film as 'the best for years and years,'[50] objected to the emphasis of the 'private voice' in the film adaptation, labelling it a 'diluted' *angry* text.

Several critics had also objected to the removal of the social and political aspects from the film adaptation of *The Entertainer.* The reader of the play *Look Back in Anger* is informed that the story takes place 'in a large Midland town' (p. 9), but the theatregoer would probably remain oblivious of this fact, as the sense of place is unrealistically non-existent; the film adaptation moves out on to the street, but still remains non-descriptive in its portrayal of place. This is not the case with the film adaptation of *The Entertainer* which, according to realist cinematic convention, is filmed on location in Morecombe, a holiday resort on the north east coast of

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[49] Osborne, J. (1991) *Almost a Gentleman*, '*an Autobiography*' - *Volume II: 1955-1966,* London, Faber and Faber, p. 108.

[50] 'No, it's not quite as good as the play [*Look Back in Anger*]. But it's still the best British film - not forgetting *Room at the Top* for years and years' (*Tribune*, 5 June 1959).

England. It might even be said that Richardson took his 'realism' too seriously; the release of the film was delayed by a soundtrack which had to be re-dubbed due to the Morecombe seagulls whose screeching drowned out the voice of Laurence Olivier. The play and the film are stylistically very different, and commentators have remarked that the film was stylistically unsuccessful in the transformation from stage drama to film.[51] The play was not in the realist genre and attempts to create a realist film by the addition of location shooting was only partially successful. The adaptation to the cinema was also hindered by retaining two of the main actors from the play. Laurence Olivier and Brenda Banzie's character acting might be suited to the theatre, but in the social realist genre they are hardly convincing as 'working class' types. Ironically, although they are inexperienced, both Shirley Anne Field (Tina Latchford) and Alan Bates (Frank Rice) succeed in their roles, because of their naturalism. The majority of reviewers, though, thought Olivier's acting was brilliant - but then they always did, as he was something of an institution in British cultural life. In the play and the film, the representations of popular and mass culture are similar; this is not surprising considering Tony Richardson and John Osborne worked in close cooperation for a number of years in both the theatre and film business. John Osborne worked together with Nigel Kneale on the film script of the Woodfall film, and although considerable changes were made these did not radically affect plot or theme. Osborne and the 'new wave' film-makers could be said to share the same critical way of looking at British society of the fifties, and they also share similar romantic notions of working class and popular culture.

[51] See Laing, S. (1986) *Representations of Working-Class Life 1957-1964,* London, MacMillan, pp. 118-9.

2.4.1 Loss of 'public voice' - a look at the opening scenes

Alan Lovell commented on the loss of the 'public voice' in a contemporary review:

> The most striking feature of the film version of *Look Back in Anger* is the cuts in Jimmy Porter's famous long speeches. Some of Jimmy's most famous remarks are lost; I missed the 'no brave good causes' comment and the passage about the Bishop of Bromley and the H-bomb.[52]

The adaptive differences between the play and film can be fairly well illustrated by considering an extract at the beginning of the film. A close study of this extract shows that the 'authorship' of the film is fragmented, as if the film has been made in a 'creative marketplace' with each person involved in the making vying with the others for a place in the creative spotlight. For example, the 'Free Cinema' exterior scenes witness the concerns of the director, Tony Richardson, whereas the editing of Jimmy's monologues ('public voice') and the inclusion of explicit sex ('private voice') witness changes made for 'reasons of genre and marketability'. As mentioned in the introduction (see 1.6), it is not always an easy matter to establish clear-cut reasons why changes are made in adaptations; a point remarked by a reviewer of the film: 'For the cinema it has been softened, though whether for censorship reasons or because the film is more concerned with Jimmy's love life than with the social climate is anybody's guess.'[53] A study of the film's press-book (plates 1-3), though, clearly illustrates that 'sex and violence' were vital marketing ingredients. There is very little 'violence' in the film (Alison burns her hand on the iron after being pushed by Jimmy), but this seems to be one of the main selling points (see plate 2); its adult rating (the **'X',** suggesting se**X**, is written boldly) was also used as a selling point (plate 2), a common marketing policy at the time. Despite there being few 'explicit sex' scenes, the publicity material attempts by showing the women characters in bed and in their underwear to create the impression that 'sex' is the main ingredient of the film. What is particularly striking

[52] See microfiche of contemporary newspaper reviews in the British Film Institute.
[53] Derek Hill in the *Tribune*, 5 June 1959.

(by its absence) is the fact that there is no reference to the social or political content of the film, and Osborne's original play is falsely described as 'sex charged' (plate 2). It might be said that the film-makers attempted unsuccessfully to repeat the success of *Room at the Top* by trying to imitate that film's main selling point: its explicit sexuality. The original script of Osborne's play, which unlike Braine's *Room at the Top* was not 'sex charged', was ill-suited to be adapted to a film marketed as 'an electrifying adult experience' (plates 1-3). Several reviewers were surprised that the Osborne 'new wave' films (*Look Back in Anger* and *The Entertainer*) had been given an 'x' certificate, as the explicit sex in these films was limited; in the case of *Look Back in Anger* some felt it was the inclusion of two gags (which would now be considered completely harmless), described by Lord Amwell in the House of Lords as 'unadulterated filth': 'She was only a monkey's daughter, but my how she handled her nuts'; and 'She was only a grave digger's daughter, but she loved lying under the sod'.[54] This exaggerated political reaction to the inclusion of relatively inoffensive material clearly illustrates the limits of the liberalisation of censorship at the time.

2.4.1.1 Opening scenes - the inclusion of explicit sex

In contrast to the stage version of *Look Back in Anger*, not a word is spoken in the first five minutes of the film. We are shown Jimmy and Cliff at a jazz club, where Jimmy is playing the trumpet in a jazz band (in the play his trumpet playing remains off-stage). The 'authenticity' of this music is reinforced by the close-up of a West Indian in the audience shown appreciating British white jazz. The first 'addition', which occurs while the credits are rolling, involves sex and class; Cliff is shown picking up a working class 'tart' who is 'nice and common - common as dirt,' the implication being that working class girls have a lax sexual code. In a later scene, we learn that Cliff's chatting up was unsuccessful; and Jimmy is established as a 'sexual strutter'

[54] Lord Amwell made the following comment: '"In that film there were two gags of a description that one cannot just call them Rabelaisian. They were filth for the sake of it. ... But these two gags I refer to were pure filth of the most unutterable description"' (*Daily Telegraph*, 23 June, 1959).

when he comments, ‘you need lessons son’. We move outside the jazz club and Jimmy is shown cavorting along the rainy social realist streets in the early hours of the morning. This little episode helps to establish his anarchist anti-establishment character; the film pays lip service to the social critique of the play by showing his cavorting against the background of a dowdy Gothic Church standing out against the tenements where Jimmy lives.

The ‘narrative’ starts tentatively in the scene where Alison is asleep in bed, at the point between the end of the credits and the beginning of the dialogue. In this scene we are given the first sign of the transformation of Jimmy’s character from the play - the emphasis on the private voice: Jimmy is shown standing aggressively over the bed, where Alison lies sleeping; he rummages through her handbag where he finds a letter which he reads with a disdainful expression on his face. His attitude implies his wife’s ‘frailty’, the fact that she cannot be trusted (the viewer of the film who had not seen the play would not be aware of this inference until a later point in the film). Jimmy is reading Alison’s letters to her parents (in the next scene in Cliff’s bedroom in the morning he tells Cliff: ‘My dear wife spent the evening writing home’). The ‘suspicion of betrayal - letter reading’ does not occur in the play until the end of Act 1, when Jimmy tells Cliff, ‘I want to know if I’m being betrayed’ (p. 36). Unlike the stage version, then, in the film the aggression between Jimmy and his wife is established immediately. In the discussion of the play, it was explained how the establishing of a ‘public voice’ provided a ‘logic of rhetoric’ for Jimmy’s *angry* private voice. In the play Jimmy gains the sympathy of the audience by use of his public voice, his critique of society, and his ‘cheerfulness (has not) deserted him’ (p. 21) before midway through the first act. As discussed in chapter one (1.6), Richard Burton reinterpreted the role of Jimmy Porter; in the film adaptation Jimmy is aggressively *angry* to such an extent that it seems he has used an *angry* interpretive strategy in working out the role. This ‘misinterpretation’ of the role of Jimmy Porter was denounced by Osborne himself:

> The original character of J.P. was widely misunderstood, largely because of the emphasis on the element of 'anger' and the newspaper invention of 'angry young man'. J.P. is a comic character. ... . This core of character is best expressed, not only theatrically but truthfully, by a *mild* delivery. In other words, it is not necessary or advisable to express bitterness bitterly or anger angrily.[55]

2.4.1.2 The function of the 'gaze'

Chapter one (1.7.2.1) briefly mentions how the additional sexually explicit scenes in the 'new wave' films can be explained in terms of Mulvey's 'gaze'. These scenes in the 'new wave' films fall outside the narrative in much the same way as the 'bed photographs' in the publicity material (plates 1 and 3) are inconsistent with what actually happens in the play or the film. After Jimmy has returned from the jazz club and is shown reading his wife's letter, Alison is angelically framed in close-up by the camera, creating a link between the audience as voyeur (camera views Alison), and Jimmy as voyeur (we are shown Jimmy viewing Alison). Jimmy and the audience are permitted to voyeuristically molest Alison while she lays asleep innocent of prying eyes. The sight of Alison arouses desire in Jimmy: we are shown Jimmy preparing to wake his wife for lovemaking - at this point the 'limits of censorship' are reached. Jimmy's 'look' involves desire, but he is aggressive; he desires his wife (whom he does not trust - illustrated by the letter-reading) against his own better judgment. Thus, at a very early stage in the film (before a word has been spoken), the viewer is shown two separate 'sexually explicit' episodes not present in the play (Alison in bed, and the chatting-up of Sally). This 'explicitness' is radical in the sense that such scenes would not previously have occurred in films, but it does not characterise what Marwick terms 'an openness and honesty concerning sexual relationships' (see 2.4). The reference to the working class origin of Sally the 'tart', the 'common as dirt' girl who Cliff fails to pick up for casual sex, does not lead, either, to 'a clear-sighted perception of ... class structure' (see 2.4). These two episodes are *characteristic* of the sexually explicit scenes added to the 'new

[55] Osborne, J. (1991) *Déjàvu*, London, Faber and Faber, pp. vii-viii.

wave' film adaptations, additions which, rather than add to the representation of reality, detract from it, as they fall outside the main narrative. The film has, from the start, established misogynist tendencies even more than in the play; the conflict between Jimmy and wife is established without the 'alibi' of class conflict.

2.4.1.3 Sexual explicitness in the film *The Entertainer*

There are also a number of sexually explicit scenes added to the film adaptation of *The Entertainer*. These tend to reinforce traditional values rather than subvert them by their stereotyping of women, and by the way in which the structuring of the scenes fit into Mulvey's 'scopophilic function', i.e. they are viewed from the man's perspective, are unimportant to the main narrative and function mainly as spectacle.

Jean Rice, Archie Rice's daughter, is portrayed as an independent 'liberated' woman, refusing to marry her fiancé Graham because he does not respect her as an individual with a right to her own career and political views. Her sexuality as an 'independent woman' is shown in caricature; she takes the initiative and invites Graham home for sex after they have said good-bye to Mike at the railway station: 'I want to go home [then a sensual inviting look], do you want to come'? Later lying on her bed after a heated argument she whispers to Graham, 'Take me to bed'. The gendered male point of view is visually explicit in the 'love in the caravan scene' between Archie Rice and Tina Lapford: after their lovemaking we are shown Tina in a 'Playboy tableau' fastening her suspenders.

In the 'Miss Great Britain Contest' it is possible to see how 'woman (functions as) an indispensable element of spectacle'; but the representation of gender in this scene is by no means straightforward as it is intertwined with representations of class and culture. The scene can be read as being structurally ironic and critical of mass culture. Seen in this perspective, the extent

to which the representation of gender and class is structurally ironic remains ambiguous. Contemporary reviewers engaged in a vigorous debate regarding the extent to which the film could be read as being critical of British society, especially in relation to the play. It will be more advantageous to first consider the critique of society and mass culture in the plays and their adaptations, especially *The Entertainer,* before finally examining the representation of gender in 'The Miss Great Britain scene'.

