

Terence Davies and the Cinema:  
An Intertextual Study of His Films

James Andrew Ballands

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# Abstract

This thesis examines the oeuvre of the British filmmaker Terence Davies between 1976 and 2011. Overall, his work from this period can be separated into two distinct categories: autobiographical films and literary adaptations. Whereas previous critical works on this writer-director have often framed him as an auteur due to the considerable creative control that he exerts over his films, this thesis problematizes such a reading by situating his body of work within a larger intertextual field. Within this field, I include other films, literary texts and pieces of music, in order to explore how other cultural influences have been channelled into Davies's filmmaking. I also explore the idea that his memories of growing up in Liverpool – particularly during the 1950s – constitute another intertext within his autobiographical films. Similarly, I demonstrate how considering the creative input of his key collaborators – including producers, cinematographers, editors and production designers – illuminates both Davies's approach to filmmaking and the dense construction of his films as texts. Unlike other critical writings on Davies's career, my thesis considers the audience's engagement with his films and the readings they generate from them.

This thesis adopts a multi-disciplinary approach to Davies's films by engaging with various branches of study within the arts, including post-structuralist theory, autobiographical studies, adaptation studies, music theory, auteur theory and production studies. Furthermore, this thesis includes insights that have been gathered from eighteen original interviews with individuals involved in the making of Terence Davies's films – including one with the filmmaker himself.

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Most of all, I would like to thank my mam and dad for their love and support.

# Author's Declaration

I declare that all written work and use of expression is, unless cited, my own.

I confirm that none of this work has been submitted for any other academic award at this or any other institution.

# Introduction

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Between 1976 and 2011, the British filmmaker Terence Davies wrote and directed three short films, five feature-length films and a documentary. Overall, his oeuvre can be separated into two distinct groups: autobiographical films and literary adaptations. His autobiographical works consist of the short films *Children* (UK, 1976), *Madonna and Child* (UK, 1980) and *Death and Transfiguration* (UK, 1983), which were released collectively as *The Terence Davies Trilogy* in 1984; the feature-length films *Distant Voices, Still Lives* (UK/West Germany, 1988) and *The Long Day Closes* (UK, 1992), and the documentary *Of Time and the City* (UK, 2008). His literary adaptations are *The Neon Bible* (UK, 1995), based on John Kennedy Toole's 1989 novella, *The House of Mirth* (UK/USA/France/Germany, 2000), based on Edith Wharton's 1905 novel, and *The Deep Blue Sea* (USA/UK, 2011), based on Terence Rattigan's 1952 play.

Despite the relatively small size of his oeuvre, Terence Davies is widely recognised as one of the greatest British filmmakers of his generation. In a 2003 poll conducted by the film critics of *The Guardian* newspaper, he was voted the tenth greatest director in the world – the highest charting British filmmaker on that list.<sup>1</sup> In 2002, *Distant Voices, Still Lives* – Davies's most admired work – was the only British entry to feature in a poll taken by the film magazine *Sight & Sound* of the ten finest films of the previous twenty-five years.<sup>2</sup> In 2011, the latter film was also voted the third greatest British film of all time – behind *Don't Look Now* (Nicolas Roeg, UK, 1973) and *The Third Man* (Carol Reed, UK, 1949), respectively – in a poll conducted by *Time Out* magazine.<sup>3</sup> In an interview with the scholar and film producer Colin MacCabe, the French auteur Jean-Luc Godard expressed his long-held view that the British 'never were gifted filmmakers', but made a *single* exception for *Distant Voices, Still Lives*.<sup>4</sup>

It is my contention that Davies's work has been under-explored by scholars, particularly in light of the high critical esteem in which his films are held. In many of the books devoted to twentieth-century British cinema, Davies is conspicuous by his absence. He does not feature at all, for example, in Jim Leach's *British Film* (2004) – unlike his art-house contemporaries Derek Jarman, Sally Potter and Peter Greenaway – or John Hill's extensively researched book *British Cinema in the 1980s: Issues and Themes* (1999). Furthermore, he receives only cursory mentions in such books as Steve Blandford's *Film, Drama and the Break-Up of Britain* (2007), Robert Murphy's edited collection *British Cinema of the 90s* (2000) and Amy Sargeant's *British Cinema: A Critical History* (2005).

This is not to suggest, however, that Davies has been ignored completely by academia. At the time of writing, two books have been written about his filmmaking career, both of which are entitled *Terence Davies*: one by Wendy Everett in 2004 and another by Michael Koresky in 2014. Paul Farley also wrote a short monograph on *Distant Voices, Still Lives* in 2006 as part of the BFI Film Classics series and there are a number of anthologised essays and articles that focus upon different aspects of his filmmaking career.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, I would argue that there has been a lack of sustained scholarly engagement with Davies's work given his standing among film critics and his peers, particularly when one considers the numerous books that have been written about his contemporaries such as Peter Greenaway and the late Derek Jarman.<sup>6</sup> Naturally, this raises the question of why Davies's body of work has been comparatively neglected, for which there are several possible explanations.

Firstly, Davies's oeuvre is relatively small and sporadic in comparison with a prolific filmmaker like Jarman who – between 1976 and his untimely death in 1994 – made eleven features, in addition to numerous shorts and music videos. Secondly, Davies's films are not as audacious or provocative in terms of their style and subject matter as those of some of his contemporaries. In *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* (UK/France, 1989), for example, Greenaway depicts an extraordinary narrative of adultery, murder and cannibalism

in a highly theatrical mise-en-scène with costumes designed by John Paul Gaultier. Thirdly, Davies is a highly paradoxical figure – elusive and full of contradictions – which makes it more difficult to locate his position within the field of British film studies, and this might explain, in part, why certain critics have chosen not to write about his films. According to Wendy Everett,

Davies is neither a straightforward nor an easy director, and the innovative nature of his films, and the way they continually subvert conventional categories and expectations, frequently confuses those critics who seek to pigeonhole them neatly into specific categories.<sup>7</sup>

Davies is often identified as an exponent of British art cinema, and as such is often grouped with Jarman, Greenaway and Sally Potter – all of whom received funding for their work from the British Film Institute (BFI) – as a filmmaker who ‘challenge[s] narrative and stylistic conventions’.<sup>8</sup> David Bordwell argues that art cinema ‘defines itself explicitly against the classical narrative mode’ epitomised by Hollywood cinema by rejecting its main conventions such as plotlines governed by ‘cause-effect logic’, ‘psychologically-defined, goal oriented characters’, spatial-temporal unity and continuity editing.<sup>9</sup> Certainly, many of Davies’s films reject these principles, but his artistic goals are, for the most part, strikingly different from those of his contemporaries. Indeed, Steve Neale has argued that the label of ‘art cinema’ has been used to group together highly individual talents, such as the four aforementioned filmmakers, whose works are thematically and stylistically opposed to classical cinema albeit in varied ways.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, Davies is also bracketed with filmmakers such as Bill Douglas and Lynne Ramsay as a creator of poetically inflected social realist cinema, and has been applauded for his heartfelt and unpatronising depictions of working-class life in mid-twentieth-century Liverpool.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, Christopher Williams has identified *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* – alongside numerous other Channel 4 productions from the 1980s like *Angel* (Neil Jordan, Ireland/UK, 1982) and *My Beautiful Launderette* (Stephen Frears, UK, 1985) – as a ‘social art film’ which addresses the principal concerns of the European art film

(‘individual identity, sexuality, psychological complexity, anomie, episodicness, interiority, ambiguity, style’) whilst simultaneously engaging with wider social issues.<sup>12</sup>

The often contradictory nature of Davies’s work is one of the central preoccupations of Koresky’s monograph, in which he explores four of the central paradoxes of the filmmaker’s work: how his films can be simultaneously (i) autobiographical and fictional; (ii) melancholic yet joyful; (iii) thematically conservative and stylistically bold, and (iv) concerned with the passing of time yet frozen in the past. Koresky also pays close attention to the homosexual content/subtext of Davies’s films, thus framing the director as a gay auteur who presents the audience with a ‘personalised vision of the twentieth century refracted through a decidedly queer prism’.<sup>13</sup> It’s important to note that he uses the word ‘queer’ in ‘a two-pronged sense, both in terms of the director’s homosexuality, reflected in the identity politics of many of his films, and to illustrate how his work deviates from the formal and cultural concerns of his cinematic contemporaries’.<sup>14</sup>

In Everett’s earlier book, she devotes a chapter to each of Davies’s films up until *The House of Mirth*: as the book was published in 2004, it does not analyse *Of Time and the City* and *The Deep Blue Sea*. Whereas Koresky explores Davies’s work from a non-linear perspective in order to draw out the connections between his films, Everett adopts a chronological approach, beginning with the *Trilogy* and culminating with *The House of Mirth*. The advantage of this structure is that it enables her to chart the ways in which the thematic preoccupations and stylistic tropes of the filmmaker’s works develop and modulate over the course of his career. Whereas Koresky is particularly interested in the queer sensibility of Davies’s films, Everett identifies time and music as the two central thematic concerns that have shaped the director’s oeuvre.<sup>15</sup>

Everett and Koresky both explore Davies’s oeuvre from an auteurist perspective by examining the thematic and aesthetic consistency of his films. Such a critical approach is particularly appropriate for a filmmaker like Davies who exercises considerable artistic control over his films by writing and directing his own screenplays. Moreover, I would argue

that the autobiographical content of his early films promotes an auteurist approach because the personal nature of their subject matter is foregrounded.

Like Everett and Koresky, this thesis will explore Davies's oeuvre from an auteurist perspective. However, I shall also combine this approach with other analytical methods, namely post-structuralist intertextuality in various modes. My intention is to place Davies's films within an intertextual field that includes other cultural artefacts such as films, literary texts and pieces of music in order to illuminate the ways in which Davies has channelled other cultural influences into his filmmaking. Although Davies deliberately appropriates and alludes to extant cultural materials for his own ends, his cinema also exists in a liminal space outside the director's control, meaning that the audience will bring their own experiences to bear on his films. For this reason, I will also explore how the audience's engagement with Davies's films contributes significantly to the creation of meaning.

In this thesis, I shall also explore the idea that his memories of growing up in post-war Liverpool are another intertext of sorts – one that he has drawn upon on multiple occasions – which means that his autobiographical films constitute a type of adaptation. Similarly, I shall demonstrate how considering the creative input of Davies's key collaborators – including producers, cinematographers, editors and production designers – reveals much about his approach to filmmaking and the dense construction of his films as texts.

Before I map out an overview of my thesis, I shall provide a brief account of Davies's early life, which has had a profound effect on his autobiographical films, before offering an overview of his filmmaking career to date.

Terence Davies was born on 10<sup>th</sup> November 1945, the youngest of ten children (only seven of whom survived infancy) in a working-class, Catholic family in Liverpool. His early childhood was overshadowed by the presence of his cruel and violent father who abused

both his wife and children. The filmmaker has described the unbearable tension that his father created within his household: 'because you had to gauge whether he was in a good mood or not, all my nerve endings were exposed'.<sup>16</sup> Salvation came when he died of pancreatic cancer in 1952 when Davies was only six and a half years old. The brief period between the death of his father and his enrolment at Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Boys' School has been described by Davies as a 'golden age' because he was finally able to enjoy the company of his beloved mother and siblings without enduring the terror that his father inflicted upon him.<sup>17</sup>

Davies's transition to secondary school would mark the end of this happy period as he would become the victim of merciless, unrelenting bullying by his peers. It was also during his early adolescence that he became aware of his homosexuality, making him feel like an outsider in his working-class community with its traditional models of masculinity. This revelation was also a challenge to Davies's strict Catholic upbringing. In interviews, the filmmaker has often described his sexual orientation as ruining his life and of how he prayed in vain to be rid of it: 'On one occasion I prayed until my knees bled'.<sup>18</sup>

Davies left school at fifteen and worked for the next twelve years as a shipping office clerk and unqualified accountant – jobs that he detested. During this gloomy period of employment Davies began to write plays for the stage and radio, and while these scripts were not produced professionally, they represent his first tentative steps into the performing arts. He subsequently escaped the crushing monotony of his white-collar job when he was accepted into Coventry Drama School in 1971. During his two years at the school, Davies completed the script for what would become his first short film, and he left in 1973 – without completing the course – in order to pursue a career in filmmaking.

His first short film, *Children*, was funded by the BFI Production Board who furnished him with a grant of £8,500. The film was a critical success upon its release in 1976 and Davies consequently gained a place at the prestigious National Film School (NFS), where he would go on to make a second short film, *Madonna and Child*, as his graduation project in



1980. After leaving the NFS, Davies would complete a third short film, *Death and Transfiguration*, with funding from the BFI and the Greater London Arts Association in 1983. The three films were subsequently released as a single feature in 1984 entitled *The Terence Davies Trilogy* and, collectively, they portray the life of Robert Tucker – Davies's alter ego – from childhood (Phillip Mawdsley) to middle age (Terry O'Sullivan) to old age and eventual death (Wilfrid Brambell). Overall, these shorts provide a sustained exploration of psychological trauma caused by parental abuse, sexual guilt and spiritual crisis.

In 1983, *Children* and *Madonna and Child* won the Bronze and Gold Hugo awards respectively at the Chicago International Film Festival. *The Terence Davies Trilogy* received wide critical acclaim upon its release in 1984, garnering prizes at both the Locarno International Film Festival and the Oberhausen Film Festival. These achievements helped to establish Davies as a promising new filmmaker and provided the springboard from which he could continue his autobiographical film project.

Davies's first feature-length film, *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, is in fact two short films joined together: the first (*Distant Voices*) was made in 1986 and the second (*Still Lives*) in 1988. Unlike the *Trilogy*, *Distant Voices, Still Lives* does not feature an autobiographical counterpart for the young Davies. Instead, it examines a working-class Liverpool family during the 1940s and 1950s – a family damaged by an unpredictable and violent father (Pete Postlethwaite) but also sustained by the warmth and vitality of working-class life. The film is a synthesis of the filmmaker's own childhood recollections combined with the 'second-hand memories' of his beloved mother and siblings, several of which occurred before he was even born.<sup>19</sup> *Distant Voices* is dominated by the presence of the father who torments both his wife (Freda Dowie) and three children, Eileen (Angela Walsh), Maisie (Lorraine Ashbourne) and Tony (Dean Williams). *Still Lives*, on the other hand, portrays the period after the father's death and how his malevolent influence gradually fades away over the course of his family's lives.

*Distant Voices, Still Lives* has been described as the 'high point of post-war British art cinema'.<sup>20</sup> The film won numerous prizes when it was released, including the prestigious International Critics prize at Cannes and, in 2009, was selected as one of the ten greatest films made in the previous thirty years by the London Film Critics' Circle (LFCC).<sup>21</sup> Moreover, Davies's film was the only British entry to feature in that particular poll which consisted mainly of American films such as *Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg, USA, 1993), *Unforgiven* (Clint Eastwood, USA, 1992) and *Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee, USA/Canada, 2005) – all of which enjoyed considerable critical and commercial success, winning multiple Academy Awards.

Davies's next film was *The Long Day Closes*, in which he created another childhood alter ego for himself: the ten/eleven-year-old Bud (Leigh McCormack). The film is warmer and more sympathetic in tone than his earlier works, depicting the director's childhood after the death of his father. Liberated from the terror that his father inspired, *The Long Day Closes* depicts Davies's burgeoning love affair with the cinema and the domestic harmony that he enjoyed whilst living with his mother (Marjorie Yates) and older siblings. Although the film lacks the threatening presence of the father that haunted *Children* and *Distant Voices, Still Lives* or the soul-destroying monotony of routine employment in *Madonna and Child*, it does not shy away from portraying the dark side of Davies's childhood, particularly his burgeoning awareness of his homosexuality.

Although *The Long Day Closes* was praised by many commentators, the initial reviews were not as enthusiastic as they had been for *Distant Voices, Still Lives*. Whereas several commentators regarded *The Long Day Closes* as a continuation or resolution of Davies's autobiographical project, the academic John Caughie criticised the film for too strongly resembling its predecessor in terms of its autobiographical content and stylistic tropes: long, elegant tracking shots, rigorously framed tableaux shots, desaturated colours and a soundtrack that combines classical music with popular music from the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>22</sup> The criticism that Davies had become over-reliant on filming his past – recycling the

same material again and again – may help to explain his decision to depart from autobiographical filmmaking. Indeed, his next two films would be adaptations of American novels.

