

Realism and Representations of the Working Class in Contemporary British Cinema

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Abstract

This thesis examines the history of social realism and the representation of the working-class in contemporary British cinema. Opening with a critical history, of the political and social context of British social realist film-making since the 1960's British New Wave era, it moves the grounds of the discussion to social realism in the 1980s and 1990s. The main chapters are dedicated to individual case studies. Three distinctive approaches are applied towards these case studies: the auteurist approach is applied to the works of Ken Loach, and exposes how his politics is reflected in the films, whilst revealing the consistency and changes of his approach towards the subject-matter.

In the second chapter, the aesthetic approach is used to examine how the new trend of 'social art-cinema' affected the concept of social realism. It will discuss how social realism employs the style and aesthetic of art cinema, to enhance the subjective representation in the film. In the last chapter, the new subjective approach is used to study films that deal with the issue of asylum seekers, immigrants and immigration. This thesis will reveal the complexity and flexibility of the concept of social realism, by analysing its use in contemporary British cinema from these three perspectives. The significance of social realism is its ability to add to the film a sense of immediacy, a sense of 'here and now'. It can enhance the objectivity of the film, or by integrating with art-cinema aesthetic, enhance the subjectivity of the issue. Social realism needs to be considered with the nature of the medium of cinema, to capture and reflect elements of the social-political structures which make up society.

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Introduction

John Hill calls social realism in British cinema an 'unbroken tradition' (Hill 2000a: 178), whilst Samantha Lay describes its relationship with British cinema as an 'enduring relationship' (Lay 2007: 232). Since the medium of cinema was invented, realism has always been its concern, and in the case of British cinema, since the documentary movement in the 1930s, cinema with social concern that searches for realist expression, is something that has always been discussed. The concept of 'social realism' is rather complex, since although it is not something like genre, which has collective characteristics on style and mode of narrative, it has been treated as one. With a specific subject (working class lives), filmic treatment (naturalism), political orientation (leftist) and iconography (industrial city, council estates etc.), these characteristics hold a range of films together under the name of social realism; however, it is always controversial since no one could define how many of these characteristics a film should have to be categorised as a 'social realist film'. There is a wide grey zone around this concept. Supposedly that is why this concept fascinated academics, critics and most film-makers.

The main concern of this thesis is the recent history of social realism in British cinema, or, a history of the transformation and transitional complexity of this concept. Throughout the thesis, the subject matter and its representation in social realist film will be examined together with a close analysis of its social and political context. This thesis consists of four main parts: Part one, as a literature review, will be a historical study of social realism in Britain, from the British New Wave films in the 1960s to the prosperity of social realist drama in British television afterwards. It continues the discussion into the social realism of the 1980s, the decade that opened a new interest in race, ethnicity, and hybrid identity in Britain. In the time of Thatcherism, the films discussed will be widely varied in terms of style and form. The third and last part of the literature review will be the 1990s and thereafter, when Britain welcomed the innovation in the national and cultural image of Great Britain under a unified name of 'Cool Britannia'. Here there appeared films which pushed the boundaries of social realist form, by integrating pop music and pop culture into films. The representation of identity in a multicultural society becomes more hybrid; with the emergence of the Black film makers who attempt to capture their voice in their own style. The literature review intends to build a background to this critical issue, by contextualising the previous works of social realism while examining the flexibility of the concept.

The next three chapters are case studies; each one discusses a distinctive

approach towards this concept. The first chapter discusses director Ken Loach and his works. It analyses his work in the early 1990s, *Riff Raff* (1991), *Raining Stones* (1993) and *Ladybird Ladybird* (1994); and his works in the late 1990s to early 2000s, *My Name is Joe* (1998), *Sweet Sixteen* (2002) and *Ae Fond Kiss* (2004). By analysing these titles chronologically and sometimes cross-referencing them, his consistent attitude towards film-making throughout his long career is discussed and it is this which allows us to perceive an auteuristic style that is carried from the traditional social realist drama of the 1960s, along with his political message.

The second chapter reviews the aesthetic approaches, to examine three very different films that develop more art-cinema style. These are *Red Road* (Andrea Arnold, 2006), *London to Brighton* (Paul Andrew Williams, 2006) and *This is England* (Shane Meadows, 2007); all of which are created by young British film directors. These films stand on the tradition of social realism whilst extending its visual expressions. All these films share the same characteristic which is a strong sense of art-cinema aesthetics. With close examination, this chapter will reveal the further hybridisation of art-cinema and social realism, and how it develops this concept.

The third chapter analyses the films with the new vogue subject-matter of asylum seekers, immigrants and immigration. This subject continues the historical Black filmic representation displayed in the films of the 1980s onwards; however, compared to the 1980s films which generally explore the issue of diasporic identity of the second and third generation of post colonial immigrants, this new trend projects the more alienated people in society. *Last Resort* (Pawel Pawlikowski, 2000), *Dirty Pretty Things* (Stephen Frears, 2002), and *It's a Free World* (Ken Loach, 2007) all adopt different cinematic styles and narratives to represent this new subject: they will allow us to see the expansion of social realist film-making in contemporary Britain.

These three distinctive approaches will show how fluid and complex the concept of social realism has become since the 1990s, and in conclusion, the thesis discusses how we should reconsider this concept.

Part 1

British Cinema and Social Realism since the 1960s: Political Context and Critical Debate

The British New Wave

The British New Wave was one of the major phases of social realism in the United Kingdom; it binds a number of films produced by young British directors between the late 1950s and the mid 1960s. Although among the critics these titles might vary, the following films are mainly at the centre of all the discussions: *Room at the Top* (Jack Clayton, 1959), *Look Back in Anger* (Tony Richardson, 1959), *The Entertainer* (Richardson, 1960), *A Taste of Honey* (Richardson, 1961), *The Loneliness of The Long Distance Runner* (Richardson, 1962), *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (Karel Reisz, 1960), *A Kind of Loving* (John Schlesinger, 1962), *This Sporting Life* (Lindsay Anderson, 1963). Alongside the vibrant movements in European cinema such as French New Wave and Czech New Wave, this cycle of films, despite some criticism that it was too short and incomplete to be called a New Wave, explored a new course of feature film-making with a new subject-matter, usually contemporary, and pursued an experimental spirit in style and editing. The filmmakers explored the margins of society and projected industrial working-class people mostly in the Midlands and northern England onto the screen. As John Hill summarises;

[T]he novelty of the movement was largely conceived in terms of “contents”(subjects) – of the presentation of the working class on the screen no longer as the stock types or comic butts of “commercial” British cinema, but as “real”, “fully-rounded” characters in “real” settings (the regions, cities, factories etc.) with “real” problems (both everyday and of the culture/ freedom/restraint, purity/corruption, tradition/modernity, affluence/authenticity). (Hill 1999: 130)

Set in real locations of industrial towns, most of these films have young working-class men as the main characters, who, unsatisfied with their life, are seeking escape. As one can see from Tony Richardson’s film which was an adaptation of the same titled novel and theatre production, this cycle often

argued its strong link with the Angry Young Men, a trend in British literature portrayed in the works of Kingsley Amis, and John Osborne in the fields of the novel and theatre performance a short while before.

Looking back on the emergence of British New Wave films, one has to see the cultural and political background, of the key year of 1956. John Caughie's insightful observation of this year explains the ending of the long history and power of the British Empire symbolised by the disappointing failure of the intervention in the Suez crisis; the hatred of the nation was generally expressed by the single figure of a young male character in the literature and theatre works of the Angry Young Men.

The same period saw the emergence of the New Left, for whom, 'doubts about the strict economism of the Communist Party's interpretation of Marx and suspicions about the nature of the Soviet State finally took definitive shape' (Caughie 2000: 60). The New Left's concern moves towards cultural politics, or, the 'importance of culture in the formation of class and identity', and a number of significant (some anthropological) works on the culture of working class were published by Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, Stuart Hall, and Edward Thompson (Caughie 2000: 60). The New Left politics grew especially among university students. The directors of the British New Wave are non-exceptional. Lindsay Anderson co-founded the journal *Sequence* with Karel Reisz and Gavin Lambert in 1947, while writing for *Sight and Sound* and the left-wing political weekly the *New Statesman*. Anderson emphasises the importance of critical commitment in film-making and criticism in his famous article 'Stand Up! Stand Up!' in 1956 *Sight and Sound*. This attitude as film-maker/critic is similar to the case of France, where, Andre Bazin's work as film critic and founder of *Cahier du Cinema* created the site for young film-makers' discussion and communication. The link between the British and European New Wave can also be traced in the brief exhibition of short and documentary films called 'Free Cinema', where the works of young European directors such as Truffaut, Lenica, Borowczyk and Polanski were introduced.

This exhibition was planned in the mid 1950s by Anderson and Reisz, who was a programmer at the National Film Theatre. According to Allan Lovell and Jim Hillier, the main ideas of this event are 'one, freedom of the film-maker; two, the film-maker as a commentator on contemporary society; three, the necessity for "commitment" on the part of the film-maker and the critic' (Lovell and Hillier 1972: 136). This collection of short documentaries declared the importance of 'creative interpretation' of society and the expression of directors' points of view. As stated in the manifesto of this project, Free Cinema clearly shows its influence from the documentary film movement in the 1930s. Led by two major

names, John Grierson and Humphrey Jennings, the impact which the documentary movement made on British cinema is to have 'captured the interest in film as an art' (Lovell and Hillier 1972: 138) and developed it within the form of documentary film. The creators of Free Cinema and the British New Wave follow the spirit of the documentary movement and pursue the role of film-makers and their commitment to criticism as Grierson and his associates also developed the critical sphere of British film through publication of journals such as *Cinema Quarterly* and *World Film News*. Although with consideration of clear contextual differences between the 1930s and the 1950s to 60s, critical perspective and high awareness of the aesthetic side of film-making, such as Eisenstein's montage technique, allowed 'documentary film to become the British art film', and this spirit is what Anderson, Reisz and other Free Cinema directors had inherited (A. Lovell and Hillier 1972: 35).

When the film-makers of Free Cinema moved to feature film production, British New Wave films still shared the subject-matter and shooting techniques of documentary production. In addition to the fresh subject-matter on the British film screen, these films' outstanding characteristic is in location shooting, which opposes the convention of studio shooting among the mainstream films. Location shooting, is the adaptation of a documentary-technique in feature film-making, which allows the films to achieve a sense of authenticity in projecting working-class peoples' lives onto the screen. Andrew Higson and John Hill provide the most significant studies on British New Wave, in which they examine the shots of locations in the films (Higson 1996, Hill 1986). Hill states that these shots of the industrial town such as squalid houses, factories with smoking chimneys, and canals in and around the town; add to the film a 'reality effect' which is placed alongside the use of the regional language and that of non-professional actors. The descriptive shots of the drab and gritty settings allow the film to achieve an authenticity otherwise unseen in earlier works. Higson calls the effect of those shots 'surface realism' and further as 'moral realism': the former authenticates the location itself within the regional accents of the actors, whilst the latter would develop the audiences' sympathy and commitment to the state and social problems faced by those places and people. Location shooting in the British New Wave worked in both ways: it reveals the 'real' state of these towns and people, and its 'authenticity' allows the film to acquire sympathy from the audience.

The subject-matter of British New Wave films is significant in terms of the representation of the working class, in the time of economic affluence. The British New Wave films repeatedly employ characters with a desire for escape (such as Arthur in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*), or climbing up the

social ladder (like Gerald in *This Sporting Life* or Joe in *Room at the Top*). Alongside the representation of their open sexuality (and sometimes issues of abortion), this tendency characterises representation of the working class. As Caughie suggests, in the late 1950s and 1960s the New Left appears, which seeks the grassroots of their politics within the traditional culture of the working class (2000: 48). *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) by Hoggart especially, descriptively records the organic community of the working class, which makes a contrast with the working class in these films that enjoy affluence, commercialism and individualism. Rather, the presentation of traditional community can be seen in the documentaries of Free Cinema. However, the close analysis of the shots of these films reveals their relationship with the New Left.

In spite of its frequent use of the main characters' point-of view shot and overlapping subjective narration, and sometimes the use of flashbacks, the viewpoint of British New Wave films is not at all coherent; especially in the 'That Long Shot of Our Town from That Hill', pictorial descriptions of the location which are often shot from a vantage-point (Higson 1996: 154). These viewpoints are noticeably differentiated from those of the main characters and reveal the gaze of another existence: an outsider looking down on the town from a far higher place. This viewpoint reminds us of the observational or philanthropic attitude of the documentary movement of the 1930s; however, Higson insightfully examines this view as that of a 'scholarship boy' in *The Uses of Literacy*, who escaped from those places, to climb the social ladder and perceive these landscapes of lost home.

Furthermore, there is another interesting relationship between location and narrative in the British New Wave. There is one point where the shots exceed the roles described above, and become an obstacle to the narrative motivation of those films. According to Higson, at some point the shots such as 'That Long Shot of Our Town from That Hill' become picturesque images of an industrial town, rather than gritty reality. Higson compares this 'overwhelming "visibility"', strangely long and numerous shots of northern cities and factories, to classical narrative theory in which notions of place are transformed into spaces which compel one to action, and discovers that in New Wave films it works differently from just being incorporated into the narrative as a motivation; rather, it leaves a spectacle impression of the photographic image itself (Higson 1996: 150). Hill also points out that 'descriptive shots' of those towns make 'complete sequences themselves' which causes 'the detachment of place from action' (Hill 1986: 130). As a result, place in the British New Wave films signifies something more than a narrative motivation, and leads to another important discussion of the

incoherence of viewpoint. Hill describes 'disjunction or tension between [...] narration and description' as a 'poetic' quality that the British New Wave films inherit from Free Cinema (Hill 1986: 129). This poetic quality is what Bazin valued in the Italian Neo-realist films of the 1930s, and what Grierson and Jennings achieved in order to differentiate the documentary from mere journalism. When these images reveal the hands of the director and cameraman as an outsider, they not only offer a surplus of 'reality', but also can be 'the site of personal expression' (Hill 1986: 132). It is the quality that integrates social problems as the subject into film as a medium of expression.

The British New Wave did not last long as a movement, since most of the films failed to achieve financial success. Hill describes the difficulty that those films faced due to the British film 'system founded upon monopoly in distribution and exhibition', by companies such as Rank and ABC, and an unwillingness to invest in social realist films by quoting the chairman of Rank, John Davis: 'the public didn't want "dreary kitchen-sink dramas' (Hill 1979: 132). After the British New Wave, these directors relocated to Hollywood, or, looked for a new medium of representation and moved to television in the 1960s, 'specifically in BBC television drama after 1964', when BBC2 was established (Caughie 2000: 58).

BBC's single play programs such as *The Wednesday Play* and *Play for Today* became another platform for the presentation of social issues. Additionally, there was a transition to filmed drama in the 1960s whilst the technology developed, and this trend was initiated by Tony Garnet and Ken Loach with *Cathy Come Home* (1966). The naturalist style of film shooting was popular among products of the single play, whilst location shooting and deep concern in the current social issues established this type of drama as a successor of social realism. Among young writers/directors who worked in this scheme we can see the names such as Steven Frears, Mike Leigh, and Jim Allen, who entered into film making later in their careers and whose work will be discussed later in this thesis. *The Wednesday Play* in the 1960s and *Play for Today* in the 1970s, with titles such as *Up the Junction* (Loach, 1968), *The Rank and File* (Allen, 1971), *Hard Labour* (Leigh, 1973), *Days of Hope* (Loach, 1975), symbolise the "golden age' of the single play on British television, a time when writers, directors and producers enjoyed unprecedented freedom' (Cooke 2003: 95). Their 'overall quality, audience pleasure, the development of talented artists and techniques, and the honest reflection of the contemporary life and crises achieved a high reputation as an art form, and this prime time programming continued to show radical drama until the early 1980s' (Cooke 2003: 138).

In the field of feature film, it is generally recognized among the critics that

there was little progress in the 1970s. For example, Higson writes; 'the 1970s can be regarded as a transitional period for cinema, caught between two more significant moments' (Higson 1994: 217). However, recent research on this rather ignored period has discovered the continuation of a social realist tradition. James Leggott advocates this continuation, especially the theme of 'the struggles of young men to escape the stifling domesticity of urban or suburban environment' in the films such as *That'll Be the Day* (Claude Whatham, 1973) and *The Likely Lads* (Michael Tuchner, 1976): he also reveals another aspect of realist subject-matter 'teenage delinquency', in the titles of *Quadrophenia* (Franc Roddam, 1979) and *Scum* (Alan Clark, 1979) (Leggott 2008: 96-97). It seems a rather scattered connection to establish a concrete 'social realist' tradition within 1970s feature film, however, it cannot be dismissed that the 1970s witnessed the works of Terence Davies and Bill Douglas, both, having a strong impression of modern art cinema. They show one direction of social realist film's transition. Leggott's work assures us that the link between the 1960s and 1980s is not entirely lost, but after all, it is more convincing to conclude that the social realism of 1970s rather survived and developed in the field of television. The relationship between social realism and TV continues into the 1980s, and leads to another significant moment in the launch of Channel Four.

The 1980s

The 1980s was a crucial decade in terms of the political condition of Britain and social realist films. Since the establishment of Margaret Thatcher's government in 1979, the basic structure of the United Kingdom had been completely changed. The government promoted the idea of a free market economy to privatise huge amounts of formally nationalised industry which included British Gas, British Telecom and British Airways; its new policies were based on the principles of self-help and moral virtue in the pursuit of personal profit. The policy of a market driven economy allowed the government to withdraw its support of various industries through privatisation; the film industry was no exception. The abolition of the Eady Levy, a long-term support system for the film industry since 1947, which provided 25% tax cuts for film investment, and privatisation of the National Film Finance Corporation (NFFC), a crucial support system for independent production, impoverished the finance of the British film industry. In addition to the immediate impact on its production environment, the Tory government gave film-makers new concern on their subject. The 1980s saw a major power shift within industry: heavy industry declined while the service industry grew, changing the economic map of the UK forever. Southern entrepreneurs represented Thatcher's idea of a new upwardly mobile class,

whilst she saw the traditional working-class northerner and the reliance on unionisation as representative of the old class system. Describing them as the ‘enemy within’, she did not hide her hostility to the trade unions: political oppression of unions brought the government the triumph over the miners’ strike of 1984-85, it symbolised the loss of traditional unionised working-class value. The country was divided: whilst the south enjoyed significant economic improvement and achieved affluence, the northern industrial cities declined into unemployment and poverty.

Social realist films in the 1980s, or ‘the state of the nation films’ as stated by Sargent (2005) and Hill (1999), reflect the drastic changes in society and show obvious hostilities towards Thatcher herself. As Lester Friedman describes in the preface to *British Cinema and Thatcherism* (1993: 10), ‘British films of this period could not help being political.’ For example, Lindsay Anderson displays a grotesque version of Britain in the late 1970s in *Britannia Hospital* (1982), where a ‘sense of shared community values [which can be seen in earlier British documentaries such as *Listen to Britain* (1942) or *Every Day Except Christmas* (1957)] has disappeared and been supplanted by selfishness, inefficiency, and strife (Hill 1999: 138). And the gloomy and despairing atmosphere in the film ‘extends to a totally pessimistic view of the human condition itself’ (Quart 1993: 27). Richard Eyre’s *The Ploughman’s Lunch* (1983)’s protagonist James Penfield reminds us of the ambitious heroes of the British New Wave, who tried to escape their origins and climb the social ladder; however, this film shows him as a pessimistic version of the Thatcherite new class ‘that eschews social concern and commitment in favour of the celebration of individual success’ (Quart 1993:27). The characters that represent Thatcher’s entrepreneur spirit are often illustrated with cynicism. Mike Leigh’s *High Hopes* (1988) illustrates the divided society that Thatcher created by using exaggerated characterisation. Cyril and Shirley are Marxist left-wingers who have no interest in the materialistic economy, Rupert and Laetitia, are an ‘upwardly mobile’ snobbish Tory couple, and Shirley’s sister Valerie and her husband, who try so hard to pursue ‘Thatcherite lines of making money and acquiring material goods’ , although the result is drawn as extremely irritating and tasteless (Quart 1993: 30-31). And Peter Greenaway’s *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* (1989) presents its main character Albert Spica as an embodiment of the values of Thatcherism, and criticises it by constructing a comparison of him to the other characters of cook Richard, who calls himself an artist, and Michael, a bibliophile, who represents the cultural values of the pre-Thatcher era. The above films have strong criticism of and hostility towards the Tory government, but not all of them expressed it in a straightforward realism.