2.5 Representations of society in the play *The Entertainer*

The play *The Entertainer* is overtly critical of society and Frank Rice's *angry* lambasting of post-war Britain could have been spoken by Jimmy Porter:

> Look around you. Can you think of any good reason for staying in this cosy little corner of Europe? Don't kid yourself anyone's going to let you do anything, or try anything here, Jeannie. Because they're not. You haven't got a chance. Who are you - you're nobody. You're nobody, you've no money, and you're young. And when you end up it's pretty certain you'll still be nobody, you'll still have no money - the only difference is you'll be *old*! You'd better start thinking about number one, Jeannie, because nobody else is going to do it for you.
> (pp. 67-8)

The Rice family represent a microcosm of British society in the mid-fifties: being both working and middle class they reflect Osborne's own mixed class background. Phoebe is working class, whereas Archie Rice's brother William is solidly middle class like Jean's fiancé Graham. The political spectrum is also represented in the family. Jean is left-wing (she has demonstrated in Trafalgar Square rallies against Britain's involvement in Suez) and her grandfather Billy is right-wing making several discriminatory comments in the play about race and women (tellingly - Billy is portrayed sympathetically). Just as British opinion was divided on involvement in Suez, different views are represented within the family. Frank and Jean Rice represent opposition to

Suez - he is sent to jail for six months for refusing to be conscripted, unlike his brother Mike who willingly helps the imperial cause. The 'I'm all right Jack' aspect of society is criticised throughout the play, and typified by one of Archie Rice's music hall songs:

> We're all out for good old number one,
> Number one's the only one for me!
> Good old England, you're my cup of tea,
> But I don't want no drab equality.
> (p. 32)

The Rice family, as representative of contemporary British society, are all racist to a greater or lesser degree. Billy Rice is overtly racist throughout the play: when Archie mentions their Polish neighbours, Billy remarks, 'Don't talk to me about that bunch of greasy tom-cats!' (p.37). Even Frank Rice who is a pacifist makes a racist remark on hearing about the death of his brother Mike abroad: 'The bastards! *The rotten bastards!* They've killed him! They've killed Mick! Those bloody wogs ... .' (p.73). The 'meaning' of the play is ambiguous here. The majority of contemporary critics saw the play as being structurally ironic: the fact that the Rice family is racist is not to be equated with a didactically reactionary meaning in the play. Giving the text a sympathetic left-wing reading might result in inferring that, despite professed liberal sympathies of those on the 'left', deep down all British are racists. The further inference, seen against the background of Britain's involvement in Suez, is that Britain has its history as a colonial power to thank for contemporary racist attitudes. But the ironic function here, similar to that in *Room at the Top,* is ambiguous, and left-wing critics perhaps read into the text more *angry* radical meanings than Osborne had intended. Considering Osborne's authorship as a whole from a 1990s viewpoint this opinion gains more weight. Jimmy Porter appears not much changed politically in Osborne's last play *Déjàvu*, the sequel to *Look Back in Anger*, but there are no critics today who would characterise the older Jimmy as being a left-wing angry; on the contrary, one commentator remarked that *Déjàvu* 'proved that the "angry young man" had become a

grumpy old blimp'.[56]

The expression of 'emotion' through the medium of an 'authentic' culture is held as more important than political commitment. In a scene with Archie and Jean Rice, Archie tells Jean that when he was in Canada he observed the expression of real emotion, he saw 'an old black whore' singing the blues. Archie believes that if he could just once produce this expression of 'real' emotion he would have achieved something in his life, and he feels this to be more important than Jean's political commitment: 'Better than all your ... rallies in Trafalgar Square' (p.71). Archie reminds us of other 'authentic' cultures (the music hall): 'Oh, he's heard it. Billy's heard it. He's heard them singing. Years ago poor old gubbins' (p. 71). The Edwardian music hall, like blues and jazz in *Look Back in Anger*, are posited as 'authentic' cultures. There is of course a contradiction inherent in the play which criticises a reactionary contemporary society and its culture, which inhibits the expression of real emotion - when it idealises a popular culture such as the Edwardian music hall, which was also reactionary. This, though, is perhaps characteristic of the 'angry young men' in that they initially appear to be radical and committed to a restructuring of society, but, on closer examination their radicalism is seen as thinly disguising conservative views.

2.6 The Entertainer and class

Despite a certain amount of 'levelling-out', Britain remained a class-bound society in the post-war period. This aspect of British society is overtly criticised in both *Look Back in Anger* and *The Entertainer*. The stereotyping of class along the lines plus/minus 'emotion' in 'They call it cricket' is put into practice in both of Osborne's plays. Graham, Jean Rice's boyfriend resembles Alison's brother Nigel, and like Osborne's family on his father's side, is related to a lack of 'emotion': 'You don't have to be afraid, Frank. You needn't worry about being *emotional*, like

[56] *The Times*, 27 December 1994.

my talented fiancé' (p. 75). The middle classes are portrayed as not wanting to have anything to do with ordinary people in the two plays. In *Look Back in Anger* Alison's middle class mother vehemently opposes the marriage of her daughter to working class Jimmy Porter, and Alison's brother, who one day is going 'to end up in the Cabinet [has a] knowledge of life and ordinary human beings [which] is so hazy' (p.20). Similarly, Graham, who wants to marry Jean Rice, wants her to turn her back on her family, who are low on the social scale: 'but I can't see what you can possibly have in common with any of them' (p.83). Portrayal of class is related to the social realist style of the *angry* texts. Lindsay Anderson wanted to represent those 'friendly faces' on the cinema screen, involving a social realist portrayal of working class milieu. In a discussion between Jean and her boyfriend Graham, she criticises him in a 'social realist style' for his middle class lack of ability to relate to people of a lower social scale:

> Have you ever got on a railway train here, got on a train from Birmingham to West Hartlepool? Or gone from Manchester to Warrington or Widnes. And you get out, you go down the street, and on one side maybe is a chemical works, and on the other side is the railway goods yard. Some kids are playing in the street, and you walk up to some woman standing on her doorstep. It isn't a doorstep really because you can walk straight from the street into her front room.
> (pp.84-5)

This description is melodramatic, and suggests, like Anderson's, that it is the view of the outsider; 'squalor' is used for dramatic and decorative effect, the credentials of the speaker are given the stamp of realism and truth.

2.7 Gender, culture and class in *The Entertainer*

In chapter one (1.7.2.2), it was noted how D. E. Cooper had observed the *angry* writers attack on *effeminacy*. In *The Entertainer* negative aspects of mass culture are connected with the working class and the female gender. In the play we see a certain amount of caricaturing in the

representation of women. Phoebe, Archie Rice's working class wife (like Osborne's grandmother, she works at Woolworth's), is stereotyped as a cold and melodramatic middle-aged woman. Archie Rice says of her coldness: 'My wife - not only is she stupid ... , but she's cold as well' (p.59); and of her lack of interest in sex: 'Poor old Phoebe, she's never even enjoyed it very much' (p.70). Her inability to express strong-felt emotion, which weakens her relationship to Archie, is connected with Phoebe's liking for contemporary mass culture (the cinema), with which she is identified. Her superficiality, and that of mass culture, is made clear by the fact that she goes to the pictures but cannot remember the names of the actors or what the film is called:

> Phoebe: The picture? Oh, wasn't up to much. But there was that nice fellow in it, what's his name? ...
> Jean: What was the picture called?
> Phoebe: (laughs) Blimey, you should know better than to ask me that!
> (p.26)

Modern mass culture can be seen as alienating her from her fellow men - a point is made of the fact that she goes to the pictures on her own. This can be seen to contrast with traditional working class and popular pastimes such as the music hall in which the audience are communal and participatory. It is also worth pointing out that Archie's father, Billy Rice, who represents the disappearing 'authentic' tradition of the music hall, would rather stay at home than go to the pictures with Phoebe (p.25).

The negative portrayal of mass culture is given more emphasis in the film by the introduction of the 'Miss Great Britain scene'. Mass culture is shown to be vulgar and dehumanising in its commercial aspect. Representation of mass culture is linked with that of class and gender; working class women are de-humanised as a consequence of the commercialism of mass culture. The 'Miss Great Britain scene' starts off with a shot of the statue of the Venus de Milo (symbolic of high culture) ironically watching over the proceedings. A similar ironic contrast between high

and low culture can also be seen in the 'new wave' film *A Taste of Honey* in which we see a burlesque of Van Gogh's 'Fascination' on the sea-front at Blackpool. The authorial viewpoint of the negative aspects of 'low' or mass culture is also expressed by focusing on the banal and lewd behaviour of Archie Rice, host of the contest, and the 'uncouth' behaviour of some of the crowd.

This scene is linked to other scenes where the negative aspect of mass culture is emphasised. At the beginning of the film, while the credits are rolling, Archie Rice is linked with one aspect of mass culture, that of television. As Jeans walks along the sea front outside the theatre where Archie works, the camera zooms in on a pavement hoarding advertising Archie as 'T.V. & RADIO'S SAUCIEST COMIC'. The father of a working class family (their class is established by their northern dialect) shows himself to be 'lowbrow' by loudly expressing, 'He's never been on T.V.'; association with television also establishes Arthur Rice as a 'non-authentic' music hall performer. The same family are seen continuing their 'low brow' behaviour when the father comments of one of the beauty contestants: 'She's a smasher', much to the annoyance of his wife, characterised as 'silly' by her comment: 'Give over father!' Archie Rice joins in the 'fun' by smartly replying: 'Don't look so worried lady, your old man may be a bit *square* but he still loves to go in for the curves'. In the film, the slang of the fifties pop culture, such as the word *square,* which is used ironically throughout, identifies those characters associated with mass culture. The pop culture is satirised in the 'youth club scene' by the poor rendering by an amateur rock-and-skiffle group, *The Clippers,* of the pop song, *Baby, Baby you're So Square*. The song is a parody (unintentional on the part of the group) of the songs popular at the time such as Buddy Holly's *Baby I Don't Care* (*you're so square*). This scene illustrates a paternalist and intellectually arrogant outlook of the upper-middle class film-makers, who on the pretence of giving a group of 'young hopefuls' an opening in show business, are actually making ironic comment.[57] The word 'square' crops up again in the song which forms a frame to the play and

[57] In the publicity material, the group are presented as young hopefuls 'planning to go professional'. They are portrayed in the film as representatives of a new pop culture, but this presentation is done in such a musically and

the film, ‘Why Should I care’; it is directly associated with the lack of emotion and feeling:

> Why should I care
> Why should I let it touch me
> ...
> What’s the use of despair
> If they call you a *square*

Those who are not followers of the pop culture are *square*, i.e. old fashioned, such as Billy Rice. The song ties together the alienation in a new affluent society (‘why should I let it touch me’), and the alienation of those corrupted by a new mass (pop) culture: those who are not ‘square’.

The banality and superficiality of the ‘Miss Great Britain contest’ (and consequently of mass culture) is also established by Archie’s listing of the girls’ trivial and absurd ‘likes’ and ‘dislikes’: ‘she likes weightlifting, and dislikes men with beards’; another: ‘she likes steaks, dislikes getting up in the morning and has no hobbies’. In this manner, the women are dehumanised; their worth as human beings is summed up in two or three ‘likes’ and ‘dislikes’, which minimise their intellectual qualities; these are further minimised by their parading of their physical attributes. The fact that the winner is given the title ‘Miss Great Britain’, suggests that the highest ideal any woman in Britain can hope to reach is a passive one, i.e. physical beauty and youth, which cannot be actively sought. Physical beauty is seen as a commodity: a hoarding tells us that the winner will receive £1,000. Archie Rice views the beauty contest as a kind of slave market, by complaining that it is not. He expresses this idea on leaving the pub, ‘The Rockcliffe’, on his way to the contest: ‘Oh they don’t understand the business in this country, oh they don’t! On the continent they put the girls up for sale when it is finished. They do’. He often samples the ‘wares on offer’, noted by his wife Phoebe: ‘I wonder which one Archie has picked

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visually unsympathetic manner that it can be seen as associative editing on the part of the film-makers, where their views regarding pop culture are all too evident.

out for himself'. The women in the beauty contest are portrayed as making the best of their saleable quality, but they are also shown as being cold and emotionless. Tina Lapford, who wins second prize in the contest, is easily 'picked up' by Archie, who resembles an old and tired Don Juan: 'You look thirsty, how about a little drink with me'? He quickly promises Tina a part in a new show and in the following scene, presumably the next day, she takes up Archie's invitation to spend the afternoon in a caravan, where they have sex ('love in a caravan scene'). The shallowness of Tina's character is made clear towards the end of the scene: After love-making, Tina, talking about the new show and her part in it, asks Archie, 'Do you think I'm in love with you Archie'?

In a similar manner to the play and the film *Look Back in Anger*, there are two levels of meaning: explicit and implicit. Few critics today can afford to ignore the blatant misogyny in *Look Back in Anger*. In *The Entertainer,* the meanings are more ambiguous, but the manner in which the explicit and implicit intertwine are identical. The film *The Entertainer,* overtly criticises mass culture in the 'Miss Great Britain Contest', but in the process uses a patriarchal structuring of filming. It has already been noted that the 'woman as erotic object interrupts the flow of the narrative ... the flow of action is interrupted in moments of erotic contemplation' (see 1.7.2.1); this is prominent in the 'new wave' films because a great number of the sexually explicit scenes are additions, and remain outside the main narrative. Mulvey notes how this 'problem' of fitting 'spectacle' into narrative is overcome: 'For instance, the device of the show-girl allows the two looks to be unified technically without any apparent break in the diegesis' (Mulvey, *Visual and other Pleasures*, 1989, p.19). Thus, the 'Miss Great Britain Contest' on one level satirises mass culture, but on another level reinforces patriarchal attitudes in displaying 'woman as erotic object'. The representation of class is also very important. Nowhere in British society is 'class' more evident than 'on holiday at the seaside'. The 'Miss Great Britain Contest' is portrayed as a mindless working class pursuit: both contestants and audience are working class. The statue of the *Venus de Milo* is included as satiric comment by the film-makers, but its inclusion testifies to

the film-makers' condescending attitudes towards popular pastimes and their position as self-appointed arbiters of taste.