*The Neon Bible* was a significant departure for Davies in various ways. Firstly, it was his first literary adaptation. John Kennedy Toole wrote the original novel in 1953 when he was sixteen years old, and it was published posthumously in 1989. When the author committed suicide in 1969, he left behind a manuscript that would be published as *A Confederacy of Dunces* in 1980. The critical and commercial success of the latter novel – which won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1981 – is largely responsible for the subsequent publication of *The Neon Bible* nine years later. Secondly, Davies's film was funded by Scala Productions rather than the BFI. This independent production company was the invention of producers Stephen Woolley and Nik Powell who had collaborated previously as joint-creators of Palace Pictures, one of the most innovative and dynamic independents of the British film renaissance of the 1980s. Thirdly, *The Neon Bible* was shot in the USA rather than the UK, where Davies had made his previous films, which suggests that he was willing to work outside of his comfort zone.

As an adaptation of Toole's *The Neon Bible*, Davies's film is largely faithful to the original text, but there are some familiar narrative and thematic tropes that help to explain why Davies would have been attracted to the project when it was first brought to his attention by the film's producer Elizabeth Karlsen. Both the novel and the film portray the life of a sensitive boy, David (played by Drake Bell as a ten-year old and Jacob Tierney as a fifteen-year-old) growing up in Georgia during the 1940s. David's violent father, Frank (Denis Leary), enlists in the army during WWII and subsequently dies while fighting in Italy, leaving David to take care of his mentally unbalanced mother (Diana Scarwid) with the help of his aunt, Mae (Gena Rowlands). Towards the end of the narrative, Mae deserts her family to pursue a career as a singer in Nashville. When David returns to the house, having walked Mae to the bus station, he finds his mother dead. When Reverend Watkins (Peter

McRobbie), the local preacher, arrives with the intention of taking his mother to the asylum, David shoots him dead and then buries his mother in the backyard. *The Neon Bible* concludes with David boarding a train and voyaging into an uncertain future.

With *The Neon Bible*, Davies was accused of transplanting the thematic and narrative content of his Liverpool-set films to the American Deep South (a sensitive boy growing up in a poor religious community is nurtured by the love of his mother and other female relatives), and therefore re-treading old creative ground without offering anything new.<sup>23</sup> Even Jonathan Coe, who was extremely complementary about the film, suggests that the source material is striking familiar, describing it as ‘the book Terence Davies might have written if he had been born a novelist’.<sup>24</sup> For Coe, however, *The Neon Bible* is best understood as a transitional work that bridges the gap between the ‘compelling solipsism’ of his autobiographical films and the ‘beginning of something altogether more powerful’.<sup>25</sup> Overall, however, *The Neon Bible* received mixed reviews and performed poorly at the box office, and Davies has gone on record as saying that the film ‘doesn’t work’ but served as a ‘transition’ piece for his next project.<sup>26</sup>

*The House of Mirth* is a predominantly faithful adaptation of the Edith Wharton novel first published in 1905. Whereas Davies’s earlier films focus on characters living in working-class communities in which their lives are dominated by the twin forces of patriarchal rule and religious dogma, *The House of Mirth* portrays the social mores and power machinations of New York society at the beginning of the twentieth century. Both the novel and the film depict the tragic fate of Lily Bart (Gillian Anderson) – a beautiful young woman without a fortune – who is expected to use her looks and charm to find a suitably rich husband. Torn between her desire for a luxurious lifestyle and her yearning for a relationship based on mutual love and respect, she consequently sabotages all her opportunities for securing a wealthy marriage, including the unctuous, social-climbing businessman Simon Rosedale (Anthony LaPaglia). As a result, Lily is unable to be with the man she truly loves – the dashing lawyer Lawrence Selden (Eric Stoltz) – because he does not believe he will be able

to offer her the lifestyle that she has been brought up to expect. Ultimately, Lily is undone by the scheming socialite Bertha Dorset (Laura Linney) who brings about her downfall by falsely accusing her of infidelity with her husband. At the end of both the film and the novel, Lily sinks into destitution, having been excluded from New York society, and dies from an overdose of prescription medication.

Overall, *The House of Mirth* was critically well-received, with many flattering comparisons being drawn between the former and an earlier Wharton adaptation, Martin Scorsese's *The Age of Innocence* (USA, 1993). Philip Horne, for example, describes Davies's film as 'quieter and more gruellingly painful than Scorsese's [film], whose achievement it equals'.<sup>27</sup> This is a considerable achievement when one considers that *The Age of Innocence* was filmed on location in New York (the setting of the novel) for \$34 million, while *The House of Mirth* was shot in Glasgow for a relatively modest £5 million. As a result of the film's enthusiastic critical reception, there was much talk in the trade papers of awards glory and healthy box office receipts for the film.<sup>28</sup>

Unfortunately for Davies, neither awards glory nor box-office success materialised for *The House of Mirth*. Andrew Higson suggests that Davies's film may have suffered as a result of declining audience interest in period dramas, with both *Mansfield Park* (Patricia Rozema, UK, 1999) and *The Golden Bowl* (James Ivory, USA/France/UK, 2000) sharing a similar fate.<sup>29</sup> After the commercial failure of *The House of Mirth*, Davies would not make another film for eight years.

Between 2000 and 2008, Davies struggled unsuccessfully to secure funding for his adaptation of Lewis Grassie Gibbon's classic Scottish novel *Sunset Song* (1932).<sup>30</sup> Indeed, John Orr has compared Davies with the late filmmaker Bill Douglas who failed to realise his own version of another classic Scottish text, James Hogg's novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824).<sup>31</sup> Although Davies has recently succeeded in filming *Sunset Song* (more on this later), this does not alter the fact that he was ignored by the British film industry for nearly a decade.<sup>32</sup>

In light of the difficulties that Davies has experienced in obtaining funding for his films, one might be tempted to accuse the UK film industry of cultural philistinism. After all, Davies is – as we have already established – one of the most critically acclaimed filmmakers working in British cinema today. Understandably, the industrial apathy that he endured in the eight-year period after *The House of Mirth* took its toll on the filmmaker who complained vociferously about the treatment he received from the UK Film Council whilst attempting to secure funding for *Sunset Song*. Indeed, Davies states that he was forced to ‘jump through all sorts of hoops’, only to have the money snatched away from him after four months.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, he has been particularly scathing of Robert Jones, the former head of the UK Film Council’s Premiere Fund, whom Davies criticised for denying him financial support whilst bankrolling such projects as *Sex Lives of the Potato Men* (Andy Humphries, UK, 2004) – a film that has become notorious for its toxic reviews and lacklustre box-office performance.<sup>34</sup> Davies’s indignation has been echoed by other commentators, including the screenwriter Frank Cottrell Boyce who posed the following provocative question: ‘if the UK Film Council doesn’t back Davies, then what is it for?’<sup>35</sup> Similarly, the academic James Leggott, writing in 2008, suggested that Britain’s independent film sector would be ‘ill-served by the populist agenda of the funding bodies in the 2000s’.<sup>36</sup> The decision to deny funding to Davies may seem perverse given the critical reputation of his previous films, but there are other factors to consider.

Speaking in purely financial terms, a film by Terence Davies is unlikely to be commercially successful. His cinematic vision – like that of many auteur filmmakers such as Bill Douglas – is highly uncompromising and (more often than not) challenging for audiences brought up on a diet of films that depend upon cogent character development and unambiguous narrative progression. Furthermore, due to the ever-growing popularity of genre films in the UK and the USA, Davies’s lyrical and stately films are even less likely to find a cinematic audience than they did during the 1980s and 1990s.

Nevertheless, Davies managed to withstand this long period of apathy and rejection, re-emerging in 2008 with the documentary *Of Time and the City*. The concept for the film originated after Davies was approached by the Merseyside film producers Roy Boulter and Sol Papadopoulos (Hurricane Films) with the idea making a film to celebrate Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture in 2008. In *Of Time and the City*, Davies performs a moving and sardonic voiceover narration – by turns elegiac and sardonic – in which he recalls his upbringing in Liverpool during the 1950s and 1960s and laments the vanished city of his youth. This voiceover – combined with characteristic selections of classical music (e.g. Mahler's 'Symphony No. 2 in C Minor') and popular song (e.g. Peggy Lee's rendition of 'The Folks Who Live on the Hill') – is laid over a montage of carefully assembled newsreel and archive footage to create a cinematic essay in the tradition of Humphrey Jennings's *Listen to Britain* (co-directed by Stewart McAllister, UK, 1942), resurrecting the working-class community in which Davies was brought up. *Of Time and the City* represented Davies's triumphant return to autobiographical filmmaking and received enthusiastic reviews from critics, who described it as a 'hymn to the culture of Liverpool's past'<sup>37</sup> and 'a welcome comeback for one of Britain's greatest filmmakers'.<sup>38</sup>

Davies's next film would be an adaptation of Terence Rattigan's *The Deep Blue Sea*, a play that fell out of critical favour (along with the playwright himself) after John Osborne's incendiary drama *Look Back in Anger* (1956) shook the cultural establishment and ushered in a new era of British theatre. The critical reputation of Rattigan's play has been rehabilitated over the past twenty years, largely as a result of Karel Reisz's critically acclaimed West End production in 1993, and the producer Sean O'Connor approached Davies with the idea of adapting it for the screen. Davies's version of *The Deep Blue Sea* retains the central narrative of the original text – which focuses on a love triangle between a respectable middle-aged woman, Hester (Rachel Weisz), her high court judge husband, Sir William (Simon Russell Beale), and a young ex-RAF pilot (Tom Hiddleston) – but also makes significant alterations (these will be discussed in Chapter 3).

At the time of writing, Davies's career is enjoying an uncharacteristically productive phase. His long-awaited adaptation of *Sunset Song* – which depicts the struggles of a young woman trying to maintain her family farm in northeast Scotland, in the face of personal tragedy and the blight of the First World War – received its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival in September 2015. Moreover, Davies's long-cherished biopic of the tragic American poet Emily Dickinson, *A Quiet Passion*, received its world premiere at the Berlin Film Festival in February 2016. For both projects Davies has enticed well-known and respected actors to play the leading roles: Peter Mullan in *Sunset Song* and Cynthia Nixon and Jennifer Ehle in *A Quiet Passion*.<sup>39</sup> These two projects represent bold departures for Davies in various ways. Firstly, he has shot in new locations for both films (New Zealand and Luxembourg for *Sunset Song* and Belgium for *A Quiet Passion*), which reminds us that he is not overly concerned with authenticity of place. Secondly, Davies's biopic of Emily Dickinson is not based on a pre-existing biography of the tragic poet but rather the filmmaker's own painstaking research, and therefore represents a different type of adaptation from his previous films.

As I mentioned earlier, both Everett and Koresky approach Davies from an auteurist perspective in order to explore the common thematic and aesthetic tropes of his films. Moreover, both writers consider some of the ways in which Davies appropriates other cultural artefacts in his films (films, songs, literary texts) as a means of achieving different artistic effects. As a child, Davies was an avid cinema-goer, and the passion that he developed for the cinema – particularly Hollywood musicals and British comedies from the 1950s – is evident in his autobiographical works which contain various visual and aural allusions to these films. This thesis will build upon their analyses by paying greater attention to Davies's deliberate use of allusion.



However, unlike Everett and Koresky, this thesis will also analyse Davies's films from an intertextual perspective, in order to gain a greater insight into their dense construction as texts. I will give due weight to the audience's engagement with Davies's oeuvre by considering the relationships between his films and a range of less obvious cinematic intertexts. Numerous critics have suggested that Davies's works can be fruitfully compared to films within the traditions of British and European art cinema due to a range of thematic, narrative and aesthetic similarities, but his lack of familiarity with these texts at different points in his career means that the apparent similarities between them are not always intentional on the director's part. In addition to deciphering/interpreting Davies's deliberate allusions to other films, the audience brings their own film-going experiences to bear upon his works. For example, if a viewer is familiar with Gena Rowlands's collaborations with John Cassavetes, then this textual awareness will affect their viewing of *The Neon Bible*.

In Chapter 1, I shall explore the ways in which Davies's approach to filmmaking has been affected by external cinematic influences. To achieve this, I shall consider his works in relation to four films from distinctly different genres: the British art film *My Childhood* (Bill Douglas, UK, 1972), the European art film *Cries and Whispers/Viskningar och rop* (Ingmar Bergman, Sweden, 1972), the 1940s 'women's picture' *Brief Encounter* (David Lean, UK, 1945) and the Hollywood musical *Young at Heart* (Gordon Douglas, USA, 1954). Although some other scholars have drawn tentative, often superficial connections between these four films and Davies's oeuvre, I intend to explore them in greater depth in order to place them in a wider cultural context.

As mentioned earlier, Davies's oeuvre can be separated into autobiographical films and literary adaptations. With the latter, there is a clear and obvious relationship between the original literary text and the filmic version, but it is my contention that there is also an intertextual relationship between Davies's life story – or, to be more precise, how he and his family remember it – and the films that it inspired. These two modes of filmmaking are both based on adaptation, with pre-existing material being re-interpreted and transmuted into

works of cinema, and it will be revealing to explore the ways in which these two modes converge.

In Chapter 2, I shall discuss the autobiographical films that Davies made between 1976 and 1992 – *The Terence Davies Trilogy*, *Distant Voices*, *Still* and *The Long Day Closes* – alongside his 2008 documentary *Of Time and the City*. Collectively, these films represent a thorough excavation of his early life, and the focus of this chapter will be to explore the different ways in which Davies has managed to re-interpret the same basic material in various ways. While some scholars have already written about the autobiographical nature of Davies's early films – not least Wendy Everett – my analysis will place Davies's films in a wider critical framework by considering other autobiographical works of cinema and exploring the conventions of the genre. I shall also place greater emphasis on the idea that the memories of Davies and his family serve as a narrative resource, much like a novel or a play.

In Chapter 3, I shall explore Davies's approach to literary adaptation by discussing *The Neon Bible*, *The House of Since* and *The Deep Blue Sea* in relation to their original literary versions. Indeed, it will be revealing to analyse how his approach to reinterpreting other authors' work has developed over time. Unlike Everett and Koresky, I shall engage with the corpus of critical theory that has been written on literary adaptation in order to illuminate the different approaches that he adopts to other writers' works. I will also consider how an informed audience's knowledge of the literary text might affect their appreciation of the filmic version. In both Chapters 2 and 3, I shall also discuss Davies's work in relation to other specific films in order to place his oeuvre in a wider cinematic context and to further demonstrate how his oeuvre can be productively related to other filmic traditions.

In Chapter 4, I shall focus on Davies's highly distinctive approach to sound design. In contrast to the visual formalism of his films (e.g. elegantly paced tracking shots and meticulously composed tableaux vivants), Davies's soundtracks draw upon a number of different sources, including audio clips from films and radio programmes. In addition to

discussing how Davies employs the different elements of sound design, I shall also examine his distinctive use of music, which contains many recurring stylistic tropes, namely popular hits from the Great American Songbook and excerpts of classical music. As with my previous chapters, I shall demonstrate how Davies uses pre-existing works of art – in this case, music – to achieve a range of artistic and dramatic effects. As mentioned earlier, Everett has written extensively about the use of music in Davies’s films, but her writing on this subject does not cover the aural component of *Of Time and the City* and *The Deep Blue Sea* as both these films were made after her book was published.

In Chapter 5, I shall explore Davies’s career in terms of authorship and artistic collaboration by discussing his views on the role of the director and scrutinizing his approach to writing and directing. For this chapter I have conducted original interviews with various figures who have worked with Davies at different points in his career – including producers, cinematographers, production designers and editors – in order to gain a more informed perspective on how he approaches collaboration and to better understand the input that these figures have had upon his films. My intention is not to denigrate Davies’s artistry as a filmmaker, but rather to offer a more nuanced view of film authorship that acknowledges the contributions of other key personnel. In my thesis, I pay far greater attention to Davies’s collaborators than any other scholar thus far and my research offers fresh insights into the director’s creative process.

This thesis will adopt a multi-disciplinary approach to Davies’s oeuvre by engaging with critical writings from various branches of study within the arts and humanities, including post-structuralist theory, autobiographical studies, adaptation studies, music theory, auteur theory and production studies. My intention is to put forward a more multi-faceted idea of authorship that considers the diverse influences that have shaped Davies’s filmmaking.