Hill recalls Raymond Williams' concept of realism in British Cinema in the 1980s (1999), by showing that social realist films could be investigated in terms of content (subject-matter) and form (realistic device). The subject-matter of realism is always expanding the boundaries, and renders invisible issues into visible. Compared to the British New Wave which focused on the representation of the white working-class male, films in the 1980s provided a new terrain of diversity in terms of gender and race. Female working-class characters and their sexuality are significant in *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (Alan Clark 1986). Hill investigates the narrative structure and shooting technique of this film in terms of 'women's film' and realism. The plot is built around two working-class teenage girls Rita and Sue and a married middle-class man Bob who creates a sexually open-relationship and radically replaces 'the conventional family by an unconventional ménage à trois' (Hill 1999: 182). Not only does it deviate from the convention of 'women's film' in which domesticity or marriage is the narrative solution, but also it rejects the moralisation which dominates the films of British New Wave (punishment of sexually transgression). Moreover, Alan Clark's style, based on realist techniques, 'long takes and the avoidance of point-of-view shots and reverse-field cutting', helps the film's discouragement of audiences' 'sense of involvement and identification which is typical of the "women's film"' (Hill 1999: 183). Although Hill criticises the film's lack of 'critical dialogue', *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* explores the teenage female working-class as a subject-matter and also exceeds the conventional principles of women's film by adopting realist techniques to split observer and observed.

In contrast to the traditional representation of masculinity which was dependent on work and the role of a breadwinner, 1980s films project the crisis of masculinity in an economic depression. Hill examines *Business as Usual* (1987), *Educating Rita* (1983), and *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* and concludes that the male characters in those films are depicted as powerless, domesticated or even castrated figures. In addition to that, *Vroom* (1988), which uses this threatened masculinity as comic elements, and explains that 'the myth of the sexually aggressive working-class male is, in effect, "exhausted" and can now only be displayed when invested with a degree of self-conscious parody and playfulness' (Hill 1999: 170). Even Mike Leigh's *Naked* (1993) and its extreme anger and misogyny in the 'working-class hero' represents a 'collapse of roles which historically reinforced a sense of male identity' and 'another form of response to the "crisis" of masculinity brought on by changing economical and social roles' (Hill 1999: 168).

Another subject which emerged within social realism in the 1980s was the marginal yet large part of British society: Black British. *My Beautiful Laundrette*

was about being a homosexual Asian British and racism during the Thatcherite era. Young Pakistani Omar's (Gordon Warnecke) success in the makeover of his father's friend's launderette depicts the entrepreneurial Asian spirit, in the market economy of the Thatcher government era. However, this film not only celebrates their new class life style, but proposes another depth by drawing the homosexual relationship between Omar and the white punk fascist, Johnny (Daniel Day-Lewis). The issue of racism comes forward when Omar's launderette is attacked by racist punks; Johnny's friends. Street suggests that the success of the launderette and the violent racist attack represent the 'enduring' nature and 'vulnerability' of Omar and Johnny's relationship (Street 2005: 107). *My Beautiful Launderette's* deeply-investigated and well-constructed illustration of homosexuality within Black British culture as subject-matter (not as another typical caricatured representation of a Pakistani as shown within *Rita, Sue and Bob, Too*) shows another new exploration of the part of British society that was yet unknown on screen. The 1980s saw the growth of Black British film from within the independent and mainstream film scenes, such as *Dreaming Rivers* (Martina Attille, 1988), *Territories* (Isaac Julien, 1985), *Testament* (Lynne Littman, 1983), *Handsworth Songs* (John Akomfrah, 1986), *Playing Away* (Horace Ové, 1987) and *Looking For Langston* (Isaac Julien, 1989); whilst independent productions and workshops provided the environment for young Black film-makers to develop their work and the public institutions such as the BFI, the Arts Council, Greater London Council and Channel 4 provided the financial support, exhibition and distribution.

These films capture the air of contemporary society, though as Hill points out, it is not straightforward realism. Rather, these films have a tendency towards a mixture of genre conventions and awareness of cinematic aesthetics. In *British National Cinema* (1997), Sarah Street gives a new term to those films which employ various genre conventions mixed with social realist elements, 'hybrid films': 'films dealt with recent/contemporary problems in an overt matter: issue-based films that encompassed several generic elements from comedy to thriller' (Street 1997: 106). Her analysis of the collection of films from *The Ploughman's Lunch* (political situation in Thatcherite Britain), *My Beautiful Launderette* (1985, racism, homosexuality, ethnicity and market economy), *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987, youth problem) to *The Crying Game* (1992, Northern Ireland problems, IRA) shows how those films illustrate the contemporary social situation or problems and use of the genre convention for narrative structure or formative techniques. For example, *The Crying Game* deals with the subject of the terrorist organisation, the Irish Republican Army and Northern Ireland yet its plotline is a mixture of thriller with a homosexual love

story twist (Street 1997: 109). It is notable that Street's examples of hybrid films expands towards works which are not precisely social realist, such as *Brazil* (1985, 'satire on the extreme Bureaucratic society') as a fantasy film, *Britannia Hospital* as a dark comic horror film, and *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* as a gangster film to analyse this tendency.

In addition to 'hybrid films' as crucial features of social realism in the 1980s, there is another significant factor in terms of context: the systematic change in the British film industry, the shift that would build a new relationship between TV and film, and between British film and European cinema. The 1980s saw the loss of financial support from government, although it was an era of achievement and international recognition of British film. The Oscar winning *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981) fuelled an enthusiasm for British (cultural heritage and empire) cinema in the international (especially American) market. Alongside this, there was another strand of films that found their way to the closer but long-time neglected European market. Williams describes the 1980s as the era when British film-making was further encouraged to look into European-based production and distribution, and the newly appeared TV broadcast company played a great part in this transition. Channel 4, the second commercial TV broadcast company, was established in 1982, with the aim to provide a larger variety of programmes to audiences. Included within its remit was the need to create feature length films for television (also aimed for cinematic and theatrical release), which it later followed with its own programme slot called Film on Four in 1984. Channel 4's film production division the Independent Film and Video Department, was proposed to encourage cultural diversity in British film by financing low-budget independent film makers. Its investment in films took the forms of full-funding (*My Beautiful Laundrette*), co-investment (*Letter to Brezhnev*, 1985), and the pre-purchase of television rights (*Room with a View*, 1985). This style of co-investment involved other companies and organisations such as Goldcrest Films, BFI and the NFFC, and it had become more and more common for independent film-makers to collect finance from more than two sources. Since the 1980s the size of the cinema audience was in decline due to an expansion of home based cinema watching via, VHS and rental outlets such as Blockbuster, this rise in TV distribution promised massive viewing figures in domestic viewers; furthermore, it created a unique realm of British film in terms of its interests and aesthetic.

Giles closely investigates how the aesthetic of TV was integrated into Channel 4 films. Compared to classical cinema's linear narrative structure, TV drama's 'open-ended and amorphous' narrative structure prevents *High Hopes* from 'reaching the cathartic climax we expect in a cinema production' (Giles

1993: 80). Also, since the audience relates television to reality and cinema to the realms of fantasy, familiarity became the key of the quality of the television medium. In terms of camerawork Channel 4 films 'possess a statuesque quality reinforced by the relative immobility of the camera' (Giles 1993: 80). Although adopting this technique of providing familiarity with the audience, *High Hopes* creates the moment of 'heightened realism' by emphasising 'physical claustrophobia and psychological immobility': 'this theatre of embarrassment challenges its onlookers by bathetically subverting the expectations of cinematic narrative and engendering a sense of queasy familiarity, a recognition of the film's disconcerting proximity to the trials of daily living' (Giles 1993: 78). This combination of familiarization and defamiliarization characterises the Channel 4 films; and it also works for the presentation of history. Through the association of film with the historic past and history and that of television with present, Giles furthermore explains the dynamics of familiarity and defamiliarization in *The Ploughman's Lunch*; its footage of the Tory conference in Brighton provides the perspective of the television medium to the film, although the film itself creates historical texture.

Such displacement of history into fiction takes on a kind of ontological status in television films of the 1980s. Television films train their glance back on television itself, exploring the contradictions inherent in this medium's own recycled vision of the world. In this way, the fictional dialectic of familiarity and defamiliarization exposes those fissures and ambiguities latent within the nation's domesticated understanding of history. (Giles 1993: 85)

This is the moment when 'this dialectic of familiarity and defamiliarization in television fiction's recognition of the past as a mode not of realism but of magic realism' (Giles 1993: 84). Channel 4 film takes the medium of television (which represents reality, and the present), and still forms itself as film (fantasy and history), in order to illustrate 'how history itself becomes fictionalized' (Giles 1993: 84). Giles' insight into social films of the 1980s and its intertwined relation between film and traditional television aesthetics suggests how complex social realism became.

The fusion of the production system of television and film and adaptation (and deprivation) of television aesthetics nourished social realism to be perceived as art cinema in the European and international market. Hill points out that the 1980s was the time when British cinema's competitive power with Hollywood turned out to be 'unsustainable' anymore: 'British film production in the 1980s was pushed in the direction of a different form of production aimed at more specialized markets', which leads to 'art cinema' circuit (Hill 1999: 64). In

addition to the established auteuristic reputation of some British directors such as Peter Greenaway and Derek Jarman in European art cinema circuit, Channel 4 films had got the attention of the critics at international film festivals: *My Beautiful Laundrette* was nominated for an Oscar, and *A Letter to Brezhnev* (1985) won at the Venice film festival.

Art cinema is basically a concept for highly expressionist European cinema; according to David Bordwell's definition, art cinema has 'loosening of narrative structures', 'a concern with "realism ("objective" realism / "subjective" realism)", 'authorial expressiveness', and 'textual ambiguity' (Hill 1999: 65). Christopher Williams also provides key terms; 'individual identity, sexuality, psychological complexity, anomie, episode-ness, interiority, ambiguity, style' (Williams ed. 1996: 198). Seen from the films discussed above, social realist films in the 1980s did have a tendency to approach art cinema convention, in respect of their cinematic structure. Quart argues that social films in the 80s 'expressed revulsion with Thatcherism; still, their anger rarely turned to vaporous and schematic polemics, evolving instead into the complex formal texture and imagination of art' rather than propose alternative and subversive political action (Quart 1993: 33). Social concern and complex aesthetic forms brought those films to a new terrain, which Williams calls 'social art cinema'. By categorising the films produced by Channel 4, he concludes that 'the most important point is that the art film grouping is the single most substantial element, and that more traditional combinations of the Human Interest, the realist and political carry about the same weight' (Williams ed. 1996: 199).

The 1980s was a significant era for British film industry and also for social realism; it explored the new subject matter of female and ethnic working class, not from class-politics but from gender perspective. The emergence of Channel 4 and its support let it acquire the new medium of television and its aesthetics. Moreover, the concept of hybrid films completely subverts the idea of social realism per excellence, or the idea of social realism as genre. Social realism of the 1980s was characterised by realist elements being interwoven into various genres of films.

The 1990s to Present: New Labour and the New Millennium

In the 1990s, Britain was celebrating 'the survival of Thatcher government's deconstruction of the country' and the arrival of the New Labour government with a charmingly young prime minister and the forthcoming new millennium. The optimistic atmosphere in British films came to a peak in its number of productions in 1996, 128 films (more than double the number of the films made

in 1990) were produced. This is the significant year that *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1996) and *The Full Monty* (Peter Cattaneo, 1997) achieved massive international success. Located in Edinburgh and Sheffield, they featured the unemployed working class or, as critics like Claire Monk, Paul Dave and Mike Wayne termed it, the 'underclass', a term coined by Charles Murray, which 'conceals the systematic destructive effects of capitalism on [...] the working class' (Monk 2000a: 156, Wayne 2002: 288, Dave 2006: 83). In the accelerating growth of globalization within the film industry, Peter Todd concludes that in 1996, most distributors and exhibitors in the UK were US companies soaking up UK rivals: Working Title was merged into Polygram Film Entertainment in 1992, which was itself merged with Universal by its parent company Seagram in 1998 (Todd 2000: 18). Rank Film Distributions was bought up by Carlton Television, and then quite quickly closed down. This is similar to the subordination to Hollywood majors which the British film industry had been fighting against, though, in the time of globalization, Wayne describes it as a process of integration into Cultural Transnational Corporations (CTNCs) (2002: 287). The phenomenal international Box Office success of *The Full Monty* and *Trainspotting*, was partly a result of powerful U.S. distributors such as 20 Century Fox and Miramax and the massive budget on marketing emphasising them as comedies and stylish youth films. Especially, *Trainspotting* is an excellent example of collaborating with contemporary British pop music, which, in 1990s, was called 'Britpop' and gained a worldwide reputation, its soundtrack went on to also achieve great sales. This creates the trend of the combination of youth drug culture and pop music within the film industry and is followed by films such as *Twin Town* (Kevin Allen, 1997), *The Acid House* (Paul McGuigan, 1998) and *Human Traffic* (Justin Kerrigan, 1999). However, *The Full Monty*'s cheerfulness and comical characters also gathered audiences to the screen of *Billy Elliot* (Stephen Daldry, 2000); another feel-good story from north England's collapsing mining towns.

As Monk suggests the underclass film in the 1990s showed two tendencies: the gender anxiety of male characters and the New Labour politics of 'rebranding' UK (2000b: 278). Right after the election, the New Labour government's first Culture Secretary Chris Smith with the support of the think tank Demos's report *Britain*TM (1997) announced the project under the name of 're-branding UK', to transform its national image from the Queen, warm beer and cricket to 'cool Britannia', which was to come to represent Britain's 'creative industry' and 'youth culture'. Theatre arts, fashion, design, music, and films; all of which constitute the main body of the UK's 'art' industry, and their 'cool' images were recruited as Britain's new face. *Trainspotting*, *The Full Monty* and

Billy Elliot are the best examples of projecting this new national image that the New Labour government pursued. These three films share the admiration of the creative industry, integrating the elements of entertainment industry into the story of unemployed, hopeless traditional (linked to heavy industry) working-class people. The unemployed and drug-addicted youth in Edinburgh is illustrated with a highly stylised film aesthetic, and with a massive collaboration of pop music: while the unemployed steel workers in Sheffield plan to become male strippers like the Chippendale's in a local pub, in the hope of gaining cash and regaining their dignity as both a father and a husband. Moreover, picturing the mining town of the 1980s, *Billy Elliot* presents a story of a boy with a natural talent in Ballet, who in the end accomplishes entry to The Royal Ballet Academy in London and becomes a future principal. Those three films share the use of British cultural pop music (although *The Full Monty* uses 80s music and *Billy Elliot* has a 60s retro soundtrack), and ultimately they find the solution to their impoverished life styles by finding work within the creative industry (in *Trainspotting*, Renton monopolises the cash made out of drug dealing to escape Edinburgh and move to London, the millennium capital which represents Britain's creativity and diverse culture).

Furthermore, Wayne's analysis reveals that in *The Full Monty*, *Billy Elliot* and *Little Voice* (Mark Herman 1998), it is through the use of a 'retro' soundtrack that characters acquire a 'new self-consciousness around the body and [...] non-traditional bodily skills' which transform their body from 'producing goods' into 'serving a paying public' (Wayne 2002: 293). In capitalist society where the security of personal ontology is fragile, music 'generally serves as sites of nostalgia for a more homely place, a better place; a utopia' (Wayne 2002: 292). Retro music works with the 'archaic *mise-en-scène* of films to create the 'absence of contemporary culture' or furthermore, 'the deracination of time and place' (Wayne 2002: 291). Political meanings in the specific context in the films are demolished and hidden in the globalised international economy.

As Hill argues, in the 1990s the representation of working class is characterised by a significant lack of political action and a tendency of utopianism. The most political social realist film-maker Ken Loach created *Raining Stones* (1993), *Ladybird Ladybird* (1994), *My Name is Joe* (1998) in the UK, though the power of political statement is fading. In the 1990s Loach also made two films located in foreign countries, *Land and Freedom* (1995) in Spain and *Bread and Roses* (1996) in the United States, and it is certain that those two have a more powerful statement in terms of their theme; one being the Spanish civil war the other dealing with Hispanic immigration. Even though he keeps his unique style of distant observation, Hill points out that in *My Name is Joe*, there

is no clear political voice at all unlike the first two. Hill also compares them with more up-tempo films of the 1990s, *The Full Monty*, *Brassed Off* (Mark Harman, 1996), and *Up'n Under* (John Godber, 2001) to claim that 'the film may be seen to hold out the possibility of overcoming the crisis of masculinity, less by a re-learning of male roles than by the re-establishment of the bonds amongst men, particularly those associated with traditional male, working class culture' (Hill 2000a: 185). These films' solution to the crisis is found in the unrealistic and temporal: male stripping, brass band competition and rugby league, and all the feel-good endings leave's us questioning about their lives after the end of the film. Instead of being class-conscious and political, they provide a story of searching alternative and a utopian ways to recover the traditional working-class community and masculinity which was utterly damaged by unemployment caused by the economic shift from industrial manufacturing to the service industry and a reversal of the gender role.

Exploring the issue of gender (or more precisely, masculine) representation of the 1990s, Monk claims that adding to the fear of disempowerment caused by losing traditional masculine work-environment and community, some films significantly express discomfort or even a violent reaction toward female characters (2000a : 164). For example, in *Brassed Off* Gloria (Tara Fitzgerald) was at first refused entry to the colliery band because she is a woman, and it was her patriarchal lineage (her grandfather as a coalminer) which helped her to be accepted. *Nil by Mouth* (Gary Oldman, 1997), similar to *Naked*, develops a dark tension between the working-class couple, and has a quite violent representation of an abusive husband towards his wife. As for youth films such as *Trainspotting*, *Twin Town* and *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (Guy Ritchie, 1998), we see little presence of female characters, and instead an illustration of the homosocial world of men. Analysing these films, Monk refers to the 'new laddism' culture of the 1990s, linked with the publication of the lads magazine *Loaded* in 1994, as 'a humorous, hedonistic and above all regressive escape from demands of maturity and women' (Monk 2000a: 162). What those films above share is 'emotion, anxiety around gender as much as economic disempowerment', and it was 'nostalgia [...] around the lost homosocial communities they engendered and the powerful emotional bonds associated with them' which appealed to the international mass audiences who had no knowledge about the industrial corruption of the 1980s (Monk 2000b: 277-78). This nostalgic representation of the working-class (male) community rather than class politics was also connected to the issue of commoditization of the underclass. Their unemployment or drug culture was presented as a 'lifestyle' and 'subculture', not a 'social problem' (Monk 2000b: 278). The British films in

the 1990s are more or less associated with the concept of 'cool Britannia', in which the working-class are represented as a commodity, style, and subculture for the mass-international market.

On the other side of the film industry, there was enthusiasm for social realist films or 'kitchen sink' films. In 1999 Vanessa Thorpe wrote an article for *The Guardian*, titled 'Reality Bites (again)'. Thorpe announces the new renaissance of British socialist films by young directors in the circuit of art cinema, as 'every one of the more successful British productions shown in Cannes this month has paid deliberate homage to the hard-bitten tradition of social realism' (Thorpe 1999). Beside a well-established favouring of the works of British social realists like Ken Loach or Mike Leigh, there were growing numbers of titles shown in European film festivals including *Nil by Mouth*, *The War Zone* (Tim Roth, 1999), *Wonderland* (Michel Winterbottom, 1999), *Ratcatcher* (Lynne Ramsay, 1999), and the works of Shane Meadows.

In addition to the admiration for British films in the European film festivals, the 1990s saw a development in the relationship with European film production in terms of production and distribution. Co-operative funding of low-budget films became more common after Channel 4 and Film Four. Ian Christie reveals that throughout the 1990s European funding organisations such as Eurimages and MEDIA supported many of the internationally recognised British films such as *Land and Freedom* (Ken Loach, 1995), *Secret and Lies* (Mike Leigh, 1995), and *The Pillow Book* (Peter Greenaway, 1995) (2000: 74). Within the UK, the environment of film production had been improving since the Lottery Fund was introduced into the film industry in 1995: The Film Council was set up in the 2003 to create a sustainable environment for the film industry with other organisations such as British Screen Finance, BFI's production department, Lottery Film Department of the Arts Council of England, and the British Film Commission (Ryall 2002: 9). The Lottery Fund's first success *Shooting Fish* (Stefan Schwartz, 1997), also led to an international outburst of other British youth culture films. It strengthened British film production by awarding production finance for more than six years to three companies, Pathé Pictures, The Film Consortium and DNA Films to construct a stable and competitive distribution system within the UK. Todd notes that this funding of the French company Pathé clearly represents 'the concerns of Chris Smith for Britain to use its unique position "as a bridge, geographically, culturally and economically, between Europe and the United States"' (Todd 2000: 23).

The establishment of UK-European co-production, projects another critical dimension of the 1990s: this being the question of nationality in British film. Ian Christie comments that European funding reinforced the effect of the devolution

of the UK, an awareness of films' regionalism and national identity.