2.8 Conclusion

Ironically, the film-makers' attempt at satire is reflexive: they criticise popular culture, but the manner in which they ladle their anti- mass culture message with a large didactic spoon assumes a popular audience, as they aim at the lowest intellectual common denominator. The plays represented a new *angry* working class provincialism, yet were first seen by a sophisticated middle class metropolitan audience. The *angry* aspect of the plays, their public voice, was edited out in the adapted films shown to a popular audience mainly comprised of working and lower-middle class cinema-goers. There are many examples of the heavy-handed satiric manner of the director, for example the close-up shot of a statue of Venus de Milo before the Miss Great Britain contest in *The Entertainer*. In chapter one (1.2) it was noted that 'a commercial film with its massive "open" exposure tells us a good deal more about the *mores* of a society than a novel'. It has been shown in chapter two that both the Richardson 'new wave' film adaptations were more conservative than the original Osborne plays; primarily, this was because of their editing of the 'public voice', but also because of their *inclusion* of sexual explicitness, an explicitness which lay outside the main narrative and stereotyped women and class in a discriminatory fashion. If we reason that 'film tells us more about the *mores* of society than theatre' it might be reasoned that society was *not* radically changing, and that the *explicitness* of the films allowed a prejudice to surface which was previously dormant. The appeal to the 'lowest common denominator' meant an emphasis of the private voice: the introduction of additional sexually explicit scenes; a sexual explicitness which, contrary to Marwick's hypothesis of an 'openness and honesty concerning sexual relationships', reinforced rather than subverted traditional values of gender relationships. It was argued that *Look Back in Anger* was misogynist, as evident from the stereotyped descriptions of Helena and Alison, generic of certain types of women seen from

a subjective male perspective. In *The Entertainer* meanings are more ambiguous because of the ironic structure of the play, but there is also some stereotyping of women. One reading of *The Entertainer* views the play as explicitly criticising a racist, homophobic and class-bound society, but it never takes any definite standpoint on these issues in the way it does concerning its critique of mass culture. The play gives a sympathetic portrayal of a traditional, popular and working class culture (the music hall), and contrasts this with a negative portrayal of contemporary mass culture, but the importance of positing different cultural values is subordinated to Osborne's main concern, that of giving his (middle class) audience 'lessons in feeling'.

Despite these 'criticisms', both the plays and the adapted 'new wave' films must also be seen in relation to those texts which they 'superseded', such as the non-realist plays of Rattigan, and films such as *Brief Encounter* with its suffocating portrayal of relations between the sexes. Osborne's plays need no commending as they have now achieved institutional status, and the 'new wave' films are still considered as a milestone in British film-making. The thesis assumes, though, that these texts are on the whole critically seen as being radical, and is concerned with the *extent* which they may be deemed radical. The plays and their adaptations are both radical and conservative: radical in their portrayal, but conservative in their reiteration of traditional sexual roles and subjective in their portrayal of class and society. They are in one sense evidence of limited change. A limited change as commented on by Alison: 'Jimmy is hurt because everything is the same' (p.28).

Chapter 3 Room at the Top

3.1 Introduction - the novel and film

"[*Room at the Top*] was accorded top-of-page treatment in *The Evening Standard* and Richard Lister announced that Braine herewith stepped 'right up beside Kingsley Amis and John Osborne as a leading member of the new school of young writers'" (Allsop, *The Angry Decade*, 1958, p. 79). The novel was an immediate critical and commercial success, and it was considered by critics as depicting a new type of 'angry young man'. It was pigeon-holed as an *angry* novel, because of its young, raw and virile working class male protagonist, Joe Lampton, and the northern social realist urban setting. The novel was first published in 1957 and adapted to film in 1959 (director: Jack Clayton). Both the novel and the film are seen as important in forefronting cultural trends in the late fifties and early sixties. The novel sold 35,000 copies within the first year, eventually selling over a million copies; it was followed by the sequel *Life at the Top* (1962). A television series called *Man at the Top* was a development of the original novel and film adaptation. Both the film and the television series were devoid of much of the irony of the novel: the social critique of British post-war society which a number of commentators read into the text. The novel and its adaptation, though, have now faded somewhat in reputation, and receive sparse attention by the critics.

The film is considered to be the first in the 'new wave' cycle of films. The common denominator of these 'new wave' films is the *angry* realist source literary texts from which they are adapted. These texts have *angry* young working class male protagonists and are set in northern and midland urban milieus. Marwick notes a discrepancy between the period of the setting of the novel and the film: 'The novel is quite firmly set in the late forties ... there is quite a striking stress on the wearing of hats. ... In general, although the chronology is not made terribly clear, the sets and costumes of the film are those of the fifties' (*Journal of Contemporary History,* vol. 2, no. 3, Autumn 1988, p. 134). This is only partly correct: in the film, the character of Jack

Wales, Joe Lampton's main rival, is established by comparing his wartime career with that of Joe's, and Joe reminisces on other occasions, as he does in the novel, on his wartime experiences. This would be inappropriate if the film was supposed to take place some ten years after the war. Although, as Marwick remarks, the chronology is not made clear in the film, in comparison with the Richardson 'new wave' films, *Room at the Top* seems dated. Richardson's 'new wave' films are firmly placed in their historical context by their askance look at aspects of mass culture. The jazz soundtracks of the Richardson films also make them seem more contemporary: aural contrast explicitly favours the 'beatnik' *angry* culture contra the mass pop culture. The background music in *Room at the Top* by Mario Nascimbene dates the film and would not be out of place in a film from an earlier decade, and there is also little reference to mass or youth culture in Clayton's film.

3.1.1 Reception of the novel and film

Times-were-a-changin, concludes Marwick on his evaluation of the film *Room at the Top*: 'The features, then, which make the film *Room at the Top* a social document of great significance are: its treatment of sex; its treatment of class, not merely the rigidities, inequalities, and antagonisms of class, but just as important, the possibilities for mobility and change' (*Journal of Contemporary History,* vol. 2, no. 3, Autumn 1988, p. 134). A number of commentators felt, though, that the film was not as faithful to reality in its representation of society and class as the novel. One reviewer commented that 'John Braine's book was acclaimed as a truthful social document of our times. But, oddly enough this is the least satisfactory aspect of the film'.[58] Marwick's statement relates to the main purpose of this thesis: to consider to what extent the *angry* literary and filmic texts can be considered as evidence and cause of radical change, especially cultural change. In chapter two, in the discussion of the two Osborne plays and their adaptations, it was concluded that these were less than radical and characteristic of limited rather

[58] *Reynolds News*, 25 January, 1959.

than radical change. Jimmy Porter was upset because 'times weren't-a-changin'; Joe Lampton, on the other hand, reaps full benefit of the fact that 'times-were-a-changin', or does he?

The majority of contemporary critics regarded the film *Room at the Top* as a watershed in British cinema in much the same way as Osborne's play had been viewed in British theatre three years earlier. Paddy Whannel in the *Universities Left Review* was characteristic of those critics when he commented: 'In its frankness before physical love, its willingness to explore social experiences representative of the post-war period ... this film is far ahead of anything produced by the British cinema, certainly since the war'.[59] To what extent the critics saw the film as a successful and faithful adaptation of the novel varied; this can be partly accounted for by the different interpretations of the novel. By the time of the novel's publication, the 'angry' label had become established in critical and journalistic circles; new 'angry' books were given *angry* left-wing readings which were not necessarily intended by the authors. Braine had professed his socialist sympathies on several occasions, but his socialism, like that of other *angry* authors, was vague. He did not feel that his role as author committed him to any special responsibility towards his publicly professed politics: 'Braine states flatly that he didn't write *Room at the Top* with any conscious propaganda intention of criticising modern society' (Allsop, *The Angry Decade*, 1958, p.85). Nevertheless, critics tended to interpret *Room at the Top* as a radical critique of contemporary society: '*Room at the Top* seems to me an anti-materialist Odyssey, the journey of a man to riches and a spiritual destruction made more acute by the fact that he rarely regrets that destruction' (Bogdanor, *The Age of Affluence*, 1970, p.265). This reading assumes an unambiguous ironic structural narrative function. The inclusion of a structurally ironic device in a novel, which suggests a didactic approach to literature, would seem to contradict Braine's pragmatic approach to novel writing.[60] This chapter does not accept this contemporary reading of

[59] See microfiche of contemporary newspaper reviews of *Room at the Top*, British Film Institute.

[60] See for example: Braine, J. (1974) *Writing a Novel*, London, Methuen; in which he describes a 'practical' approach to writing a novel.

the novel 'as social critique' and sees, rather, the role of the narrator as being characterised by his *ambiguity*. Consideration of the novel in relationship to John Braine's authorship as a whole would suggest a different reading: the author and his protagonists revel in the fruits of 'T'Top (the affluent society). With no hint of irony, Braine describes middle class Warley (Warnley in the film) in other guises on several occasions in his writings. In a newspaper interview he gave this description of Hampstead, a sophisticated 'Warley' in London, where he settled later in life: 'Hampstead is a village within a village where people live and where, in parts, whatever you look at gives your eyes pleasure. I've never been so happy in my whole life. ... Hampstead welcomes people instantly and I felt myself a part of the place from the start'.[61] This 'personification' of Hampstead is surprisingly similar to that of Warley in the novel. Another reading of the novel and film might see a basically reactionary philosophy: one of social mobility being a goal for a section of the working classes who see improved conditions for their class within society as unlikely. In one sense this reflects a certain reality: a sizable section of the working class community have traditionally voted Conservative, and might envisage Joe Lampton as a certain kind of working class 'type' who realises their dreams. Both the novel and the film can also be considered as less than radical in their representations of society, class and gender which are not necessarily part of an overarching ironic structure of the novel.

3.2 Joe-narrator and Joe-hero[62]: ambiguous irony

The novel is in the first person and told by 'Joe-narrator', the older and wiser Joe, who, from the standpoint of 1956, looks back with a partly critical eye on the escapades of 'Joe-hero', the younger Joe Lampton in 1947-48. The story is told, then, when the period of affluence is well under way, about a character striving to better his position in a period of austerity. The plot of the

[61] *Hampstead and Highgate Express*, 4 October 1985, p.23.
[62] These two terms are used in Laing, S. (1986) *Representations of Working-Class Life*, p. 71.

novel is relatively simple, as referred to in the novel itself, 'the swineherd ends up with the princess'. Joe Lampton, who comes from working class Dufton, is the son of a mill worker. He was a sergeant in the Second World War, and spent some time in a prisoner of war camp, where he used his time to study accountancy (which hardly seems to add to the novel's 'realism'). All Joe's values are related to money; he even sees women in terms of money - the best looking women (Grade One women) going to the men with most money, and the worst women (Grade Twelve) going to men with the lowest income. Joe moves to middle class Warley in 1947 where he takes up a post in the City Accountant's Office. After Joe has moved to Warley, he forms relationships with two women from higher social classes (hypergamy). In this, the novel resembles *Look Back in Anger*, where two middle class women vie with each other to gain the favours of a working class stud. He falls in love with both of the women, but his love towards the older and more urbane Alice is more intense. Joe banks on his 'lesser love' Susan Brown, the daughter of a rich industrialist, exploiting this relationship because Susan is his ticket to 'the Top'. In order to carry out his plan to reach 'the Top', he cannot be true to himself and develop his 'real' relationship with Alice. His plan involves his 'third love', the strongest of all his loves, the love of middle class Warley, the town which symbolises everything Joe values in life: 'I had to love Warley properly too, ... I couldn't leave it. And if I married Alice I'd be forced to leave it' (p. 197). Joe makes the 'wrong' choice: he chooses Susan and rejects Alice. After being rejected, Alice drives to a drunken death. Joe has to 'learn to smile as he kills, if he wants to be like the folks on the hill.'[63] Joe feels guilty about her death, 'I murdered Alice' (p. 235), but

[63] John Lennon's *Working Class Hero*:
There's Room at the Top they're telling you still

shows neither guilt nor remorse publicly: 'He [Joe Lampton] always said and did the correct thing and never embarrassed anyone with an unseemly display of emotion' (p.219).

3.2.1 An *angry* reading of the text: unambiguous irony

The novel was given an *angry* reading by contemporary commentators who regarded the narrative function as didactic, seeing it as an ironic structural device. Given this reading, Joe-narrator is wiser, frequently interrupting the narrative to point out the 'wrong' choices Joe-hero makes. This is illustrated in the episode where Joe-hero breaks off his relationship with Alice because she has worked as an artist's model and posed 'in the nude' (p.115), the older and more urbane Joe-Narrator is critical of Joe-hero: 'Looking back, I can see exactly how it happened' (p.115). Joe-narrator uses Alice to criticise Joe-hero, she calls him a 'narrow-minded prude from Dufton' (p.116). Thus, the novel characterises different working and middle class values in the two 'characters', Joe-narrator and Joe-hero: Joe-narrator has absorbed the liberal-minded urbanity of middle class Warley, whereas Joe-hero, although anxious to get away from his working class roots, is still characterised by his narrow-minded working class morality.