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<sup>1</sup> Bradshaw et al 2003, accessed on 15 August 2011.

<sup>2</sup> James 2002, 20-23. The results of the *Sight & Sound* poll were as follows: (1) *Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola, USA, 1979), (2) *Raging Bull* (Martin Scorsese, USA, 1980), (3) *Fanny and*

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*Alexander* (Ingmar Bergman, Sweden/France/West Germany, 1982), (4) *Goodfellas* (Martin Scorsese, USA, 1990), (5) *Blue Velvet* (David Lynch, USA, 1986), (6) *Do the Right Thing* (Spike Lee, USA, 1989), (7) *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, USA/Hong Kong/UK, 1982), (8) *Chungking Express/Chung Hing sam lam* (Kar Wai Wong, Hong Kong, 1994), (9) *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, (10=) *Once Upon a Time in America* (Sergio Leone, Italy/USA, 1984) and (10=) *A One and a Two.../Yi yi* (Edward Yang, Taiwan/Japan, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> Calhoun et al 2011, accessed on 30 March 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Godard quoted in Everett 2005a, p. 187.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Williams (1993, pp. 237-254), Eley (1995, pp. 17-43), Radstone (1995, pp. 34-47), Hunt (1999, pp. 1-16), Ellis (2006, pp. 163-178), Porton (2008, pp. 86-99) and Orr (2010, pp. 164-179).

<sup>6</sup> Books devoted to Jarman and Greenaway include the following: *By Angels Driven: The Films of Derek Jarman* (Ed. Chris Lippard, 1996), *Derek Jarman* (Tony Peake, 1999), *The Films of Derek Jarman* (William Pencak, 2002), *Derek Jarman and Lyric Film: The Mirror and the Sea* (Steven Dillon, 2004), *Derek Jarman* (Rowland Wymer, 2005), *Derek Jarman's Angelic Conversations* (Jim Ellis, 2009), *Being Naked Playing Dead: The Art of Peter Greenaway* (Alan Woods, 1996), *Peter Greenaway: Museums and Moving Images* (David Pascoe, 1997), *The Films of Peter Greenaway* (Amy Lawrence, 1997), *Peter Greenaway: Interviews* (Eds. Vernon Gras and Marguerite Gras, 2000) and *Peter Greenaway's Postmodern/Poststructuralist Cinema* (Eds. Paula Willoquet-Maricondi and Mary Alemany-Galway, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> Everett 2004, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Leggott 2008a, p. 23.

<sup>9</sup> Bordwell 2002, p. 95.

<sup>10</sup> Neale 2002, p. 119.

<sup>11</sup> Barrow 2008, 229.

<sup>12</sup> Williams 1996, p. 198.

<sup>13</sup> Koresky 2014, 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>15</sup> Everett 2004, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Davies quoted in Floyd 1988, p. 295.

<sup>17</sup> Davies 2014, interview with author.

<sup>18</sup> Davies quoted in Hattenstone 2000, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Davies 1992, p. xi.

<sup>20</sup> Pulver 2007, accessed 20 November 2010.

<sup>21</sup> The results of the LFCC poll were as follows: (1) *Apocalypse Now*, (2) *Schindler's List* (3) *The Lives of Others/Das Leben der Anderen* (Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, Germany, 2006), (4) *Unforgiven*, (5) *Brokeback Mountain*, (6) *Cinema Paradiso* (Giuseppe Tornatore, Italy/France, 1988), (7) *L.A. Confidential* (Curtis Hanson, USA, 1997), (8) *Fargo* (Joel Coen, USA, 1997), (9) *Distant Voices, Still Lives* and (10) *The King of Comedy* (Martin Scorsese, USA, 1982).

<sup>22</sup> Caughie 1992, pp. 11-13.

<sup>23</sup> Patterson 2001, p. 74.

<sup>24</sup> Coe 1995, p. 14.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Davies 2014, interview with author.

<sup>27</sup> Horne 2000, p. 18.

<sup>28</sup> Hattenstone 2006, p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> Higson 2003, p. 144.

<sup>30</sup> *Sunset Song* was voted the 'Best Scottish Novel of All Time' in a public poll taken by the Edinburgh International Book Festival in 2005.

<sup>31</sup> Orr 2010, p. 164.

<sup>32</sup> Despite not working in film during this period, Davies found another creative outlet in the radio, producing two different works: *A Walk to the Paradise Garden*, an original radio play broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in 2001, and a two-part radio adaptation of Virginia Woolf's novel *The Waves* (1931), broadcast on BBC Radio 4 in September 2007.

<sup>33</sup> Davies quoted in Hattenstone 2006, p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Cottrell Boyce 2008, 26.

<sup>36</sup> Leggott 2008a, 23.

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<sup>37</sup> Gilbey 2008, 46.

<sup>38</sup> Bradshaw 2008, 13.

<sup>39</sup> Peter Mullan is an acclaimed writer, director and actor who has appeared in a diverse range of films, including *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, UK, 1996), *My Name Is Joe* (Ken Loach, Spain/Italy/France/UK/Germany, 1998), *Young Adam* (David Mackenzie, UK/France, 2003) and *Sunshine on Leith* (Dexter Fletcher, UK, 2013). Cynthia Nixon is best known for playing Miranda Hobbes, one of the four protagonists in the US sitcom *Sex and the City* (1998-2004) and its two big screen incarnations (2008 and 2010). Jennifer Ehle has appeared in such diverse films as *Wilde* (Brian Gibert, UK/Germany/Japan, 1997), *The King's Speech* (Tom Hooper, UK/USA/Australia, 2010), *Zero Dark Thirty* (Kathryn Bigelow, USA, 2012) and *Fifty Shades of Grey* (Sam Taylor-Johnson, USA, 2015) but is probably best known for her performance as Elizabeth Bennett in the much-loved BBC adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* (1995).

# Chapter 1

## Intertextuality

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According to Jonathan Coe, '[n]o director – probably not even Quentin Tarantino – is more thoroughly saturated in popular culture than Terence Davies'.<sup>1</sup> When one considers the former's notoriety as a pop culture magpie, pilfering ideas from a vast range of filmic sources of varying levels of respectability – the French New Wave, blaxploitation films, spaghetti westerns, kung fu movies and grindhouse pictures, to name but a few – it could be reasonably argued that Coe is overstating the case. Indeed, the term 'Tarantino-esque' has emerged as a 'byword for both pop-culture reference and popular post modern cinema'.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, it is my contention that Davies's films are exemplars of intertextuality, drawing upon a range of diverse cinematic influences, and the purpose of the chapter is to demonstrate that his oeuvre can be productively analysed by way of an intertextual approach.

The process of reading Davies's films in relation to other key cinematic works provides valuable insights into both their dense construction as texts and the way in which he has channelled his deep knowledge and love of cinema into his own creative process. I will begin this chapter by briefly examining the concept of intertextuality in film before considering how Davies's use of cinematic quotation differs from that of other directors. I will then analyse his use of cinematic allusion and quotation within his oeuvre – particularly in *The Long Day Closes* – before turning my attention to four key films that have either directly influenced his creative approach or can be fruitfully compared to his films: *My Childhood*, *Cries and Whispers*, *Brief Encounter* and *Young at Heart*. While certain scholars have already considered Davies's films in relation to other cinematic works, I shall provide a deeper and more sustained analysis by focusing on specific films from different genres – the

British art film, the European art film, the 1940s women's picture and the Hollywood musical – in order to demonstrate the hybrid nature of his filmmaking style. Indeed, one might view these films as constellations for plotting Davies's approach to filmmaking.

The concepts of auteurism and intertextuality co-exist through the interplay of conscious homage and the subconscious transmission of cultural influences. In other words, whereas some of the apparent intertextual connections in Davies's films are deliberate on the director's part, others are not.

### **Intertextuality in Film**

The term 'intertextuality' was coined by the post-structuralist Julia Kristeva in 1966 to describe the shaping of texts' meaning by other texts, whether it be by the author borrowing from or modifying a pre-existing text or the reader drawing connections between one text and others that they have read.<sup>3</sup> In other words, both the writer and the reader are empowered to draw connections between one particular text and a host of others. In the essay 'Against Intertextuality', William Irwin suggests that Kristeva's term has been misappropriated and oversimplified to signify a 'stylish way of talking about allusion and influence', the implication being that these ideas are not integral components of intertextual discourse.<sup>4</sup> Of course, there is more to intertextuality than the mere notion of writers influencing/borrowing from each other, but the idea of interconnectedness between multiple texts is an integral part of it. As Kristeva argues, 'every text is from the outset under the jurisdiction of other discourses which impose a universe on it'.<sup>5</sup> This idea of the text being subject to other influences – as opposed to a unified whole – is one of the key concepts of post-structuralist theory which seeks to counteract the ideology of individualism (part of our post-Renaissance legacy) with its emphasis on the uniqueness of authors and texts. In his seminal essay 'The Death of the Author', one of the key texts of post-structuralism, Roland Barthes proposes that there are limitations to imposing a single vision – that of the author – upon a piece of writing, suggesting that a text is in fact a 'multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash'.<sup>6</sup> He then goes on to argue that

'The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture [...] the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original'.<sup>7</sup> For Barthes, the text is not the product of a single governing consciousness, but the combination of various conscious and unconscious influences, some harmonious ('blend') and some dissonant ('clash'). This thesis will explore that idea that Davies's oeuvre serves as a 'multi-dimensional space'.

Although Barthes discusses intertextuality in specific relation to writing, this notion of an artist bringing together 'anterior' voices and influences in their work might be productively applied to other art forms such as cinema as creativity never takes place in a vacuum. Indeed, artists across all media – literature, music, the visual and performance arts – learn, borrow, quote and steal from their predecessors. The degree of authorial agency, however, depends on the artist in question. Whereas some quote self-consciously from their predecessors – Picasso, for example, painted 58 versions of Velázquez's *Las Meninas/The Maids of Honour* (1656) between August and December 1957 – others may do so unwittingly because the influence of the existing artwork has been absorbed into their subconscious mind. Of course, certain artists are content to plagiarise the work of others – hoping, no doubt, that this theft will go undetected and thereby escape censure – but many quote without the intention of cheating other artists or deceiving the general public. Consequently, it becomes the task of the scholar to identify and scrutinize the relationship between the artist's creation – be it a novel or a film or a painting – and that of their predecessors.





Left: Velázquez's *Las Meninas* (1656). Right: Pablo Picasso's *Las Meninas, after Velázquez 1* (1957).

Davies has been extremely candid on the topic of his cinematic influences, even going so far as to list them in the introduction to *A Modest Pageant* (1992), a collection of his early screenplays: 'the American musical, the British comedy, Gene Kelly, Judy Garland, Danny Kaye, Margaret Rutherford, Alistair Sim, Terry-Thomas, Joyce Grenfell and – above all – Doris Day'.<sup>8</sup> Davies is not an unusual case in this regard as there are numerous filmmakers who draw attention to their inspirations rather than conceal them. Take, for example, Todd Haynes's pastiche of Sirkian melodrama *Far from Heaven* (USA, 2002) which appropriates the lush mise-en-scène of Douglas Sirk's films from the 1950s, and whose plot is strikingly similar to that of *All That Heaven Allows* (USA, 1955), albeit it with some additions that would have scandalised a 1950s audience: namely homosexual desire and inter-racial romance.<sup>9</sup> Another example is Brian De Palma's thriller *Dressed to Kill* (USA, 1980) which draws many of its narrative and aesthetic ideas from the films of Alfred Hitchcock.<sup>10</sup> The scene of Kate Miller (Angie Dickinson) admiring paintings in New York's Metropolitan Museum is noticeably similar in terms of shot composition and mise-en-scène to that of Madeleine Elster (Kim Novak) gazing at her suicidal ancestor's portrait in San Francisco's Legion of Honor Museum in *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1958). Furthermore, the brutal stabbing of the heroine in the elevator halfway through the film by a male

psychopath dressed up as woman (Michael Caine) is an obvious allusion to Janet Leigh's fatal shower in *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1960).

Both Haynes and De Palma have been inspired to quote from other filmmakers, but for markedly different reasons: the former pastiches Sirk in order to examine the social mores of 1950s American society – and, by extension, its cinema – from a more enlightened twenty-first-century perspective<sup>11</sup>, whereas the latter borrows from Hitchcock because he is utterly fascinated by the older director's oeuvre and feels compelled to re-make and re-interpret the plots, visual motifs and themes of the latter's films. A comparison could justifiably be made between De Palma quoting from Hitchcock's oeuvre in his own films and Picasso re-painting Velázquez's canvas multiple times: both artists return to the same source of inspiration and discover new ways of fusing their own ideas with those of their predecessors.



Women in art galleries. Above: Kate Miller (Angie Dickinson) in *Dressed to Kill*. Below: Madeleine Elster (Kim Novak) in *Vertigo*.

Like Haynes and De Palma, Davies's use of intertextuality is powered by his passion for particular filmmakers and films. Unlike Haynes and De Palma, however, Davies is not driven by an urge to re-interpret or re-make existing movies. Instead, his desire to pay homage to other films appears to be motivated by his self-confessed cinephilia and his desire to communicate how particular films have been woven into the fabric of his childhood memories, even becoming part of his psychological make-up.

Although Coe has described Davies as being particularly interested in popular culture, he then goes on to argue that 'there is nothing knowing or hip about the way he deploys [it]', suggesting that his films are 'too direct and sincere, with none of the high-gloss camp of a Greenaway or Almodóvar'.<sup>12</sup> Unlike the latter filmmaker, who explores Hitchcockian tropes (voyeurism, obsession, the mutable nature of identity, the formation of the actress/female star) in his film *Broken Embraces/Los abrazos rotos* (Spain, 2009) and then assimilates them into his own personal vision, Davies's use of cinematic allusion is neither as playful nor elastic. When Coe labels Davies's use of cinematic allusion as 'sincere', he is referring to the reverence with which he treats his formative influences. While Almodóvar takes pleasure in drawing from other influences and then reshaping them as he pleases – *The Skin I Live In/La piel que habito* (Spain 2011), for example, is heavily inspired by Georges Franju's poetic horror *Eyes Without a Face/Les yeux sans visage* (France/Italy, 1960) – Davies's movies are not as self-reflexive or ironic in their treatment of other films.



Women in masks. Left: Elena Anaya (Vera Cruz) in *The Skin I Live In*. Right: Christiane Génessler (Edith Scob) in *Eyes Without a Face*.

Although Davies is not interested in the postmodern tropes of pastiche or parody, his films can still be appropriated to a postmodern account that foregrounds the endless recycling of culture. In this respect it could be argued that Davies's work resembles that of Martin Scorsese – arguably the most significant and critically lauded filmmaker to have emerged from America during the 1970s – as both directors regard cinema with a reverence that borders on the religious.<sup>13</sup>

Despite their obvious differences, Terence Davies and Martin Scorsese share much in common: both are the products of a working-class Catholic upbringing (in Liverpool and New York, respectively); both have sought to capture their childhood worlds on the screen; and both have adapted Edith Wharton novels into acclaimed films (Scorsese made *The Age of Innocence* in 1993 and Davies *The House of Mirth* in 2000). Admittedly, Scorsese is not strictly an autobiographical filmmaker like Davies, but many of his films – particularly those he made during the 1970s and 1980s such as *Mean Streets* (USA, 1973), *Taxi Driver* (USA, 1976) and *Raging Bull* (USA, 1980) – capture the Lower East-Side environment and social milieu, as well as the Catholic guilt, machismo, violence and crime that characterised his Italian-American upbringing in New York. Furthermore, both filmmakers are united in their passion for the cinema. In the four-hour documentary *A Personal Journey with Martin Scorsese Through the American Movies* (co-directed with Michael Henry Wilson, UK/USA, 1995), Scorsese demonstrates his encyclopaedic knowledge of American cinema, from the silent films of D.W. Griffith to Stanley Kubrick's work in the 1970s. He has also been a tireless supporter of film preservation, playing a significant role in the restoration of numerous important but neglected films, such as Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (UK, 1943) and *The Red Shoes* (UK, 1948). It is this shared cinephilia that motivates both filmmakers to employ cinematic quotation/referencing (consciously and unconsciously) in their filmmaking.