In the first place, it has broadened and consolidated the social cinema that withered after the 60s (or rather disappeared into television). It was European recognition, initially through festivals and then with funding, that allowed not only Loach to re-emerge, but also Leigh to develop as a film-maker, with his suburban odyssey *Secret and Lies* largely funded by France's CiBy 2000. Again, European recognition and support has encouraged the diversification of a British realism that was once essentially English into Welsh, Irish and especially Scottish strands. (Christie 2000: 77)

Since the devolution of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in 1997, the critical approach on British cinema moved towards a 'national cinema', more than a cohesive 'British cinema'. Duncan Petrie's book *Screening Scotland* (2000) captures the history of film-making and film-criticism in Scotland. In addition, David Martin-Jones adopts the concept of 'minor cinema' by Deleuze and Guattari to examine the aesthetic structure of *Orphans* (Peter Mullan, 1997) and its representation of post-devolutionary Scotland (Martin-Jones 2004: 228). Whilst the film journal *Cineaste* (Fall 2001) published a supplementary collection of articles on contemporary British cinema, and there are titles including 'Scottish cinema' and 'Celtic Fringe', represented by works of *Trainspotting* or *Twin Town*. Martin McLoone comments that it is the reflection of 'the complex identities that now exist within and between these areas [non-England UK]' and their attempt 'to explore especially their relationship to both Englishness and Britishness' (2001: 52). Moreover, Steven Blandford writes in *Film, Drama and the Break-up of Britain* (2006) that 'it is possible to find writers and film-makers from Scotland and Wales seeking to distance themselves from a "British" identity by locating their work in what they see as a European context'(9). Although some films try to overcome this regionality and aimed for international success, this tendency is quite characteristic of the 1990s considering the financial status of those films is rather patched from European and regional Film Councils.

The issue of an identity of Britishness leads social realist films to a new subject-matter, that of ethnic minorities. Although the British Asian community was already on the screen in the 1980s, *East is East* (Damien O'Donnell, 1999) presents a comedy of a mixed marriage and their children's complex attitude toward their parents' culture in 1970s England. In this way Ken Loach tackles a contemporary Romeo-Juliet form of love story *Ae Fond Kiss* (2004), but this time it is not the class difference but the difference of ethnicity that is the obstacle.

Alongside comedy and love stories, *Dirty Pretty Things* (Stephen Frears, 2002) takes a crime-thriller narrative style on the African and Turkish asylum seeker working in a hotel who happens to get involved in a syndicate of human organ trading within London. Whilst the documentary-maker Powel Pawlikowski's feature film *Last Resort* (2000) is a story of a Russian woman and her son who come to England to get together with her 'fiance', who has no intention of getting married; she then decides to apply for political asylum and is sent to temporary accommodation in the grim run down seaside resort of Stonehaven. This film achieved a reputation as a highly aesthetic film, while maintaining a realist style through the use of minimal music effects and the use of a hand-held camera on location. In 2007, Loach comes back to his basics television feature for Channel 4, *It's a Free World* (2007), and presents a story of an English woman who tries to build a job agency for economic migrant (mainly Polish) workers and other illegal workers. Since this subject matter was presented as 'social issues' which need awareness, critics found a new 'realist tradition' within them. In 2006 Rebecca Prime wrote an article 'Stranger than Fiction: Genre and Hybridity in the "Refugee Film"' to analyse the 'historical' aesthetic strategies that *Dirty Pretty Things* and *In This World* (Michael Winterbottom, 2003) adopted from traditional film-making for the 'representation of social issues' (Prime 2006: 57). Some of these films gained a reputation for their aesthetic quality; it is also notable that these films have a wide range of genre convention, from comedy to thriller. In this complexity and hybridity, the social realist elements are interwoven.

The 1990s is the decade of the British social realist film which explores the concept of British identity. It also presents a new national identity of 'Britishness', which was represented as the UK's creative cultural industry. The white male working class was shown to have switched their hope from regaining political and economic power to restoring their homosocial communities thorough the performing arts. The youth's unemployment and drug addiction is mixed with pop music and becomes a stylized subculture. The subject matter of social realism was absorbed and transformed into a cultural commodity within a global market. On the other hand, it found diversity in its identity through devolution, which made the term 'British cinema' no longer cohesive. Although Thrope announced the ending of the renaissance of social realism in 2005, in another article "The British are coming, but this time we'll be playing it for laughs", she states the coming movement within the industry; which was turning away from 'miserabilist' drama to a popular genre such as comedy, realist film-making is surviving among various genres, searching for a further new frontier of British society.

Chapter 1

Ken Loach's Social Realism

British director Ken Loach, started his career in the 1960s, when he joined BBC Television and directed several *Wednesday Plays* (single plays broadcast in 1964-70) including *Up the Junction* (1965) and *Cathy Come Home* (1966) with producer Tony Garnett; with whom he shared a passion to present current social issues to the British public via TV, in the form of drama. His beliefs and areas of main concern are clearly displayed consistently in his work: *Up the Junction* is based on a novel by Nell Dunn, who observed the lives of working-class people in South London. *Cathy Come Home*, is where Loach shows us a young working-class couple who become homeless, it is based on the investigative journalism into the issue of accommodation for homeless families carried out by journalist Jeremy Sanford. Through these works Loach determines to present working-class people's challenging lives, adopting filming techniques from documentary which use handy and flexible 16mm cameras to film outside the studio; and with his preference of using non-professional actors and improvised shooting, Loach established his particular style of drama, which creates a blurring effect between the distinction of fact and fiction, and fact appears through fictional narrative. When he began his long career as a film director, with *Poor Cow* in 1967, he had already established and sustained his basic approach toward film-making.

Loach's work has never primarily been about visual style: at the core of all his films, are political statements about people marginalised economically or politically within British society. Loach's films from the 1960s through to the 1980s, deal with particular social and political contexts, such as housing problems or union strikes. His main concern is the social system; supposedly designed to help people in a predicament, but which nevertheless works in the opposite manner to further oppress the people and create misery. Loach's commitment to Trotskyite Marxism also differentiates his works from other high-profile British directors and makes his position in British film culture unique; as he uses his characters to portray key political points of each period they were filmed, by directing them to give key political speeches. Loach is also unusual in refusing to diverge from his commitment to a naturalistic style of film-making derived from documentary cinema techniques: filming in locations without artificial lighting; using non-professional actors and valuing improvisation (it is a well-known fact that he provides actors only a single piece of a script at a time and encourages them to ad lib). He has been seen as the prime British

exponent of social realism and his films are appreciated internationally, especially in European countries where they have been widely shown on the art cinema circuit and received numerous awards in film festivals, including Cannes.

This chapter examines Loach's films from the 1990s, which focus on working-class people in contemporary British society. Loach's two 'trilogies' – firstly, *Riff Raff* (1990), *Raining Stones* (1993) and *Ladybird Ladybird* (1994), and secondly, *My Name is Joe* (1998), *Sweet Sixteen* (2002) and *Ae Fond Kiss* (2004) – allow us to comprehend how he carefully balances tensions between fiction and non-fiction to achieve social realism. This chapter reviews the question of how consistent his style is, in dealing with the working class in the rapidly transforming political situation in post-Thatcher Britain.

***Riff Raff* (1990), *Raining Stones* (1993) and *Ladybird Ladybird* (1994)**

Riff Raff was produced as a feature film for Channel 4's Film on Four, which was established for the purpose of investing in British independent films with a theatrical distribution after television broadcasting. Located on a construction site in south London, this film features casual workers converting a hospital building into luxury apartments. Set in Thatcher's Britain of the 1980s, it makes obvious references to government politics (Tommy's speech on housing policy) and the rise of the entrepreneurial market (this construction itself is a significant indication that British society is moving from a welfare state towards a money-driven economy). The story deals with the lack of health and safety on the site, shown through the unsafe and insecure working conditions used on the construction site and the unprotected working situations of the casual workers.

A Glaswegian, Stevie (Robert Carlyle), recently released from prison and homeless, finds a job as a casual construction worker; he also manages to find minimum accommodation in a squatted room in a semi-derelict council estate building with the help of his new work colleagues. He then meets a would-be singer Susan (Emer McCourt), although his relationship with her reveals fundamental difficulties due to her dreamy and un-realistic ambitions to be a star singer, in comparison to Stevie's dream of making a fortune by selling men's underwear. It finally breaks up when he finds out that she is taking drugs during his absence to attend his mother's funeral. Apart from the scenes between Stevie and Susan, most of the action takes place on the construction site: Larry (Ricky Tomlinson) the political activist among the builders tries to organise a union for the casual workers and, is then sacked as he is seen to be a troublemaker. Desmonde (Derek Young), dreams of making a trip to Africa to find his roots, however he falls from the scaffold and is seriously injured. This

tragic accident makes Stevie desperate and he and another colleague burn the building down.

Loach reflects the actors' (and the screenwriter's) own experiences onto the screen, and he encourages the actors to suggest their own ideas, or surprises them by allowing them to elicit natural reactions and ad-libs, in order to achieve a naturalistic effect. The scriptwriter, Bill Jesse, was working on a construction site when he met Loach (Fuller 1998: 151). Also many of the actors, including Carlyle and Tomlinson, had similar kinds of work experience. Loach usually gives the actors a short script of a scene they are about to play rather than the whole in order to avoid over-rehearsed acting and to keep the dialogue fresh. This allows the actors to deliver natural reactions in their performance such as the line of Larry ('I'm checking the plumbing.') when he is spotted taking a bath naked in the show flat by the muslin women, and provides the film with comic elements (Fuller 1998: 151).

The observational style of Loach's shooting is evident in the distance between the camera and the characters. Throughout the film, the camera maintains either a medium or long shot. Even the conversation between Stevie and Susan in the beginning of their relationship, which would normally be shot in close-up to emphasise emotional intimacy, is shot from a distance to create a sense of observation rather than involvement. The actors are continually allowed to come in and out of a static frame; and their dialogue is allowed to drift in and out; even though sometimes their voices are too faint or too crowded to hear. With a style of cinematography that relies heavily on natural light, these techniques create 'an artless naturalism that has no trace of artificiality or stagecraft' (A.W. Murphy 1991: 21-22).

Alongside these stylistic approaches, another important aspect of *Riff Raff* is its narrative structure. This film's narrative works as a mosaic or collage: alongside the main story of Stevie and Susan, minor episodes in the lives of this group of construction workers being depicted (Smith 1994: 38-46). Loose construction of the plot characterises this film's story which, 'builds a central relationship round, but not from, the scattered bricks of a communal experience' (Wilson 1991: 61). Stevie provides this film's centre point as a protagonist, and his relationship with Susan is an important romantic sub-plot. When their relationship ends, before the scene of the accident, the emphasis shifts back onto the narrative and the subject of the conditions on the building site, other episodes about the construction workers, such as Larry's unfair dismissal and Desmond's tragic accident, give strong motivation to Stevie's action of setting fire to the site at the end of the film, and encourage a strong impression and sympathy from the audience. Although some critics call the collaged narrative

structure of the plot a 'weakness', this film is a strong reaction to the socio-political change brought about by Thatcher's Britain and it is this political comment which is the underlying and controlling narrative of the film; for this reason Hill(1999) places the film with other 1980's anti-Thatcher films.

Stevie is depicted as embodying the entrepreneurial spirit of the age, by attempting to build his own business, at the same time Susan also has an ambition to succeed as a singer; however, she is rather depicted as an unrealistic dreamer due to her lack of singing talent and her continual missing of auditions due to laziness. The gap between the two is their attitude towards success and how they believe they can achieve it within the changing society of Thatcher's Britain. Loach's critical attitude towards this entrepreneur spirit governed by a capitalist economy is illustrated by these two characters; Susan's failure as a professional singer is obvious not only from her lazy nature but from the quality of her singing. Steve shows more discipline by explaining his plan to pursue his dream, but he bitterly rejects his entrepreneurial ambitions in favour of burning down the building. The damage done by the Conservative government (or that Loach believes) is also shown in the scene when Larry gets fired because he tried to organise a union. In the end of the film, Stevie's action of setting fire to the building is symbolically represented in the opening scene of rats running away from the burning building. *Riff Raff* shows a strong political statement throughout the film while maintaining the naturalistic style of shooting in order to achieve social realism.

Compared to Loach's work until the end of the 1980s (including *Riff Raff*), Leigh suggests that since *Raining Stones*, 'Loach has developed his commitment to working out coherent narrative structures' (Leigh 2002: 142). *Raining Stones* has a linear main plot: an unemployed father's struggle to find the money for his daughter's first communion dress. Bob (Bruce Jones) and his friend Tommy (Ricky Tomlinson) try to earn money wherever and however they can. Unfortunately, Bob finally borrows the money from a money-lender which brings down dangerous threats from loan sharks against his wife and daughter. Bob's quest for revenge comes to end when the boss of the loan sharks drunkenly crashes his car and dies. Bob then runs into the church and confesses everything to the catholic priest, who persuades him not to deliver himself to the police, telling him that God has forgiven him. After a period of reflection, Bob has a fearful moment during his daughter's communion hearing the police siren getting closer, however it is only revealed to the audience that his stolen van has been found.

Loach puts much effort into describing the lives and difficulties of ordinary people. The film was shot around a small town in the Langley estate in Middleton, north-east Manchester from a moor where Bob and Tommy run after a sheep to get mutton in the first scene, a pub to sell it, the council estate building they live in, employment office, night club where Bob gets a security job, and cricket field from which they steal the turf for a clients lawn, all are artfully interwoven into the main story about Bob and Tommy. These places allow the film to provide a detailed observation on the ordinary life of working-class people. As he did in *Riff Raff*, Loach keeps the camera distant from the actors and places which are filmed, by relying mainly on the use of a scattered visual style which uses medium close shots with the use of long focus lenses. Tuener complains that

The film is visually boring, a succession of weakly framed shots which could have been constructed to prove that there is nothing interesting to look at in the places where poor people live' (Tuener 1993: 51).

Distanced and loosely-framed shots from a hand-held Super-16mm camera under natural light in *Raining Stones* also weakens the contrast of each scene and that of the main and sub plot. Sometimes humorous scenes, such as Tommy's 'flashing his backside at the police helicopters as he stumbles home drunkenly one night' or stealing the lawn from the cricket field at the Conservative Club, have an obvious political intention; and these might have more impact on the audience than Bob's scenes which can sometimes seem trivial (Macnab 1995: 163). But for Loach, small events around the main plot in *Raining Stones* have significance. While answering a question about the danger of down-playing the narrative with an episodic construction, Loach defends the inclusion of trivial events:

There's got to be a tension between the sequences, otherwise the thing never has any cumulative effect. And the audience has to be aware of a forward movement throughout. But I think it's also important to allow space for those little asides or jokes that help to describe people, make people funny and idiosyncratic and likeable. So it's a balance really, trying to keep good forward movement yet not to squash the life out of the people (Quoted in G. Smith 1994: 59).

This space for 'little asides or jokes' not only depicts people but also plays a role

to set up a convincing context for the film. In a discussion on Loach and naturalism, Deborah Knight suggests the significance of contexts within naturalist fictions. Located in social or cultural contexts allow a character's action to make sense. 'This embedding of characters in contexts forces us to recognise the pressures which lead to – or, in some cases, prevent – certain actions or decisions' (Knight 1997: 76). All the trivial scenes and inconsequential dialogue in *Raining Stones*, which seem to be apart from the main plot, are working together to set up a realistic context. The detailed context of *Raining Stones* establishes a naturalistic style to give an 'authentic' sense to the characters' action within the main plot.

Critics repeatedly point out that the work of Loach shares the characteristics of the Italian neo-realist films, and *Raining Stones* is especially often compared with De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (1948). Not only Loach's techniques to achieve authenticity (subject matter, non-professional actors, location shooting, lengthy takes), but also, as Leigh investigates, they share 'the alternating comedy and melodrama' when they construct the episodic linearity (Leigh 2002: 143). Loach comically draws the attempt of Bob and Tommy to make some money outside of benefit, such as stealing turf from a cricket field or stealing sheep: those petty crimes are presented as a source of laughter, and are contrasted to the helplessness of their unemployment and impoverishment. Richard Combs describes how Loach sets a task 'to make the audience see the politics of it without making the main characters something that they cannot be' (Combs 1994: 6). Bob and Tommy's actions are not seen to be motivated politically at all: however, in the procedure of 'embedding the characters in the background' (Leigh 2002: 143), Loach allows the audience to see how politicians have a direct effect on the lives of ordinary people through the narrative of the politics of ordinary life, in a very non political way.

Loach's next film *Ladybird Ladybird*, 'combines less specific environment with a narrative structure that draws on melodrama' (Leigh 2002: 151). Maggie (Saoirse Ronan) has four children taken away from her by the social service, due to the violent relationship she has with her ex-husband Simon (Ray Winstone). One night she meets a Paraguayan exile Jorge (Vladimir Vega) in a karaoke pub, and she tells him about her life. They fall in love, start living together and have two daughters, although both of them are also taken in to care by social services who conclude that their relationship is not 'good' for the children. The audience is given a sense that this is a docudrama by being informed at the beginning of the film that it is 'based on a true story', which completes with the additional lines about the later life of Maggie and Jorge at the end of the film.

The narrative structure of this film is melodramatic; time between events is shortened to condense their story into a hundred and one minute film and creates more dramatic effect. Maggie's recollection about her separation from her children is incorporated as flashbacks within the progression of their relationship. Leigh points out that in the flashback scenes, Loach adapts 'voice-over' technique to emphasise Maggie's viewpoint (Leigh 2002: 151). *Ladybird Ladybird* is often compared to Loach's work in the 60s, *Cathy Come Home*, both capture the struggle of ordinary people against the institution (in *Cathy Come Home*, the young parents with no home are also treated as 'inadequate parents' and face the possibility of their children taken away by social services). Although *Cathy Come Home* deploys rather documentary style by keeping away from the emotional involvement with the characters, *Ladybird Ladybird's* flashback with Maggie's voice-over clearly differentiates the attitude of those two films. Although still using the observational camera work, the story is strictly composed from Maggie's viewpoint: scriptwriter Rona Munro concentrating on 'seeing the world through her eyes', representing 'the emotional truth of "Maggie", whose story it tells' and the film is structured so that real events work as a dramatic narrative (Munro 1994: 10).

In *Ladybird Ladybird*, 'the authenticity of experience' comes from the film's closer position to Maggie (Macnab 1994: 14). The audience follows the important incidents of her life – her father's violence, her life with her children (all from different fathers), the encounter with Simon and having another baby, Simon's violence and her escape from him, her stay in a women's refuge and an accidental fire which seriously injures her eldest son Sean, and her struggle to deal with social workers who doubt her 'maternal responsibility' – all through Maggie's perspective. The strong focus on Maggie's viewpoint has the effect of erasing the personality and viewpoint of the social workers. There is a similarity between the loan sharks who attack Rob's wife and daughter in *Raining Stones* and that of the social workers who come to Maggie's flat to take her fifth baby away. Starting in the warmth of the house – mother and daughter baking pies in *Raining Stones* and friends visiting Maggie in *Ladybird Ladybird* – the audience is provided no warning of the loan sharks or social workers before they enter the house: they are represented as 'invaders'. There is a clear contrast of the power relationship between Maggie and the social workers which creates a melodramatic structure of 'innocent versus villain' (Leigh 2002: 154). Leigh points out that 'the decisions taken against Maggie may appear implausible, untrue or biased; but, considered as part of a melodrama of protest, they are actions by an enemy against an innocent' (Leigh 2002: 155). This allows the audience to be involved in Maggie's story.

This identification with Maggie works as a strong melodramatic device, but it raises the criticism that too much emotional impact makes the power of 'social analysis', in this film less-effective. However, Loach uses the emotional power of this film not only for identification with Maggie, but at one point to disrupt this identification. *Ladybird* *Ladybird's* close focus on Maggie also exposes her 'abrasiveness'. In the court scene, where it is judged that Maggie's children will be taken into care by the social services for adoption, her trust in the social workers and the social system is betrayed. After that, Maggie's efforts to be reasonable and co-operative with the social services prove unsustainable. She eventually yells hysterically at one of the social workers who visit her home for an interview. Although it obviously comes from a deep grief at losing her own children and a sense of mistrust of an ideological society which sees her in a biased way as a working-class woman who has a 'low intellect and little self-control' and 'has had a number of partners' and 'put her children [...] at risk of violence', Maggie's anger and offensive language, in contrast with Jorge's composedness, disrupts the audiences' ability to identify with her.