3.2.2 Ambiguous narrative function

There is no clear-cut differentiation of values, though, between Joe-narrator and Joe-hero, making the narrative function ambiguous. The 1950s reader could, perhaps more easily than the 1990s reader, differentiate between the two; Joe-narrator does not always 'reprimand' Joe-hero, when he behaves in a manner which might be seen as being morally apprehensible, and when Joe-hero is reprimanded we are not always convinced of Joe-narrator's sincerity. There is a distinct *picaresque* flavour to *Room at the Top*; this is already signalled on the inside cover:

But first you must learn how to smile as you kill
If you want to be like the folks on the hill

> I was the devil of a fellow, I was the lover of a married woman, I was taking out the daughter of one of the richest men in Warley, there wasn't a damn thing I couldn't do. Say what you like of me when I was younger; but I certainly wasn't blasé.[64]

This is spoken by Joe-narrator and hardly suggests a consistently admonitory voice. It is reminiscent of picaresque novels such as *Moll Flanders* in which the heroine is explicitly criticised but implicitly applauded. Similarly, explicitly, the older Joe-narrator criticises the younger Joe-hero. Critics interpreted this as a criticism of the affluent society which was responsible for 'creating' men like Joe Lampton, men who discarded their traditional authentic working class culture and values on their journey to 'the Top'. Implicitly, though, the present-day reader feels that the scales come down in favour of Joe-hero and the affluent society and that Joe's uncompromising ambition to see his plan through witnesses a rugged individualism. Firstly, there is the powerful impact of Joe-hero's picaresque 'present tense dialogue'. This is characterised by an intermittent use of Yorkshire dialect by Joe-hero. Ironically, Joe-hero reverts to his native working class dialect on those occasions when his aggressive individuality is emphasised - this is contrasted with the anaemic standard English of Joe-narrator. The use of dialect in the novel, then, is not realistic, as it is used inconsistently and only for effect. For example, Bill Naughton's *Alfie,* written during the same period, uses dialect consistently - the first person narrator (now older and wiser) uses the same cockney dialect as the younger version of himself in the novel. If it was the author's intention to use the narrative function in a didactic manner (which seems unlikely), then it was unsuccessful, as there is no real distancing of values between Joe-hero and Joe-narrator. There is of course the third alternative: the reader is meant to look askance at the morals of both Joe-narrator *and* Joe-hero. It seems unlikely, however, that the author should employ such an intricate narrative function in this novel when he did not do so in

[64] Not quite as dramatic as the title page of *Moll Flanders* but written in the same picaresque 'style': 'twelve year a whore, five times a Wife (whereof once to her own Brother), Twelve Year a Thief, Eight Year a Transported Felon in Virginia.'

his later novels. This evaluation of the novel, though, will imagine such an *invisible* function and look askance at both Joe-narrator and Joe-hero in order to consider the author's representations of society, class and gender. For example: Joe-narrator is critical of Joe-hero's treatment of women, but on examination, Joe-narrator's system of values are not dissimilar to those of Joe-hero.

The blatant misogyny of *Room at the Top* belongs to Joe-hero. It is best illustrated by the grading of women by Joe and his friend Charles. They had made the observation that 'the more money a man had the better looking was his wife' (p. 36). The women are graded by Joe and Charles from One to Twelve according to what income group they can expect to find a husband. This misogynist system of grading women can be found in other *angry* texts. The plot of *Lucky Jim* hinges on a similar grading. Jim Dixon is stuck with a neurotic girl, Margaret, who belongs to the 'huge class (of women) ... destined to provide his [Jim Dixon's] own womenfolk' (p.39). In *Room at the Top* Joe Lampton is in a similar predicament to Jim Dixon. Joe is 'profoundly depressed [at the thought that he is restricted by his low income to choosing a] Grade Six wife' (pp. 37-8). Joe plans to capture Susan who 'was Grade Two - if not One' (p. 38), from class enemy, upper class Jack Wales. Similarly, Jim Dixon plans to win Christine from Bertrand Welch who is from a higher social class. Jim Dixon shares Joe Lampton's view of 'women as chattel', when he observes that Bertrand can demand women who belong to a higher grade: 'The notion that women like this [Christine] were never on view except as property of men like Bertrand' (p.39). The *angry* reading, though, assumes that an unambiguous narrator will see Joe's misogyny as that of a new 'classless' group of men thrown up by a new affluent society, young men 'on the make'. This new 'class' have jettisoned traditional values and taken on a new materialist code of ethics. Joe-narrator can be seen as being critical to this system of grading. Alice is not included in the grading system, and it is Joe-narrator who points back at some of Joe-hero's 'foolish' actions towards Alice. Joe-narrator, then, can be seen as distancing himself from the representation of women as no more than slave market chattel to be bought and sold.

Given the *angry* reading, the ironic function of two personas - one young and cynical - the other older, wiser and more 'humane' - is a device by which the novel adopts a critical stance to social mobility, a social mobility which involves an emphasis on material values and a diminishing of humane values.

Narrative ambivalence clouds the thematic content of the novel. The novel has two themes which are morally and ethically opposed: on the one hand there is the condemnation of Joe-hero, who sweeps aside humane values in his quest for material gain and social advancement, and, on the other hand, there is the applauding of a 'self-help' ethic by which Joe-hero acquires those trappings of wealth and position not normally obtained by men of his class. The urbanity and liberal-mindedness of Joe-narrator is a by-product of the wealth acquired by the immoral doings of Joe-hero. The misogyny of Joe-narrator hardly differs from that of Joe-hero, especially seen from a present-day perspective. This can be seen in the last chapter, when urbane Joe-narrator 'criticises' the provincial boorishness and narrow-mindedness of Joe-hero in his treatment of Alice, which is seen as resulting in her gory death. Joe-narrator's moral distancing from Joe-hero is established in the last chapter before Joe-hero goes on a binge by the use of the third person: Joe in retrospect refers to himself as if he was another person, '"I didn't like Joe Lampton"' (p. 219). In this manner, the older narrator distances himself as far as possible from the 'sin' which the younger Joe has committed. Joe decides to console himself after hearing of Alice's death by going on a pub binge. The binge which is used to show the moral abyss into that Joe has sunken is painted in a grotesque manner. Joe meets lewd homosexuals, a cheap tart whom he has sexual intercourse with in a woodyard, and he is beaten up by two men, the girl's boyfriend and another man. The homosexuals he meets are called 'pansies', and one of them is described in grotesquely feminine terms: 'He had dyed hair of a metallic yellow and smelled of geraniums' (p. 222). The description of the scene with the lurid homosexuals highlights Joe's 'masculinity'; the inference is that Joe-hero might sink so low as to have shabby and casual sexual intercourse with someone of the lowest class, but he is still a *man*, even more so as his animal instincts have driven him to

such depths of degradation. The 'pick-up' or 'hot piece of stuff' (Mavis) he plies with drinks in order to seduce is described in a manner which suggests she belongs to the lumpen-proletariat: she has 'frizzy blonde hair ... (and) her upper teeth were scored horizontally with a brown line of decay' (pp. 226-7). The explicit purpose of Joe-narrator's description is to be critical of Joe-hero, but the present-day reader tends to be critical of the 'description' rather than the 'episode', critical of Joe-narrator's system of values which he uses in painting the scene, rather than of Joe-hero. The description reveals attitudes in its construction of gender, which can hardly be differentiated from the attitudes inherent in Joe-hero's 'grading system'.

The ironic structure of the novel is dependent on the first person narrator, Joe-narrator, distancing himself from his younger self, Joe-hero. This narrative function, unsuitable for the medium of cinema, is discarded in the adaptation. In the film, the 'present' is that of the 'past' of the novel: the adventures of Joe-hero devoid of Joe-narrator's observations. Despite the discarding of the ironic device of the first-person narrator, it might be said that the film has a more powerful irony for other reasons. The viewer is not required to sympathise with the main protagonist, something demanded by the first person narrator of the novel. The observations of Joe-narrator in the novel make Joe seem a somewhat introspective figure; in the film Joe is more brash and arrogant, devoid of his conscience (Joe-narrator) sitting on his shoulder. In the film, the viewer is encouraged to adopt the role of Joe-narrator and look critically at Joe-hero. Contemporary critics saw the film as realistic: 'At last, at long, long last, a British film that talks about life here today - not during the war, not in the jungle or desert, not in some unimaginable script-writer's suburbia or stately home, but slap in the middle of our time and place'.[65] This view is of course based on the contrast with the British cinema which preceded *Room at the Top.* Changing conventions of realism mean that present-day viewers will probably find the film 'Dickensian' rather than realistic: working class Joe Lampton (Laurence Harvey) speaks in a

[65] Isabel Quigly in *The Spectator,* 30 January 1959.

broad 'Lithuanian' Yorkshire dialect and Alice (Simone Signoret), who Joe of the novel saw as a challenge because she is English middle class, conveniently changes her nationality in the film to accommodate audiences who could not associate a British actress with sexuality (erotic films certified 'X' had been primarily imported from the Continent since the early fifties).[66] Despite this, by present-day standards, disrespect for 'realism', Joe's Lithuanian Yorkshire brogue, and Simone Signoret's erotic French sultriness add enormously to the structural irony of the film, making the film appear more socially critical than the novel. Joe Lampton's Yorkshire dialect, only employed intermittently in the novel, and then only by Joe-hero, is used consistently in the film, and Laurence Harvey tends to exaggerate the dialect so that it becomes symbolic of brashness (realism is also diminished in present-day viewings by fact that Yorkshire 'brashness' became a stock-in-trade joke of comedians, it was, for example, satirised in *Billy Liar*). The difference between Alice (Simone Signoret) and Susan (Heather Sears) is made visual in the film: Heather Sears gives Simonet Signoret poor competition, and makes Joe's preference for Susan rather than Alice seem more of a 'moral' mistake than in the book. This comes about for two reasons: casting, and the original characterisation of Susan. Joe-narrator's highly subjective way of viewing women is made more tangible in the film. Susan in the novel is a 'Grade-One' woman, but behaves like a trite and spoilt English schoolgirl, and would receive a grade-ten in any other male chauvinist's book; Heather Sear's interpretation of the role enhances this English schoolgirl gawkiness rather than her 'grade-one' aspect. Susan brightly remarks in a fun-fair manner to a despondent Joe, 'Oh Joe, wasn't it super?' after their lovemaking for the first time (see plate 6); the scene and remark sum up the triteness of their affair. Joe's deeper relationship with Alice is symbolised by the wind-swept coastal setting of their West Country cottage, where they retreat secretly (see plate 5). Simone Signoret had considerable experience in playing seductresses, acting the role of prostitute several times in the French cinema, and it seemed natural to give the role of Alice to a French actress in Britain's first sexually explicit film (see

[66] Oddly enough, the two main roles were played by 'foreigners' in Britain's 'first' working class realist film. Several reviewers remarked on the non-authenticity of Lithuanian-born Laurence Harvey's Yorkshire dialect.

plate 4). In the minds of British cinema audiences, sex was something that was imported from the continent, as expressed by Vic Brown in *A Kind of Loving*: '"Was this picture hot stuff?" "Oh, X certificate and all that," he says. ... Be in French, I suppose?" ... "Well I don't mind these foreign films when there's a bit of tit or summat to see"'.[67] Joe's 'wrong choice', then, in the film is made the more obvious; apart from the differing attributes of the two women, Joe's relationship to Alice is more visually explicit, and portrayed as deeper and more meaningful. The film, then, emphasises more so than the novel the brashness of classless Joe and the wrongness of his choices, and in this way the film is seen as being critical of the materialism of British post-war society. The final irony of the film is of course Joe's tears at the end, when he and Susan are driving to T'Top after their wedding. Susan assumes these to be tears of joy, but the audience know better - they are tears of sadness, the sadness of making the wrong decision in not choosing Alice. The film, though, is similar to the novel in its thematic ambiguity. Joe's failures are never sufficiently dramatised, and it is evident that a popular audience probably preferred the roguish element of Joe's character, which was given more emphasis in the television follow-up *Man at the Top*.

3.3 Realist representations of society and class - the novel

As quoted above, Marwick sees the film *Room at the Top* as evidence of 'mobility' (3.1.1). If by this he means that the career of Joe Lampton from poor to rich is itself evidence of this, then the same might be said about other periods of history, as 'rags to riches' is a common plot of both narrative fiction and cinema. The upward career of Joe Lampton is not particularly realistic, but part of the dream world of fiction in which the reader can identify with roguish heroes not burdened with troublesome consciences. The reader 'thinks' on reading of the adventures of Joe: 'there but for the grace of God go I'. 'Mobility', then, being nothing new in the world of fiction, Joe uses a self-help Victorian philosophy, like Pip in *Great Expectations:* he wants to become a

[67] Barstow, S. (1986) *A kind of Loving,* London, Black Swan, p. 50.

gentleman so he can woo his ‘Estella’, or in Joe’s case, ‘the girl with the Riviera sun-tan’. Joe, like Pip, soon discovers that being a gentleman means a moral decline, a decline described in terms of class. Once Pip had become a gentleman he turns his back on working class Joe Gargery who brought him up, just as Joe Lampton turns his back on his working class aunt and uncle in Dufton. The novel is naturalistic, though, in the sense that the protagonist is developed and changed by his environment: the social and economic forces of contemporary society. If we consider this naturalism as part of an unambiguous ironic structural device, Joe Lampton is a typical product of the welfare state and the affluent society. The moral ethic of this society is ‘I’m all right Jack’, an ethic illustrated by Joe’s ‘wrong choice’ (his choice of Susan who represents money and the norms of society, rather than Alice who represents ‘real’ love, but is outside the norms of society). This reading sees the novel as criticising a society which encourages people to make these wrong choices. The naturalism/realism of the novel is limited by its ‘middle-brow’ style, what Kenneth Allsop calls ‘woman’s magazine serialese’ (*The Angry Decade,* 1958, p.81). Braine expressed that he had a kind of realism as a basis for his novel writing: ‘to show his age as it really is’ (*The Angry Decade*, 1958, p.84). The plot of the novel somewhat calls this realism into question as it is clichéd: ‘poor working class boy attends drama society - meets factory owner’s daughter - makes her pregnant - offered job by dad - marries daughter - doesn’t live happily ever after’.