In her compelling study of intertextuality in Scorsese's cinema, *The Scorsese Connection* (1995), Lesley Stern puts forward the idea that in the director's oeuvre, 'A space



opens up ... where a variety of text, and memories, intersect and reverberate'.<sup>14</sup> To support this argument, she draws illuminating (and often surprising) parallels between Scorsese's films and those of his predecessors (John Ford, Charles Laughton, Powell and Pressburger) and direct contemporaries: David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* (USA, 1986), for example, is discussed in relation to Scorsese's *Cape Fear* (USA, 1991).<sup>15</sup> Stern begins her study by identifying a parallel between one of the final scenes of *Goodfellas* (Martin Scorsese, USA, 1990), in which the murdered gangster Tommy DeVito (Joe Pesci) shoots his gun directly at the camera, and the iconic final scene of *The Great Train Robbery* (Edwin S. Porter, USA, 1903), where the leader of the outlaw band also shoots directly at the audience. The two scenes are similar not only because they both feature hand-guns being aimed and fired directly at the viewer, but also because of their composition: both are medium close-up shots of outlaw men in hats. Scorsese's homage to Porter's silent classic not only demonstrates how an extensive knowledge of cinema has permeated into and influenced his otherwise distinctive filmmaking style, but also the ways in which ideas are constantly being recycled and reappropriated in film.



Men with guns and hats: Left: Tommy DeVito (Joe Pesci) in *Goodfellas*. Right: *The Great Train Robbery*.

### **Intertextuality in Davies's Films**

Like Scorsese, Davies is a highly cine-literate filmmaker, whose impressive knowledge of American, European and British cinema has informed much of his work. In various

interviews, Davies has described the consolation that the cinema offered to him as a child growing up in the bleak landscape of post-war Liverpool during the 1950s. He has spoken movingly of his love of Hollywood cinema from this period, particularly the iconic musical *Singin' in the Rain* (Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, USA, 1952) which had a profound effect on him when he first saw it as a seven-year-old boy: 'It was such magic, such magic! It was one of the most transcendental experiences of my life'.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Davies has cited this experience on numerous occasions as being the single event that began his life-long love affair with the movies, and consequently kick-started his filmmaking career. Similarly, he has also expressed an ardent passion for the Judy Garland vehicle *Meet Me in St. Louis* (Vincente Minnelli, USA, 1944) and the lesser known musical drama *Young at Heart*, starring Frank Sinatra and Doris Day.

Davies has also expressed his adoration of British comedies from the 1950s, especially those starring Alastair Sim and Margaret Rutherford, but particularly *The Happiest Days of Your Life* (Frank Launder, UK, 1950) which stars both actors as warring head teachers. In addition to his love of the Hollywood musical and the British comedy, Davies has also often declared his admiration for the renowned Swedish filmmaker Ingmar Bergman. In an interview with the BFI, he expressed anxiety for the future of filmmaking, stating gloomily that 'with the death of Bergman there are no great filmmakers anymore'.<sup>17</sup>

In 2002, Davies participated in *Sight & Sound's* decadal poll to identify the greatest film ever made and his film choices can be categorized loosely into three different groups: (i) Hollywood movies from the 1940s and 1950s (*Singin' in the Rain*, *Sweet Smell of Success* [Alexander Mackendrick, USA, 1957], *The Searchers* [John Ford, USA, 1956], *Sunset Boulevard* [Billy Wilder, USA, 1950] and *Meet Me in St. Louis*); (ii) British comedies of the 1940s and 1950s (*Kind Hearts and Coronets* [Robert Hamer, UK, 1949] and *The Happiest Days of Your Life*), and, finally, (iii) a looser assortment of acclaimed dramas that have found favour with art-house audiences (*Cries and Whispers*, *The Apu Trilogy* [Satyajit Ray, India, 1955-9] and *The Age of Innocence*).<sup>18</sup> It is valuable to consider Davies's favourite movies as

it enriches our understanding of his filmic influences, whether it is the emotional austerity and contemplative aesthetic beauty of Bergman's *Cries and Whispers* or the aural and visual spectacle of Hollywood musicals as encapsulated in *Young at Heart*. While Davies's influences may not be as wide-ranging as Tarantino's, for example, they nonetheless demonstrate a similar collapsing of high (the art film) and low culture (popular genre cinema).<sup>19</sup>

Terence Davies's works are punctuated with allusions – some subtle, others more direct – to the films that he watched during his adolescence. In addition to being his most autobiographical film, *The Long Day Closes* is also the one that most fully explores Davies's passion for the cinema. Furthermore, it is the most intertextual of his films, being described by Robert Shail as a 'collage of filmic references'.<sup>20</sup> In the striking opening credits sequence, Davies shoots a bowl of red and yellow roses decaying over time.<sup>21</sup> To accompany this apparently static image, which alters slowly – almost imperceptibly – before our very eyes, Davies uses Boccherini's famous minuet, from 'String Quintet in E, Op. 13, No. 5'. This particular piece of classical music has extra cinematic resonances as it also features prominently in *The Magnificent Ambersons* (Orson Welles, USA, 1942). Set at the beginning of the twentieth-century, Welles's film depicts the downfall of the mighty Amberson dynasty – an upper-class Indianapolis family – due in large part to the behaviour of its spoiled heir, George (Tim Holt), whose interference in his mother's private life, combined with bad investments, careless spending and an inability to keep up with progress, ultimately results in the family losing their fortune. Despite the tragic dimensions of its plot, *The Magnificent Ambersons* shares much in common with *The Long Day Closes* – and Davies's other autobiographical films for that matter – in that it also functions as a haunting and elegiac dramatisation of a bygone era. Indeed, both films set out to reclaim/recreate a world that has disappeared, motivated by a sense of nostalgic longing for the past.

The Boccherini minuet was also used in *The Ladykillers* (Alexander Mackendrick, UK, 1955), one of Davies's favourite Ealing comedies, which is also referenced in the

opening scene of *The Long Day Closes* through the appropriation of an audio clip from the film ('Mrs Wilberforce? I understand that you have rooms to let?'). The line of dialogue is spoken by the nefarious criminal Professor Marcus (Alec Guinness) upon introducing himself to the elderly landlady Mrs Wilberforce (Katie Johnson). These references to *The Ladykillers* have no obvious thematic connection to *The Long Day Closes*, but give us a sense of the cinema that Davies enjoyed as a child.

The opening sequence of *The Long Day Closes* is suffused with cinematic quotations, beginning with an audio extract taken from *The Happiest Days of Your Life*, in which the formidable headmistress of St. Swithin's Girls' School, Miss Whitchurch (Margaret Rutherford), scolds the hapless sports teacher, Miss Gossage (Joyce Grenfell), for banging a gong too loudly: 'Tap, Gossage, I said "tap" – you're not introducing a film'. Besides the obvious irony – Gossage *is* introducing a film when she bangs the gong in a manner that resembles the Rank Organisation trademark – Davies uses the audio clip as a direct reference to his childhood experience of cinema-going. According to Bruce Babington, this audio clip 'functions, *primus inter pares*, as a synecdoche for the enchantments of 1940s and 1950s cinema'.<sup>22</sup> The filmmaker demonstrates further cinematic awareness by following this audio clip with the orchestral flourish of the Twentieth-Century Fox fanfare composed by Alfred Newman which accompanies the beginning of so many beloved Hollywood movies. As with *The Ladykillers* and *The Happiest Days of Your Life*, Davies incorporates sound clips from *The Magnificent Ambersons*, *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, *Meet Me in St. Louis*, *Private's Progress* (John Boulting, UK, 1956) and *Great Expectations* (David Lean, UK, 1946), in order to portray the ways in which the cinema permeated his childhood consciousness.

Cinematic allusion is not restricted to *The Long Day Closes*, however, since it serves as a recurring motif in the majority of Davies's films. *Death and Transfiguration* opens with Doris Day's rendition of 'It All Depends on You' from the Hollywood musical *Love Me or Leave Me* (Charles Vidor, USA, 1955). In *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, the two sisters watch *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing* (Henry King, USA, 1955) at the cinema. While in *The*



*Neon Bible* (1995), Max Steiner's legendary score for the epic Hollywood melodrama *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, USA, 1939) is played over an image of white bed linen drying in the sun. In interviews, Davies has spoken of the visual influence that the classic tearjerker *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (Max Ophüls, USA, 1948) – the tale of Lisa's (Joan Fontaine) unreciprocated love for a handsome but conceited pianist (Louis Jourdan) in nineteenth-century Vienna – had upon the look of *The House of Mirth*.<sup>23</sup> One example of Davies's visual debt to Ophüls is the exquisite crane shot of the crowd climbing up the opera steps in *The House of Mirth* which resembles a similar scene of opera-going in Ophüls' earlier film.



Left: *Letter from an Unknown Woman*. Right: *The House of Mirth*.

The cinematic allusions that I have described thus far are drawn from films made in the 1940s and 1950s – the period of Davies's childhood – and are clearly part of a wider sphere of individual and collective memory that has inspired and fed into his films. But there are also notable parallels between his early films and that of his direct contemporary Bill Douglas, the acclaimed Scottish filmmaker. I shall therefore discuss the relationship between Douglas's first film *My Childhood* and Davies's body of work, before moving on to discuss the influence that his cinematic forebears Ingmar Bergman, David Lean and Gordon Douglas have had upon his films.

## ***My Childhood***

The names of Terence Davies and Bill Douglas have often been bracketed together in studies of British film.<sup>24</sup> For numerous commentators, they are two of British cinema's greatest poets who have adapted their own life stories in order to create films of great austerity and lyricism. Judith Williamson, for example, describes Davies and Douglas as

working-class filmmakers speaking for themselves, not trying to speak for other people, and it makes for quite a different tone. Their work is so strong visually, it shows harrowing class experiences, but it's not didactic. It shows something from the inside.<sup>25</sup>

Both directors have employed the camera as a means of portraying harsh and impoverished upbringings. Davies's early life was dominated by his father's violence, but his life became happier – for a brief period at least – in the period between the latter's death and his enrolment in secondary school. Douglas's childhood, on the other hand, was almost uniformly grim and marked by a lack of stability. But apart from the identification of both filmmakers with trilogies of short black and white autobiographical films, the comparison made between the two has rarely been explored in sufficient critical depth – the implicit message being that the two directors' films are similar for obvious reasons and, consequently, the parallel does not require further elucidation or analysis.<sup>26</sup>

*My Childhood* is the first part of a trilogy of black and white autobiographical films directed by Bill Douglas between 1972 and 1978; the other two are *My Ain Folk* (UK, 1973) and *My Way Home* (UK, 1978). Like Davies, Douglas has only a small number of directing credits to his name and this is largely due to difficulties that he encountered in his efforts to secure funding for his projects. Nevertheless, his relatively small corpus of films – several shorts and one feature-length film, *Comrades* (UK, 1986) – has earned Douglas a reputation as one of the great poets of British cinema. *The Bill Douglas Trilogy* – which has been described as the 'apotheosis of auto-biographical filmmaking in British cinema'<sup>27</sup> – depicts the events of Douglas's life from his impoverished upbringing in the Scottish mining village of Newcraighall through to his time spent in Egypt as part of his National Service where he

befriended an English soldier, Peter Jewell, whose friendship and encouragement opened him up to the possibilities of self-fulfilment and creative freedom.

*My Childhood* is set during the 1940s when parts of Scotland were still recovering from the depression brought about by the Second World War. The film depicts Douglas's eight-year-old alter ego, Jamie (played by non-professional actor Stephen Archibald across the three films) living on the breadline with his ailing maternal grandmother (Jean Taylor Smith) and older half-brother Tommy (Hughie Restorick). The three relations form a loving but fragile family unit: the grandmother's ill health (culminating with her death at the end of the film) forebodes that the two brothers will be separated from each other at some point. For all practical purposes, Jamie is an orphan: his feckless father (Paul Kermack) lives nearby but offers no financial or emotional support to him whatsoever, and his mother (Ann Smith) has been sent to a mental hospital and barely registers her son's existence when he visits. The only release that Jamie achieves from his grim existence is through his friendship with Helmuth (Karl Fieseler), a German prisoner of war, who functions as a surrogate father figure to the young boy, but who departs at the end of the film. With the death of his grandmother and the departure of his one true friend, Jamie runs away from his old home and hurls himself dramatically from a railway bridge into a coal container. Despite this brave attempt at escape, there is no sense of freedom as it is implicitly suggested that Jamie will be forced to return to Newcraighall.

Although Bill Douglas taught at the National Film School during Davies's time there, their paths did not cross.<sup>28</sup> During my interview with the latter, he expressed his mixed feelings on *The Bill Douglas Trilogy*:

I think the *Trilogy* is a huge achievement ... My reservations are, unfortunately, that the acting is not very good a lot of the time. It just isn't. And, this is a purely syntactic thing: you've got to know the people are and what their relationships are. In the first twenty minutes, you have no idea who's who, and that spoils the rest of it because you're thinking, 'Is it his son? Are they uncles? What are they?' You've got to know that'.<sup>29</sup>

Jennifer Howarth, a fellow student of Davies's and the producer of *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, watched *Children* when it was first screened at the National Film School in 1977, and recalls noticing the similarity between the two directors' work: both directors made films, 'shot in stark black and white, with uncompromising honesty' that 'conveyed the pain and bewilderment of a powerless childhood'.<sup>30</sup>

Douglas filmed his *Trilogy* by using static shots, many of which are held over long periods of time, imbuing his films with a deliberate, meditative quality. Unlike *Madonna and Child* or *Death and Transfiguration*, in which Davies begins to explore the creative possibilities of the moving camera to traverse time and space (arguably reaching its apex with *The Long Day Closes*), *Children* is mainly composed from a series of static shots much like Douglas's *Trilogy*. Arguably the most memorable static shot in the film is a two-minute take of Tucker (Phillip Mawdsley) and his mother (Valerie Lilley) riding the bus. Davies has expressed his disappointment with this particular scene because he feels that the scene is too long and, consequently, loses its dramatic power: indeed, he refers to it as his 'Angora sweater shot', suggesting that 'by the time it's over you could have knitted one'.<sup>31</sup> This particular scene echoes a similar one in *My Childhood* in which Jamie and his grandmother take the bus to visit the boy's mother in the mental hospital, although the scene in *Children* is more languorously paced than the one in Douglas's film. It's important to clarify at this point that Davies had not seen any of Bill Douglas's films before he wrote and directed *Children*, so his debut film is not a conscious homage. That said, there are striking stylistic and thematic parallels between the two.



Left: The 'Angora sweater shot' in *Children*. Right: Jamie (Stephen Archibald) travelling with his grandmother (Jean Taylor Smith) in *My Childhood*.

In a BBC radio interview to discuss the DVD release of *The Bill Douglas Trilogy*, Davies rejected the idea of a similarity between his films and those of his predecessor, although his fellow radio contributor, the critic Nigel Floyd, noted that both filmmakers had adopted a 'poetic' approach to depicting own life stories on screen.<sup>32</sup> In spite of Davies's rejection of the comparison, *Children* is punctuated with moments that will prompt an informed audience to make associations between the latter and Douglas's earlier film. One notable example is the scene in which Tucker flings himself onto his bed after being scolded by his father as this echoes similar moments from *My Childhood* in which Douglas shoots Jamie lying on his bed – a visual metaphor for the young boy's solitude, vulnerability and inability to understand or control the confusing adult environment around him. In both films, the directors use visual language to communicate the isolation and unhappiness of their young male protagonists.



Left: Robert Tucker (Philip Mawdsley) in *Children*. Right: Jamie (Stephen Archibald) in *My Childhood*.

The autobiographical trilogies of Davies and Douglas belong within a tradition of British art cinema. The term 'art cinema' is a contested one but it seems clear that the trilogies of the two filmmakers can be categorised as such for the following reasons: their narratives are distinguished by a tenuous linkage of events rather than the tautness of classical narrative (embodied most completely in Hollywood cinema); they use actual locations rather than studio sets; they depict psychologically alienated characters who are defined by reaction rather than action (they are passive observers for the most part), and they foreground their author's perspective within the narrative (Jamie and Tucker serve as alter egos for Douglas and Davies respectively).