Jorge, a political refugee from Paraguay, is on the other hand a marginalised immigrant in the UK; however, he is highly educated and political, and he understands how to cope with bureaucracy. Even after they have lost their first daughter, he is able to persuade Maggie to modify her behaviour in order to allow her to get her baby back. Jorge's rational nature provides a clear contrast with that of Maggie's, whose desire for children seems stronger than her rationality. There is a jolt out of alignment between Maggie and Jorge, their way of thinking and acting; it emphasises the excess of Maggie's emotion. *Ladybird* *Ladybird* provides the audience with a melodramatic narrative device by focusing on a female protagonist through Maggie's viewpoint and creates the situation of 'innocent' person versus autocratic society. But Loach avoids letting the audience fully sympathise and identify with her: an excess of her emotion pulls the audience back, leaving a rather uncomfortable sense of 'observation of real life'.

***My Name is Joe* (1998), *Sweet Sixteen* (2002) and *Ae Fond Kiss* (2004)**

This second trilogy, also called the 'Scottish trilogy', is Loach's collaboration with the screenwriter Paul Laverty, who had first worked with Loach on *Land and Freedom* (1995). *My Name is Joe* was planned while Loach was filming *Carla's Song* (1996) in Nicaragua, and as he states in an interview, it was a 'tale about the way life is in Britain's cities' today (Kitson 1998: 14). Joe Kavanagh (Peter Mullan) is an unemployed Glaswegian recovering alcoholic who is managing a

local football team for unemployed youth with his friend Shanks (Gary Lewis). One of the members of the team, Liam (David McKay), and his wife Sabine (Annemarie Kennedy) and four-year-old son Scott (Scott Hannah), are in a family-like relationship with Joe. Sarah (Louise Goodall), a social worker from the health centre who meets Joe when she visits Liam and Sabine, is hesitant about having a relationship with Joe because of the class difference between them, but feels strongly enough about him to try and she finds that she is pregnant with Joe's baby. However, they have a big argument and separate, when it turns out that Joe does drug runs for a local gangster McGowan (David Hayman), to whom Liam and Sabine owe money. Joe tries to quit this job, has a fight with McGowan and his gang, and drinks again in desperation; he fails to help the despairing Liam, who hangs himself from a window in Joe's flat. But at Liam's funeral, Joe is reunited with Sarah.

My Name is Joe can be seen as a gritty portrayal of working-class people in Glasgow. Loach casts all the actors/actress in this film from Glasgow as 'part of the process of establishing absolute authenticity' (Ryan and Porton 1998). Not only their dialect, but the sense of reality of life is projected on the screen through non-professional actors. Loach describes how important it was for his film to have people like Anne Marie Kennedy, a part-time school cleaner who plays Sabine:

People like Anne Marie bring their three-dimensional world into the film. They are the experts and they tell me how it should be. They become part of the film, almost like a documentary, weaving their real lives into the story (Kitson 1998: 15).

Loach goes on to add that Kennedy 'knows people like that [drug addict] well enough for it to be part of her world' (Kitson 1998: 15). The experiences of these actors, having seen and lived in a world of desperate poverty, drug addiction and alcoholism (Mullan has a father who was an alcoholic), create the 'parallel between the role and their lives' (Bazin 1971b: 24).

In *My Name is Joe*, Loach concentrates on the relationship between Joe and Sarah, which provides a linear narrative and works as a melodramatic device. Despite the obvious difference in their background – Sarah, a skilled health visitor who possesses a car and an apartment, and Joe, unemployed for whom his name is the only thing he has – they get closer and closer. The scene of Joe's confession about his alcoholic violence to his ex-girlfriend is a crucial point in their relationship: Sarah holds Joe and whispers 'Its okay, its

okay' as if her acceptance of all of his traumatic past, could release him from it. Melodramatic elements here, as in *Ladybird Ladybird*, encourage the audiences' sympathy and identification with the characters, through the melodramatic tensions created by class difference. But this class difference is also what tears them apart. When Sarah discovers Joe's involvement in the drug business, she brands Joe as a 'drug dealer', describing the children who have been brain damaged by drugs; her point of view is completely that of a social worker, and one who tries to protect children from drugs. Her attitude and morality about the drug business are middle-class. On the other hand, Joe calls her world a 'tidy wee' one, which is totally different from his, in which a debt of £1,500 can give a person no options but to become a drug runner. The individual actions Joe and Sarah take are rooted in their class background: 'class is absolutely part of a way of thinking. It's part of a way of being' (Pincus 1999: 53).

Sweet Sixteen, is Loach's response to the youth film trend of 1990s Britain; it features a teenage boy as a protagonist as had Loach's most popular film *Kes* (1969). Liam (Martin Compston) plays a 15 year-old boy, whose mother Jean (Michelle Coulter) is in prison, and who is living with his grandfather and his mother's boyfriend Stan (Gary McCormack), a drug dealer. His small dream is to buy a caravan for his mother, older sister Chantelle (Annmarie Fulton) and her little son Calum (Calum MacAlees); but his hope of reconstructing his family eventually comes up against a harsh reality. Liam and with his friend Pinball (William Ruane), steal Stan's cache of heroin to raise funds for the caravan, but their attempt at drug dealing is spotted by the local gangster Douglas (Jon Morrison). He offers to take them on as his men, but when he only hires Liam, Pinball's pride is hurt and their friendship is damaged. Liam's new business, which operates as part of Douglas's undercover drug dealing pizza delivery network, is a success, but Pinball burns down Liam's caravan in anger and steals Douglas' car and crashes it into his health club. Douglas offers Liam a luxury flat for his family but also orders him to give Pinball a lesson first. After a long search for Pinball, Liam finally finds him, addicted to heroin in a squatted house on a council estate, and their argument leads Pinball to cut his own face with Liam's knife and get sent to hospital. On the day of Jean's release from the prison, Liam holds a welcome home party in his luxury flat; however, after this brief moment of family reunion, the next morning – Liam's sixteenth birthday – Jean goes back to Stan. Liam in despair blames Chantelle for her cruel attitude towards their mother, and in return she tells him that Jean does not love them anymore. In desperation Liam runs to Stan's house and has a fight and stabs Stan in front of his mother.

Sweet Sixteen is set in Greenock near Glasgow, a city Loach shows as suffering from economic deterioration and long-time drug problems. As he did in *Kes*, Loach found a teenage footballer in a local football team to play his young protagonist (Martin Compston). The fact that he is trying to achieve a success in the football world, provides the film with a parallel structure of fiction and non-fiction, as Loach mentions in the commentary, pointing out that becoming a footballer or a drug dealer were two of the limited options for a boy like Liam to make money'

Loach uses improvisation to elicit a natural reaction from the actors. In the scene when the gangs take Liam in their car and leave Pinball behind, Pinball's reaction of surprise and resentment gives credibility to his revenge in the latter part of the film. In Liam's 'test' to be Douglas's man, the mission to assassinate someone in the bar, Loach only gave him the script up to the point where he stabs a man in a toilet; Liam's reaction when he is stopped by other members of his gang provides a genuine emotion of fear and relief when set against his determination to kill this man. Loach's naturalism encouraged him to allow his actors to speak in a strong Glaswegian accents and use a great many swear words, though this necessitated the use of subtitles within the film for the first fifteen minutes and saddled the film with an 18 certificate, making the film inaccessible to anyone under eighteen.

In *Sweet Sixteen*, Loach explores the relationships of Liam with his friend Pinball, his mother Jean, his older sister Chantelle, and the gangster Douglas. There are no social workers, and Liam's absence from school is unexplained. The film concentrates on the isolated situation of a teenage boy with these relationships effectively representing the choices he has to make. In the beginning of the film, Liam and Pinball sell contraband fags, but their business expands unexpectedly when Liam steals a bag of heroin that Stan hides in a dog shed. Liam shows his potential as an entrepreneur by suggesting Pinball takes away the other dealer's customers by lowering the price and moving their dealing base closer to their customers. While Pinball is taken aback with this risky idea, Liam's determination and courage to make money (for his dream caravan) shows how he can be a successful businessman given the right chances. When Liam decides to work for the local drug gangster, however, he loses Pinball's friendship and trust; and this abandonment causes Pinball to fall into drug-addiction in despair.

An alternative path is shown in Chantelle's decision to take a community course to get a decent job; she is displayed as a person who is trying to break the bad cycle of life; which she has been through as a child whilst in her mother's care. Chantelle and her son Calum live in an estate flat, and when Liam is

kicked out of his grandfather's house, Chantelle asks him not to do bad things for the 'sake of Calum'. Her determination to free her and her young son from the old life is shown. She also attempts to encourage Liam to take courses, and makes him promise to 'sort his life out'. The relationship of Liam and Chantelle, provides him with another chance of getting out of his old life, however it also means cutting his mother out of his life (since she is an addict in an abusive relationship with Stan). Chantelle keeps telling him that their mother does not love them, because she is in a different world.

In contrast to Chantelle, Liam's character has a naïve innocent quality, which blinds him from the result of his drug-dealing: one of his employees is shouted at by a neighbour of the customer, a mother with a baby who buys their drugs, as she feels they are destroying her and her baby's life. But besides this incident, the drug dealing of Liam's pizza shop is illustrated as a pure business, as if it can continue without consequences. Peter Bradshaw points out that: 'Compston's Liam is heart-rendingly naïve in his assumption that once he has got enough drug money, he can abandon the trade and live with his mother in a vaguely imagined bucolic bliss in this caravan' (Bradshaw 2002: 16-17).

Loach suppresses the expression of teenage sexuality, and the relationship between Liam and Susan who is Chantelle's friend; never goes beyond 'friends'. Throughout the story the motivation of Liam's actions is his continual attempts to get his mother back, and even when Jean leaves his new flat without a word and goes back to her abusive husband, Liam does not doubt her. Consistent representation of Liam as an innocent boy allows the audience to identify and sympathise with him, and see the world through his relationships with the other characters. Loach shows a grim melodramatic world where innocent people have to make impossible choices in order to highlight Loach's socio-political views.

In *Ae Fond Kiss*, Loach's exploration of the politics of ordinary life is directed toward the difference and conflict of religion after 9/11, and takes the form of a love story between an Irish catholic teacher and a Muslim Pakistani entrepreneur. Roisin teaches music in a catholic school in Glasgow; she falls in love with Casim, an older brother of her student Tahara. As their affection for one another grows Casim confesses to her that he has a fiancée arranged by his parents. When he attempts to get out of this arranged marriage, it has devastating consequences for his family and her career. Casim's older sister Rukhsana is engaged to another Pakistani, who cancels the wedding because her future husband's parents have 'concerns' over the risk of been ostracized by

the community. Roisin is offered the opportunity of a full-time contract with her school, however when she visits her priest for approval of her Christianity, she is accused of living in a sexual relationship with a coloured man outside of marriage. The climax of the narrative comes when Rukhsana takes Roisin to their house, where Casim's parents try to persuade him to make his engagement work; Roisin runs away and Casim leaves his family in anger. His father, in despair, destroys the house extension which was built for Casim and his future bride. Casim goes back to Roisin, leaving several issues unresolved.

Ae Fond Kiss like *My Name is Joe*, relies on a love relationship as the main plot. But in contrast to *My Name is Joe's* emphasis on class difference; *Ae Fond Kiss* concentrates on cultural and religious divisions. Casim is attracted to a beautiful music teacher even though he already has a fiancée. On their Spanish holiday, they discuss their religion, but it is just another enjoyable conversation for lovers, and there is nothing political. When Casim tells Roisin about his fiancée, she blames him for not telling her about it earlier, but she still has no idea what his relationship is with his fiancée. Roisin represents the western younger generation who honours independence and freedom, but who have not much passion for their religion. Casim is a DJ and a university accounting graduate who dreams of opening his own club with his business partner/friend Hamid. Although he talks about his club as 'inclusive and open-minded', Casim is clearly conscious about his origin. His experience of witnessing the racist violence and abuse against his father's small grocery shop is deeply rooted within him. He is shown as an honest man who considers the best for everyone; in contrast, Hamid maintains a seven-year relationship with a white girlfriend without telling his parents. Casim is caught within a self-perpetuating choice between that of freedom with Roisin or happiness for his parents by maintaining himself as a British Pakistani.

In a crucial scene, when Casim shows Roisin the photographs of his father and twin brother, prior to the Partition of India in 1947. He talks about the meaningless massacre between Muslims and Hindu's, and tells her about his father losing his twin brother and how it scarred his life forever. From this experience and through having to build a new life as an immigrant within the UK, enduring terrifying verbal and physical racism, it is crucial for his parents to belong to the community and protect each other. Roisin is apparently touched by this story, but it is not until she is rejected and insulted by her priest about her relationship with Casim and abruptly told she is to be sent to a non-catholic school that she finally 'experiences' this story. At this moment both of the characters become victims of their religious/cultural background, and the audience begins to experience the political statement Loach is trying to make.

Casim's young sister Tahara adds a more political and progressive view on immigration, when she gives a speech in the class debate, about her identity and the western generalization of it. She states that she is a 'Glaswegian, Pakistani-Muslim girl in a Catholic school' and her identity is a complex cultural mixture. She represents the second generation of UK migrants, and after a long struggle with her parents' disapproval, she tells them of her decision to go to Edinburgh University to be a journalist and thanks them for everything they did for her. This provides a more optimistic counterbalance to Casim's and Roisin's decision to be together, which might be right for them but only has catastrophic consequences for Casim's family.

Ae Fond Kiss shows the relationship of two young people, drawing in the audience through their love story but embedding and projecting the politics, cultural and religious world of their community on to the screen, in the world after 9/11. By using love as the main plot, Loach attempts to draw sympathy from the audience; but he never forgets to distract too much involvement. He embeds the main characters in the different background of their cultures, Muslim and Pakistani immigrant community and Catholic communities. In this way Loach displays that personal relationships always reflect the politics of the society to which they belong.

Through the 1990s and after, Loach developed his creative style further relying increasingly on linear narrative, especially in the second trilogy where he explores relationships between his characters. His approach toward film-making remains naturalistic: the mixture of professional actors and non-actors, the use of dialect and location shooting in natural light to deliver an authentic *mise-en-scène*. Loach finds politics in the life of ordinary people, the unemployed working-class struggling to cope with the destructive changes to their economy made by the Thatcher government and its successors, and the increasingly limited options open to them. The adaptation of melodramatic plot devices, such as the conflict between 'innocent people' and 'villains'; is used to draw sympathy from the audience. However, within this melodramatic plot Loach always finds a moment when the melodrama is interrupted by the reality of lives; which is, often represented by the characters' frustration and disappointment in the limitation of their choices. Behind the apparent positioning of stereotypical villains of bureaucratic employer, gangster or loan shark, what Loach is trying to expose is the society that deprives people of choice to have better lives. And the politics of any situation is always shown in the very personal situations and the relationships of ordinary people.

Chapter 2

Social Realism and Art Cinema: The Aesthetic Approach

Christopher Williams' analysis of the critical history of British cinema reveals to us four reputations and one problem that British cinema has been attributed. The first reputation is based on Satyajit Ray's 1976 article, which compares the nature of film as a medium with the nature of being British: 'a supposed lack of interest in visual style or formal elaboration which can also be perceived as emotional inhibition' (Williams(ed.) 1996: 190). The second is on realism, although in the course of critical history realism has been discussed with various attitudes (1940s and 1950s it was in favour, however, 1970s and 1980s it was dammed) (Williams 1999: 190). Thirdly, there is a 'quality' issue, which basically accuses British cinema of a failure to 'sustain a national cinema' (Williams 1999: 191). Fourthly there is the 'social character' of British cinema as a whole, which expresses themes in a certain social context, in other words 'in the form of a relative lack of interest in the individual or in subjectivity' (Williams 1999: 191). We can observe all these elements in the history of British social realism. The documentary movement in the 1930s established realism and the social character of British cinema. Although Grierson attempts a modernist approach towards film-making by claiming cinema as a personal expression, Peter Wollen concludes 'the main drift of Grierson's project was to subordinate modernism to realism and to national propaganda' (Wollen 1993: 40). The 'poetic' realism in the British New Wave, that expresses the personal vision of the director; especially within shots of northern industrial cities of 'That Long Shot of Our Town from That Hill', created a brief period of quality film-making, but it was unsustainable without continuous financial support from the industry. The one and crucial problem Williams points out is that, since the end of World War Two, British cinema, being 'caught between Hollywood and Europe', failed to establish and sustain a strong identity or a form or style of national cinema, as opposed to European art cinema, whilst defeated by Hollywood products that share the language and dominate the international market (Williams 1999: 193). British cinema bound by these reputations that was bound by the situation of 'in-between Hollywood and Europe' finally released itself in the 1980s.

Peter Wollen declares the blossom of British art cinema in the 1980s, when Derek Jarman and Peter Greenaway created both distinctively different yet both

incredibly modernist films. These directors explored the strong visual expression inspired by modernist painting and theatre. Jarman's *Jubilee* (1978), *Caravaggio* (1986), *The Last of England* (1987), and Greenaway's *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover* (1989), *The Draughtsman's Contract* (1982), *The Pillow Book* (1995) all show emphasized use of composition (excessively and minimally), use of sound and music adopted from theatre techniques, and their unique use of cinematic imagery established their name as auteur.

Behind the emergence of this art-conscious cinema, there is a crucial factor of the establishment of Channel 4. This fourth channel had unique policy on its programme *Film on Four*, which constituted the financial backup for various independent film-makers. At the same time, the films produced for this channel were normally co-financed, by institutions such as British Screen, other television companies both British and international, independent film companies, or the British Film Institute (Williams 1999: 195). As the expansion of co-production film reinforced, it accelerated the collaboration between the British film industry and the European art cinema circuit. Williams pointed out that this change of structure within the industry allowed the emergence of 'social art cinema', which possesses a highly aesthetic style while maintaining a social and political statement of contemporary Britain. The unique circumstances of the combination of TV and film production allowed British social realism to adopt the quality of art cinema; the titles such as *My Beautiful Laundrette*, *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* (Terrence Davies, 1988), *Angel* (Neil Jordan, 1982), *The Draughtsman's Contract*, *Letter to Brezhnev* (Chris Bernard, 1985), *High Hopes* (Mike Leigh, 1988) are produced under the support of Channel 4.

Williams provides a new notion for these films; 'social art cinema', firstly he rephrases the definition of art cinema is, based on the article by David Bordwell in 1979:

The art film deals with issues of individual identity, often with a sexual dimension, and aspires to overt psychological complexity. Because it sees the individual as more important than the social, the social tends to be presented in terms of anomie or alienation, from a point of view which has much in common with that of the consciousness of the unhappy or doubting individual. It is more interested in character than in the plot aspects of story, which in keeping with the interest in anomie can be allowed to drift and follow each other in a loosely defined episodic fashion. It tends to interiorise dramatic conflicts; in some sense to give us the feeling that they are

happening inside the protagonist's own mind. It aims at a distinct, intentional feeling of ambiguity, and its ending is typically unsolved; these lacks of resolution are valued for their 'life-likeness' and provocativeness. At the same time, and as an external mark of the subjectivity with which it is thematically concerned, the art film is expected to bear the marks of a distinctive visual style, which may be associated with the individual authorship of the director (Williams 1999: 193).

In comparison with this definition, we can see that the titles listed above have more concern in the individual identity: *My Beautiful Laundrette* explores the ethnic and sexual identity of the Pakistani protagonist, with a much constructed visual image. *Distant Voices, Still Lives* is the autobiographical tale with highly psychological imagery, with restrained emotions. These films 'addresses the principal concerns of European art film – loneliness, who am I?, social and moral confusions, the importance of the stylish exterior'; whilst maintaining a 'social' quality as 'they also begin to shift these concerns toward the group, the context and the social-diffuse, to some extent through using diction drawn from television' (Williams 1999: 193).

Alongside the notion of 'social art cinema', there is another significant concept to understand the complexity of British cinema since Channel 4: Sarah Street's 'hybrid film'. This concept is more concerned with a formative style of film, and is used for the 'films [dealing] with recent/contemporary problems in an overt manner: issue-based films that encompassed several generic elements from comedy to thriller' (Williams 1999: 193). Her examples for this concept are, *Beautiful Laundrette*, *The Crying Game* (Neil Jordan, 1992) which deals with the IRA issue via a love story, *Brazil* (Terry Gilliam, 1985), a comic critical critique of an Orwellian society with Si-Fi elements, *Britannia Hospital* (Lindsay Anderson, 1982), with a format of dark comic horror film, and *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* as a gangster form. This notion, as social art cinema, expands the critical discourse on social realist film since the 1980s.

After the 1990s, there emerges regional interest in film critics, as Duncan Petrie claims the strong tradition of Scottish cinema and European art cinema which created the works of Peter Mullan *Orphans* (1997) and Lynne Ramsey *Ratcatcher* (1999) and May Miles Thomas *One Life Stand* (2000). These variety of works all show an influence from classic European art cinema, such as 'the surrealism of Bunuel, the carnivalesque energy of Fellini, and the magic realism of Emir Kusturica'; 'the pristine, pared-down aesthetic of Bill Douglas or Robert Bresson' (Duncan 2000: 56).