3.3.1 a Promotional material for the film. Plates 4,5 and 6

Plate 4. The 'explicitness' of the love scenes referred to the language rather than the lovers' state of undress. Although filmed lying on a bed, they kept their underwear on.

Plate 5. Joe (Laurence Harvey) and Alice (Simone Signoret) make love on the wet sea shore of their romantic West country weekend hideaway.

Plate 6. After losing her virginity Susan gaily chirps to a despondent Joe, 'Oh Joe, wasn't it super, wasn't it simply super!' This candidness about sex was new for British cinema audiences, especially coming from a young English middle class girl.

3.3.1 Realism: *Room at the Top* - Britain's first 'adult' film

The realism of the *angry* literary texts was not new, but an established style, used in the context of the fifties and sixties, as a vehicle of opposition by the *angry* authors who wanted to distance themselves from the modern, the experimental and the 'non-realist' middle class dramas of Rattigan, Coward and Eliot. Cinema in Britain was relatively new as a medium and industry, and in one sense still attempting to establish itself from a national cultural standpoint. Hill sees the realist innovation in the British cinema during this period in economic terms: partly a response to the challenge from television (see 2.4); Higson explains the realism of 'new wave' as part of a continuing British tradition (see 1.5). Whatever the reasons were for the flowering of realism in the British cinema, it was, unlike the realism of the *angry* literary texts, innovative, and to a great extent welcomed uncritically by reviewers. As for instance Isabel Quigly, quoted above, who remarked: 'at long last, a British film that talks about here today' (3.2.2). The realism of the films was seen as an undisputed fact and not as dependent on conventions governed by the quirks of time and place. The conventions of British realist cinema were highly stylistic, though, and a narrow prescriptive recipe was demanded in order to qualify as 'realism': northern and midland urban settings filmed in journalistic black and white, and young white male working class protagonists who sexually strut their way through the narrative. This prescriptive recipe was restricted to a British context, as can be witnessed by considering the reviews of non-British critics, who often had views similar to American Walter Staloff. He questions the film's realism and felt it to be a 'pot full of gimmicks'.[68] The conventions of realism change with time, and present-day reviewers are often left unimpressed by the film's realism, for example, Peter Waymark made the following comment: '[the film] has dated, much of it now seems as contrived as Laurence Harvey's vowels'.[69]

Customers who find Britain's first *adult* film, *Room at the Top,* on the adult shelf at their local

[68] *The Sentinel*, January, 1960.
[69] *The Times*, 19 October 1985.

video-rental shop and furtively sneak it home to view will be sorely disappointed, because in the words of Vic Brown they won't find a 'bit of tit' in the whole film. The term *adult* was once synonymous with realism and serious art in British cinema, whereas now it is synonymous with soft-porn and 'non-art'. The devaluation of the term signals a change in the complex relationship between art, censorship, pornography and realism in the British cinema over the last thirty years. This changing relationship has received little critical attention, and will only be briefly touched upon here as it lies outside the scope of this thesis. The Free Cinema film-makers equated working class realism with serious art. Alan Lovell has described 'British documentary as our Art cinema'.[70] In reviews of *Room at the Top* critics frequently collated and equated the words *real*, *adult* and *serious*. with each other: not only was *Room at the Top* the 'the most "adult" film on sex ever to be made in this country',[71] but British cinema was seen as '(coming) of age'[72] with the release of the first 'new wave' film. Realism and serious art were seen by critics as the industry's challenge to censorship: the development of sexual explicitness in British cinema. If we ignore the fact that the conventions of realism are not necessarily governed by the relationship between the genre and reality but rather by the quirks of place and time, the following question might be asked: to what extent was there a relationship between the film and the social reality which it attempted to portray?

3.3.2 Realism and the sense of *place* in *Room at the Top*

Description of *place* is all-important in the novel because of the equating of place, character and class. In the first four chapters of the novel the older Joe (Joe-narrator) describes the experiences of the younger Joe (Joe-hero) on his first meeting with middle class Warley (Warnley in the film); this is contrasted in rich detail with his working class birth place Dufton. Joe-hero views Warley as paradise on Earth and Dufton as hell. Warley is affluent, liberal and its inhabitants

[70] Alan Lovell, *The British Cinema, The Unknown Cinema* (London: British Film Institute, 1969), p.2.
[71] *News Chronicle*, 23 January 1959.
[72] *Daily Herald*, 23 January 1959.

know how to enjoy life, Dufton is poor, and the poverty of the place makes its inhabitants narrow-minded and incapable of enjoying life. This representation of working and middle class milieus, and their contrasting, is, to a great extent, edited from the film, probably because of the difficulties of translating the narrative function of the novel. The same urban milieus in the film form only a backdrop. The film occurs in the 'present', whereas the novel is retrospective, which permits an emphasis on the contrast in detail of the different class milieus by its constant movement in time ('flashbacks') and place. This would prove very difficult to recreate in the film, as the main thread of the narrative of Joe-hero in the 'present' would become too diffuse. To present this aspect of the novel would require a freer adaptation of the novel - something which the film-makers shied away from. The film is more successful, though, in its representation of place than *Look Back in Anger*, where in the play we are told that the 'action throughout takes place ... in the Midlands' (p. 7); but the sense of place is never established in the play or film, and is irrelevant to the narrative.

3.4 The representation of class and gender in *Room at the Top*

Room at the Top, like *Look Back in Anger* and *Lucky Jim,* involves hypergamy, that of a member of a lower class marrying someone of a higher class. In *Look Back in Anger* and *Room at the Top* hypergamy can be seen as a type of private class war waged by the main protagonists. Jimmy Porter has declared war on the middle and upper classes and takes Alison as 'hostage'. Joe Lampton also takes Susan 'hostage' by making her pregnant and the ransom fee is the job given him by Susan's father, 'Why, he even made a roll in the hay with a pretty little teenager pay dividends' (p.219). In chapter two it was discussed how misogynist attitudes in *Look Back in Anger* were camouflaged behind a smoke screen of 'class war'. The misogynism in *Room at the Top* is blatant, and, unlike *Look Back in Anger*, does not have any 'social conscience alibi'. The misogynist attitudes in *Room at the Top* can be seen as being more or less in tune with contemporary male prejudice. The misogyny of *Look Back in Anger* not only reflected

contemporary male prejudice, but also Osborne's personal attitudes and prejudices. The character Jimmy Porter, although hardly synonymous with the author in his views and sympathies is, nevertheless, not portrayed in a heavily ironic manner; suggesting that Jimmy's misogyny resembles that of his creator, a view supported by several commentators, and Osborne's own autobiographical writings. The misogyny of *Room at the Top* is that of the main character Joe Lampton and his friend Charles, rather than that of the author. The 'author' might be identified with Joe-narrator, who, though a misogynist is so to a lesser degree than the main protagonist, Joe-hero.

3.5 Class in *Room at the Top*, the film and the novel

Joe Lampton was the first *angry* working class hero. Jim Dixon in *Lucky Jim* had been lower-middle class, and Jimmy Porter in *Look Back in Anger* had a mixed class background and a university education. Joe was from working class Dufton and moved to middle class Warley, where he had a post at the town hall which placed him in the lower-middle classes; but dissatisfied with the material limitations of the lower-middle classes he planned to move up into the upper-middle classes. Joe is in love with two middle class women, and his 'class antagonism' has its source in the fact that his rivals in love are also middle class. He revenges himself on his 'class enemy' by taking his girl: 'I've got her, I took my friend's advice, she's mine and I can do what I like with her. I've beaten that bastard Wales. I'll marry her if I have to put her in the family way to do it. I'll make her daddy give me a damned good job. I'll never count pennies again' (p. 137).

There is a clear difference in the representation of class in the novel and the film. In the film, class antagonism is emphasised to the point of caricature. For example, Jack Wales, Susan's fiancé, is caricatured as an upper-middle class cad, displeasing one of the censors who objected

to 'the inevitable loading of the dice against the people with money'.[73] Like *Look Back in Anger*, though, class antagonism is torn from its social context and relegated to the level of personal relationships. Both the novel and the film boasted their realism, but this realism is strictly limited by the portrayal of class conflict, in terms of these personal relationships. Readers of fiction and cinema audiences find hypergamous relations intriguing, but these relations are non-representative and non-realistic, revealing no information about the basis of class conflict. As discussed above, the character of Joe Lampton is *fictional* rather than *real*, and his non-representativeness detracts from the realism of both novel and film. This non-representativeness was spotted by one of the reviewers of the film:

> In a film that sets out to explore class relations and sex relations between the classes, it is a trick to select an immature, over-sexed, unprincipled climber as the main representative of the working class.[74]

This point of view, though, ignores any structural irony which might be inherent in the film, as discussed in 3.2.1.

3.6 Conclusion

The extent to which the novel and film *Room at the Top* can be regarded as radical and as testifying to cultural change in their representations of society, class and gender depends much on the interpretation of the themes of the texts. Contemporaries of Braine gave the texts *angry* readings, and Braine, although he professed to have radical sympathies, denied writing the novel with any specific social comment in mind. The discussion of *Room at the Top* has considered how the novel is ambiguous thematically. Its construction of gender discloses a system of values which reinforce rather than contradict established norms. Marwick's 'an openness and honesty

[73] British Board of Film Classification: Note from examiners. Seen at Plaza Cinema, Wednesday afternoon, 28 January 1959. Quoted from Aldgate, A. (1992) *Cinema and Society, Britain in the 1950s and 1960s*, Milton Keynes, The Open university, p.80.

[74] Nina Hibbin, *Daily Worker*, 26 January 1959.

concerning sexual relationships' (see 1.7.2) seems an inappropriate use of terminology regarding the changes in representations of gender that took place during this period. There was undoubtedly a relaxation of censorship in relation to the *visually descriptive* portrayal of physical relations between the sexes seen from a male point of view, but this description only formed part of an aggressive re-gendering of the male, something also witnessed in *Look Back in Anger*. In a similar manner to *Look Back in Anger*, relaxation of censorship brought to the surface an enmity between the sexes which was shown from the male point of view. The *angry* reading of the Braine novel and 'new wave' film seems, even more so than other *angry* texts, very much to have vaporised from a 1990s perspective; this suggests that critics all too readily applied *angry* interpretive strategies to any texts which fulfilled the qualification of being oppositional.

Chapter Four *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner*

4.1 Introduction: fiction and film

> There was still no talented novelist equipped by experience to bring home the contemporary conditions and aspirations of working-class life to a wider public. With the publication of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958), however, and *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner* (1959), it was obvious that the working-class had found a brilliant spokesman.[75]

Sillitoe's fiction and that of other working class writers such as David Storey and Stan Barstow is considered to portray a working class authenticity not fully realised in earlier *angry* texts, such as those of Osborne and Braine. The 'new wave' adaptation of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960) was also heralded by a number of critics as bringing a working class realism to British cinema, even more so than earlier 'new wave' films such as those already discussed. Nina Hibbin expresses this view aptly:

> Those who classify *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* as just another *Room at the Top* or a *Look Back in Anger* simply don't know which day of the week it is - or don't want to. Here at last is a film which not only, in the contemporary fashion, is *about* the working class, but also *of* and *for* the working class. *It is the best, most accurate and profoundest film that has yet been made in England, and it talks to us in our own language.* [76]

The release of *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner* (1962), though, signalled that the 'new wave' style was itself becoming something of a cliché; and director Tony Richardson strayed from what had become the strict conventions of British realism by employing a number of French Nouvelle Vague 'gags', such as the Chaplinesque speeding up of the film at the end of

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[75] Atherton, S.S. (1979) *Alan Sillitoe: A Critical Assessment*, London, W.H. Allen, p. 20-21.
[76] *Daily Worker*, 29 October 1960.

the 'baker job' scene. The manner in which the two Sillitoe texts were adapted differ considerably. Tony Richardson's stylistic signature is seen clearly in *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner*, especially in comparison with his other 'new wave' films, *Look Back in Anger* and *The Entertainer*. Richardson brings his own concerns to the film to such an extent that there is a considerable shift in meaning from the short story. *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* is directed by Karel Reisz who is more faithful to Sillitoe's source text than Richardson is in his adaptation of *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner*. Reisz had the advantage of adapting an episodic novel mainly built around the character, Arthur Seaton; the editing of plot was done therefore without any considerable loss to the original story.