Since art cinema has been widely construed as a European phenomenon, this has served to explicitly locate both Davies and Douglas within a broader continental context. In scholarly treatments of Douglas's work, his *Trilogy* has been compared to numerous auteurs with roots in European cinema: the 'stillness and intensity' of these films has been compared to the silent films of Carl Theodor Dreyer (*The Passion of Joan of Arc/La passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, France, 1928), F.W. Murnau (*Nosferatu*, Germany, 1922) and Erich von Stroheim (*Greed*, USA, 1924).<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Davies's work has been compared to that of Alain Resnais (*Last Year in Marienbad/L'année dernière à Marienbad*, France/Italy, 1961) in the way that their films place 'emphasis on emotional continuity over narrative continuity'.<sup>34</sup>

One filmmaker that has been cited as being an influence on both Davies and Douglas is Ingmar Bergman, a monumental figure in post-war European art cinema. His distinctive cinematic style, which combines emotional austerity, existential suffering and a contemplative aesthetic beauty, is detectable in both directors' films. For Birgitta Steene, one of the pre-eminent scholars on Bergman's films, his artistic vision 'aimed at penetrating beneath surface reality to reveal a world of metaphysical and depth-psychological dimensions'.<sup>35</sup> I will now discuss the intertextual relationship between Bergman's *Cries and Whispers* and Davies's own work.

### ***Cries and Whispers***

On numerous occasions, Davies has expressed his admiration for the Swedish auteur Ingmar Bergman. Comparisons have been drawn between the two figures but no sustained comparative analysis has been made regarding their work – again, as if the parallels between the two filmmakers were thought to be so self-evident that they were not worth exploring in greater depth. During our interview, Davies revealed that he hadn't seen any of Bergman's films before he wrote and directed *Children* because these films were not screened in the Liverpool cinemas he frequented as a young man.<sup>36</sup> However, Davies became an admirer of the Swedish director's work after he enrolled at the NFS and he concedes that his later films may have been influenced by Bergman to a certain degree: 'I think everything you see has an effect on you, in a small or greater way ... it's something that comes out of you refracted'.<sup>37</sup> Of all Bergman's films, Davies has singled out *Cries and Whispers* – alongside *Fanny and Alexander* (Sweden/France/West Germany, 1980) – as his personal favourite, and the one that has had the most profound influence upon his filmmaking.

The action of *Cries and Whispers* takes place in fin-de-siècle Sweden in the isolated, rural mansion of Agnes (Harriet Andersson), a middle-aged bourgeois spinster who is dying of cancer. She is visited by her two sisters – the beautiful but conceited Maria (Liv Ullmann) and the increasingly neurotic Karin (Ingrid Thulin) – both of whom have returned to the family

home to comfort their sister during her final days. Initially, Maria and Karin display sisterly affection towards Agnes, but it becomes increasingly clear throughout the course of the film that the two sisters are emotionally distanced from her (and from each other) and are made uncomfortable by Agnes's presence as it forces them to confront their own mortality. Uncomplicated love and affection is given to Agnes by her deeply religious servant Anna (Kari Sylwan). Having lost her daughter to illness, Anna is able to provide comfort to her mistress during her final days. After succumbing to an excruciating and protracted death, Agnes miraculously comes back to life and begs her sisters for reassurance; however, both sisters are disgusted and terrified by the dead sister's pleas, deeming her desire for physical contact unnatural. In one of the most iconic moments from the film, Anna cradles the dead Agnes against her naked breast. After the funeral the two surviving sisters and their husbands depart from the house. They suggest that Anna select an object from the house to remember her mistress by and depart separately – despite all that has happened, the sisters will continue to be emotionally estranged from one another. The film ends with a flashback scene – taken from Agnes's diary before her illness confined her to a bed – in which the three sisters, dressed in white, sit together on their childhood swing in a rare moment of sisterly affection and serenity.

In addition to the film's main plot, *Cries and Whispers* is punctuated by a series of flashbacks intended to provide greater insight into the inner lives of the characters. In Maria's flashback, she recollects how she slept with David (Erland Josephson), the local doctor, when he came to the house to attend to Anna's ill daughter. When her weak-willed husband Joakim (Henning Moritzen) returns the next day, he is intuitively aware that his wife has betrayed him and stabs himself in the chest while Maria looks on with an expression of disgust and loathing. In Agnes's flashback, we see her as a young girl who covets her beautiful but emotionally remote mother's affections (also played by Liv Ullmann). In the flashback scene, we observe how the mother is withdrawn from Agnes and is closer to Maria. However, in a moment of rare tenderness between mother and daughter, Agnes caresses



her unhappy mother's cheek. In Karin's flashback we witness the unhappiness of her marriage to Fredrik (Georg Årlin) as they consume their dinner in virtual silence. The highly-strung Karin breaks a glass and secretes a shard of glass in her black dress. After changing into her white nightgown she uses the glass shard to mutilate her vagina. She then goes to her husband's bed chamber, lies on the bed to reveal her wound and smears her face with blood.

*Cries and Whispers* focuses primarily on the relationship between three sisters. In contrast with the female fellowship and sisterhood that Davies portrays in *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes*, *Cries and Whispers* offers a bleaker, more jaundiced view of human relationships. Indeed, Bergman presents the relationships between the three sisters as brittle and shallow, governed by self-interest and vanity. Bergman's name has been invoked by numerous scholars in relation to the pessimism of Davies's *Trilogy*, particularly with regard to his most austere black and white films, such as *The Seventh Seal/Det sjunde inseglet* (Sweden, 1957), *The Virgin Spring/Jungfrukällan* (Sweden, 1960) and *Winter Light/Nattvardsgästerna* (Sweden, 1963).

One of the most obvious points of comparison between *Cries and Whispers* and the *Trilogy* is the harrowing scenes of Davies's dying father (Nick Stringer) in *Children* as the latter's spasms and agonised screams are highly reminiscent of Agnes's death throes. The death of his father was a cataclysmic event for the young Davies, and his description of it is strongly reminiscent of Bergman's film: 'It was a violent death. So agonising. His body was in the house for nearly two weeks, and the smell of decay and formaldehyde was just awful. Then there was the grim funeral thing which is just a leftover from Victorian time. It was hideous. It spoils the soul in a way.'<sup>38</sup>



Scenes of suffering. Left: Tucker's father (Nick Stringer) in *Children*. Right: Agnes (Harriet Andersson) in *Cries and Whispers*.

Both Agnes and Tucker's father are stripped of their humanity by the pain they endure – in their writhing suffering, they become animal-like. Bergman depicts Agnes's illness like a martyrdom (albeit one without God's forgiveness), whereas with Davies's father there is the implication that his excruciating pain eradicates any semblance of civility and exposes his true brutish nature. The illness of Davies's father is also portrayed in *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives*, although without the same intensity of his earlier film.

John Orr has noted a parallel between *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *Cries and Whispers*, suggesting that both filmmakers 'use the family as a collective subject who face a hideous death within their midst'.<sup>39</sup> A prolonged tableau shot of the family in *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives*, clad in black for their tormentor's funeral, echoes scenes from *Cries and Whispers* in which the surviving family members are dressed in elaborate funeral garb. In *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives*, the stillness of the image conveys how they have been traumatised by their father's treatment (they have been arrested in time), whereas Bergman's depiction of the funeral communicates the emotional estrangement and self-interest of the sisters and their husbands, and also the emptiness of Christian funerals.



Families in mourning: Left: *Distant Voices, Still Lives*. Right: *Cries and Whispers*.

Another parallel between *Cries and Whispers* and the *Trilogy* is its combination of the sexual and the sacred. In one particularly striking sequence from *Madonna and Child*, Davies juxtaposes images of the interior of a Catholic church in Liverpool with a lurid phone conversation between the middle-aged Tucker (Terry O'Sullivan) – Davies's alter ego – and a tattoo artist (an uncredited Paul Barber) during which the former enquires about the likelihood of getting his penis tattooed. This scene encapsulates the tension that Davies felt between his faith and his burgeoning homosexuality during his adolescence, but also gestures towards his atheism, a position that he reached after years of feeling guilty about his sexual orientation. Similarly, in *Cries and Whispers*, there is a deeply powerful scene in which Anna comforts her undead mistress by cradling her against her naked breast in an image redolent of the Pietà, a popular subject in Christian art which depicts the Virgin Mary cradling the dead body of her son Jesus Christ.



The sacred and the profane. Left: In *Madonna and Child*, footage of a church interior is juxtaposed with an obscene phone call. Right: The Pietà scene in *Cries and Whispers*.

Interestingly, both filmmakers undermine the notion of Christianity, but in doing so achieve radically different effects. In *Madonna and Child*, the dichotomy between the salty, risqué phone call and the sweeping shot of the church interior is both amusing and provocative. The sanctity of Christian faith is further undermined in another scene that cross-cuts between Tucker confessing his sins to a priest and his fantasies/memories of giving oral sex to a stranger. The image of the Pietà in *Cries and Whispers* is shocking as it imbues an image of maternal love with (homo) sexual overtones. Nevertheless, the image is extremely moving: it is arguably the purest expression of love in a film that depicts the lack of empathy and communication between sisters and spouses.

This idea of fusing the religious and the sexual is a subject that Davies would return to in an extraordinary sequence from *The Long Day Closes*, in which Bud – Davies's younger self – envisages an attractive, young builder (Kirk McLaughlin) as Christ crucified. The scene is based on Salvador Dali's *Christ of Saint John of the Cross* (1951) which depicts Christ suspended in darkness, viewed from a high angle. Like Dali, Davies provides a non-gratuitous depiction of the crucifixion, devoid of blood, nails or a crown of thorns.<sup>40</sup>



Visions of Christ. Left: Salvador Dali's *Christ of Saint John of the Cross* (1951). Right: The builder (Kirk McLaughlin) as the crucified saviour in *The Long Day Closes*.

An informed audience will be able to forge connections between the films of Davies and Bergman as both filmmakers explore the themes of desolation and loneliness in their films whilst employing a meditative visual aesthetic in order to achieve this end. Another film that explores the theme of emotional repression is *Brief Encounter*.

### ***Brief Encounter***

Since its release in 1945, *Brief Encounter* has become one of the most celebrated British films of all time. In a poll taken by *Time Out* magazine in 2011, Coward's acclaimed tearjerker was voted the twelfth greatest British film of all time. It performed even better in the British Film Institute's top 100 British films list in 1999, charting in second position behind *The Third Man*. In 2010, *Brief Encounter* was voted the 'greatest romantic film of all time' by *The Guardian* newspaper, defeating its American rival *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, USA, 1942).

Although Davies has demonstrated a personal fondness for *Brief Encounter* by selecting it as one of his ten choices for *Time Out* magazine's 1995 poll to reveal the greatest film of all time, it is not a film that he appears to have discussed in any great depth during interviews.<sup>41</sup> I would argue, however, that illuminating comparisons can be made between Lean's film and Davies's oeuvre.

*Brief Encounter* was adapted by Noël Coward from a short play that he wrote in 1936 entitled *Still Life*. This short drama was performed as part of a cycle of ten plays entitled *Tonight at 8:30* which was originally devised to be performed across three nights by Coward and his long-time friend and collaborator, the English actress and comedienne Gertrude Lawrence.<sup>42</sup> Of all the plays in Coward's cycle, *Still Life* has enjoyed the most significant afterlife through Lean's acclaimed film adaptation.

Coward's script for *Brief Encounter* is a predominately faithful version of his earlier play. Apart from the addition of a few more minor characters and locations, the two main alterations are the timescale of the drama (*Still Life* takes place over the course of a year, while *Brief Encounter* unfolds over a matter of weeks) and the use of voiceover narration

(the play's linear plot unfolds in the present tense, unlike the film which is narrated in hindsight by the film's romantic heroine). Laura (Celia Johnson), a suburban housewife, first meets Alec Harvey (Trevor Howard), an idealistic doctor, in the refreshment room of Milford railway station when he removes a bit of grit from her eye. They soon run into each other again during one of Laura's weekly shopping trips to Milford, and – having decided that they enjoy each other's company – agree to meet up again. What begins as an innocent and casual friendship soon develops into romance, and both characters are torn between their passion for one another and the guilt of hurting their loved ones: both parties are married with children. After a few more furtive meetings, the characters decide to separate permanently: Alec will relocate to Johannesburg for a new job and Laura will continue to be a respectable housewife and mother. As a further blow to the star-crossed lovers, Coward deprives Laura and Alec of a suitably romantic parting scene by having Laura's busybody acquaintance Dolly Messiter (Everley Gregg) intrude upon their farewell at the refreshment room, thereby denying them the emotionally cathartic farewell that they – and, by extension, the audience – so richly deserve.



Laura's (Celia Johnson) daydreams are projected onto the train window in *Brief Encounter*.

The main connection that Davies's cinema shares with *Brief Encounter* is the tension – even incompatibility – between escapist fantasy and everyday reality. This tension is most evident in the scene where Laura is returning home on the train from a day in Milford, and begins to fantasise about her and Alec in a variety of different romantic scenarios. At this

point Lean could have chosen to rely solely upon Laura's voiceover to describe the character's romantic daydreams; instead, the director translates these thoughts into images and projects them onto the train window, so that the reflective surface of the glass become a cinema screen for Laura's private fantasies. In his study of first-person cinema, Bruce Kavin suggests that there are two modes of 'subjective camera' – one is to show what the character sees (the 'physical eye'), the other what she thinks (the 'mind's eye').<sup>43</sup> This particular scene serves as an excellent example of cinema's capacity to project the fantasies of its characters. *Brief Encounter* is justifiably acclaimed for its realist milieu, but surely part of its enduring appeal derives from 'the way in which, handling its very 'British' material, it enacts processes of fantasy which are basic to cinema'.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, Charles Barr argues that *Brief Encounter* can be grouped with *A Matter of Life and Death* (Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, UK, 1946) and *Dead of Night* (Alberto Cavalcanti, Charles Crichton, Basil Dearden and Robert Hamer, UK, 1945) as instances of a shift within 1940s British cinema from the public sphere (serviced by documentaries and wartime propaganda) to the private, 'the world of subjectivity and states of mind'.<sup>45</sup>

One of the qualities that make this scene particularly poignant is the banality of Laura's romantic fantasies which are the hackneyed tropes of the most clichéd romantic fiction. Paris, Venice, midnight cruises, star-filled skies, moonlit beaches – these are some of the stock materials of the 'women's pictures' that dominated Hollywood cinema in the 1940s. *Brief Encounter* provides us with an example of Hollywood romance in the fictitious movie-within-a-movie *Flames of Passion* which is shown initially as a trailer on Alec's and Laura's first cinema trip. Although Lean uses the trailer in order to ridicule the excesses of Hollywood cinema (the film purports to be 'Stupendous!', 'COLOSSAL!!', 'GIGANTIC!!' and 'EPOCH-MAKING!!') and contrast it with the quiet Englishness of *Brief Encounter*, the trailer ends with a passionate kiss between the hero and the heroine before the title of the movie is imposed over their faces in flame. Perhaps a better comparison might be made between Laura's fantasies and such Hollywood tearjerkers as *Now, Voyager* (Irving Rapper, USA, 1942), in

which an unattractive, repressed spinster (Bette Davis) is transformed through psychiatric therapy into a beautiful, confident woman who meets the love of her life (Paul Henreid) on a cruise ship: this film makes free use of the clichéd images of cruise ships and star-lit skies. What is so crushing for both Laura and the audience is the knowledge that these fantasies, ultimately, cannot be lived out in the real world. It is telling that during Laura's imaginings, we hear the sound of the train. Despite the romantic associations of train travel in the British public consciousness (in no small part due to *Brief Encounter*), the sound of the train serves as a constant reminder of the implausibility of Laura's dreams. In *The Long Day Closes*, Davies explores the power of cinema to transport us imaginatively but also suggests that films cannot totally transport Bud – Davies's younger alter-ego – from the environment in which he lives. Films and daydreams may provide temporary escapism for Laura and Bud, but neither of them can truly escape from reality.



Cinematic fantasies: Left: A film trailer in *Brief Encounter*. Right: Charlotte Vale (Bette Davis) in *Now, Voyager*.