This chapter will examine three works, by three young British directors: *Red Road* (Andrea Arnold, 2006), *London to Brighton* (Paul Andrew Williams, 2006), and *This is England* (Shane Meadows, 2007). By adopting the concept and critical concern summarised above, it will be revealed how the aesthetic style of these films develops while corresponding to the subject of social realism, and how these three examples symbolises a new realm in British realist film practice.

Red Road

Red Road was a part of a co-production project called Advance Party between Glasgow's Sigma Films and Denmark's Zentropa Studios. Three fresh directors were selected (Arnold, Morg McKinnon and Mikkel Norgaard) and given a set of characters to create their own version of story which is set in Scotland. The Advanced Party scheme is financed by BBC Films, Glasgow Film Office, Scottish Screen, Sigma Films and the UK Film Council. In these unique circumstances, Arnold created the story of a withdrawn woman with a past in a narrative full of suspense and tension.

Jackie (Kate Dickie) lives in Glasgow and works as a CCTV operator. She has a once-in-two-weeks physical relationship with one of her married colleagues, but overall her life is filled with loneliness. In the first part of the film, Jackie barely shows her emotion; the audience can only see her smile when she watches the world via these screens. Every day she watches over the lives of Glasgow people on the small CCTV monitors. The story grows in tension when she finds a man, Clyde (Tony Curran), on the monitor, who is deeply involved in the traumatic loss of Jackie's husband and little daughter in a car accident. Clyde is released from prison early due to good behaviour. Jackie begins to investigate his life cycle, looking for any cause that will send him back to prison, and in so doing she gets closer to him. While helplessly being attracted to him, she decides to accuse him of rape and goes to his flat and sleeps with him. After she leaves his flat, she tears her clothes and hits herself with a stone to make the rape accusation look more convincing prior to informing the police. Clyde is immediately taken into custody, but afterwards Jackie withdraws the charge; at this point her feelings of responsibility for the night of the accident are revealed. On the day Clyde is released, Jackie confronts him and tells him that it was her family that was killed in the car accident, and also reveals her own guilt and regret about shouting at her daughter that night. After seeing Clyde's guilt and the release of her own suppressed emotion, Jackie goes to the parents of her dead husband and tells them that she is going to bury the cremated bodies in order to have closure.

Red Road is set on the Red Road council estate on the gritty side of Glasgow, the tall flats are covered with graffiti and scattered garbage lies in the street. Although Arnold was given the set of characters for this project, she created an authentic Glaswegian atmosphere, by casting actors from Glasgow as the main characters (Tony Curran is from Glasgow, and Martin Compston as Stevie is from Greenock, his debut was the protagonist in Ken Loach's *Sweet Sixteen*). Arnold's emphasis on 'instinctive' film-making is shown in that she reduces her rehearsals to emphasise the natural interaction between the actors. The use of music is minimised, so the audience only hear cluttered noise of Glasgow throughout the film besides the dialogue of characters; there is little use of sound effects (such as in a scene when Jackie wakes up abruptly in the middle of the night just after she sees Clyde on the CCTV) to emphasise Jackie's psychological state. Arnold's style in *Red Road* is often compared to that of Dogme 95, because of one of the main directors of this movement Lars von Trier's professional relationship with the production company Zentropa Studios.¹ We can see some of the characteristics they share in terms of film-making: location shooting, no sound effects or music, the use of hand-held cameras in colour without special lighting, no optical work or filters, independent from genre conventions and superficial action.

Red Road, although shooting contemporary society, does not contain a strong political statement; it follows Jackie's life and the city of Glasgow with a digital hand-held camera, but compared to Loach's observational works, this film keeps focus on her personal emotion and motivation. As John Roberts states in his analysis on Dogme 95: 'it is the presentation of human inadequacy, abuse, victimization, psychosis and neurosis, which drives the narration' (J. Roberts 1999: 143). The concern with the characters' psychological state can also link it to other highly aesthetic Scottish films such as *Ratcatcher* (Lynne Ramsay, 1999), *Morvern Callar* (Lynne Ramsay 2002) and the autobiographical works of Bill Douglas (French 2006). The shots of the littered streets under a grey sky is not used to set the character within the social context, but is used to describe the characters' state of mind.

The film opens with several close up shots of Jackie's face, to emphasise the world reflected in her eyes, the audience is also supplied with little

¹ Dogma 95 was avant-garde movement to practice low-budget film-making. Their policy was to avoid dependence on commissions or huge Hollywood budgets, depending on European government subsidies and television stations instead. It was highly influenced by European new wave films, and especially François Truffaut. Dogma 95 published 10 rules of their film-making, such as location shooting, no sound effect or music, hand held camera in colour without special lighting, no optical work or filters, no temporal and geographical alienation independent from genre conventions and superficial action, and no credit for a director. (John Roberts(1999) 'DOGME 95', *New Left Review* 1/238, November-December)

information about her past and her feelings in the beginning. As the story unfolds, more is revealed in the course of the narrative which depicts the opening of her mind. Arnold discusses her strategy of film-making in an interview:

I made a decision that the camera would never be ahead of the characters, that we would go with her. [...] I felt that we needed to have empathy with her, to experience everything with her and not be ahead of the information. The audience should never have more information than she does (Pride 2007).

Her decision to view the world through Jackie's eyes and mind allows the audience to identify with her in the same voyeuristic manner as she acts as a voyeur whilst performing her job; we do this without knowing what she actually intends to do. This subjective viewpoint is used to produce an impressive effect during Jackie's sex scene with Clyde, as he gives her oral sex the camera view the scene through her eyes, showing a view of her stomach and his head.² This directly contrasts with the voyeuristic signification of CCTV cameras through which she observes people's lives; Arnold refuses to provide the audience with additional information through the use of flashbacks in order to allow us to view her intentions. It usurps the audience's relationship with the film to that of the character, because the audience no longer has the privileged viewpoint of knowing what has occurred; only Jackie's subjectivity is what this film concerns, and the use of CCTV creates a rather complex structure by adding observational sense to it.

Female sexuality seems Arnold's primary interest as a film-maker, as we see in her debut Oscar-winning short-film *Wasp* (2003) and another highly recognised feature film *Fish Tank* (2009). *Wasp* is a story of a single mother with four children, living off dole money in a council estate. The encounter with her ex-boyfriend wakes her sexuality, and she abandons her children outside of a pub to meet him. Her psychological dilemma as a mother of four and a young woman attracted to a guy is depicted closely, and culminates in the symbolic scene of a bee crawling into her baby's mouth. *Fish Tank* sets 15 years-old Mia (Katie Jarvis) who is fed up with living with her sexually loose mother and younger sister on a council estate in Essex. Her unsettled emotion towards her family leads her into a sexual relationship with her mother's boyfriend whilst developing a rather delicate bonding with Billy (Harry Treadaway) at a traveller's

² In another interview, being asked if this subjective view in the sex scene is referring to Laura Mulvey's film theory on male gaze, Arnold states that it was not political at all but she was trying to do 'whatever the truest thing is for the character.' (Sweeney, 2006, p18)

caravan site. The film is driven by Mia's adolescent confusion and irritation. All three works of Arnold show her continuous interest in the experience of being a woman and its sexuality.

Red Road depicts a form of Orwellian society, or the condition of a contemporary surveillance society filled with CCTVs. This element links the film to the social realist cycle, and Arnold's use of the CCTV monitors allows the film to create an interesting effect within the film as the monitors, with which Jackie watches the everyday lives of Glaswegians, provides set pieces of ordinary lives within the city seen from various angles. These monitors built in the small chamber of the operation room show indistinct, sometimes grainy images of the Glasgow streets; the restriction of the camera movement and focus creates artless and rough visual impressions. Arnold uses these cameras throughout the film, often expanding the monitor's viewpoint to the frame of the film, to integrate them into the narrative. This allows the characters such as a man with a sick dog or a cleaning woman, to add sentiment to the film, this is shown in the later part of the story; when Jackie bumps into the man in the street and interacts with his dog. It operates in the same way when Jackie spots Clyde in one of the monitors; and the incorporation of the CCTV camera into the film creates the illusionary effect that there are two worlds, the 'real' world of Glasgow and the 'fictional' one of Jackie. *Red Road* blurs the imaginary line between fact and fiction, in order to provide the audience with the impression of realism.

In addition, the use of the imagery on CCTV cameras allows *Red Road* to create a significant contrast in terms of the texture of the film. As Jackie observes Clyde through the monitors, the film texture shows a rough vision of the Red Road area. The colour is deliberately kept dim and washed-out, while the shot composition is always restricted by the viewing angle of the CCTV camera. When Jackie wanders around the same place, however; the handheld camera follows her to create the most effective composition to show her hidden emotional state. In the night scene, Jackie almost bumps into Clyde at a pub; here the film offers the shot of the street, filled with lights; to create an almost fantasy effect within the imagery, a homage to the fantasy effects of the luminous night of the London streets in *Wonderland* (Michael Winterbottom, 1999). Andrew Burke states, that historically the image of the tower block is presented as a symbol of modern utopia and happiness within the 1960s, which changed into a symbol of crime, poverty, and the 'prisoner state' of the people who live there after the 1980s. In *Red Road*, as in *Last Resort*, the image is humanised by projecting the lives of characters, who; live in these buildings on to the screen and thereby converting the image of a social dystopia into a new, humanised

one (Burke 2007: 186). Within the latter part of the film, Jackie's feeling of guilt regarding the loss of her family, rather than anger toward the murderer Clyde, is revealed; alongside her emotional conflict with her former husband's parents. The tower blocks and the gritty estate area of Glasgow at that point start working as a *mise-en-scène* that motivates a narrative of guilt and redemption. This is contrasted with the rough 'realistic' visual of the CCTV monitors, this aesthetic visual technique, works to create a poetic view of the tower blocks, adding a sentimental effect to the story of a woman who seeks redemption from her past.

London to Brighton

Paul Andrew Williams' debut feature film, made on a small budget of eighty thousand pounds portrays the ruthless gangster world of gritty London. The film opens with a shocking scene, the bruised face of a woman with one eye; so badly beaten it has doubled in size, and a terrified girl run into a public toilet cubicle and plan a getaway to Brighton. It transpires that Kelly is a prostitute (Lorraine Stanley) who has been instructed by her pimp Derek (Johnny Harris), to find a girl in the street, to be sent to a gangster who has a taste for the immature fresh bodies of young girls. Kelly finds Joanne (Georgia Groome), an 11 year old who is has run away from an abusive father, and calls Derek. In a late night café Derek offers Joanne a sum of money if she will 'spend time with a guy for one hour'. Frightened, but in a desperate need for cash to continue her escape, Joanne agrees, and Kelly reluctantly, accompanies her to the client's mansion. Duncan (Alexander Morton), the aging yet powerful gangster, takes Joanne upstairs to his bedroom. While waiting for her, Kelly hears a scream and a cry for help and runs upstairs to investigate. The audience is provided flashback shots of Duncan, the lower half of his body covered with blood, crawling on the floor calling for Stuart (Sam Spruell) his son for help. Kelly finds Joanne tied up, and after untying her it is revealed that she stabbed Duncan; this is the dramatic beginning of their journey to Brighton by midnight train. The next day they arrived at Brighton early in the morning, and pass the time on the pier before going to Kelly's friend's house. In order to make enough money to buy train tickets to Devon, where Joanne's grandmother lives, Kelly goes back on the streets of Brighton to work. While Kelly and Joanne have a little fun in the arcade catching stuffed bears, their whereabouts is leaked to Derek, who is told by Stuart to find them in a day, and they are caught when they return to the house. Derek and his right-hand man kidnap them, and Stuart takes all of them to a dark gloomy field in the middle of the woods. Stuart, orders the guys to dig a hole, and takes Joanne into his car and demands all the information as to exactly what happened in the bedroom. Sobbing and shaking helplessly in fear,

Joanne tells Stuart about his father's disturbing sexual treatment of her, tying and cutting her clothes with a knife. Stuart tells Joanne of a memory of his, when his father caught him smoking and made him eat the entire packet as punishment. Stuart's hatred toward Duncan is then linked via a previous scene showing Stuart silently watching Duncan dying in the bathroom. Stuart takes Joanne and Kelly to the hole and then shoots Chum. Afterwards he tells Joanne to pull the trigger at Derek, and makes her kill him as a pay-off on the whole incident. Released from the nightmare, Kelly takes Joanne to Devon, watches the reunion between grandmother and granddaughter from a distance, and disappears into the London night.

Williams' script which was written over a weekend illustrates the grim side of London in a linear storyline. Within the film the story moves back and forth along the timeline to create a more vivid and intense narrative between the runaway victims and the gangsters. The state of Kelly's face is used to help the audience understand where the story is within the timeline. Williams frequently uses close-up on the characters to draw more attention to their emotional state. He mentions in an interview that it is his way of representing the real; where the other things around the important one tend to be placed out of focus.³

London to Brighton places itself within the history of British gangster films, which have strong links to the realist-technique of film-shooting and art cinema. Steve Chibnall demonstrates this in his article 'British Crime Cinema' (1999), here he states how crime films adapted the technique of the New Wave cinema during the 1960s, and that after the 1980s this started the fusion of the genre and art cinema.

With the switch to colour after 1965 a sort of dirty realism emerges in films like *The Strange Affair*, *Get Carter*, *Villain*, *The Squeeze* and the *Sweeney* spin-offs. Their location shooting and lack of stylisation adds to their feel of representing a seedy, run-down Britain. *The Long Good Friday* is much brighter and although its glossy New London is exposed as a sham, there is still a feeling of optimism and dynamism about the film. Subsequent British crime films- such as *Stormy Monday* and *Shallow Grave* (Danny Boyle, 1995) – have reverted to a more stylised, nourished look associated with contemporary cinema's fusion of genre and art film (Chibnall 1999: 5).

This explanation clearly sets the path of British crime cinema in *London to Brighton*, which shoots the entire film on location, in order to create a raw, gripping atmosphere. As in *Get Carter* (Mike Hodges, 1971), it also uses the

³ Williams in a Q&A session in the DVD

genre of extreme violence within the gangster film to create a realistic tone to the film. However, Williams clearly differentiates his film from the trend of the 'lad gang films' of the 1990s; which is analysed by Monk as to how the lad culture was created by the media in the 1990s:

Images of the 1960s Michael Caine and profiles of the septuagenarian ex-gangster 'Mad' Frankie Fraser became typical fare in men's monthly magazines such as *Loaded* and *GQ*; and the gangland films [...] were canonised as genre classics by the taste-makers of 'lad' culture (Monk 1999b: 175).

This new trend in media set the market for films such as Guy Ritchie's *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (1998), *Snatch* (2000), and *Rocknrolla* (2008), which sustains and develops the tradition of glamorisation of gangster films which evolved from *Get Carter*. Nevertheless, in contrast to the teasing and mocking attitude towards gang-culture and violence in these films, *London to Brighton* prefers to stay away from media-hyped "glamour" of the crime' world as much as possible.⁴

From this connection with the gangster cycle, the location of Brighton comes forward. Walton (2000) summarises the seaside representation in British cinema since the 1930s, pointing out as the British seaside declines, its representation disappears from the screen. As Lay (2007) analyses, now the seaside of British cinema is rather linked to an issue of asylum seekers, such as *Last Resort*, *GYPO*, and *Ghosts* mostly located in north seaside such as Kent (Lay 2007: 241). On the other hand, Brighton's standing history of representation can be seen as a heaven filled with bright sunshine as we can see in *The Good Companions* (Victor Saville, 1932) and *Holiday Camp* (Ken Annakin, 1938); or, a nest of gritty criminals and gangsters as in *Brighton Rock* (John Boulting, 1947). As a gangster film, *London to Brighton* naturally selects Brighton as the destination of the runaway girls. Nevertheless, it compares this to the description of London as a dark, bloody site of criminals, while that of Brighton plays the role of relief, or sense of security (although briefly), and the scene of Brighton beach is a moment to make an imaginary mother-daughter bonding between the two. The film innovatively applies both images of dark and the bright sides of Brighton, to make a rather complex reference to this history of representation.

In order to retain the tension and speedy tempo within the narrative plot, Williams avoids humanising the characters too much. This allows the cruel

⁴ Rather than these gangster films, Williams refers to *Nil By Mouth* (1997) as a film that made him want to be a director. (*Sight and Sound* January 2007, p21)

nature of the gangsters to be portrayed; so the pimp Derek's cruelty is suggested in a scene when he persuades his girlfriend to have sex with two of his clients, by using gentle words in a cold and firm way; and Stuart, the cold-blooded son of a gangster, who is portrayed through the lack of emotion within his face or attitude (except when he talks about the memory of his father to Joanne at the end of the film). Even in terms of Kelly and Joanne, who bond with each other and create a temporary substitute mother-daughter relationship, Williams eschews sentiment:

Stanley is wondrously good as a woman discovering her own humanity in the most vicious straits, and not once does Williams go soft on her: even when we see the girls finish their coffee and watch the wind blowing their empty paper cups along the promenade, he cuts away before the symbolism becomes overbearing (Quinn 2006: 8-9).

Quinn's observation here concerns the control of the tension within the film; however, the scenes of Brighton pier play a significant role in the film to create aesthetic contrast of *mise-en-scène*. In the bright morning sunshine, these scenes provide the poetic atmosphere, in contrast to the ones of the gritty London night, in which all the dark and terrible things occur. 'While the grittier scenes are visibly handheld to create a sense of urgency, Williams knows when to leave the camera still and linger on single moments for greater dramatic impact' (Bell 2008). It works as a break from the intense story filled with violence, and the audience is shown the innocent side of an eleven year old girl, Joanne; who is so excited by the view of the seaside, that she ignores Kelly's warnings of the freezing water and instead runs excitedly around the beach. Williams adapts middle and long shots with beautifully composed scenery, in contrast with the persistent use of close up within the gritty scenes afterwards and prior to this scene. Alongside the views from the train, to Brighton after the dawn, and the one of Devon, that show peaceful countryside greenery, the scenes in Brighton of the seaside represent a temporary success of the girls' escape and a hope for future; which, ultimately only works for Joanne, who manages to escape from becoming a disgraced prostitute like Kelly.

London to Brighton uses the narrative of the gangster and thriller film, to capture the underworld of London. Williams adapts the techniques to enhance the tension in the story, such as the use of flashbacks, close up shots, lighting effects and the use of the music. Its well-composed narrative movement and highly calculated visual style creates unique fusion of social realism with genre film-making

This is England

Shane Meadows is one of the British directors with a commitment to his hometown. He has been making films located around Nottingham, and *This is England* is no exception. Set in Uttoxeter in 1983, Shaun (Thomas Turgoose) is an 11 year-old boy who recently lost his father in the Falkland's war. He is bullied at school due to his style of clothing; his flared jeans become the target of mocking by the students who dress in the various trends of the 80s, such as two-tone, new-romantic and punk. On the way home from school, Shaun meets the local skinhead gang and their leader Woody (Joseph Gilgun), who sympathises with his situation and welcomes him into the group. In order to follow the style of the skinheads Shaun persuades his mother to buy him a pair of Dr. Martin boots, has his head shaved and Woody gives him a new Ben Sherman shirt to complete the look. Shaun is happily accepted by the gang, nevertheless their cheerful gathering is interrupted on the same night by a vicious looking man Banjo (George Newton), accompanied by the returned-from-prison old skinheads leader Combo (Stephen Graham). Who upon spotting one Jamaican Milky (Andrew Shim) in the group; insults him and the night ends in an awkward and uncomfortable mood. Although the majority of the members (including Woody) sense the riskiness of Combo and try to avoid him, Combo comes back and lectures them about the state of England; his passionate speech on the condition of immigration and criticism of Margaret Thatcher's Falkland war policy leads to a speech on the pride of being English, and Combo persuades them to join his group. Shaun flips out when Combo comments that the Falkland war was meaningless, in order to protect his father's honour: this interests Combo and he treats Shaun specially and encourages him to join. Combo's act as a surrogate father figure lets Shaun join with a few other members. They go on to attend a speech by a National Front politician, and Shaun is fascinated by the comradeship between these people without knowing what it actually means. For him it was simply the fun of being in a gang, but it soon expands into insulting graffiti and bullying Pakistani immigrants and a vicious attack on the local Pakistani who runs the local news shop. Milky, Jamaican-English, eventually joins Combo to prove his 'Englishness'. A gathering in Combo's flat one day reveals the fundamental difference between them. Milky tells Combo he has a big family with both parents, which is something Combo could not have. Combo loses his temper and strikes Milky until he becomes unconscious and covered with blood, Shaun tries to stop Combo but results in crying helplessly, and the night ends disconsolately. Shaun's Mother later tells him that Milky is going to be ok, but this incident awakens him from the short summer fantasy, and in the last scene we see

Shaun walking towards the sea to throw away the English flag that Combo had given him as a symbol of their beliefs and relationship.