Sillitoe's characters presented a new type of 'angry young man': anarchic and thoroughly working class. In the characterisation of Arthur Seaton in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning,* working class milieu is portrayed in great detail: Arthur at his place of work the bicycle factory), Arthur at home, Arthur at leisure in the pub and fishing along the canal. Sillitoe's fiction is about the working classes, but as Sillitoe expresses himself, this does not mean that his fiction has the working class as its only theme: 'The greatest inaccuracy was ever to call the book [*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*] a "working class novel"'.[77] Sillitoe portrays the working classes in much greater detail than the other authors discussed so far in this thesis, but this does not mean that his portrayal does not involve a good deal of subjectivity, for example in the portrayal of male sexuality. *Room at the Top* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and their adaptations were considered by commentators to be highly contemporary and as evidence of social change, but both the novels were first drafted several years before publication: *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958) from 1950 onwards. This novel, though, has more of a contemporary feel than *Room at the Top* because of its inclusion of the contemporary youth culture (Arthur is depicted to a certain extent as a Teddy boy).

[77] Alan Sillitoe's introduction to the 'Heritage of Literature' reprint of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1968), xii.

4.2 Representation of class and society

This chapter will discuss the representation of society and class in the Sillitoe texts and their 'new wave' adaptations on the basis that these representations are more radical than in the texts discussed in the previous chapters. This will be done taking into account opinions of a number of other commentators, two of whom were quoted above. The chapter will discuss, to *what extent* these representations were radical.

4.2.1 Class awareness: 'us' and 'them'

The characters in Sillitoe's early fiction show a naive class awareness: they speak of 'us' and 'them', 'us' meaning vaguely the working classes and 'them' being the ruling classes - especially representatives of the ruling classes who are seen as having a conflict of interest with the working classes. This division of society into 'us' and 'them' is also discussed by Hoggart:

> A word commonly used by the working-classes, the world of 'Them'. ... is the world of the bosses, ... [and] public officials. ... 'Them' includes the policemen and those civil servants or local authority employees whom the working-classes meet - teachers, ... the local bench. ... 'They' are 'the people', ... who ... call you up.
> (*Uses of Literacy,* 1959, p. 72-73)

'They' start wars: 'They were angling for another war now' (*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, p. 132.). In *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner* Colin speaks of 'them':

> And if I had the whip-hand I wouldn't even bother to build a place like this to put all the cops, governors, posh whores, penpushers, army officers, Members of Parliament in; no, I'd stick them up against a wall and let them have it, like they'd have done with blokes likes us years ago, that is, if they'd ever known what it means to be honest, which they don't and never will so help me God Almighty. (p.15)

'Class conflict' - the conflict between 'us' and 'them' is put across in stronger terms in the short story than in the novel; and especially in the film adaptation of the short story. 'They' are portrayed in a negative manner verging on caricature. The political and social simplicity of Sillitoe's characters are not those of the author who deliberately constructed unsophisticated working class characters and distanced himself from those characters. In discussing how he came to write *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* he made the following remark:

> I also wanted to write a book around a man who had never read a book in his life. I hoped that such a person of this group who could read (but had no so far been bothered to read a book) would be induced to read this one, because it was in some way about himself.[78]

The non-representative simplicity of both Colin Smith and Arthur Seaton in *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* respectively, suggests a certain paternalism on the part of the author. Sillitoe employs the ironic structural device of a naive hero in his early fiction, which is more thoroughly and consistently executed than in Braine's *Room at the Top*. The use of structural irony tends to detract from the realism of what Sillitoe writes, and despite the author's belief that he 'wrote about him [Arthur Seaton] as a person, and not as a typical man who works at a lathe',[79] there is a good deal of caricaturisation in the portrayal of Arthur Seaton and Sillitoe's other early working class heroes. A paternalist attitude is also suggested by the fact that Arthur is characterised as a working class 'type': in other words, from Sillitoe's viewpoint it might be suggested that a 'typical man at a lathe' had 'never read a book'.

The use of 'us' and 'them' can be considered as constituting a layman's Marxist analysis of society. Colin Smith's 'class analysis', which is part of his personal philosophy, has not been

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[78] *Daily Worker,* 28 January 1961.
[79] Ibid.

gleaned from books on political science, but learnt from experience. His analysis is therefore subjective and explained in the diction of a seventeen-year-old working class boy. On several occasions throughout the story, Colin describes himself as being 'honest', and those in authority as being 'dishonest'. Colin's 'honesty' can be interpreted as his way of viewing society, his naive Marxist perspective. From Colin's viewpoint, those in authority are 'dishonest' because they see society differently, blinded by their own 'revisionist' ideology which is geared towards resolving class conflict by peaceful means. The Borstal institution can be seen as symbolising this ideology. Those in authority see Borstal as giving working class youth the possibility of being reintegrated into society. This point is reiterated several times throughout the short story, for example, the governor tells Colin at the beginning of the story: '"We want hard honest work and we want good athletics," he said as well. " And if you give us both these things you can be sure we'll do right by you and send you back into the world an honest man"' (p.10). This is of course, not only the discourse typical of penal institutions, but also of the British school system; there is the subtle irony made more explicit in the film that the penal and school systems in Britain use a similar discourse, that of a rigidly authoritarian society.

Colin feels that his superior understanding, or what he calls his 'cunning', enables him to be one step ahead of 'them', often referred to in the short story as the 'In-law blokes'. His cunning will allow him to 'win in the end' (p.13) by losing the race which the governor expects him to win. By winning the race, Colin would be given the opportunity of being reintegrated into society, and the possibility of taking 'up running in a sort of professional way' (p.39). But Colin's philosophy of life will not allow him to 'win the race':

> So I thought: they aren't going to get me on this racing lark, this running and trying to win, this jog-trotting for a bit of blue ribbon, because it's not the way to go on at all, though they swear blind that it is.
> (p. 44)

The long-distance cross-country race and the winning of it are symbolic of capitalist society and its credo of the 'survival of the fittest'. The author inadvertently rejects one kind of Establishment ideology only to replace it with another: Colin rejects the 'survival of the fittest' philosophy, but opts, nevertheless, for another kind of individualist philosophy symbolised by his joy of running for the sake of it, rather than running to win. Colin's individualist philosophy might be likened to the non-materialist individualism which is thematic of the two Osborne plays discussed in chapter two. Colin professes this individualist philosophy while thinking to himself during the race: 'You should think about nobody and go your own way, not on a course marked out for you ...' (p.44). We also learn that Colin is a writer, he is the 'writer' of the story, and the long-distance runner in the story can also be seen as being a metaphor for the writer, the artist, the individualist.

It may seem peculiar that Colin has a naive 'Marxist' analysis of society, but follows a liberal individualist philosophy in his personal life. There exists a contradiction in the text; the reader might be tempted to ask: when Colin gets 'the whip-hand' will he, as a writer, stick himself 'up against the wall'? Colin Smith, like Jimmy Porter, employs class grievance as *angry* rhetoric. The short story does not authentically represent class, but is rather written in the *style* of an *authentic* account, the style of an autobiographical documentary. It does not have the authenticity of, say, Brendan Behan's *Borstal Boy*. If we assume that Colin's philosophy is that of Sillitoe's, then we can see Sillitoe in the tradition of British writers such as George Orwell, W.H. Auden and the 'left-wing' writers of the 30s. These writers marketed themselves by their use of the *style* of a committed socialist rhetoric, a socialist rhetoric which would anger the Establishment. These writers were often critical of the Establishment, and often used a Marxist/socialist analysis of society in their writings, but in the long term perspective leaned more towards 'liberal' values than Marxist ones.

4.3 Different meanings in the short story and the adapted film

In the short story, the author uses the ironic structural device of a first person 'naive hero', a device which is difficult to transfer to film. Flashbacks are used in the film so that the first person subjective view (the interior monologues) is retained to a certain extent; the use of flashback also enables a jumping backwards and forwards in time. The irony present in the short story - made possible by the use of the naive hero - is to a great extent non-existent in the film. It is replaced by what must be characterised as a heavy-handed ladling of additional 'meanings' by the director; this is done to a great extent by the use of associative editing. For example, the soundtrack is used satirically: the ironic theme tune of Jerusalem satirises the difference which exists between the underprivileged youth of the Borstal and the ideals conjured up by Blake's song, which is often sung in British schools on appropriate patriotic occasions. This irony is also emphasised by the acting of Michael Redgrave, who is very much the Public School headmaster in his role as governor of the Borstal.

Interpretation of the meaning of the short story will depend on to what extent the reader reads the actions and views of the naive hero ironically. In the discussion of *Room at the Top* it was argued that the ironic structure of the novel was by no means consistent, and that it is also unclear to what extent the author consciously adopted an ironic structural device. Sillitoe's early fiction is more consistent in its use of a 'naive hero'. For example, Colin in the short story is portrayed as being all for the new consumer society:

> Now I believe, and my mam must have thought the same, that a wad of crisp blue-back fivers ain't a sight of good to a living soul unless they are flying out of your hand into some shopkeeper's till, and the shopkeeper is passing you tip-top things in exchange over the counter, ... (p. 20).

He also has nothing against mass culture (television), which serves and is served by consumerism:

> To begin with, the adverts on the telly had shown us how much more there was in the world to buy than we'd ever dreamed of when we'd looked into shop windows but hadn't seen all there was to see because we didn't have the money to buy it with anyway.
> (p. 21)

The author's tone regarding the consumer society and mass culture one of light humour. Meanings are made more explicit in the film. The film represents commercialism, consumerism and mass culture unsympathetically, and the reader is left in no doubt concerning the film-maker's views on these issues.

The film adaptation is thematically fragmented, unlike the short story which focuses on one particular idea. The short story is characteristic of its genre in that it focuses around one particular event that of the long-distance cross-country race, but unlike the film it is does not focus on the outcome of the race, rather on the reasons why Colin decides to lose the race. It can therefore be termed a 'story of character'. Within the tight framework of the short story genre, other characters and events are subordinate to this particular event and the main character. Unlike the film, the social milieu of Colin's home and the Borstal are minimised; Colin explains that he does not have to 'describe what they gave us to eat, what the dorms were like, or how they treated us [because he has] no complaints' (p. 16).

4.3.1 a Promotional material for the film, plates 7,8 and 9.

Plate 7. 'Life': Arthur Seaton (Albert Finney) discusses Brenda's unwanted pregnancy with his Aunt Ada. The censor had 'strong misgivings about the slap-happy and successful termination of pregnancy', so the film script had to be altered (BBFC Scriptreader's report 20.11.59).

Plate 8. 'Love': The 'explicit sex' scenes of the 'new wave' films were radically innovative in the late-fifties and early-sixties, but subdued by present-day standards.

Plate 9. 'Laughter': Arthur takes a pint with his mate Bert (Norman Rossington).

Plates 10 and 11

4.3.1 Mass culture and gender in the film

In addition to Colin's individualist philosophy, the film can be seen as taking up other themes. A recurring theme throughout the 'new wave' films is that of the superficiality and negative aspects of a commercialised mass culture. John Hill has observed that a 'contrast (...) is assumed between modern mass culture and traditional working class culture, [between] "male" and "female" values' (*Sex, Class and Realism*, 1986, p. 150). 'Female' values are equated with what is considered as a negative mass culture, and 'male' values associated positively with a traditional and authentic working class culture.

In the film, Colin's mother is portrayed as being immoral, a poor wife and mother, superficial and having only material values. There is little basis in the short story for this character portrayal in the film. Colin's mother's 'fancy man' has a fair-sized role in the film, but is not referred to specifically in the short story, as she has a number of fancy men. It is perhaps the film's moral indictment of the mother's affair that her lover is never actually given a name, despite the size of his role; he is only referred to as 'fancy man'. The term has negative connotations, suggesting that the mother's relationship is devoid of 'human' values, based only on a vulgar and shallow physical sexuality. It is implied in the film that it is the mother's immorality and her lack of feeling for her husband and children, which have forced Colin into a life of crime. In the short story, Colin and his family have a long history of petty criminality: 'because running had always been made much of in our family, especially running away from the police' (p.7). No quasi-psychological reasons are given in the short story for Colin's criminality, and it is not implied that it stems from an uncaring mother. Colin is sent to Borstal because of the 'bakery job', and in the film it is implied that his mother was indirectly responsible for his actions. Melodrama of the type 'Dead-but-never-called-me-mother', was added to the film script. After a row between Colin and the 'fancy man' Colin gets into a row with his mother in which he says: 'You brought

your fancy man in here before me father was cold'. She responds by slapping him on the face and ordering him out of the house not to come back before he has 'some money'. In the short story there is no mention of a difficult relationship between mother and son. A despondent Colin leaves the house with his friend Mike and they walk down the street and do the 'bakery job'.

The point that Colin's term at Borstal is the indirect result of an immoral and uncaring mother is further emphasised in the 'word association' scene. The progressive and liberal house-master Brown (barely mentioned in the short story and then not by name) is trying to help Colin by getting to the root of his problems, which he believes to be emotional. In a meeting between him and Colin the following 'word association' takes place:

> Brown: father
> Colin: dead
> Brown: Why do you say that? Is your father dead?
> Colin: (nods)
> Brown: Ah! right. When did he die?
> Colin: The other week.
> Brown: The other week! I'm very sorry. Your mother was very upset I expect?
> Colin: No.
> Brown: She wasn't? (looks puzzled - "thinks": 'maybe this is the root of the boy's problem')
> Colin: Not very.
> Brown: Well I think that will be all for now, thank you.