Like *Brief Encounter*, *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes* portray the importance of the cinema to British life during the mid-twentieth-century. In Lean's film, Laura travels to Milford every week by train for some shopping and a trip to the cinema: this appears to be one of the rituals of the middle-class suburban housewife in 1940s England. Much like Maisie (Lorraine Ashbourne) and Eileen (Angela Walsh) in *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives*, or Bud (Leigh McCormack) in *The Long Day Closes*, Laura is an avid cinemagoer. In all of these films, the cinema functions as a means of imaginative escape for the main



characters. Of course, the notion of escaping one's reality through the arts is a well-trodden idea, and Davies has been upfront about the role that cinema played in allowing him to escape the dreariness of his surroundings as a child and the dreariness of his office employment as a young man. Indeed, the concept of gay adolescents retreating from the confusion created by their sexual orientation through immersion in the arts has been explored by numerous scholars.<sup>46</sup> While *Brief Encounter* does not portray the cinema in the same evangelical way as Davies's films do – particularly in *The Long Day Closes* – the audience is certainly made to feel that these cinema trips form an important part of Laura's routine: it is a compulsion.

In one particularly memorable scene from *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, Davies depicts Maisie and Eileen watching the classic Hollywood tearjerker *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing* through floods of tears. The image of their tear-stained faces gazing in wonder at the cinema screen has become one of the most famous and oft-produced images from that particular film: indeed, it was the image chosen for Paul Farley's 2006 monograph on *Distant Voices, Still Lives*.<sup>47</sup> The barely repressed emotion of the characters – and of the extras surrounding them – combined with the lush orchestral soundtrack played over the scene, makes it a powerful articulation of cinematic rapture. Similarly, the scene of Bud from *The Long Day Closes* staring at the cinema screen with a mixture of quiet awe and intense concentration has been reproduced as another image attesting to the power of the cinema.<sup>48</sup> It is important to remember that during the 1940s and 1950s, before television became a fixture in the family home, cinema was *the* popular art form – an experience shared and understood by many people; therefore, this scene is replete with nostalgia for a time when cinema occupied a more important place in people's lives.



Cinematic bliss: Left: *Distant Voices, Still Lives*. Right: *The Long Day Closes*.

In addition to the magical qualities of the cinema, Davies's films (particularly the *Trilogy* and *The Long Day Closes*) also explore the anguish of being a repressed homosexual in a Catholic, working-class community. While *Brief Encounter* is not explicitly a film about homosexuality – the love affair depicted is definitely a heterosexual one – certain critics have interpreted the film as a veiled articulation of the difficulties experienced by its writer, Noël Coward, in exploring a relationship with another man. An informed audience, therefore, will be able to make illuminating intertextual connections between *Brief Encounter* and Davies's autobiographical films.

In his monograph on *Brief Encounter*, Richard Dyer describes the film as having a 'gay sensibility'<sup>49</sup> because '[t]he subject matter – forbidden love in ordinary lives – makes an obvious appeal to gay readers, as do fear of discovery and settling for responsibility'.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, Andy Medhurst has argued that Lean's film 'explores the pain and grief caused by having one's desires destroyed by pressures of social conventions and it is this set of emotions which has sustained its [*Brief Encounter's*] reputations in gay subcultures'.<sup>51</sup> If one follows this line of argument then the societal conventions that prevent Laura and Alec from being together – both are married with children – are part and parcel of the same conventions that would have prevented Noël Coward from establishing an open, recognized relationship with another man: both relationships would have been viewed as sinful and as an affront to public morality. However, it is important to emphasise that while adultery was widely considered taboo by the British public in 1945, homosexuality was illegal.

The homosexual subtext of *Brief Encounter* has been explored in other works of art since the film was released. Richard Kwietniowski's short film, *Flames of Passion* (UK, 1989), portrays a gay love affair heavily inspired by Lean's classic tearjerker. Indeed, the short film's title is as an affectionate nod to the film that Alec and Laura watch on their second trip to the cinema. More importantly, the romance between the two men is centred on a train station. While there is little direct resemblance between the two films in terms of plot – *Flames of Passion* depicts a commuter who steals a set of photographs from a train station booth, and looks for the man depicted on the photos on subsequent train journeys, before finally meeting him face to face – the film bears a striking visual similarity to Lean's film with its black and white photography, canted camera angles and images reflected in windows.



Left: A trailer for 'Flames of Passion' in *Brief Encounter*. Right: Homosexual romance in *Flames of Passion*.

The parallels between *Brief Encounter* and Davies's films (emotional/sexual repression, the concept of 'Englishness') are illuminating. However, the main subject they share is the incompatibility between fantasy (embodied by the cinema) and reality. The final film I will discuss is *Young at Heart*, a film that Davies watched at the cinema as a child and one that provided the young director with a dream world in order to escape the reality of post-war Liverpool. The aural and visual spectacle of this Hollywood musical has had a

significant impact on Davies's filmmaking career, and I will now discuss this influence in some depth.

### ***Young at Heart***

A musical remake of the Hollywood melodrama *Four Daughters* (Michael Curtiz, USA, 1938) starring John Garfield and Priscilla Lane, *Young at Heart* has never enjoyed the critical prestige or audience popularity accorded to other Hollywood musicals such as *Meet Me in St. Louis* and *Singin' in the Rain*. Nevertheless, the film occupies a special place within Terence Davies's affections and has made an indelible impression upon his stylistic approach to filmmaking.

Besides substituting a happy ending for a sad one (more on this later), and using three daughters instead of the eponymous four, the plot of *Young at Heart* is broadly similar to that of *Four Daughters*. The Tuttle sisters – Fran (Dorothy Malone), Amy (Elizabeth Fraser) and Laurie (Doris Day) – are all talented musicians, living in an affluent Connecticut suburb with their adoring music lecturer father Gregory (Robert Keith) and his spinster sister Aunt Jessie (Ethel Barrymore), who occupies the dual role of housekeeper and agony aunt. The family's harmonious living arrangements are shaken up with the arrival of Alex Burke (Gig Young), a charismatic young song-writer, who almost immediately wins the hearts of all three sisters. Suddenly, Fran begins to experience doubts regarding her engagement to her rich but dull fiancé Robert Neary (Alan Hale Jr.), and Amy is forced to watch in quiet agony as her younger sister Laurie and Alex fall in love before her eyes. Events are further complicated with the appearance of Barney Sloan (Frank Sinatra), a talented musician who comes to the Tuttle home to assist Alex with the arrangements of the musical that he is writing. Despite the personality difference between Barney and Laurie – the former's urban cynicism clashing with the latter's small-town optimism – they are drawn to each other, culminating with Laurie jilting Alex at the altar in order to elope with Barney.

Several months pass by and it is revealed that Laurie has moved to New York to set up home with Alex in a shabby, cramped apartment. In spite of their marriage, Barney

remains plagued with anxiety about his self-worth (this feeling is compounded by being forced to sing and play piano in a restaurant where he is ignored by an apathetic audience, his music drowned out by their chatter) and doubts the love that Laurie professes to have for him. Laurie and Barney return to the Tuttle home for Christmas, where we discover that Fran is making a go of her marriage to Robert and Amy has forgotten about Alex, becoming engaged to the besotted plumber Ernest 'Ernie' Nichols (Lonny Chapman). Whilst at home, Laurie is able to clear the air with Alex who has gone on to enjoy commercial success with the musical that he has written. Barney sees but crucially does not hear this tender exchange between the former lovers, and becomes further convinced that Laurie does not truly love him. After dropping Alex off at the train station, Barney attempts suicide by driving in the snow with the car's windscreen wipers turned off. At the hospital, Laurie begs Barney to believe that she loves him, and we are left to wonder whether Barney will be able to recover from the crash. Fortunately for the Tuttle family, Barney survives the accident, and in the final scene of the film – which is set a year after Barney's suicide attempt – we see the Tuttle family gathered around the piano, Laurie and Barney singing the film's title song to their baby daughter.

When Davies introduced a screening of *Young at Heart* for the BFI in 2010 as part of the BFI's ongoing programme of public screenings entitled 'Screen Epiphanies'<sup>52</sup>, he rhapsodized about the film, giddily describing how he was taken to see it by one of his older sisters as a ten-year-old boy and how he was utterly enthralled by it: 'from the moment... it started, I was hooked'.<sup>53</sup> Unfortunately for the film, however, Davies's appears to be its only vociferous champion. For example, the film is not mentioned at all in either Rick Altman's *The Film Musical* (1981) or the collection he edited, *Genre: The Musical* (1987), which have been acknowledged by critics as the 'standard works on the genre'.<sup>54</sup> With the exception of Mark Cousins, *Young at Heart* has not received any analytical probing from film scholars which is surprising when one considers that the period between 1930 and 1960 marked the 'great era of the Hollywood musical'.<sup>55</sup> Critical neglect of the film is mystifying when one

considers its numerous points of interest, particularly Sinatra's performance and his input in the film's production.<sup>56</sup>

One of the interesting features of *Young at Heart* is the way the ending deviates from that of the original version. In *Four Daughters*, Mickey Borden (John Garfield) – the original Barney Sloan – commits suicide by driving into a snow storm, eventually dying in hospital. It is implicit that he commits suicide because he loves Kay Lemp (Priscilla Lane) – the Laurie Tuttle/Doris Day character – but believes that he can only bring her unhappiness. Both films include the scene where Kay/Laurie visits Mickey/Barney in hospital to express her love for him and pray for his recovery. In the original script for *Young at Heart*, Barney was supposed to die but Sinatra disliked this downbeat ending (particularly as he had died in his two previous films) and had it changed so that his character survives. Numerous commentators have judged this plot adjustment dramatically unsatisfying, suggesting that Barney's death felt like an organic part of the character's dramatic trajectory. Consequently the final scene of the film – which depicts Barney, Laurie and their baby daughter sat around a piano – feels somewhat inauthentic. Bosley Crowther was critical of the film's ending in his review for *The New York Times*, observing that 'worst of all, the hard-luck character is allowed to recover from his attempt at suicide'.<sup>57</sup> Doris Day also disapproved of the altered ending, suggesting that 'there was an inevitability about that character's death'.<sup>58</sup>

Regardless of these critical caveats, Davies's passion for the film remains unabated. According to Mark Cousins, Davies is even an admirer of *Young at Heart's* maligned ending:

Davies has often cited the crane shot near the end of *Young at Heart*... where the camera glides through the window of a family home after the husband of one of its daughters appears to have killed herself, as a perfect cinematic moment, a depiction of heaven or the kind of utopia written about by Richard Dyer. Such scenes become the central formal-emotional device of his own work.<sup>59</sup>



The crane shot at the end of *Young at Heart*.

Here, Cousins suggests that Davies is drawn to this particular film because it depicts a 'perfect cinematic moment' – in other words, a moment of transcendent beauty and escapism. For Cousins, this notion of capturing paradise on screen is fundamental to appreciating the influence of *Young at Heart* on Davies's filmmaking style. This theory is supported by Davies's introduction to a screening of *Young at Heart*, during which he described how intoxicated he was by the film's opulent mise-en-scène, how the three-strip Technicolor of the movie was so ravishing as to be 'almost edible', and how the film's depiction of America – a glistening world of 'wraparound teeth', 'gorgeous frocks' and 'big kitchens'<sup>60</sup> – offered a means of imaginative escape for him as a child: a paradise that could only be accessed through the movies. Davies's thoughts on *Young at Heart* resemble those expressed by Dyer in his seminal essay 'Entertainment and Utopia', in which the latter describes the enduring appeal of musicals as entertainment:

Two of the taken-for-granted descriptions of entertainment, as 'escape' and as 'wish-fulfilment', point to its central thrust, namely, utopianism. Entertainment offers the image of 'something better' to escape into, or something we want deeply that our day-to-day lives don't provide. Alternatives, hopes, wishes – these are the stuff of utopia, the sense that things could be better, that something other than what is can be imagined and maybe realized.<sup>61</sup>

It is not difficult to grasp why 'escape' and 'wish fulfilment' would appeal to a working-class boy growing up in the sexually and religiously repressed environment of post-war Liverpool. The parallel between film-going and dreaming is a familiar trope in film studies, and Davies has himself described his early movie-going experiences as escaping into a

fantasy world. The idea of there being 'something better' outside of one's own reality is a seductive idea, and one that has appealed to Davies. The vibrant Technicolor of *Young at Heart*, combined with the glamour of its stars, the warm domesticity of the Tuttle family, the opulence of the family home, and a selection songs sung by Day and Sinatra, proved irresistible to Davies, supplying him with an escapist fantasy of America: 'When you grow up in a Liverpool slum and you saw these films, that's what you thought America was like. Everyone was rich, everyone was beautiful. There was no want, no poverty; it was always summer. It's as potent as religion'.<sup>62</sup>

Davies's approach to filmmaking has been strongly influenced by *Young at Heart* and other Hollywood musicals of the period. In his discussion of *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, Cousins remarked upon Davies's 'exquisite framing and lighting' and suggested that the crane shots were 'choreographed with as much grace and joy as any Hollywood or Bollywood musical'.<sup>63</sup> Although Davies does not explicitly refer to *Young at Heart* through means of a visual reference or an audio clip, an audience familiar with this musical and its place in the director's affections will be able to appreciate the influence it had on his cinema.

There are a number of parallels to be explored between *Young at Heart* and Davies's oeuvre. For instance, both *Young at Heart* and *Distant Voices, Still Lives* (and to a lesser extent his follow-up *The Long Day Closes*) are full of songs. It is important to bear in mind that no original music was written for *Young at Heart*, with the notable exception of the title song. Instead, putting Ray Heindorf's score to one side, the film's musical arrangement consists of songs that had become established standards by this point in time: 'Just One of Those Things' (Cole Porter, 1935), 'Someone to Watch Over Me' (George and Ira Gershwin, 1926) and 'One More for My Baby (and One More for the Road)' (Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer, 1946), for example, were all written for other musicals.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, Davies has the characters in *Distant Voices, Still Lives* sing popular tunes from the Great American Songbook, particularly on social occasions (family gatherings and evenings spent in the pub), and the music is used for a variety of dramatic effects. In one scene, for example,



Davies depicts the extended family sat together in the pub singing 'I Love the Ladies' (traditional song) and this brief sequence communicates successfully the pleasures that such music would have held for working-class people in post-war Britain.

Davies also uses these songs as a means of allowing his characters to express their innermost feelings. In another pub scene, Eileen launches into a heart-rending rendition of 'I Wanna Be Around' (Sadie Vimmertsedt and Johnny Mercer, 1959) which includes the following barbed lyrics: 'And that's when I'll discover that revenge is sweet / As I sit there applaudin' from a front-row seat / When somebody breaks your heart / Like you, like you broke mine'. In this instance, Eileen is communicating her discontent with her marriage to Dave (Michael Starke) whose behaviour at home is becoming increasingly boorish and abusive (much like her father's towards her mother). Invariably, songs in Hollywood musicals allow the characters to communicate their emotions without recrimination – consider, for example, Judy Garland's performance of 'The Trolley Song' (Hugh Martin and Ralph Blane, 1944) in *Meet Me in St. Louis*, in which her character, Esther Smith, sings of her love for the boy-next-door, John Truitt (Tom Drake) in front of a trolley load of strangers – and Davies permits his characters to do the same thing. He also juxtaposes existing recordings of songs to his filmmaking for ironic effect which is particularly evident in the sequence where Davies plays Ella Fitzgerald's rendition of 'Taking a Chance on Love' (John Latouche and Ted Fetter, 1940) over traumatic images of domestic abuse between Mother (Freda Dowie) and Father (Pete Postlethwaite).

## **Conclusion**

Like Martin Scorsese and Pedro Almodóvar, Terence Davies's passion for the cinema informs his filmmaking practice, and each of his films – from *Children* to *The Deep Blue Sea* – incorporates influences, quotes, allusions and re-workings from other films. Paradoxically, in spite of his inclination to borrow from existing movies, Davies's filmmaking is one of the most unique and distinctive in contemporary British cinema.

Lesley Stern's study of Scorsese placed the latter filmmaker in a wide intertextual field to explore how his oeuvre might be productively discussed in relation to a range of other films. It is my contention that Davies's works benefit from a similar treatment. According to Stern, the 'acute question of Intertextuality ... [is] asking where one text ends and another begins'.<sup>65</sup> Bearing this in mind, the four films that I have chosen to explore in this chapter, and the cinematic categories that they represent (the British art film, the European art film, the 'woman's picture' and the Hollywood musical) provide a useful framework for discussing Davies's filmmaking style which combines deeply felt emotion and visual formalism.