Shane Meadows's film-making is as consistent as that of Loach, filmed on a low-budget, with the use of a mixture of professional actors and local people, and the use of a chronological shooting style. From the beginning of his career, including a short film *Where's the Money, Ronnie?* (1996) his first feature *Smalltime* (1996), and the BBC backed *24 7: Twenty Four Seven* (1997), Meadows has always been a regional film-maker, finding subject matter in his hometown of East Midlands. Meadows answered questions in an interview about why he stayed outside of London's film industry;

I suppose the dream was always about existing outside of London. Obviously the film world ten years ago, when I first kicked off, was a very different landscape. Meeting anyone for a job on the crew, and on the cast, always meant a trip to London for me. But it's changed quite dramatically. You can't completely exist outside of what's down there, but things have changed massively. On a technical level, I can edit at home. Computers, compared to what they were then...you don't have to hire a big system in London. And on a casting level, now I have five films behind me, I have this team of people I can rely on and work with again and again. Obviously you don't give a person a part they're not perfect for, but we're starting to build this assembly of people. [...] if you check the names on all my films you'll notice people cropping up in and out of them throughout the course of my career (*FutureMovies* 2010).

His stance as a regional filmmaker is supported by the development of the digital camera and computer techniques coupled with a regional funding system of Lottery Funding which was introduced in 1995, but his style is still rare enough to make his independent position stand out from other British directors.

Meadows' films are always about local lads or gangs, and often have a father-son relationship narrative. *24 7: Twenty Four Seven* is an autobiographical story of Darcy (Bob Hopkins), who tries to build a boxing club in his local housing estate: he eventually persuades the local unemployed kids living in boredom to join the club, and gets them something to commit too and a goal to achieve. In the course of the story, Darcy develops the father-son relationship with these boys, by standing by them with great patience. *This Is England* also builds this structure, but from a different perspective, by placing an eleven year old boy as a protagonist. Shaun, whose father was killed in a war, is psychologically empty and lonely at the start of the film. When he joins the local gang, the leader Woody acts as a sympathetic big brother father figure,

stopping the trouble between Shaun and Gadget, who gets aggressive towards him as he is afraid of losing his position in the group. When Woody gives Shaun a Ben Sherman shirt to complete his transformation into a miniature skinhead, this is a symbolic moment within their relationship; however, shortly after Combo appears as another father figure, but one who is more powerful and confident. Woody's reign is finished when Combo insults Milky's colour and afterwards accuses Woody of not standing up for his mate and attracted to Combo's power, Shaun leaves Woody.

When Combo gives Shaun the English national flag, Meadows creates a contrast of generations between Woody and Combo's father figures. These two gifts both constitute what Shaun is transforming into: with the Ben Sherman shirt, Shaun becomes a proper skinhead. This cool style is the only thing that Woody's gang share and honour and it is why they accept Milky without questioning his colour. On the other hand, when Shaun receives the flag, he without realization accepts the principles that Combo represents: the far right politics of the National Front and a hatred of immigrants. This gap between Woody and Combo, however, is invisible to Shaun.

The day after the incident of Combo beating up Milky, Shaun symbolically goes to the seaside, to throw away the flag. Meadow presents an effective contrast of this scene by shooting Shaun playing alone in the deserted grassland near the seaside before he joins Woody's group in the beginning of the film. In the former scene, there is a shot of Shaun sitting in an abandoned boat, positioned on the right side of the frame in a field, shot from above creating a poetic image of the boy's adolescence and loneliness. In the last scene, the camera captures the blue summer sky, panning down to the same grassland with a boat. Now the camera lets Shaun enter the frame and walk towards the boat. He puts his bag down, takes out the flag and unfolds it. After a brief close up of the flag flying in wind, the film shows Shaun in a long shot walking towards the sea with the flag in his hand. The shot then switches, Shaun approaches the waterline, and we see a close up of his face, but cannot catch his eye. Looking at the flag for the last time, Shaun throws it into the water and the camera follows the sinking flag, before cutting back to a close up of Shaun, as he looks straight into the camera. By ending the film in this way *This Is England* echoes an earlier sensational film on teenager lives, *Quadrophrenia* (Franc Roddam, 1979) when Jimmy (Phil Daniels) was disappointed and abandoned his mod's members, running along the seaside cliff on his scooter, and drops it off the cliff. The symbol of his youth, rebellion and friendship crushes on the ground, as Shaun's flag sinks in the water. It also reminds us of the last scene of *Sweet Sixteen*, when Liam runs away to the seaside after the confrontation with his stepfather. These two films show a resemblance with *The 400 Blows*

(François Truffaut, 1959). At the end of the film *Antoine* (Jean-Pierre Léaud) escapes the camp and runs off to the seaside, the camera shoots his close-up, and the film ends. As Jon Savage's claim that 'Shaun ends surrounded by the sea, confronted by both physical limit and emotional space – if not actual ego dissolution' (Savage 2007:40)). *This is England* closes exactly the same way to suggest Shaun's confrontation of 'physical limit and emotional space': however, Meadow's decision to put Shaun's gaze into camera as a last shot presents the strength he has gained through the whole summer experience. This contrast between the two scenes exquisitely depicts the personal growth of Shaun, from a boy; into a man.

This is England is an autobiographical film, based on Meadow's experience during his childhood. Meadows mentions that his first impressions of Thomas Turgoose and his family background where especially similar to those of Shaun; since Thomas's parents are separated and he is living with his mother. Meadows also refers to how he tried to find a 'father figure' in his childhood older friends who he was hanging out with. Looking back, Meadows explains how he got involved with far right politics:

It's very easy to see what can happen when you've got 3 million people on the dole and right-wing politicians start doing talks in town halls and everyone's looking for someone to blame. Don't get me wrong, I didn't sign on the dotted line, but I did sit and listen to these people and was thinking: Maybe this is the way. [...] I was being told that people were sneaking into the country on boats and were living 50 and 60 in a house. I knew no better (Calhoun 2007).

In *This Is England*, although the subject matter of racism and violence during the 1980s is quite bold, Meadows manages to capture a 'contemplated' version of the story, through the eye of an eleven year old boy. The film shows how desperate people can be violent and cruel to each other, though he avoids a graphic and brutal display of violence. It works by constructing the narrative around Shaun's point-of-view: Combo and his gang's insults and bullying towards Pakistani boys on the street or by robbing and vandalism of a local newspaper shop run by another Pakistani immigrant are represented as jolly gang moments. The true meaning of the violence is concealed by Shaun's enjoyment and admiration of the older gang members. Real violence is only shown in one scene, at Combo's flat when he beats up Milky. Claiming that this film's aim was 'to repulse people against violence and racism', Meadows explores this scene:

I believe as a director that if you can make people contemplate the size of an issue by showing them just one beating in a flat, then you've achieved something. As a director, it's the way I want to deal with violence (Calhoun 2007).

This scene brings both the film and Shaun back to reality and the issue of racism; however, considering the conversation between Combo and Milky just before the incident regarding Milky's family, it adds an ambiguity to Combo's far right politics and racism. It appears his outrage comes purely from his psychological complex toward Milky's situation; in that he is jealous of his stable parents, close family ties and large family.

The film places itself in 1983 through the use of media footage of the time. In the opening scenes, Meadows shows iconic footage from the 80s such as a Rubik cube, Margaret Thatcher playing a computer game; the fashions of the 1980s and most importantly, Falkland's War footage. These are edited to fit Clayhill's song "Please, Please, Please, Let Me Get What I Want", this mixture of visual and audio is used to take the audience back to the past. Throughout the film, Meadows uses the music that represent the 80s music scene, such as Toots & The Maytals, The Specials, and U.K. Subs, to further embed the film in 1983. This footage and music not only brings a certain reality to the film, it also creates a nostalgic tone which alongside the 'lustrous colour and excellent editing by Chris Wyatt' 'amplify' the fantasy (Savage 2007: 42). This is especially true within the scene of the gang's day-out, where slow-motion footage of Woody, Shaun and other gang members walking down a bleak street is accompanied by the song 'Loui Loui'.

Meadow's film-making style, embedded in the ordinary lives of the people of his locality, clearly aligns his works within the social realist tradition. Nevertheless, his use of cinematography and editing, the deployment of music and eclectic use of camera techniques gives his films a fantasy feel, which, when placed with the realist element of the film, explores the new realm of British social realism.

Red Road, *London to Brighton*, and *This is England* are all directed by fresh talents within the British film industry in the new millennium. All of them have a high concern for film aesthetics: *Red Road's* subjectivity constructs the intensity and suspense in the narrative plot, while the combination and use of two different cameras, CCTV and a hand-held camera, seeks to texture the film with a realistic and fantasy feel. *London to Brighton* adopts the genre convention of gangster films: location shooting a shuffled plotline and the use of flashback techniques maintains the tension and speed of the film. This aligned with the

link between gangster and social realist film-making, allows it to develop a commitment with a poetic contrast in terms of lighting and scenery. Finally, *This is England* depicts the socio-political condition of the 80s and skinhead culture, merging fantasy and reality by use of historic media references which are placed alongside the subjective viewpoint of its teenage protagonist. The deployment of music allows the audience to feel nostalgia, alongside an enhancement of eclectic visual style. These films all portray an interest in aesthetic quality of film, whilst adopting the techniques of realist film-making. It is interesting that these three films are spread throughout three parts of the United Kingdom, London, Scotland and the Midlands. Contrasts to the variety of the locations, these films rather focus on the description of emotional state of characters, especially on their relationship to family (father-son, mother-daughter or family as a whole). They represent the growth of regional production of the British film industry which encourages diversity in film-making; however, their main subjective concern is moving towards a more general human condition, such as father-son or mother-daughter relationships and sexuality. This trend of integration of social realist techniques with art cinema is expected to continue. They exemplify the new realm of British social realism, which explores the poetic view of contemporary society and that of magic realism.

Chapter 3

The New Subject-Matter: Immigrants and Asylum Seekers

As already established, the history of British social realism has often been conceived in terms of an extension of the boundaries of filmic representation in terms of subject matter towards the margins of British society, and to find appropriate techniques for this. According to Sarita Malik, it was in the 1970s that Black British films made by black directors or with the involvement of black writers first appeared, both in the form of landmark features such as *A Private Enterprise* (Peter Smith, 1974), co-written by Dilip Hiro, *Black Joy* (Anthony Simmons, 1977), which was based on the play on Black-British experience *Dark Days and Light Nights* by Jamal Ali and first feature film by Black director *Pressure* (Horace Ové, 1975), and other independent short films.⁵ The 1970s proved to be the key breakthrough period for Black British film-makers, not merely in breaking the barriers of stereotypical representation of Black characters and culture, but in finding their own voice to express and debate issues affecting black communities from a black perspective. Contextually, it was crucial that public institutions such as the British Film Institute (BFI), the Arts Council, the Greater London Council (GLC) and, from the 1980s, Channel 4 supported these developments financially – which, a 1976 report by Naseem Khan, ‘The Arts Britain Ignores’, suggested, brought public awareness to Black art. (*Black Joy* and *Pressure* both had BFI production funding. While there were self-financed titles such as *Reggae* (Horace Ové, 1970) also attracted critics’ attention and led his later work financed by Channel 4, *Playing Away* (1986)).

The 1980s brought further developments in this field, such as the “Black Film Festival” of 1982, the Greater London Council’s ‘Third Eye: London’s Festival of Third World Cinema’ in 1983, and from 1985, Anti- Racist Film Programme Cinema Circuit. These events in the first half of the 1980s, Sarita Malik argues, created the UK audience for Black film. This receptive climate encouraged a number of independent production companies to emerge,

5 Malik describes the term ‘Black British film’ as the films “which draw on the manifold experience of, and which, for the most part are made by film-makers drawn from the Asian, African and Caribbean diaspora”, referring to the fact that by the 1980s these people “[adopted] the term ‘Black’ as an umbrella political term” (1996, p203, 204)

including Kuumba Productions, Anacy Films, Penumbra Productions, and Social Film and Video. The same period saw the establishment of the Black and Asian film and video workshops, notably Sankofa, Retake, Ceddo, and the Black Audio Film Collective, all of which played a role in further developing the ground for Black film-making in Britain. However, besides these organisational structures and funding, Malik emphasizes perhaps the most crucial factor to boost this trend: the establishment of Channel 4 television in 1982, which was licensed and formed with an explicit remit to present the diversity of British culture and project the voice of minorities. Channel 4 also rapidly became a key funder and producer for independent film-makers, and provided a broadcast platform to bring their films to an unprecedentedly wide audience, alongside (in many cases) successful cinematic releases. In short, the 1980s saw the growth of Black British film, as independent productions and workshops provided the environment for young Black film-makers to develop their work, whilst the public institutions such as BFI, the Arts Council, Greater London Council and Channel 4 provided financial support for exhibition and distribution.

For Malik, the key question surrounding the Black cinematic activity that started in the late 1970s and developed in the 1980s is that of aesthetics, or, 'how new paradigms, languages and agendas could be formed through and within the new Black diasporic arts' from a starting-point where the first 1970s Black British films had largely adopted the techniques of documentary film-making (Malik 1996: 166). Early Black British films were also, Kobena Mercer suggests, modelled on the approach he called the 'Cinema of Duty', representing Black characters as 'victims' or 'problems' or, in other words, 'as some intractable and unassimilable Other on the margins of British society' (Mercer 1988: 8). By the 1980s, Black British film-makers were keen to find strategies to escape the limitations of the 'cinema of duty', which had originated with white film-makers who had used this mode of representation to display the oppression of the white working class prior to this period. The debate around the issue of 'duty' highlights the need among Black British filmmakers to discover and express a 'subjective' Black voice and experience in film. It can be seen in the independent and more experimental art films of the 1980s such as Sankofa's *Dreaming Rivers* (Martina Attille, 1988), *Territories* (Isaac Julien, 1985), *Testament* (Lynne Littman, 1983), and *Looking For Langston* (Isaac Julien, 1989). This trend also emerged in the mainstream cinema, which created hybrid feature of 'social art cinema'.

On the mainstream film-production of 1980s there were Steven Frears' two films in a monumental collaboration with the writer Hanif Kureishi, *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987). The first film

presents the life of Pakistani British (in the latter case, more racially diverse picture of British society), projecting the issue of sexuality, especially homosexuality in the light of magic realism. And the latter deals with multiculturalism in London with the issue of sexuality. In film-maker Julien Henriques' analysis (quoted by Mike Wayne), *My Beautiful Laundrette* uses 'fantasy' aesthetics as a device to articulate 'the feelings, contradictions and imagination of the characters rather than any attempt to reflect reality'; yet at the same time, Wayne observes, the film 'locates its representation of cultural identity and consciousness quite precisely in time and place' as social realism (Wayne 2002: 124). Writing on *Handsworth Songs* (John Akomfrah, 1986) – the first film by Black Audio, one of the 1980s Black films which were trying to find their way to present a subjective Black voice – Sarita Malik relates its non linear-narrative and 'cut 'n' mix' style to Third Cinema:

[I]t developed various non-linear paths and alternative viewpoints, thus dislodging the central and marginal positions of subject and viewer, and offering a decisive change for audiences reared on monotone riot television documentaries (Malik 2002: 164).⁶

Following on from the notion of Third Cinema, Hamid Naficy's more recent concept of 'accented cinema' (Naficy 2001) provides another relevant critical framework. He categorises three types of accented cinema: exilic cinema, diasporic cinema, and postcolonial ethnic and identity cinema. All of these types are related to the 'locatedness' and 'place' of the film-maker (in terms of identity as well as geography). While the exilic cinema expresses a strong yearning for 'there and then in the homeland', or desire for lost home, the diasporic cinema expresses a 'lateral relationship to the diaspora communities and experiences' with a 'vertical relationship to the homeland'. The postcolonial ethnic and identity cinema is more about 'exigencies of life here and now in the country in which the filmmakers reside' or, the examination of their identity (Naficy 2001: 15). The latter two concepts especially are applicable to the above Black films and the postcolonial Asian-British filmmakers and their works in Britain, such as *Mohammed's Daughter* (Suri Krishnamma, 1986), *I'm British, But...* (Gurinder Chadha, 1989) and more wide-ranging Black films of the 1990s.

6. As for the characteristics of Third Cinema, Malik summarises them as 'formal innovation, a break with an individual protagonist and conventional narrative, its connection to active liberation struggles, its invitation to the spectator/viewer as participant or comrade, its collective production process, and its opening up of dialogue between film-makers and theorists.'

As the diversification of British cultural identity continued, the 1990s brought Chadha's emergence to commercial success as the first Indian British female director with her comedy film *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993), the story of an Indian women's day trip from Birmingham to Blackpool, which studied the subtlety of the women's emotions about traditional Indian culture and community. Chadha's style of genre film-making with social realist elements is analysed by Sarah Street as 'hybrid film', alongside other 1980's Black films such as *My Beautiful Laundrette* (a fantasy-social realism). Chadha continues to explore the postcolonial ethnicity and identity of the Indian-British in another comedy *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002), which presents the story of an Indian teenage girl and her passion for football and the conflict this causes between her and her conservative parents. *East is East* (Damien O'Donnell, 1999) illustrates the gap between the generations of Pakistani Muslims set during the 1970s. Written by Ayub Khan-Din, this film can be linked with the works of Chadha, as it also takes an issue of ethnicity and identity of postcolonial immigrants. Using comedy to popularise themselves, these films achieved a significant gross success and contributed to British cultural awareness of this subject. This move towards populist film-making can also be seen in the films on Black communities, such as *Babymother* (Julian Henriques, 1998): which sets a black single mother as a protagonist and her attempt to become a successful reggae singer is depicted comically. At this point some of the Black film-makers moved into commercial film-making; only adding to the variety and concept of Black British film.

After 9/11, the number of representations of the Muslim community grew, as *Ae Fond Kiss* by Ken Loach (2003), which captures Pakistani Muslims and their persistence in their community, by contrasting them against a white Catholic woman and her community. This film presents two different settled immigrants; Pakistani Muslims and Irish Catholic to create an insightful portrait of complex British society. The tone of the film is rather sympathetic toward the Pakistani family, by showing their tragic history to justify their importance of kinship within the Muslim community in order to survive the unreasonable prejudice and violence that they receive as British immigrants. As in other Black-British films, its illustration of the conflict between the conservative first generation and second generation with hybrid identity provides significant complexity to this film. It deals with the link between a religion and its community with a prejudice towards another, which affects individual's decision-making.

The above films offer portraits of post-colonial immigrants, immigrants from the British Commonwealth, such as India, Pakistan, Caribbean and East African colonies. In most cases they explore the diasporic identity of settled

immigrants or the conflict of cultural identity between the first and second generations. However, the late 1990s and 2000s witnessed a new shift in the subject matter of British social-realist cinema towards a further growing interest in, and exploration of, illegal immigrants and asylum seekers.

As the European Union expanded and the movement of population became more fluid, after 2004 when the East European countries joined the EU; the number of illegal immigrants seeking asylum dropped from its peak of 84,130 in 2002, after this official expansion took place. Such expansion within the EU, did not solve the issue of illegal immigration, as highlighted in the general Election discussions of 2010. An article in the *Daily Telegraph* dated 20/02/2010 points out that the immigrant population in 2005 could be as high as one million, all of whom, could after 14 years of staying in the UK illegally, claim British citizenship. It suggests that these illegal immigrants or asylum seekers are the potential future of British society: despite being outside of the tax system, they already contribute to the British economy by providing cheap yet illegal labour.

Beautiful People (Jasmin Dizdar, 1999) provides an interesting portrait of refugees and Britain and its class-based society. Set in 1993 during the World Cup qualifiers when England played Holland, it explores a confusion and conflict between English families and refugees from the former Bosnia and Yugoslavia in a very carefully constructed narrative. Serbs' and Croats' historical conflicts are played out on a bus in the middle of London, where observers can only recognise them as 'others' engaged in unreasonable and meaningless fighting. An episode in a hospital places the Serb and Croat protagonists in a shared ward with a Welsh terrorist, juxtaposing conflict in their homeland with internal conflicts within the United Kingdom. Meanwhile a young drug-addicted man from a working-class British family accidentally arrives in the middle of the Bosnian war, paradoxically returns home as a war hero, and sets himself free from the bad influence from his old mates, racist/nationalist hooligans. A female doctor from the English upper class falls in love with and marries a Bosnian refugee, who is grudgingly accepted by her conservative family when he displays too obviously convenient classical piano skills. This film presents multiple perspectives of Bosnian refugees and their integration into British society. The upbeat, comic rhythm of the film, very optimistic closure, and stereotypical representation of the British characters question the film's authenticity on the subject-matter. However, Dizdar as a Bosnian refugee himself, draws a cynical portrayal of British society by adopting stereotypical representation, and its integrating narrative structure between the refugee's world and British people's life certainly provides a very distinctive representation of refugees.