Colin's father's death and his mother's uncaring attitude are causally linked to the robbery. In the short story the petty criminality of Colin is linked to the general impoverishment of a working class environment in which work, if you can get it, is lowly paid. Several references are made to life in the army throughout the short story. Ironically, life in Borstal does not seem so bad to Colin, because it is not much worse than home life or being in the army. The main reasons given in the short story for Colin's criminal life are societal, whereas in the film his criminality is

individualised and indirectly caused by a mother who does not fulfil her maternal duties. The short story makes a radical/socialist analysis of this aspect of society, whereas the film's individualising of social problems gives it a more reactionary agenda.

Mass culture and consumerism is seen as negative and linked to 'female' values in the film, whereas 'authentic' and traditional working class culture is seen as positive and linked to 'male' values. Colin identifies with his father who in the film is an active trade union man (representing 'authentic' working class culture). On the death of her husband Colin's mother receives five hundred pounds in insurance money from the factory where he worked. It is made clear in the film that Colin and his mother collected the five hundred pounds the same day as the funeral (they arrive at the factory in a Rolls Royce wearing black armbands). On returning to the house, Colin's mother seems more concerned for the money than she is about her husband's death. Her three small children are also infected by her enthusiasm about the money and do not seem to be much concerned about their father's death either. Colin, on the other hand, is upset. The difference in *feelings* as well as *values* is created visually: in one corner of the room we see the mother counting the money while her 'fancy man' and three small children enthusiastically look on. In the other corner of the room Colin is seated beside a wedding photograph of his parents which he looks at despondently. Colin's mother is excitedly fondling the money and asks: 'What shall we do with them'? Colin replies, 'Burn it' (another out-of-character addition), which prompts the mother to say scornfully, 'You take after yer dad right off'. By the end of this scene it seems 'real human values' (symbolic in the wedding photograph) have been replaced by superficial ones (symbolised by money).

4.4 Arthur Seaton as a representative working class type

Despite Alan Sillitoe's assertion that he 'wrote about him [Arthur Seaton] as a person, and not as a typical man who works at a lathe' (see 4.2.1), his most infamous protagonist emerged in

national cultural terms as *the* working class type; *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* was the first British film to portray in the main role a working class man with any semblance of reality. The description of working class life in Saturday Night and Sunday Morning is somewhat reminiscent of John Osborne autobiographical reminiscing in 'They call it cricket' discussed in chapter one (1.7.1): 'they bawled and laughed and they moaned'. In the novel, Arthur is portrayed not so much an *individual*, but rather as a caricature of a *type*. This is evident in the first chapter which recounts the picaresque events of a Saturday night and a Sunday morning: Arthur in a drinking competition with 'loudmouth' at the White Horse Club downs 13 pints of beer and seven gins, falls down a flight of stairs and then falls asleep, vomits on two pub-goers; makes illicit love with his workmate's wife later the same evening, wakes up cheerfully in the morning ready for more sex, plays happily with his lover's kids, heartily eats a full English breakfast and then sneaks off through the front door as the husband is arrives at the back. Arthur's enormous appetite for sex, alcohol and fighting put his predecessors, Joe Lunn, Charles Lumley, Jim Dixon, Jimmy Porter, and Joe Lampton in the shade.[80] The 'picaresque anecdote' of Saturday night and Sunday morning told by the narrator in chapter one resembles that of Joe Lampton's on the inside cover of *Room at the Top*: 'I was the devil of a fellow', (see 3.2.2). Both belong to the 'sexual strutting' male discourse of the public bar and involve not so much realistic portrayals but an idealised male gendering of the period. The picaresque/realist style of the novel was one of its selling points: 'a novel of today with a freshness and raw fury that makes *Room at the Top* look like a vicarage tea-party' boasted the front cover of the 1960 Pan Edition when quoting a *Daily Telegraph* reviewer.[81] The Pan Edition included scenes from the film on its covers, emphasising the novel and film's 'explicit sexuality' by showing a still from the film of Arthur (Albert Finney) in bed with his workmate's wife, Brenda (Rachel Roberts) (see plate 8). The sales blurb on the back cover described an authentic working class milieu: 'a raw

[80] In *Scenes from a Provincial Life, Hurry on Down, Lucky Jim, Look Back in Anger* and *Room at the Top* respectively.

[81] Sillitoe, A. (1960) *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, London, Pan Books Limited.

uninhibited story of a working-class district in Nottingham and the people who *live*, *love*, *laugh* and *fight* there. Working class milieu was not prominent in earlier 'new wave' films such as *Look back in Anger* and *Room at the Top*. In *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* we see an authentic portrayal of leisure - pubs and clubs (see plate 9). 'Realism' was severely limited, though, in both novel and film, mainly by censorship, or the overhanging threat of censorship. The language of the novel was commended by contemporary critics for being authentic, but there is only mild swearing throughout. But the 'mild swearing' of the novel, such as 'bugger', 'sod' and 'Christ' was too severe for the censors and much of it was censored. Similarly, the abortion which was successful in the novel was objected to by the censors and had to be changed for the film (see plate 7).

4.5 Narrative function and use of language

The novel *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* is mainly in the third person, but sometimes changes to the first person:

> I'm just too lucky for this world, Arthur told himself as he set his lathe going, too lucky by half, so I'd better enjoy it while I can. I don't suppose Jack's told Brenda yet about going on nights, but I'll bet she'll die laughing at the good news when he does.
> (p.37)

The transition between the third and first person is almost imperceptible; Arthur's interior monologue continues for a couple of pages and then returns to the third person: 'When Arthur went back to work ... ' (p. 39). These changes from the third to the first person are made even more imperceptible by the similarity between Arthur and the narrator of his story. This similarity is particularly evident in their use of language, described by one commentator as 'an uneasy half-literary journalese'.[82] This description seems apt in that the alliteration used by both Arthur and

[82] *New Left Review*, November/December 1960.

the narrator throughout the novel is reminiscent of the style of British tabloids; this style is reflected by the title of the novel, *Saturday* Night and *Sunday* Morning. The author gives full vent to this alliterative tabloid style already on the first page of the novel:

> For it was *Saturday* night, the *best* and *bingiest* glad-time of the week, one of the fifty-two holidays in the *slow-turning Big* Wheel of the year*,* a violent *preamble* to a *prostrate Sabbath*. *Piled-up passions* were exploded on *Saturday* night, and the effect of a week's monotonous graft in the factory was *swilled* out of you *system* in a *burst* of goodwill.
> (p.9)

Arthur employs a similar style, for example: 'That stuff you've got'll give yer a *bilious-bout'* (p.34) and 'I'm going downtown to get *Robboe's rubbers*!' (p. 41). The journalese style tends to diminish the realism of the character Arthur; his language, similar to Colin Smith's in *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner,* is characterised more by idiolect than dialect.

Despite these similarities between the narrator and the protagonist there exists an ironic distancing between the two which serves a similar purpose as the ironic structural device of a naive-hero in *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner*. The narrator is *learned* and distances himself from the main protagonist, Arthur, who is *naive*. This distancing is marked in different ways: the narrator limits himself in his use of dialect and in his use of non-standard spelling, and employs a more formal and standard vocabulary than the main protagonist:

> He felt electric light bulbs shining and burning into the back of his head, and sensed in the opening and closing flash of a second that his mind and body were *entirely separate entities* inconsiderately intent on going their different ways.
> (p. 10)

If we consider that Arthur Seaton represents a certain *type,* then this distancing characterises a

certain kind of paternalism. The narrator can permit himself to use learned phrases such as *entirely separate entities* - a vocabulary out of reach of proletarian Arthur. The use of a formal diction including words such as 'entity' and 'eulogy' (p. 10), is out of character with the use of dialect and journalese used elsewhere by the narrator, and suggests the author's lack of confidence in his own regional culture. The use of such words signals more their formal than their semantic aspect and could have easily been replaced by informal synonyms.

In a similar manner to *Room at the Top,* regional dialect is used to signal certain *machismo* values. Dialect is only used intermittently by the working class characters in *Room at the Top*, and then often to attain a special effect. Dialect is used more consistently in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, but is also used to achieve certain effects. The narrator as described uses dialect, but his use is limited and he does not employ non-standard spellings of the kind 'He's on'y twenty-one and 'e can tek it in like a fish' (p. 10). It has been discussed in the previous chapters how the working classes have been employed by *angry* authors and film-makers alike to signal a certain *virility* and capacity to show *emotion*. In *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* this is especially noticeable in the comparison of the language between the narrator (who is seemingly working class) and the working class characters he describes; it is also especially noticeable in the contrast between the cuckold Jack, Brenda's husband, who, although working class has a relatively anaemic diction: 'Not swearing himself' (p. 34).

4.6 Gendering of the male towards the end of the *angry* decade

The portrayal of Arthur Seaton in both the novel and the film can be considered as gendering of the male according to the 'male discourse of the public bar'. It has already been discussed how the description of Arthur is not representational, although in one sense he represents a *type* (4.4). As discussed in 1.7.2, 'class as theme' is employed in the *angry* texts to displace the perhaps more important theme of male gendering according to the male perspective. Arthur Seaton is a

more likable character than both Jimmy Porter and Joe Lampton, and his misogyny is less pronounced. Nevertheless, the 'realism' of both novel and film is limited by the subjective male viewpoint. Although more likable, Arthur's sexual strutting and his callous behaviour towards women (despite his unconvincing 'reform' towards both end of novel and film) witness a misogyny not unlike that of the other *angry* heroes. There are several episodes in the novel which witness this, one will suffice to illustrate. The narrator describes Arthur's seduction of Brenda's married sister Winnie:

> He followed, loving her on every second stair, loins aching for her small wild body, remembering that he had recently ascended another set of stairs under different circumstances. The evening had begun, and the evening was about to end. She stripped to her underwear and lay in bed waiting for him. Never had an evening begun so sadly and ended so well, he reflected, peeling off his socks.
> (p. 97)

Earlier the same evening, Arthur had aided Brenda (helped by Brenda's friend) in successfully aborting her unwanted pregnancy by plying her with gin and putting her in a hot bath. Arthur is portrayed as callous in his attitude towards Brenda: 'It's her fault for letting such a thing happen, he cursed. The stupid bloody woman' (p. 93). There is no clear-cut authorial condemnation of Arthur's behaviour; on the contrary, there seems to be a delight in the 'picaresque mode' of telling a 'shocking story'.

4.6.1 Gender and the family

Although Arthur speaks of marriage in derogatory terms, he and other *angry* heroes ultimately opt for family life. In the *angry* fiction and the 'new wave' film adaptations those women who are deemed a threat to family life are often 'punished' in some way or other. John Hill has drawn a comparison here between the representation of women in the 'new wave' films, and in *film noir*; he notes that Mulvey suggests the example of *film noir*, in which 'excessive and disruptive

female sexuality is often either punished or destroyed and male control reasserted'.[83] The 'excessive and disruptive sexuality' in the *angry* fiction and their 'new wave' adaptations is also 'punished and destroyed'. For example: a car accident which involves scalping Alice in *Room at the Top* (although the 'scalping' part was too violent for the censor and was edited out of the adapted film), Alison's miscarriage in *Look Back in Anger* (she lost her baby *after* she walked out on Jimmy) and Brenda who has an abortion in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (the abortion is unsuccessful in the film version). The women with the more aggressive sexuality are also rejected. Arthur thus 'rejects' Brenda and her sister, who are both only too willing to favour him; whereas, Doreen, who plies her virtue as a saleable commodity, is "rewarded" by marriage. Similarly, Helena in *Look Back in Anger* is also 'rejected'.

Arthur's wayward sexuality was itself also a 'threat' to society, but was eventually brought under control. At the beginning of the novel he is characterised as being opposed to marriage: '" What for? Like gettin' married, you mean? I'm not that daft" ' (p. 36). This anti-marriage view is also given narrative endorsement. In his discussion with Arthur concerning marriage, cuckold Jack defends the institution saying:

> Neither was I daft when I got married. I wanted to do it, that's all. I went into it wi' my eyes open. I like it, and all. I like Brenda, and Brenda likes me, and we get on well together. If you're good to each other, married life is all right.
> (p. 36)

The reader who has witnessed the cuckolding of Jack knows this view of Jack's to be false, as does Arthur, thus encouraging the reader to take Arthur's view; this point is unclear, though, as the 'opposition' to marriage might be to the type of soulless marriage Jack has. This seems

[83] Hill, J. "Working-class Realism and Sexual Reaction" in Curran, J. and Porter, V. (eds.) (1983) *British Cinema History,* p. 305.

probable as it is a theme which is also taken up in the short story *The Fishing Boat Picture.*[84] This criticism of Jack is also coupled together with a criticism of mass culture, a criticism made more clear in the film. Jack's soulless character and lack of vitality is characterised by careful planning for a comfortable life; he already owns a motor bicycle and informs Arthur in chapter two that one of the reasons he is going to start on the night shift is so that he can please Brenda by earning enough money to buy a television. Ironically, this arrangement pleases Brenda, but not in the way planned by Jack. Towards the end of the novel, though, Arthur's sexuality, like that of Brenda's, is brought under control. In the film, although Arthur conforms by his planned marriage to Doreen, it is hinted at, albeit unconvincingly, that he is still a bit of a rebel (witnessed by his stone throwing at the end). The sense of family is also strengthened by Arthur views concerning his family: 'if [he] won the football pools ... I'd [be] seein my family right' (p. 35).