The concept of intertextuality encompasses not only the artist's self-conscious borrowing from other sources, but also the relationships that the audience is able to construct between one particular work of art and those that they have experienced before. Clearly Davies has chosen to quote deliberately from other films: this is apparent in his deployment of audio clips (*The Ladykillers* in *The Long Day Closes*), music extracts (Max Steiner's score for *Gone with the Wind* in *The Neon Bible*), popular songs (Doris Day's rendition of 'It All Depends on You' from *Love Me or Leave Me* in *Death and Transfiguration*) and visual references (*Letter from an Unknown Woman* is alluded to visually in *The House of Mirth*). The four films discussed may not have been alluded to in Davies's work as explicitly as some of the films mentioned above, nevertheless they each offer valuable insights into how Davies has channelled his passion for the movies into his own work.

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<sup>1</sup> Coe 1995, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Woods 2000, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Kristeva 1990, p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> Irwin 2004, p. 228.

<sup>5</sup> Kristeva quoted in Culler 1981, p. 105.

<sup>6</sup> Barthes 1977, p. 146.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Davies 1992, p. ix.

<sup>9</sup> Douglas Sirk's reputation as the creator of vibrant Technicolor melodramas is based primarily on four movies that he made during the 1950s: *Magnificent Obsession* (USA, 1954), *All That Heaven Allows*, *Written on the Wind* (USA, 1956) and *Imitation of Life* (USA, 1959). Other films that Sirk made during this period – such as *All I Desire* (USA, 1953), *There's Always Tomorrow* (USA, 1956) and *The*

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*Tarnished Angels* (USA, 1957) – share the soapy, overblown plots of the aforementioned films but lack their visual splendour having been filmed in black and white.

<sup>10</sup> Brian De Palma's films are littered with direct quotations from Hitchcock's work: the plot of *Obsession* (USA, 1976) is almost an exact copy of *Vertigo*, and *Body Double* (USA, 1984) – with its lurid mixture of sex, murder and voyeurism – is clearly inspired by Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (USA, 1954). Even De Palma's adaptation of Tom Wolfe's 1987 novel *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (USA, 1990) quotes from Hitchcock's *Foreign Correspondent* (USA, 1940): both movies feature similarly shot scenes of rainy courthouse exteriors and seas of umbrellas.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Dyer considers *Far From Heaven* as a remake of *All That Heaven Allows* and other Hollywood melodramas by Douglas Sirk and Max Ophüls in his book *Pastiche* (2007, 174-180).

<sup>12</sup> Coe 1995, p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> Whilst attending Cardinal Hayes High School in the Bronx, Scorsese decided to abandon his ambition of becoming a Catholic priest in order to become a filmmaker: religion was literally replaced by cinema.

<sup>14</sup> Stern 1995, 6.

<sup>15</sup> To further complicate matters, Scorsese's *Cape Fear* is actually a remake of an earlier film also entitled *Cape Fear* (J. Lee Thompson, USA, 1962) which was itself adapted from an existing literary source, John D. MacDonald's novel *The Executioners* (1957).

<sup>16</sup> Davies quoted in Stone 1997, p. 305.

<sup>17</sup> A video clip of Davies discussing the death of Ingmar Bergman – entitled 'Terence Davies on the Future of Film' – is available to view on the BFI website at <http://www.bfi.org.uk/live/video/217>, accessed on 5th February 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Davies participated in a similar poll in 1995 devised by *Time Out* magazine to commemorate the centenary of film. In this particular poll, Davies chose *Young at Heart*, *The Night of the Hunter* (Charles Laughton, USA, 1958), *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (Max Ophüls, USA, 1944), *All About Eve* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, USA, 1950), *The Ladykillers* and *Brief Encounter* in addition to *Singin' in the Rain*, *Meet Me in St. Louis*, *Kind Hearts and Coronets* and *The Happiest Days of Your Life* which survived into the 2002 poll. Much like the *Sight & Sound* poll, Davies's selection of movies indicates a love of British and American cinema from the 1940s and 1950s.

<sup>19</sup> In the 2012 poll for *Sight & Sound*, Davies listed his ten favourite films as *Great Expectations* (David Lean, UK, 1946), *The Happiest Days of Your Life*, *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, *The Magnificent Ambersons* (Orson Welles, USA, 1942) *The Night of the Hunter*, *The Searchers*, *Singin' in the Rain*, *Victim* (Basil Dearden, UK, 1961) and *Young at Heart*.

<sup>20</sup> Shail 2007, p. 50.

<sup>21</sup> According to Michael Coulter, the cinematographer on *The Long Day Closes*, this effect was not achieved through time-lapse photography (in the manner of Sam Taylor-Wood's video art, for example) but involved Davies halting the shot at intervals in order to place withered petals onto the roses.

<sup>22</sup> Babington 2002, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Everett 2004, p. 212.

<sup>24</sup> Douglas and Davies form the subject of a chapter in John Orr's book *Romantics and Modernists in British Cinema* (2010). Duncan Petrie has also written a paper in this topic entitled 'Autobiography and British Art Cinema: The Films of Bill Douglas, Terence Davies and Derek Jarman' (2002).

<sup>25</sup> Williamson 2001, 110.

<sup>26</sup> Notable exceptions would include John Orr's essay 'Terence Davies and Bill Douglas: the poetics of memory' (2010) and Duncan Petrie's paper 'Autobiography and British Art Cinema: The Films of Bill Douglas, Terence Davies and Derek Jarman' (2002).

<sup>27</sup> Petrie 2002, p. 57.

<sup>28</sup> Davies 2014, interview with author.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Howarth 1994, p. 59.

<sup>31</sup> Davies quoted in Kennedy 1988, p. 17.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Petrie 2000b, p. 159.

<sup>34</sup> Rosenbaum 2004, p. 386.

<sup>35</sup> Steene 2005, p. 23.

<sup>36</sup> Davies 2014, interview with author.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>38</sup> Davies quoted in Stone 1997, p. 306.

<sup>39</sup> Orr 2000b, p. 139.

<sup>40</sup> Kirkham and O'Shaughnessy 1992, p. 15.

<sup>41</sup> In addition to the 1995 poll, Davies selected *Brief Encounter* as one of the ten greatest British movies ever made in a poll taken by *Time Out* magazine in 2011.

<sup>42</sup> Six of the short plays (*We Were Dancing*, *The Astonished Heart*, *Red Pepper*, *Hands Across the Sea*, *Fumed Oak* and *Shadow Play*) were first presented at the Manchester Opera House in March 1935. A seventh play, *Family Portrait*, was added on the subsequent nine-week provincial tour. The three final plays were added before the London run of *Tonight at 8:30* in January 1936, and included *Ways and Means*, *Star Chamber*, and *Still Life*.

<sup>43</sup> Kawin 1978, p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> Barr 1986, p. 17.

<sup>45</sup> Petrie 2000a, p. 224.

<sup>46</sup> Lucas Hilderbrand identifies *The Long Day Closes* as one of numerous books and films that depict homosexual boys finding a source of comfort and release through the arts. Other examples might include James Baldwin's book of essays *The Devil Finds Work* (1976), Wayne Koestenbaum's book on the love affair between gay men and the opera *The Queen's Throat* (1993), the short film *Trevor* (Peggy Rajski, USA, 1994), and the feature film *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (John Cameron Mitchell, USA, 2001) (Hilderbrand 2007, p. 43).

<sup>47</sup> This image has also been used on the website for *Sight & Sound* magazine along with stills from other acclaimed films, ranging from established classics like *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, USA, 1941) to more contemporary British films like *Caravaggio* (Derek Jarman, UK, 1986) and *Under the Skin* (Carine Adler, UK, 1997).

<sup>48</sup> Unsurprisingly, this image is reproduced on the front cover of Davies's *A Modest Pageant* (1992) which collects together his scripts for *Children*, *Madonna and Child*, *Death and Transfiguration*, *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes*.

<sup>49</sup> Dyer 1993, p. 10.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>51</sup> Medhurst 1991, p. 204.

<sup>52</sup> 'Screen Epiphanies' consists of prominent personnel from the British film industry selecting and introducing movies that have had a profound influence upon their lives. Past participants include the director Sally Potter who introduced *Mr Hulot's Holiday/Les Vacances de M. Hulot* (Jacques Tati, France, 1953), the actress Juliet Stevenson who selected *Pather Panchali* (Satyajit Ray, India, 1955), and the producer Stephen Woolley who chose *Zulu* (Cy Endfield, UK, 1964).

<sup>53</sup> A video clip of Davies's introduction to *Young at Heart* is available to view on the BFI website at <http://www.bfi.org.uk/live/video/317>, accessed on 5th February 2011.

<sup>54</sup> Marshall and Stilwell 2000, p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> Hayward 2006, p. 272.

<sup>56</sup> After enduring numerous personal and professional blows – the break-up of his marriage to Ava Gardner, problems with his singing voice, the termination of his contract with MCA and Columbia Records due to declining album sales – Sinatra's acting career experienced a turnaround with his acclaimed performance in *From Here to Eternity* (Fred Zinnemann, USA, 1953). Sinatra's recording career was then revitalized by a new contract to Capitol, where he got to work with talented arrangers like Nelson Riddle, who helped to develop his image as a swinger and an outsider. Sinatra's performance in *Young at Heart* also helped to cultivate his image as the romantic loner that was often personified in the singer's albums. His musical solo-pieces – 'One for My Baby' and 'Just One of Those Things' – filmed with him sitting alone at a piano with shot glass, tilted hat and dangling cigarette, helped to establish the iconic image of singer/actor that still endures in the minds of the public. Sinatra's performance in *Young at Heart* – combined with the roles he played in *From Here to Eternity* and the assassination thriller *Suddenly* (Lewis Allen, USA, 1954) – helped pave the way for a series of dramatic performances in acclaimed Hollywood pictures. Sinatra would go on to deliver acclaimed dramatic performances in various Hollywood pictures, including a drug addict in *The Man with the Golden Arm* (Otto Preminger, USA, 1955), an alcoholic war veteran in *Some Came Running* (Vincente Minnelli, USA, 1958) and a platoon commander in *The Manchurian Candidate* (John Frankenheimer, USA, 1962). Furthermore, it helped to cultivate the enduring image of Sinatra as a romantic outsider, with the songs that he sang in the film – particularly the title track – becoming a popular feature of his musical repertoire.

<sup>57</sup> Crowther 1955, accessed on 20 June 2011.

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<sup>58</sup> Day quoted in Sterritt (n.d.), accessed on 20th June 2011.

<sup>59</sup> Cousins 2008, p. 414.

<sup>60</sup> 'Terence Davies on Young at Heart', <http://www.bfi.org.uk/live/video/317>, accessed on 5th February 2011.

<sup>61</sup> Dyer 2002, p. 19.

<sup>62</sup> Davies quoted in Shaw 2007, p. 28.

<sup>63</sup> Cousins 2008, p. 414.

<sup>64</sup> Porter wrote 'Just One of Those Things' for the Broadway musical *Jubilee* (1935); the Gershwins wrote 'Someone to Watch Over Me' for the Broadway musical *Oh, Kay!* (1926), and Arlen and Mercer wrote 'One for My Baby (and One More for the Road)' for the Hollywood musical *The Sky's the Limit* (Edward H. Griffith, 1943).

<sup>65</sup> Stern 1995, 8.

# Chapter 2

## Autobiographical Filmmaking

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The focus of the next two chapters is to examine Terence Davies's work as a cinematic adaptor. Overall, Davies's oeuvre can be separated into two discrete phases: (i) films that dramatise his own life story, focusing primarily on his working-class upbringing in Liverpool during the 1940s and 1950s, and (ii) adaptations of canonical literary texts. The autobiographical stage of Davies's career began in 1976 and ended in 1992 – although he returned to the subject in 2008 with the documentary *Of Time and the City* – and he has specialised in literary adaptations since 1995.

This chapter will consider Davies's filmmaking career as an adaptor of his own personal history. Collectively, *The Terence Davies Trilogy*, *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives*, *The Long Day Closes* and *Of Time and the City* form a 'wide-ranging autobiographical project', in which Davies adopts a variety of different approaches in order to transmute his personal history into works of cinema.<sup>1</sup> While a considerable amount of scholarly attention has been devoted to the subject of literary autobiography, relatively little has been written on its cinematic equivalent. The lack of scholarship on this issue is truly mystifying when we consider the diverse range of filmmakers who have used their own lives as raw material for their movies, including Ingmar Bergman, Federico Fellini, Martin Scorsese, Andrei Tarkovsky, François Truffaut, Bill Douglas and Derek Jarman.

The overriding tendency in adaptation studies has been to focus on the transformation of texts – particularly novels – into films, and how these adaptations translate the verbal into the visual. While Davies has written a loosely autobiographical novel, *Hallelujah Now* (1984), which depicts some of the characters and events dramatised in his early short films (e.g. his first visit to a gay bar), this novel was actually published *after*

Davies completed his trilogy. Rather than adapting a novel into a film, it might be argued that *Hallelujah Now* represents Davies's literary engagement with subject matter that has already been rigorously conceptualised by the author in cinematic language and – as a direct result – ‘provides considerable echoes when read in the light of his films’.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, each of Davies's autobiographical films has been adapted from memory, deriving from either the mental (memories plucked from the director's consciousness) or the verbal (oral storytelling, popular music), as opposed to the written word. It is my contention that Davies's autobiographical films constitute a form of adaptation because he takes the events of his own life and transforms them into works of cinema by altering and dramatising them to suit his creative purposes.

### **Autobiographical Studies**

The term ‘biography’ first entered the English language around 1680, but it was not until 1809, when the Romantic poet Robert Southey coined the word for the *Quarterly Review*, that ‘autobiography’ became a familiar term.<sup>3</sup> Over the last few decades autobiographical studies has developed into a thriving field of trans-disciplinary study, with literary theorists, psychologists, historians and anthropologists all contributing their own particular ideas and theories to a shared critical discourse. The breadth of interest in autobiography as an area of academic scrutiny is undoubtedly related to the various issues that it interrogates, including the ‘great themes of memory, identity, the making of meaning, and the social construction of reality’.<sup>4</sup>

Writing on the pervasiveness of autobiography, Candace Lang has argued that ‘Autobiography is indeed everywhere one cares to find it’.<sup>5</sup> If one subscribes to the concept that the writer is always implicated in their work, then almost any piece of writing could be judged as autobiographical to an extent. Indeed, it is no small part due to the slippery and promiscuous ways in which the term has been applied that academic writing on the subject has tended to focus on defining the conditions and limits of autobiography and what differentiates it from other forms of writing (namely prose, drama and poetry). Philippe

Lejeune has described autobiography as 'the retrospective prose narrative that someone writes concerning his own existence where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality'.<sup>6</sup>

While this definition may seem relatively uncontroversial at first glance, it has often been employed to demonstrate how limited the perceived understanding of autobiography actually is. There is, for instance, a long-running literary tradition of texts that deliberately distort the distinction between fact and fiction, ranging from works of high modernism such as Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (published in seven volumes between 1913 and 1927) and James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (serialised between 1914 and 1915, and published in book form in 1916) to later 'classics' such as Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) and Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* (1975). By intermingling fiction and personal experience, and presenting fiction as autobiography and *vice versa*, these novelists appear to delight in ambiguity and the undermining of generic conventions. There is a striking similarity between this approach and the one adopted by Davies in his autobiographical films. Indeed, Robert Shail has described Davies' approach to filmmaking as the 'cinematic equivalent of literature's magic realism, in which a vivid recreation of everyday life is fused with dreams and memories to produce a form of hyper-realism, reflecting both the external world and the inner world of the filmmaker'.<sup>7</sup>

Autobiographical writing encompasses a range of different forms, from the spiritual writings of Saint Augustine's *Confessions* (written between AD 397 and 398) to Wordsworth's epic poem *The Prelude*<sup>8</sup> (begun in 1798 and published posthumously in 1850) to Gertrude Stein's modernist novel *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933). The labelling of Saint Augustine's *Confessions* as the first 'true' autobiography has become firmly linked with the idea that the genre is 'both introspective and centrally concerned with the problematics of time and memory'.<sup>9</sup> It is not coincidental that contemplative introspection and



a preoccupation with time and memory are some of the defining characteristics of Terence Davies's films.