Gypo (Jan Dunn, 2005) examines a working class family and its breakdown through a friendship of between the working-class wife Helen (Pauline McLynn) and a Roma Czech refugee, Tasha (Chloe Sirene). This film set in Margate as we will see in *Last Resort*, the town that has been one of the entrances for asylum seekers. Cruel prejudice towards Tasha and other refugees are depicted throughout the film, especially by Helen's husband Paul (Paul McGann) who expresses invective words towards Tasha. *Gypo* creates the narrative from different perspective of three family members (Helen, Paul and daughter Kelly (Tamzin Dunstone)), and provides an insight into their reaction towards refugees through their psychological state.

While these films illustrate immigrants and their relationship with British people in fictional narratives, Michael Winterbottom's *In This World* (2002) takes a documentary-drama style which follows the journey of exiled boys from Pakistan to London. Using non-professional actors for the main characters, this film draws tension and urgency of various dangerous situations they face in the course of the journey. Throughout the film it follows the journey from Pakistan to London made by Jamal (Jamal Udin Torabi) and his cousin. Adaptation of the documentary technique of voice-over narration strengthens the sense of reality of the film, with the use of shaky hand-held camera. As an example of illegal immigrants, the documentary drama *Ghosts* (Nick Broomfield, 2006) captures in a more observational way the life of Chinese illegal workers, reconstructing the real-life tragedy of their accidental death whilst cockling at night in Morecambe Bay. As a documentary drama, Broomfield carefully selected the actors, who can reflect their own experience onto the screen. The protagonist Ai Qin (Ai Qin Lin) is herself an accepted asylum seeker, who went through the same journey as in the film. This film reveals the working and living conditions of illegal workers, the exploitation both by gang master and employers. By showing a written explanation about the incident at the beginning and the ending of the film, it embeds fictional creation into documentary construction.

Films since the late 1990s project the issue of immigrants and asylum seekers in various styles, and there are growing numbers of films that place immigrants and their situation at the centre. These terms need to be used carefully, since 'immigrants' are legally accepted people, whilst 'refugees' come to the UK to seek asylum status, which could lead them to 'immigrants' or 'illegal immigrants' status. Economic immigrants come with work permission (mostly from East European countries), but most of the time they engage in unskilled work or hard labour. Asylum seekers while waiting for the result of their application also face the issue of survival due to their financial status (they are not allowed to work). The remainder of this chapter explores three distinctive

films as case studies, *Last Resort* (Pawel Pawlikowski, 2000), *Dirty Pretty Things* (Stephen Frears, 2002), and *It's a Free World* (Ken Loach, 2007), each of which have different approaches in the way they represent (illegal) immigrants and asylum seekers. The focus of the discussion will be on how these films represent immigrants and asylum seekers in terms of character development, and how these films present the subject matter adopting various cinematic styles. Additionally the concept of the 'hybrid film', which blends social realism with the characteristics of other, popular, genres or art cinema, will be explored and the notion of social realism will be questioned and re-examined.

Last Resort

Pawel Pawlikowski was himself a teenage immigrant to the UK from Poland, whose mother, a lecturer of English, later married into a British family; graduating from Edinburgh College of Art and the National Film School, Pawlikowski starts his career as a documentary film maker mainly for the BBC. *Last Resort* was his second feature film after his much less acclaimed first feature film *The Stringer* (1998). Many of his documentaries such as *In Tripping with Zhirinovsky* (1995), shows his persistent interest in Russia, its politics and cultures; the later *Last Resort* also sets a Russian woman as its protagonist.

Last Resort's story begins when Tanya (Dina Korzun), a single mother and her son Artyom (Artyom Strelnikov) arrive at Stanford Airport; she comes to England to be with her 'fiancé' Mark, who nevertheless does not show up at the airport to meet her. She is held by an immigration officer due to her financial situation and attempts to apply for political refugee status. She and Artyom are sent to the holding area in Stonehaven (Margate), specifically to a tower block in this abandoned seaside resort. As time passes, they develop a friendship with Alfie (Paddy Considine) a local lad, who manages the arcade and bingo hall. Tanya's desperate attempts to call for Mark ends with him rejecting her, which leads her to try to withdraw the application for political asylum; only to discover the process of withdrawal will take more than six months. In an attempt to earn some cash to return to Russia, Tanya agrees to participate in an Internet porno video, but fails. Alfie's apparent kindness towards Tanya and her son make them gradually become attached to him, but Tanya ultimately decides to return home to 'live her life' in her home country. With Alfie's help, they sneak out of Margate by boat and hitchhike to London, leaving Alfie behind. The closing shot of the film is very similar to the opening shot, in which Tanya and Artyom are carried by an airport terminal bus, with a bright light.

Pawlikowski's career in the field of documentary tends to cast his fictional in

asimilar light, alongside the techniques he acquired through his previous career in documentary film-making: a small budget, use of hand-held cameras, natural lighting, and location shooting with non-professional people. These characteristics are found in the work of other social realist film-makers, such as Ken Loach; on the other hand, his working methods, 'a brew of on-the-spot improvising, ceaseless rewriting, and instinctive decision-making', links him to Mike Leigh, and often leads to a comparison between them. Both links he persistently denies, while revealing his disliking of current British films. Pawlikowski explains his own idea of continuity between documentary and fiction.

The documentaries I made were never normal documentaries. They were about subjects I was obsessed with, and I suppose I thought I could sculpt them. What I think I do with my fiction is the same. You take raw materials, a story that you emotionally connect with. And you put materials together that you like: landscape, character, location. Then you start sculpting with the help of a great director of photography and actors (Roberts 2002: 97).

In another interview on his award-winning documentary *Serbian Epics* (1992), however, he states that what separates documentary and fiction is 'manipulating' while reflecting on his *In Tripping with Zhirinovsky*, which was constructed around the interview with Russian nationalist politician Vladimir Zhirinovsky, as a failure due to too much manipulation. Pawlikowski's aspiration to present a material of his interest, with sculpting, naturally leads him to a fictional world, where he can control the balance of reality and abstraction to make his own image. In the case of *Last Resort*, he set it in a fictional place Stonehaven, based on Margate, a seaside town with an abandoned funfair and tower blocks that is used as holding space for asylum seekers. A fascinating feature of this film is the abstract and almost fantasy-like imageries created in a real location by cutting it out from the rest of the world. Pawlikowski describes how he constructs the world of Stonehaven:

I immediately clocked certain objects, and all we had to do really was remove traffic and remove all kind of distractions and try and keep anything distracting out of shot. So it was a case of stripping things down all the time to make it feel like a slightly abstract stage for a drama, rather than make it feel like this is realism; there'd be extras walking around, and cars, like most British films try to create a kind of simulacrum of reality. Which was why I was irritated when critics wrote that this is a kind of documentary realism, nothing in it is at all documentary. The acting hopefully is authentic, and in

that sense the approach is documentary, but every location was chosen because it wasn't quite real, or real but not real. I tried to stylize it to the point where it wasn't the real world at all (Roberts 2002: 97).

The grey sky in the background of concrete tower blocks, the deserted seaside and the old abandoned funfair's billboard 'Welcome to Dreamland' all create a complete image of isolation. Pawlikowski's careful manipulation of the location clearly succeeds in adding a very sensitive atmosphere to the film, to create a sense of 'non-place'. Marc Augé contests that this concept consists of 'opposed polarities' with 'anthropological place', the latter having historical and cultural roots that link people to the place. On the other hand, 'non-place' can be seen in the places such as hotels, industrial zones, leisure parks, supermarkets, airports, and wireless network space: they are a result of transportation and technological development in a globalised era, places that provide the exact same function and feelings as any of the others, without any historical and cultural links to that location (Augé 1995: 64).

Adopting the concept of 'non-place', Les Roberts categorises the three 'space zones' in the film; zone of arrival and departure (the airport), zone of transition (between airport and holding area), and zone of stasis (Stonehaven). According to him, these three zones are all characterised as having an 'absence of agency in movement' and surveillance cameras, the closed railway, and sea in Stonehaven helps to create an exclusive space of stasis (Augé 1995: 83). The characters' deprivation of agency of movement constitutes the overall impression of the film, which symbolises a disconsolate and desolate feeling of asylum seekers. Roberts' reference to 'non-places of sedentary and transitory experience' reveals that this film ensembles narratives of immigration, a tension between home and non-place (Roberts 2002: 79). When Tanya comes to England, she desires a utopia, a life in London with her future husband. But when she is held in Stonehaven, she grows a desire to go back to Russia, letting it become her new 'utopia'. The use of 'non-place' within the *Last Resort* allows it to create a unique position between 'home' and 'utopia' where, Tanya can change the object of her desire. This brings us back to the opening and closing scenes of the film; Tanya and Artiom sitting in an airport terminal bus, carried away in a bright light. In comparison with European road cinema, Mazierska and Rascaroli state the repetition of this 'travel' image in *Last Resort* 'typifies the two characters as "travellers" almost detached from an outside reality' (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006). As a 'traveller' in a 'non-place', Tanya is always aiming for 'utopia'.⁷

7 In terms of repetition, Mazierska and Rascaroli indicate a very interesting feature: Tanya's description of her home. 'I grew up in the forest, in a house with three

Last Resort interprets the subject of asylum seekers in a very unique and sensitive way; as pointed out by Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, the uniqueness of *Last Resort*, lies in its subject-setting:

Compared to *In This World* and *Dirty Pretty Things*, 'made by British directors engaging with the drama of the Other, and both putting forth the cases of genuine asylum seekers, i.e. those who, according to the principles of the Geneva convention, escape political oppression and abuse in their home countries, *Last Resort* presents an ostensibly indefensible case of the much maligned "bogus asylum seeker" – a person motivated by purely individual and emotional, rather than by socio-political needs, who moreover, is female, professional, and comes from post-Soviet-oppression Russia' (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006).

Tanya's profession as an illustrator of children's books is visually portrayed in the film by the fact that she carries a piece of her work with her. In the beginning it traps her at the airport because the illustration causes the airport immigration officer to doubt her statement that she is a job-seeker, but later in the film her illustration of the boat symbolically suggests the way she should escape from Stonehaven. Her status as 'bogus asylum seeker' is also apparent in Stonehaven; where most of the asylum seekers are non-white. At the same time, her motivation for action always stems from her emotions, or, 'search for love'. Right after finding out that her London lover is never going to welcome her, she meets a local guy, Alfie, whose affection towards Tanya is quite obvious. All of these facts offer the viewer different cinematic perspectives: Tanya typifies the image of an 'Eastern European bride' in post-Cold-War Hollywood (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006).⁸ Although this script is no longer valid (due to her immigration status being refused whilst entering the UK), this concept connects *Last Resort* to other media images of Eastern European female immigrants, portrayed in *Lilya 4-Ever* (Lukas Moodysson, 2002) and *Eastern Promises* (David Cronenberg, 2007). Both films portray Eastern European girls being trafficked to the West with hopes for a better life only to end up in prostitution. This concept explains Tanya's attempt, but failure to work, in desperation, as a cyber-prostitute. Pawlikowski places in Tanya's character all

women; me, my mother, my grandmother and my great-grandmother': this dialogue suggests a repetition of the mistakes that they all make by falling in love with the wrong man, and Tanya's decision to go back there, implies the continuity of it in the 'mythological' situation.

8 Murawska-Muthesius describe in the Hollywood in cold war period and after, there was a typical representation of East European female immigrants, who were masculine in their home countries; 'Once the suppressed voice of their femininity had been awakened by the assiduous male character from the West & further rekindled by western luxury commodities, [they] were shown as happy to transform into the real, the "womanly women" of the West.

these references and representations of Eastern European female immigrants, whilst allowing her to deviate from them with her failure as a prostitute and her refusal to marry Alfie.

Pawlikowski's creation of the fictional Stonehaven, as an isolated parallel world, which is connected to the 'real world' only via a public telephone and cyber pornographic space, provides the audience with an abstract vision and sense of reality. The abandoned funfair's message "Welcome to Dreamland" and the falling wallpaper with tropical palm trees in the council flat both work as ultimate ironies to capture the asylum seeker's (probably hopeless) desire for a utopia. Also the suggested repetition of her journey by alignment of the same imagery in the opening and closing scenes, creates a circle, and closes the film's access to reality. *Last Resort* presents all these carefully manipulated non-naturalistic aesthetics; whilst also succeeding through its use of social realism in capturing the physical and psychological state of asylum seekers symbolically.

Dirty Pretty Things

Dirty Pretty Things is set in a hotel in central London. Okwe (Chiwetel Ejiofor), an exile from Nigeria handles two jobs by chewing on khat, a hotel-receptionist by night and a taxi driver by day. Between these jobs, he briefly rests on a couch in a flat rented by one of the hotel maids, Senay (Audrey Tautou), an asylum seeker from Turkey. While waiting for the result of her application, she has to sneak around to work, since if immigration finds her illegal working, they would refuse it and deport her back to her country. One night Okwe finds a human heart stuck in a toilet in one of the rooms, which leads him to the dark side of the London organ trade business. The hotel manager, Sneaky (Sergi López), tells him to keep his mouth shut and we later learn that it is he who is taking the organs of illegal immigrants in exchange for a new passport and identity. Okwe and Senay are constantly living in fear of being picked up by immigration, and the film uses a suspenseful chase between them and immigration enforcement from point to point. Sneaky approaches Okwe when he investigates his past, a respectable doctor made an enemy of the government when he refused to eliminate proof of a political murder. He offers him a new identity in exchange for removing kidneys. Okwe's refusal, however, does not last long due to Senay's desperation when she loses a job in sweatshop after she takes revenge for a sexual assault carried out by the owner. She makes a deal with Sneaky, a passport and flight ticket to New York, her dream city, in exchange for her virginity and kidney. Okwe agrees to a practice operation for her, but she drugs Sneaky and removes his kidney instead. Okwe and Senay get a new identity, but

part at the airport, Senay goes to New York, whilst Okwe returns to his home country, to be with his little daughter.

Dirty Pretty Things' theme, immigrants in London, brings us back to Frears earlier work *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*. But Frears emphasises the difference between them, saying; 'It's a rather new phenomenon. The people in the film aren't by and large from former colonies, which he did with Hanif Kureishi in the two titles in the 1980s (L. Klady 2003). This film is about multi-national immigrants, most of whom are illegal or asylum seekers. To clarify the fact, the film insistently deprives itself of white British people from the screen. The cleaning maids in the hotel, when they look up into the CCTV camera while checking in, show a variety of faces but none of them are white; the victim of the kidney operation is a Somali family; the doorman Ivan (Zlatko Buric) is Croatian: these are the marginal people in London. Furthermore, the film repeats its clear message among different characters: in the beginning of the film, Juliet (Sophie Okonedo) a prostitute who uses the hotel room for her job meaningfully tells Okwe 'I don't exist, do I?' and there is a most significant dialogue in the last scene, when a man (the only white character in the entire film) who receives a kidney asks: 'How come I've never seen you people before?', Okwe answers: 'Because we are the people you do not see. We are the ones who drive your cabs. We clean your rooms, and suck your cocks.' The film describes the mechanism of their invisibility through the fact that not only the main characters have to hide their identities (Okwe, not his real name), but also their identity is transient. Charlotte Brunsdon points out that in this film the immigrants' identity is 'fragmentary, transitory and pragmatic' (Brunsdon 2007: 118). When Okwe comes back to the cab office, he passes the driver's identity card to another colleague, mocking his golden cross necklace and telling him his name is now 'Mohamed'.

It is significant that although this film is set in London, one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world, it makes a clear contrast with the London tourist films, such as *Brigit Jones' Diary*, *Sliding Doors*, Richard Curtis productions including *Notting Hill* and *Love Actually*, all of which are filled with shots of major landmarks of the metropolitan city: Piccadilly Circus, the London Eye on the River Thames, St. Paul's Cathedral, red double-decker buses and streets full of people. Cinematographer Chris Menges projects the side of London that is never shown in these films: the back of a hotel, tower blocks, Ridley Road Market with exotic stalls, and a sweatshop. His 'talent for evoking run-down London' makes 'even the hotels and hospitals, places where sterilised cleanliness is part of the deal, look shabby' (Sandhu 2002: 27). The title suggests a co-existing feature of London, by contrasting with the 'pretty'

attractive image that mainstream London films project, giving us a glimpse of the 'dirty' seedy side of London which is normally kept hidden in the shadows.

As a story of immigrants, *Dirty Pretty Things* can be read with the concept of 'Non Places' as in *Last Resort*. With both the opening and closing scenes being set in the airport, to imply their arrival and departure. The hotel, where they work, is also a temporary space for tourists and does not contain any organic society. These places are opposed to the utopian ideals, which in this case are defined by New York (for Senay), the most symbolic image of utopia, since the conquest of the New Continent, and home (for Okwe). Okwe and Senay travel throughout the film, Okwe as a default does not have his own place, and rents Senay's couch. Her temporal accommodation for asylum seekers has to be abandoned in the course of their fleeing, and they briefly stay in a crematorium. Although Ian Sinclair disapproves of the use of 'disparate' locations in the film: 'the sprawl of London lends itself to amnesiac fiction' (Sinclair 2002: 34), considering the film's function as a journey, it is understandable that the location does not connect to the characters. Rather, its fragmentation constitutes the mind of immigrants. There is nothing to depend on, there is no place to settle down.

This sense of displacement is what characterises the films that capture refugees, as Rebecca Prime suggests it as a genre 'refugee film', expanding the concept of 'accentuated cinema' by Hamid Naficy (Prime 2006: 57). In a comparison study of *Dirty Pretty Things* and *In This World*, she describes that it is 'space' that preoccupies the refugee film, and the fragmental use of spaces in *Dirty Pretty Things* is also an expression of the sense of displacement of the characters. This comparison reveals another significant fact regarding this film. *In This World* presents the boys' journey as exile, and the film ends when they arrive at London, their utopian city: however, in *Dirty Pretty Things*, although Okwe and Senay are already in London after their journey as exiles, they are still on a journey to utopia. A looking at the three categories of immigrant cinema by Yosefa Loshitzky, 'the grand tour of the migrants', 'in the promised land', and 'the second generation and beyond', it is apparent that this film mixes the first two categories (Loshitzky 2010: 15). Okwe and Senay have already been through the journey to London, but in their 'promised land', they still have to continue their journey to the next believed utopia. By creating the story of another journey as exiles, *Dirty Pretty Things* not only represents the sense of displacement of immigrants, but also suggests the possibility of their never-ending journey.

The scriptwriter Steven Knight provides an orthodox narrative plot of a thriller by introducing human organ trading and a love story between the two

exiles. In one of his other scripts, *Eastern Promises* a similar subject is applied; exploitation and tragedy of immigrants. The story revolves around the diary of a Russian prostitute, who dies on a hospital bed during delivery of her baby. As her diary is translated, the nurse Anna (Naomi Watts) discovers a connection with the Russian mafia who are behind the girl's tragic death. This film was directed by David Cronenberg and achieved a high reputation and success as a violent gangster thriller. Both films adopt current socio-political situations to form a ground, which then develop into highly dramatic entertainment films. Knight's previous famous work of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* assures us of his ability as a creator of drama. Alternatively one can see within the wide variety of films throughout Frears' entire career as a director, that he is rather an interpreter of a script and is constantly trying to find the best way to present it on the screen, rather than simply adding a strong colour.

In *Dirty Pretty Things*, it has been said that the characters are 'too good to be true': Okwe, a hero with a tragic past, never destroys his figure; and contributes from the bottom of his heart to save Senay. People around them, Juliet, Ivan and Guo Yi (Benedict Wong), a Chinese porter in hospital crematorium, are all very sympathetic and helpful. On the other hand, it illustrates the evil characters as nothing other than evil. The hotel manager/organ trader Sneaky, as his nickname suggests, is like a sneak who always looks for something to take advantage of. The sweatshop owner threatens Senay into giving him oral sex, in exchange for not informing about her to the immigration office. Finally, the immigration enforcement directives are caricatured as ruthless intruders. All these characters have little or no depth, the audience is given very little or no understanding of their lives or history; they are purely presented as villains, as opposed to the innocent victims Okwe and Senay.

Significantly, their character development also shows the audience another structure of the world of *Dirty Pretty Things*. In contrast to the innocent characters (Senay: asylum seeker, Guo Yi and Ivan: accepted asylum seeker, Okwe: rejected asylum seeker turned into illegal immigrant), the villains are post-colonial immigrants and EC workers (immigration officers and sweatshop owner: Pakistani, Sneaky: Spanish, more precisely Catalan). Here one can see a hierarchy of exploitation, asylum seekers and illegal immigrants at the bottom, post-colonial and European immigrants in the middle, and on top of that, a white British national who receives a kidney from Okwe. Loshitzky's points out that it is 'global capitalism' that the film projects through this narrative, where asylum seekers and their body become a 'commodity' (Loshitzky 2010: 74). *Dirty Pretty Things* draws a clear division between innocent and villain, in order to

embed the immigrants in the thriller narrative structure, but at the same time, it reveals the complex hierarchy of exploitation in a global society.