4.7 Conclusion

Sillitoe's fiction attempts a more realistic portrayal of society than the other *angry* texts discussed in this thesis. Both *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* convincingly show a working class milieu in which Hoggart's *us* and *them* are prominent but little is actually shown of the economic basis of the life of the characters, and the structural irony of the short story and novel exhibit a paternal distancing between author and subjects; this is further emphasised by the picaresque nature of both. The film adaptation of the short story is like Richardson's other 'new wave' films - critical of mass culture. This criticism involves additions to the original story, additions which tend to water down the original, because of a de-emphasis of a working class milieu as source of Colin Smith's problems. The association of an adverse mass culture with female values and a negative portrayal of Colin's mother give the film misogynist tendencies not present in the short story. The portrayal of class in *Saturday*

[84] In the collection of short stories, *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner*.

Night and Sunday Morning displaces what is thematic of the *angry* texts: an aggressive gendering of the male.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

This conclusion will be relatively brief, as the thesis has tended to reach certain assumptions while discussing the texts and each chapter has been concluded by a brief summary. Firstly, it will be of advantage to reiterate in short the 'aim of the thesis' (1.1): were the *angry* texts and their 'new wave' film adaptations evidence of Marwick's 'cultural revolution', and if not, is the use of such a term appropriate in a British post-war context. Did these cultural artefacts exhibit radical representations of class and society and did they portray a new 'openness and honesty concerning sexual relationships' (1.7.2); which represented a release from 'Victorian paternalistic controls' (1.3)? This thesis has concluded that the use of the term 'cultural revolution' is inappropriate in describing the changes in representations of society, class and gender which was evidenced in the *angry* literary texts and their 'new wave' film adaptations. In describing these changes, Marwick uses a negative/positive cline of: ('older restraints .... paternalistic Victorian controls'/a society characterised by liberal social and political reform) (1.3), which this thesis also deems inappropriate. This thesis has also questioned the indiscriminate use of *ideological terms* such as *adult,* and *sexually explicit* in describing 'liberal' change. These terms have now been 'devalued' and are associated with non-art and soft pornography, rather than serious art and release from paternalist control; this 'devaluation' signifies that in retrospect, the sexual explicitness of the *angry* artefacts is not necessarily to be equated with 'liberal' change. The tabloid publications which most frequently employ such terms today, as for example the *Sunday Sport,* are equated with a diminishing of woman's position in society rather than liberal change. There was undoubtedly a relaxation of censorship in relation to the *visually descriptive* portrayal of physical relations between the sexes seen from a male point of view (3.5); but this description only formed part of an aggressive re-gendering of the male, described by Molly Haskell as 'sexual strutting', under the cover of 'social alibis' (1.7.2). This aggressive re-gendering of the male can be seen in connection with the crisis in male sexuality of the period (2.3.1). This was illustrated by the hypergamous relationships of Jimmy Porter and Joe Lampton who, using these relationships as 'alibis', could with importunity abuse

women while seemingly voicing their class grievances. The supposed class warfare which Jimmy Porter wages against his middle class wife, Alison, illustrates a poorly camouflaged misogyny. The 'class theme' displaced the 'real' theme of these texts: the misogynist gendering of the male. While overtly being critical of society (Jimmy's 'public voice' 2.3.1) Jimmy Porter covertly cultivates his real interest, his misogyny and his aggressive gendering of himself (his 'private voice').

The 'new wave' films tended, on the whole, to exhibit more conservative attitudes than the *angry* literary source texts. If we consider film to tell us 'more about the *mores* of a society' than a literary text (1.2), then this would point towards a society changing more slowly than some sections of the artistic community, such as the *angry* writers. The 'new wave' films were made by a 'university-educated bourgeois making "sympathetic" films about proletarian life but not analysing the ambiguities of their own privileged position' (1.5), a position illustrated by Anderson's remark when speaking of the working classes: 'Those good and friendly faces' (1.5). The films adapted misogynist literary texts, but reinforced this aspect by including additional sexually explicit scenes (sexually explicit from subjective male viewpoint); these scenes were often superfluous to the narrative and exhibited Mulvey's 'woman displayed as ... erotic object' (1.7.2.1). This 'superfluousness' also diminished the claim to 'reality'. The sexual explicitness of the 'new wave' films made possible by the 'liberalisation' of censorship enabled dormant misogynist attitudes to surface. The 'honesty' of the sexual explicitness was not so much in portraying sexual relationships, but rather in displaying misogynist attitudes which had been hidden from sight. The more conservative aspect of the films was also noted by the editing of much of the social and political comment from the *angry* literary texts, for example the editing of 'no good brave causes' (2.4.1) and the change of the ideology of the short story *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner* (4.3). The 'new wave' films were 'new' in their representations of class and gender. The representation of class used 'new' realist conventions such as location shooting, but this soon became highly stylised and prescriptive. This

prescriptive *class realism,* in a similar manner to the *sexual explicitness* often involved additional scenes which were superfluous to the narrative, and in a similar manner to the sexual explicitness was *decorative*. These additional scenes (usually involving location shooting) can be compared with a type of photography described by Walter Benjamin: a photography which is 'incapable of photographing a tenement or a rubbish-heap without transfiguring it ... It has succeeded in turning abject poverty itself, by handling it in a modish, technically perfect way, into an object of enjoyment.[85] The additional exterior location shooting of the 'new wave' films included in an attempt to achieve *realism* in the British cinema in one sense diminished the realism of the films in that they were non-narrative scenes. The *realism* of the 'new wave' films was also strictly limited by the subjective limitations of their *angry* source texts: subjective and narrow in that they mainly portrayed the viewpoint of their young male white northern/midland working class protagonists, viewpoints concerning personal relationships shorn of their social contexts. The portrayals were also less than *real* in that the narratives often involved a 'distancing': i.e. they employed a naive hero or ironic structural device which further diminished the authenticity of their realism. In short, the 'realism' of these texts had little to do with *reality*, but more to do with stylised conventions.

D.E. Cooper observed that the *angry* texts made an 'attack [on] women' (1.7.2), but justified this by saying it was *really* an attack on a 'much wider target, effeminacy'. Throughout the *angry* texts various aspects of society are attacked, but also adversely equated with women: Jimmy Porter's 'Something is rotten in the state of England' and Alison described as 'Lady Pusillanimous ... This monument to non-attachment' (p. 21). It was argued that the 'new wave' film-makers, especially Richardson (2.7 and 4.3.1), equate a negative mass culture, Hoggart's 'shiny barbarism', with a misogynist portrayal of women. In the 'new wave' films, mass culture was also adversely contrasted with an illusory 'authentic' working class culture, for example

[85] Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht* (London: New Left Books, 1973), pp. 94-95.

Osborne's music hall in *The Entertainer.* This witnessed a paternalist attitude in that mass culture was deemed unfit for working class consumption. Ironically, the 'new wave' films were part of this same mass culture, as witnessed by their heavy ladling of didactic message which aimed at the lowest common denominator (3.1), a popular audience.

None of the texts discussed in this thesis give any real consideration to the context of class: the relationship between capital and labour, labour relations and other circumstances which provide the socio/economic/political basis of class. *Class* is used metaphorically in order to establish a masculine gendering of the male. The texts discuss gender, but the subjective young white male viewpoint inhibits any claim to realist objectivity, what were for example the thoughts of Brenda when she became pregnant and took an abortion in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, or the thoughts of Alice in *Room at the Top* as she drove to her death? The explicit ideology of *angry* literary texts was less than radical; they exhibited an individualist ideology, although often voicing an anarchistic and socialist view of society. The texts were self-contradictory in ideological terms: the protagonists expressed their problems in *societal* terms, but their solutions in *individual* terms; they followed different kinds of individualist philosophies ('I'm all right Jack solutions'). For example, Jimmy Porter, although overtly critical of society, is aggressively individualist, and Joe Lampton was overtly highly individualist and one who wanted to exploit the affluent society. Contemporary critics tended to use an *angry* interpretative strategy and presume that *angry* texts had certain anti-Establishment and radical meanings. In order to give *Room at the Top* such a 'meaning' it was necessary to assume a consistent structural irony which was never intended by the author. The Sillitoe *angry* texts offered a more radical and realistic portrayal of class than the other *angry* texts discussed in this thesis; this is witnessed, for example, by their use of dialect, and their portrayal of class conflict 'us and them' and by their positive portrayal of class milieu. But the *realism* of the Sillitoe texts is hampered by a controlling narrative function which exhibits a certain kind of paternalism, illustrative of the author's lack of confidence in his own regional culture: the ironic distancing of the narrator by

use of language and the use of a naive hero. Sillitoe's working class heroes, although more likable than Jimmy Porter and Joe Lampton, donned their class identity in an ornamental manner. Arthur Seaton in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* distanced himself from his own class by his own brand of aggressive individualism, which in Arthur's case revealed itself to be traditional and conservative towards the end of the novel. Admittedly, in the film he pays lip service to an oppositional philosophy as witnessed by his stone throwing, but his rebellious nature has in reality been gelded by society by the means of Doreen. This thesis concludes that there was change in British post-war society as well as in its cultural artefacts, but that this change was *limited*, a limited change best illustrated by the Alison's remark when speaking to her father about Jimmy: 'You're hurt because everything is changed. Jimmy is hurt because everything is the same' (p. 68). As remarked in chapter one: if we follow Alison's line of reasoning in relation to the texts themselves, it might be said that the *angry* texts and the 'new wave' films are both radical and conservative (1.7).

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Filmography

Abbreviations
cert: certificate; *sc*: script; *dist*: distributor; *ph*: photography; *p.c*: production company; *ed*: editor; *p*: producer; *a.d*: art direction; *d*: director; m: music.

The Entertainer (1960)
Cert - X - *dist* - British Lion/Bryanston *p.c* - Woodfall/Holly *p* - Harry Saltzman *d* - Tony Richardson *sc* - John Osborne, Nigel Kneale. Adapted from the play by John Osborne, *ph* - Oswald Morris ed - Alan Osbiston *a.d* - Ralph Brinton *m* - John Addison 96 mins.

Laurence Olivier (*Archie Rice*), Joan Plowwright (*Jean*), Brenda de Banzie (*Phoebe Rice*), Alan Bates (*Frank*), Roger Livesey (*Billy*), Shirley Ann Field (*Tina*), Thora Hird (*Mrs Lapford*).

The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner (1962)
Cert - X - BLC/British Lion/Bryanston *p.c* Woodfall *p/d* - Tony Richardson *sc* - Alan Sillitoe, from his short story *ph* - Walter Lassally *ed* - Anthony Gibbs *a.d* - Ralph Brinton, Ted Marshall *m* - John Addison 104 mins.

Tom Courtenay (*Colin Smith*), James Bolam (*Mike*), Avis Bunnage (*Mrs Smith*), Michael Redgrave (*Governor*), Alex McCowen (*Brown*), Joe Robinson (*Roach*).

Look Back in Anger (1959)
Cert - X - Associated British-Pathé *p.c* - Woodfall *p* - Gordon L.T. Scott *d* - Tony Richardson *sc* - Nigel Kneale, from the play by John Osborne *ph* - Oswald Morris *ed* - Richard best *a.d* - Peter Glazier *m* - Chris Barber and his Band 101 mins.

Richard Burton (*Jimmy Porter*), Claire Bloom (*Helena Charles*), Mary Ure (*Alison Porter*), Dame Edith Evans (*Mrs Tanner*), Gary Raymond (*Cliff*), Glen Beam Shaw (*Colonel Redfern*), Donald Pleasance (*Hurst*).

Room at the Top (1959)

Cert - X *dist* - Independent/British Lion *p.c* - Remus *p* - John and James Woolf *d* - Jack Clayton *sc* - Neil Paterson, from the novel by John Braine *ph* - Freddie Francis *ed* - Ralph Kemplen *a.d* - Ralph Brinton *m* - Mario Nascimbene 117 mins .

Laurence Harvey (*Joe Lampton*), Simone Signoret (*Alice Aisgill*), Heather Sears (*Susan Brown*), Donald Wolfit (*Mr Brown*), Ambrosine Phillpotts (*Mrs Brown*), Donald Houston (*Charles Soames*), Raymond Huntley (*Mr Hoylake*), John Westbrook (*Jack Wales*), Allan Cuthbertson (*George Aisgill*), Mary Peach (*June Samson*).

Saturday Night and Sunday Morning (1960)
Cert - X *dist* - British Lion/Bryanston *p.c* - Woodfall *p* - Harry Saltzman, Tony Richardson *d* - Karel Reisz *sc* - Alan Sillitoe, from his own novel *ph* - Freddie Francis *ed* - Seth Holt *a.d* - Ted Marshall *m* - Johnny Dankworth 89 mins.

Albert Finney (*Arthur*), Shirley Ann Field (*Doreen*), Rachel Roberts (*Brenda*), Hylda baker (*Aunt Ada*), Norman Rossington (*Bert*), Bryan Pringle (*Jack*).