The dramatic cliché of the narrative plot and thriller format reduces the political heat of the subject, in order to achieve an entertaining feature film. It causes the critical response to the film in terms of beneficial and limiting effect in achieving realist representations. Since Frears put the genre format first, as he states that it is a 'thriller with political context', not a 'political film with thriller elements', the film received some severe critical comment from critics such as Ian Sinclair in *Sight and Sound*. It is a very populist film with a typical narrative plot and simplified character construction; however, in terms of projecting new subject matter, that of illegal immigrants, the invisible citizens of London; *Dirty Pretty Things* succeeds by attracting the attention of the audience and the film industry towards this subject. Furthermore, the film analyses and adopts the structure of exploitation and racism in the modern time of globalisation. As in his works of the 1980s, Frears shows the audience his ability to find the most effective way to represent the subject in a political context.

It's a Free World

Ken Loach's *It's a Free World* tackles the issue of illegal workers and the system of exploitation from a unique perspective. Angela (Kierston Wareing) lives in London, she works for a recruitment agency for East European workers; however she is fired for 'bad behaviour in public', after she splashed her drink on her boss's face when he sexually harassed her in a business drinking session. As an ambitious single mother in her 30s, she plans to open her own recruitment agency for casual workers and persuades her flatmate Rose (Juliet Ellis) to become a partner, and help her start her business: targeting workers from East European countries. Angela and Rose are at the beginning determined to be fair employers and only hire legal workers, nevertheless the situation gets difficult. Due to cash flow issues created by one of the factories becoming bankrupt and not been able to pay her agency, Angela tells the workers to wait for their money, and at this point the spiral of exploitation begins; because postponing their wages creates frustration and anger among the workers. Which culminates in one of the workers attacking Angela, and other workers going round to Rose and Angela's home and threatening them by breaking their windows; this might have not been possible had they not been aware of their address due to Angela and Roses mistake of previously inviting some of the workers to their home for a 'fun night'. Frightened and ashamed, Rose declares herself out of this business when she sees Angela calling the immigration office to get rid of people living in a caravan site to make a space for

their workers. These experiences, however, only resolve Angela's determination to achieve 'success' and she continues sending workers to work without pay. The film climaxes, with the angry workers kidnapping Angela's son Jamie (Joe Siffleet), breaking into her flat and threatening and robbing her, after which she promises to pay 'every single penny back'; the film ends with a scene in which Angela is interviewing future workers in the Ukraine, which means, as has been mentioned by Rose earlier in the film, Angela is hiring illegal workers to keep her business.

The film effectively sets the position of the main characters in society. Angela loses her job in the recruitment agency because she defends herself, after her boss deliberately pinches her bottom whilst drinking with their clients in a bar after work. As she protests and informs him that she can file a complaint about what occurred, the boss says 'you do what you got to do' with a blank face; this tells the audience that there is actually nothing Angela can do. She is already being exploited, by both her boss and the company system. The film emphasises this structure when Angela asks Rose to join her, pointing out 'you are a university graduate, but working in a call centre'; thereby describing how hard it is for women to survive in society. Besides setting female protagonists, Loach explains his attempt to develop the characters to allow the audience to identify with and draw their sympathy.

We wanted the two women to be people the audience would identify with. You need to be drawn in to think, 'Well, yes, that's reasonable. Of course, if she doesn't do that, somebody else will and she's in a competitive market; she's got to get a toehold, so she's got to be pretty tough...' You need to be drawn into her logic. And then at the end, see how horrifying that logic is (Wilson 2007: 29).

By starting the film with the description of Angela as a single mother in her 30s who gets sexually harassed and fired, Loach successfully grabs the audience's sympathy. Furthermore, the film thoroughly stands by Angela's viewpoint, to show how difficult negotiation is between factory workers and the owners. Even Angela's use of her sexuality to flirt with clients also depicts the way women sometimes use sexual politics to survive in a mainly male dominated economic system.

This film significantly displays what is occurring within the complex and hidden world of illegal workers, by breaking away from the general cinematic genre, with a structure that is not of villain and victim, but of victim and victim.

The issues addressed in the drama are plainly topical – the exploitation of the immigrant workforce, gang masters, culture clash – but as ever with Loach’s work, the real dramatic interest is in people. Angie and Rose are not monsters (Wilson 2007: 27).

Loach effectively describes the situation and life that Angela has at different points in the film. Besides being a single mother with a troubled boy in school, she has issues with her parents, craving for their approval that she can never acquire. In the beginning Angela tries to be professional. The motto of the agency is printed on their flyers ‘no papers, no work’; however, the changing situation draws her away from her principles. Ironically, the starting point of hiring illegal workers is purely out of sympathy, when Angela meets an Iranian exile family who has had their asylum application rejected. She takes them back her flat, finds them a caravan site to stay at, and provides their father with a job; however, these actions place her in a position of power with the ability to take advantage of them. Later, she starts providing passports and accommodation to other illegal workers and charges them. When she becomes a victim of a payback, Angela and Rose who now earn thousands of pounds from the accommodation; Angela refuses to pay the workers from this money, and one of them attacks her. The co-existence of sympathetic employer and exploiter in Angie ends at this point, when her anger and fear towards the attackers overcomes her sympathy towards their situation.

At this point the audience are put in an uncomfortable position, regarding their sympathy between Angela and the workers. The film showers the audience with a more appalling scene: Angela and Rose visit a property to open their office, where they get another request for 45 workers. At this point Angela suggests hiring Ukrainian workers while providing them accommodation, and they visit a caravan site, where Angela calls immigration to report on the current occupiers in order to get rid of them. Shortly after they find two girls from the Iranian family Angela helped before. This shocking scene describes the twisted chain of causality of Angela’s actions, which leads her to that of an exploiter unconsciously.

Loach illuminates the causality chain of exploitation in a globalised society: how people get sucked into this spiral is effectively shown, as the audience have enough reasons to identify themselves with Angela and Rose, both of whom act on the basis of their feelings. This technique of ‘embedding characters in the context’ is a common technique of Loach, as seen in the first chapter of this thesis. Loach tries to describe these characters as deeply as possible, to provide the audience with the logic of their action.

The film shows the issue of immigration and illegal workers from various perspectives, one of which is between Angela and her father. One morning her father takes Jamie to see Angela's place of work, only to find out her so called business is pimping on casual workers. Angela and her father's argument in the later scene illustrate attitudes towards immigration: which the father thinks is degrading the country. Advancing against the way she treats these workers, the father asks whether she pays them a minimum wage; incapable of answering that question, Angela deflects the question by referring to the system of exploitation, by stating that it is their work which makes it possible for cheaper supermarket products. This scene clearly presents the two biased opposing opinions on illegal workers: one is a humanist position the other is purely an economic position. But interestingly at this point, we see the desperation of workers for any kind of job, and Angela's effort to get them one, her father's humanistic opinion is somehow presented as a hollow one.

In the film's closing scene Angela is back in east Europe, this time in Ukraine. She interviews people looking for jobs in England, accepting cash from them for their applications. This is the same as the opening scene, where Angela was working for her old company and was shown interviewing people in Poland. The only difference between these scenes is the fact that Angela is now the one taking their money; providing them with horrible accommodation while charging an expensive price to make extra money. One woman tells Angela that she is leaving her two children. Angela hesitates a little before she receives her cash, and asks her name. Throughout the film the workers that Angela knows by name play important roles in the course of her business. Firstly there is Karol the Polish guy, who helps her as a translator at the beginning of her business while developing a relationship with her. Secondly there is Mahmood the Iranian exile who is Angela's first illegal worker and a victim of her inconsiderate actions at the caravan site. These characters all play key roles at points of the causality chain in Angela's business. The existence of this Ukrainian lady suggests the beginning of another move, probably with tragic consequence, in the story, but the film ends.

It's a Free World presents a very distinctive perspective on the issue of illegal workers. By placing the character of Angela and her struggling life at the centre of the story, it projects the system of exploitation, and shows the causality chain of human action and how people are sucked into a spiral of degradation. There are no villains within the film, even the factory owner who fails to pay Angela and causes her big trouble, is given a degree of sympathy by the way the camera shoots his face being hit by loan sharks, which makes the audience feel pity for him. The film is structured to show the system of exploitation only; with

victims been placed on both sides which allows the audience to view the complexity and the deep roots of this issue.

All these films, present the issue of asylum seekers and illegal workers with different textures and from different perspectives. *Last Resort* and *Dirty Pretty Things* draw them as travellers, placed within non-places. The use of non-places such as the airport and hotels (and crafty manipulated imagery of the tower blocks in *Last Resort*) allows these films to describe the sentiment of the characters, and create a sense of displacement. The former takes the shape of an abstract tale rather than a straightforward realist film, leaning towards the aesthetic side of film-making by controlling the tone of the imagery with monotonous acting to project a psychological state of the asylum seekers in an isolated claustrophobic place. The latter applies the style of a popular film by adopting a thriller narrative plot; it illustrates illegal workers as the victims of society allowing the audience to be drawn into this subject-matter and ultimately identifying with them. The clear characterisation creates a simple (although narrow) diagram of the issue to be recognised; while revealing the more complex structure of system exploitation within global capitalism. Furthermore, *It's a Free World* applies all the style that Ken Loach develops in his entire career, to create another documentary-drama on this new issue. It tackles the issue of exploitation of illegal workers from the eye of the exploiter, who has been trapped in a spiral of the causality chain. The film actually provides an objective, economic analysis of this situation, but allowing the audience to witness it within a story of Angie, who wants to make her life work, and give these workers a chance.

The issue of immigration is still current at this moment, and there will be more films on this subject. British films since the 1980s have been expanding the margin of representational subject in order to show the diversity and hybridity of this nation, to project something invisible onto the screen. At the same time, there is an expanding concern on illegal immigrants and asylum seekers, which is projected onto the screen in various ways. This question of representing the 'Other', in terms of style and aesthetics of the film, allow the film-makers to combine genre-film-making with social realist elements to develop the techniques of representation. There is still a risk in the representation of this subject matter of being another 'cinema of duty', since two out of three case studies are created by white male British directors and writers. *Dirty Pretty Things* employs the genre film-making to reduce the political temperature of the film, whilst *It's a Free World* depicts a more complex hierarchy of exploitation in global society. As the social realist subject matter expands its concern, it seeks more various style of film-making to represent the truthfulness of experience.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored and analysed the development and expansion of social realism in Britain from the 1990s adopting three distinctive approaches towards this issue; the auteurist, the aesthetic and a subjective approach on the issue of immigrants and asylum seekers. The works of Ken Loach display consistently sympathetic eyes on the people on the margin of society, the people who are trapped in a predicament and not be able to escape from it. Mostly located in northern England and Scotland, after the massive industrial transition of the 1980s, they explore the issues of unemployment, the spread of drugs and drug related crimes. Loach projects these issues through the portraits of family or relationships: his works carry the message of how social conditions affect people's life and their future. His constant stance against authoritarianism can be clearly seen in his description of social workers and the British police, in *Ladybird Ladybird*, where they are represented as unsympathetic bureaucrats. His dramas are always studies of the victims of the British social and economic system.

Dedicated to the use of an observational shooting style, the camera keeps its distance from the characters or objects, while the use of an occasional hand-held camera adds a documentary feeling to the film. Minimal use of music and sound-effects create contrast within the dramatic scenes, such as the attack of intruders, loan sharks, drug dealers and social workers. Loach's constant search to develop an authentic and naturalist film style to portray a particular culture through the use of locally found talent and non-professional actors, who often come from the area where the film is being made and most of whom have the same life experiences as the characters within the film. All these factors provide each film with a strong individual feel and strong advantages such as the use of strong local dialect; all of which combine to provide a more documentary and naturalist feel within a social realist film; these factors also can cause issues with the distribution and exhibition of his works (i.e. *Sweet Sixteen* was subtitled). Loach's significance is the consistency of his style, since commencing his career with the *Wednesday Play* and other docudramas made for television up to his most recent feature *Looking for Eric* (2008), and is also strengthened by his continuous collaboration with the film crews, such as producer Tony Garnett in his early career and the scriptwriter Paul Laverty who he has collaborated with since *Land and Freedom* (1995).

Loach's works always carry and focus disappointment and anguish towards the social system which abuses and places people in predicaments beyond their control; however, there are slight differences of this vision in his later works. In

Ae Fond Kiss, Loach takes up the issue of religious and cultural difference in British society by creating a love story between a young Muslim and a Catholic. The disruption and refusal of each other between their communities suffocates their relationship into a tragic state. Significantly, this work is the first film that Loach points his camera towards the non-white community, as critics such as John Hill repeatedly point out the absence of non-white characters in Loach's work (Hill 1999: 204). It is also significant that the supporting role of Rose in *It's a Free World*, who seems black or mixed race, carries the moral standard in this film.

His interest in multicultural Britain leads him to create *It's a Free World*, where, he tackles the issue of exploitation of illegal workers. By setting a female lower middle-class Angie as a protagonist/exploiter, the spiral of exploitation is revealed in an unsettling way. This film illustrates a complex structure of society in a time of global capitalism, where people are helplessly trapped. After these works, Loach returns to his routes through the portrayal of working-class people in *Looking for Eric*. Here the football enthusiastic postman regains his confidence in terms of his relationship with his ex-wife and children, through help and training from the illusionary star football player Eric Cantona. It has a rather optimistic and uplifting mood especially in the latter half of the film following his transformation, and most significantly of all, in the last plot of attacking the local gangster by a group of his colleagues who carry this out whilst wearing Cantona face masks. Compared to his previous films, where the power of the local community is lost during the destruction of traditional labour intensive industries and unions, *Looking for Eric's* collective action towards evil works as a quite magical moment. But being put in the context of a disastrous deconstruction of the post office which was taking place at that time, the film's optimism provides rather cynical and critical comment on this matter.

The solid reputation that Loach has gained through more than 50 years of his career, and his contribution towards British film culture is magnificent. He is the auteur that has consistency in social realistic style and statement, and affecting many young directors whilst still at the forefront of British social realism.

While Loach keeps the traditional style of realist film-making, there are a number of films that integrate high aesthetics into social realism. The second chapter reviewed three distinctive works by Paul Andrew Williams, Andrea Arnold and Shane Meadows. All of them have a unique independent style, as Williams uses the genre of the gangster film and then adds social realist elements of prostitution. His use of techniques of location shooting and of hand-held cameras allow the film to emphasise the intensity of the story of the

fleeing of the two girls, while the picturesque seaside imagery of Brighton gives the film great contrast against the gritty dark side of London. This film reminds us of the linkage between the social realism and the gangster film, which prefers to use low budget location shooting to create settings with tension. Adopting the breakdown of a linear narrative from art cinema, Williams succeeds in pushing the idea of 'hybrid film' that adopts a structure of genre film while interweaving social realist elements and techniques, to create more impact on filmic expression.

Arnold also uses the thriller plot by creating a story of vengeance of a woman. Her attention to the medium of cinema, the device of camera and screen, allows her to apply the issue of CCTV as an element of social criticism, whilst using this system as a crucial narrative device. *Red Road's* use of CCTV footages provides it with a sense of realism placed alongside the location of council flats where Jackie finds Clyde and later visits him. At the same time, these shots delicately describe the psychological state of this female protagonist, who shuts herself off from the rest of world after a tragic experience. The audience see Jackie's loneliness and hopelessness in the shot of her walking down a deserted area of Red Road, and towards the end of the film her redemption and reconnection with the world through the CCTV footage of her interacting with an old dog that she has been watching through the screens in the operation centre. The setting of the economically disadvantaged area of the town or the tower buildings of the council estate, which used to be a subject of social realism, in *Red Road*, constitutes psychological description of the characters, rather than representation of something real. We see in this film the transformation of a social realist setting into a device that develops the subjectivity of characters.

This is England contextualises itself by inserting highly political news footage of the 1980s. This straightforward technique to establish realism works with his use of 1980s music as a soundtrack. Meadows' style towards film-making; location shooting, local non-professional actors, working-class subject matter; is as consistent as that of Loach, alongside his attitude as a regional independent film-maker. What separates these two is Meadows' deep interest in the visual side of film. His use of slow-motion, monotone colour or metaphorical shots allows the film to develop the subjectivity of protagonist. Especially in *This is England*, by setting it as a story of a boy growing into a man, Meadows attempts to balance out the level of political issues that the film deals with. Emphasis on style culture of the 1980s sets this film up to be as iconic as *Quadrophenia*, and a TV series of the film has now been made.

These films vary in terms of genre or subject-matter; however, they share

the interest in a more hybrid use of social realist elements. The traditional locations in social realist film are not used as realist descriptions of the predicament of the people living in that area, but as elements to constitute a psychological state of character. What the audience witnesses is the movement from objective towards subjective representation in film. At the same time, they share a tendency of hybrid film-making that has been developed since the 1980s which leads them to successful exhibition.

The discussion in the final chapter, the new subject matter of asylum seekers and immigrants, reveals the continuous expansion of social realism. *Dirty Pretty Things* provides a rather traditional representation on this subject: as a victim of society, invisible people. Its adaptation of the popular genre style of thriller and love story allows it to provide a clear division between innocent and villain, leaving a stronger impression on their predicament. This hybrid film-making reveals its downside of weakening the sense of social realism by too much popularisation. However, through the concept of 'non-place', it succeeds in representing the illegal immigrants as 'travellers', and furthermore, significantly suggests the repetition of their journey.

This concept of 'non-place' can also be adopted in the next film, *Last Resort*. It creates Stonehaven, the fictional location that is isolated and inorganic. Compared to *Dirty Pretty Things*, which attempts to clarify the cause of their actions or journeys, this film illustrates Tanya in a more ambiguous way, by emphasising the naivety of her character. By setting the protagonist as a 'bogus asylum seeker', *Last Resort* avoids to categorise itself as one of the 'social problem' films that criticises the situation and seeks resolution. The film's fictionalisation in its location setting and characterisation allows it to distance itself from the political aspect of this subject-matter, in order to represent the emotional side of their 'experience', or, to describe their feelings. Rather, the significance of this film is in the sensitivity of its visual image, which exaggerates the subjectivity of the characters rather than sustaining the objectivity on this issue.

Loach's *It's a Free World*, on the other hand, reinforces the social realist tradition with adaptation of this new subject matter. Throughout the film the audience witness Loach's analysis on this matter, or his accusation on the system of global capitalism that sucks people into the spiral of exploitation. His decision to create a working-class female as a protagonist apparently succeeds in gaining the audience's sympathy with her own situation, revealing the disturbing result of exploitation by a victim of another exploiter at the far margins of the economic system. As in his other works, the system is that which needs to be accused and changed and this fact provides us with a view of depressing

helplessness as in his other works.

Sight and Sound in its January issue in 2007 praises the new trend of films that have less press coverage yet are achieving a reputation among the international film festivals, such as *Red Road* and *This is England*, saying 'some British films are at last [...] reflecting aspects of British life again, and maybe suffering the consequences of being harder to sell abroad'. Coincidentally they are the case studies on the aesthetic approach to social realism in this thesis. This trend will continue, but we also need to pay attention to the financial background of their production. The financial supports of these films exemplify the current trend of British film production: co-production between public institutions (national and regional) and small independent companies. Whilst there are films like *London to Brighton*, which although using a minimalist budget for production, find their own financier without depending on public funding. This 'entrepreneurial' spirit among film-makers needs to expand; considering the future difficulty that British film industry will face when the government shuts down the UK Film Council in 2012.

From all of these case studies, I would like to conclude that social realism in British cinema is alive, but it remains as complex as ever. As stated in the introduction, social realism is a cinematic concept that does not possess a distinct style or conventions. It is rather something that appears on the surface of the film, as an added layer of texture, one of the layers that the film carries. Sometimes it emphasises objectivity in the form and narrative of film-making, sometimes it is integrated within the text of the film, to highlight the subjectivity of it. The significance of social realism is its ability to add to the film a sense of immediacy, a sense of 'here and now'. Social realism takes different shapes and represents different matters in each time of history, but it always reflects the present historical situation it wishes to portray or emulate. All we can do is scrutinise the tradition of social realism, to embed films in the social and political discourse of the historical time line, and find elements of immediacy in its complex structure and the texture of the film. Social realism will never therefore become extinct provided cinema exists, since the nature of this medium is to capture and reflect elements of the social-political structures which make up society; the question that any critic should therefore ask is not does it exist but what is social realism, and how does its representation function in a film.

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