Certain theorists of autobiography, such as Harold Rosen, have attempted to broaden the definition of autobiography beyond the written word, arguing that 'Autobiographical discourse embraces all those verbal acts, whether they may be whole texts or parts of texts, whether they be spoken or written, in which individual speakers or writers or two or more collaborators attempt to represent their lives through a construction of past events and experiences.'<sup>10</sup> Rosen objects to the prescriptive idea that autobiographical discourse must be written down, preferring to make the term more inclusive by acknowledging the importance of verbal communication. A natural development of this argument would be to recognise that an autobiographical text might also be cinematic as well as verbal. Although Lejeune's proposition that autobiographies must be (a) written down and (b) in prose has been criticised by figures such as Rosen, his suggestion that 'the *author*, the *narrator*, and the *protagonist* must be identical' for a text to be truly autobiographical has been accepted by the majority of scholars as a fundamental principle of the genre.<sup>11</sup> However, the issue of authorship necessarily becomes more complex when it is applied to film.

Autobiography abounds in film, particularly in art cinema where the director has traditionally exercised more creative control over the projects they undertake. In her essay, 'Timetravel and the European Film', Everett provides an extensive list of European art films that might be viewed as autobiographical.<sup>12</sup> Bordwell argues that the art film can be defined by its opposition to the storytelling and stylistic norms of classical Hollywood cinema (plotlines driven by causality, characters with clearly defined goals and desires, and a predominately discrete filming style) and its 'authorial expressivity' which foregrounds the filmmaker as the central governing intelligence behind the film's structure.<sup>13</sup> Liberated from the conventions (or, one might argue, restrictions) of classical Hollywood cinema, the director is given greater artistic freedom to communicate their own ideas and feelings. While

Bordwell argues that the director may not necessarily be represented as a 'biographical individual', he concedes that certain films permit 'confessional readings'.<sup>14</sup> One of the examples he cites is François Truffaut's *The Four Hundred Blows/Les quatre cents coups* (France, 1959) as both the director and the film's protagonist, Antoine Doinel, were the only children of loveless marriage, committed petty acts of theft and truanted from school and the military. Over five films, Truffaut's alter ego – played by the same actor, Jean-Pierre Léaud, over two decades – is depicted from boyhood to adulthood, culminating with *Love on the Run/L'amour en fuite* (France, 1979).<sup>15</sup>



Jean-Pierre Léaud as Antoine Doinel in *The Four Hundred Blows*.

The Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini has adopted numerous strategies in order to depict his life cinematically. While *Amarcord* (Italy/France, 1973) dramatises his childhood through 'staged reminiscence'<sup>16</sup>, his earlier film *8½* (Italy/France, 1963) is a formally adventurous film that traverses (and occasionally collapses) time and place, providing the audience with some insight into the baroque realm of Fellini's imagination. The director also makes physical appearances in his own works such as *Roma* (Italy/France, 1972) and the TV documentary *The Clowns* (Italy/France/West Germany, 1970), which explores his childhood obsession with clowns and the circus. Furthermore, there are the extravagant 'signed' works *Fellini-Satyricon* (Italy, 1969) and *Fellini's Casanova/Il Casanova di Federico Fellini* (Italy/USA, 1976) which combine sumptuously designed historical narratives with the director's memories and fantasies. While scholars of Truffaut and Fellini have discussed

these films within the context of their makers' lives, these directors have not been compared in a larger investigation of autobiographical cinema as a whole.

One possible explanation for this lack of scholarship is the idea that autobiographical cinema doesn't actually exist. Indeed, Elizabeth W. Bruss proposes that there is no real cinematic equivalent for autobiography due to the fundamentally collaborative nature of film as a creative medium:

Even if a single individual should manage to be script-writer and director, cameraman, set designer, light and sound technician, and editor to boot (and few "auteurs" in fact manage to do them all), the result would be a tour de force and not the old, unquestionable integrity of the speaking subject. An auteur is never quite the same thing as an "author" because of the changes film effects in the nature of authority itself. Authors must exercise their own capacities where auteurs are free to delegate; authors actually possess the abilities that auteurs need only over-see, and they fabricate what filmmakers may only need to find.<sup>17</sup>

Bruss stresses the sanctified position of the single author and highlights the impossibility of this being achieved within the nuanced power structures of film which is, of course, the product of an industrial process. Although a director – unlike a novelist – must rely upon the expertise of a producer, cast and crew in order to create their work, Bruss seems to question the degree of control that certain directors exercise over their films. In addition to directing his films, Terence Davies also writes elaborately detailed screenplays that provide comprehensive descriptions of how individual scenes should be shot, composed and edited in order to achieve the desired artistic effect. Although he is willing to listen to his collaborators' ideas (this will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5), he will only accept their suggestions if they can be assimilated into his 'central vision'.<sup>18</sup> Such a creative approach suggests that Davies is the dominant governing intelligence on his films.

A further issue that Bruss has with the idea of autobiographical cinema is precisely how the audience is supposed to discern that the film they are watching is based on the filmmaker's life story since many of the 'attempts' at autobiographical cinema they have watched seem 'indistinguishable from biography, on the one hand, or expressionist cinema, on the other'.<sup>19</sup> For Bruss, this problem is related to what they perceive as the film image's

lack of 'selectivity' when compared to written language and the contentious idea that whereas writers can control the reader's mental engagement by selecting what they regard as important, directors exert less influence on how the images they present are interpreted by the viewer, meaning that the audience may not necessarily manage to 'discriminate between the essential and the accidental'.<sup>20</sup>

Bruss's concept of the differences between literature and film underestimates the scope for interpretation that the filmic image permits. For example, in his discussion of the cinematographer Gregg Toland's pioneering use of deep focus photography in *The Little Foxes* (William Wyler, USA, 1941) and *The Best Years of Our Lives* (William Wyler, USA, 1946), Bazin wrote that 'Thanks to depth of field, at times augmented by action taking place simultaneously on several planes, the viewer is at least given the opportunity in the end to edit the scene himself, to select the aspects of it to which he will attend'.<sup>21</sup>



A famous example of Gregg Toland's deep-focus photography in *Citizen Kane*.

In their use of deep focus photography, filmmakers such as Wyler and Welles (particularly in *Citizen Kane*) sought to achieve a level of cinematic realism that preserved the integrity of physical space and time by staging action across multiple planes whilst maintaining sharp focus in all of them. Furthermore, deep focus shooting means that the viewer can choose to focus on what is happening in the foreground or the background. Whilst Bazin's comments support Bruss's view that the filmic image is fundamentally open to

multiple interpretations besides that of the director, there are numerous filmmakers who aspire to manipulate the audience's response as much as possible. Montage editing, for example, which emerged out of the Soviet experimental cinema of the 1920s, is predicated on the theory that 'collision or conflict must be inherent to all visual signs' and the idea that juxtaposing different shots results in the creation of meaning.<sup>22</sup> This filming technique is primarily associated with Eisenstein who employed this technique in *Strike/Stachka* (Soviet Union, 1925), *Battleship Potemkin/Bronenosets Potemkin* (Soviet Union, 1925) and *October/Oktyabr* (Soviet Union, 1928), but has been widely appropriated by later filmmakers such as Alfred Hitchcock and Steven Spielberg. My discussion of Davies's autobiographical films – with their meticulous framing, measured use of tracking shots, and carefully conceived diegetic and non-diegetic sound – will demonstrate his investment in controlling what the audience sees and hears.

Bruss has astutely observed that a director may encounter difficulties in conveying to an audience that their work is autobiographical without resorting to voiceover or inter-titles. While this does not alter the fact that various directors have adapted their lives into works of cinema, it raises questions over whether the audience requires this extra-textual knowledge of the filmmaker's life story to fully appreciate the film. For certain filmmakers, the autobiographical element of their work may be incidental (the director's life story serving merely as creative fodder), in which case an extra-textual awareness of the director's life is not essential. In the case of Terence Davies, however, his Liverpool-set films offer such an intense and thoughtful engagement with his own past that their autobiographical status seems fundamental to fully appreciating them.

In the introduction to his collected early screenplays, *A Modest Pageant* (1992), Davies explains how his decision to start making autobiographical films

came from a deep *need* to do so in order to come to come to terms with my family's history and suffering, to make sense of the past and to explore my own personal terrors, both mental and spiritual, and to examine the destructive nature of Catholicism. Film as an expression of guilt, film as confession (psychotherapy would be much cheaper but a lot less fun).<sup>23</sup>

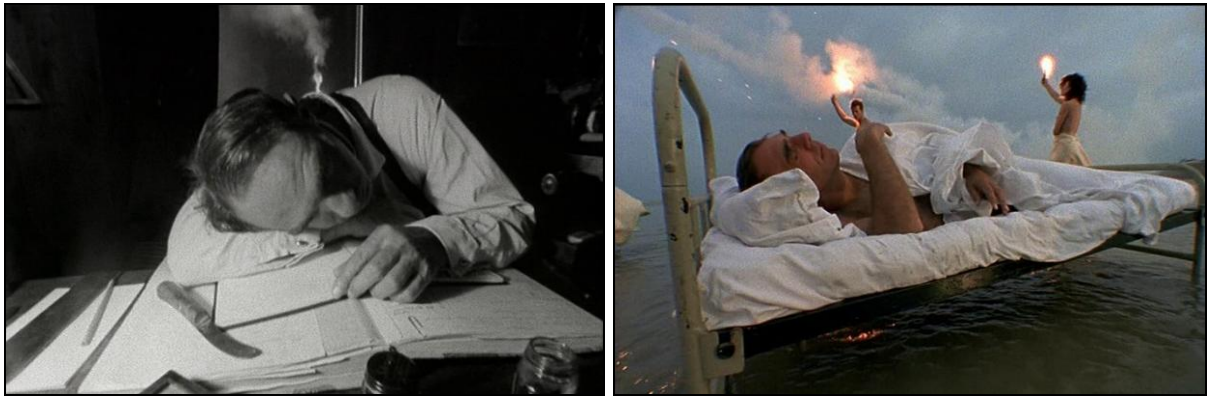
In other words, Davies has identified the urge to adapt his life experiences into films as emerging from a need to reconcile himself with the past – as an act of emotional catharsis. Similarly, fellow British filmmakers Bill Douglas and Derek Jarman transmuted their lives into films as a means of dealing with their own troubled histories and psychological baggage. Since the deaths of Douglas and Jarman in 1991 and 1994 respectively, numerous semi-autobiographical films have been made in Britain – from Gary Oldman’s *Nil by Mouth* (UK, 1997) to Shane Meadows’ *This is England* (UK, 2006) – but most of these works seem to belong to a mode of social-realist filmmaking. Generally, these films have focused on the working class as the ‘victims of harsh economic conditions, identified as responsible for yet further erosion of working-class traditions’<sup>24</sup>, and they achieve naturalism in part by eschewing the aesthetic stylisation that can be found in the films of Davies, Douglas and Jarman.<sup>25</sup>

Like Davies, Douglas endured an abusive and impoverished childhood that profoundly affected his subsequent filmmaking. Indeed, John Orr suggests that these two directors both ‘re-enact the Proustian conquest of suffering through art’.<sup>26</sup> Unlike Davies, however, Douglas did not have the respite of a loving mother and siblings to lighten the drabness of his early existence and his *Trilogy* – which consists of the short films *My Childhood*, *My Ain Folk* and *My Way Home* – depicts the story of alter-ego Jamie from his humble upbringing in the Scottish mining village of Newcraighall to his time spent in the army stationed in Egypt. Like Davies, Douglas uses Jamie as the ‘bearer of [his] autobiographical investment’.<sup>27</sup> The narrative of *The Bill Douglas Trilogy* is chronological but we have ‘little sense of the temporal relations between individual scenes’ and the way in which they are linked together seems to be ‘driven more by emotion than logical causality’.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, the narrative of *The Terence Davies Trilogy* (particularly the first and third parts) is broadly chronological (childhood, middle-age, old age) but the linking of scenes seems fragmented and elliptical to reflect the inner workings of a character’s memory or subconscious.

However, Davies's autobiographical trilogy differs from Douglas's because its fluctuations in time are far more extreme (in *Children*, for example, we see Tucker as an adolescent and then as a young man in his twenties). For both directors, autobiographical cinema is a 'redemptive exercise'.<sup>29</sup>

Derek Jarman is less associated with autobiographical cinema than either Davies or Douglas, and is probably best known for a number of controversial and innovative feature films, including *Sebastiane* (co-directed with Paul Humfress, UK, 1976), *Jubilee* (UK, 1978), *The Tempest* (UK, 1979), *Caravaggio* and *Edward II* (UK/Japan, 1991). Whereas Douglas and Davies both began their filmmaking careers by mining their own personal histories, it wasn't until the later part of his career that Jarman completed a trilogy of boldly experimental films that engage with his own life and, to a lesser extent, those of his relatives: *The Last of England* (UK/West Germany, 1989), *The Garden* (UK/Germany/Japan, 1990) and *Blue* (UK/Japan, 1993). *The Last of England* is an 'all-out assault on the senses', in which Jarman combines nightmarish images of a post-apocalyptic wasteland with footage taken from his parents' and grandparents' home movies.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, most of *The Last of England* was shot on Super 8mm film, which is widely regarded as a 'home movie' format rather than a professional one. In *The Garden*, Jarman intersperses footage taken from his real life (his AIDS-ravaged body, his home, and his garden) with a series of surreal visual images, including one sequence in which the director lies on a bed in the sea, surrounded by nymph-like figures carrying torches. In *Blue*, Jarman's final and most autobiographical film, the director juxtaposes the image of a blue screen with a voiceover narration drawn largely from his journals and performed by the actor Nigel Terry, one of Jarman's long-standing collaborators. The voiceover script explores the director's views on a range of subjects, particularly art and the AIDS virus that would result in his death four months after the film was first released. Terry also provided the voice-over for *The Last of England*, with Jarman appearing as himself, enshrining the actor's voice as the director's onscreen voice. At the beginning of the film Jarman is shown as a 'Prospero-like figure', sitting alone at a writing

desk at night, inscribing him as the 'author' of the text from whose consciousness the film's eclectic images seem to flow.<sup>31</sup> Jarman's appearances also mean that he is foregrounded within his films to an even greater extent than either Douglas or Davies, who rely upon alter egos to represent themselves dramatically.



Derek Jarman appears in his film *The Garden*.

Collectively, these three filmmakers demonstrate the creative possibilities for a stylistically adventurous form of autobiographical cinema. However, it is clear that Davies is more interested in the autobiographical subject than Jarman who draws upon a range of idiosyncratic intellectual and artistic concepts, from the state of the nation in *The Last of England* to the treatment of homosexuals in *The Garden* to the artistic properties of the colour blue in his film of the same title. Equally, Davies's approach to filming his life story is more wide-ranging than Douglas's as he adopts different formal approaches for each of his films. While Douglas's aesthetic remains relatively consistent throughout his autobiographical trilogy, there is a clear stylistic development between *Children* and *Death and Transfiguration*. In my discussion of Davies's autobiographical works it will be revealing to analyse the various approaches that he adopts in order to render his life story as works of cinema.



### ***The Terence Davies Trilogy: Inventing One's Life***

In 1976, Davies directed *Children*, a film which encapsulates many of the key themes that would characterise his later, more famous works. Simultaneously the most autobiographical and the least stylistically interesting film of Davies's trilogy, *Children* depicts the harsh greyness of his working-class childhood in Liverpool during the 1950s. Like Davies's childhood self, Tucker (Philip Mawdsley) is a lonely, isolated boy, who struggles to reconcile his burgeoning awareness of his homosexuality with his Catholic upbringing. At school, he is ridiculed by fellow students for his perceived difference, and is barely tolerated by his unsympathetic teachers. At home, both Tucker and his mother (Valerie Lilley) are tyrannized by his brutish father (Nick Stringer) who is slowly succumbing to an agonising death from bowel cancer. Even though Davies is largely faithful to the factual details of his childhood, he concedes that *Children* and his later child-centred film *The Long Day Closes* are not blow-by-blow accounts of his early life, both employing a 'great deal of elision and indeed poetic licence'.<sup>32</sup> It is important to emphasise, at this point, that elision and poetic licence (the freedom to depart from the facts in order to create a particular effect) are two of the defining features of literary adaptation. For example, the narrative arcs of novels usually need to be compressed in order to fit into a two-hour film format. In her review of *Oliver Twist* (David Lean, UK, 1948), the critic Dilys Powell opined that the director is 'careful in the presentation of Dickens's novel (since skeleton is all a film has time for)'.<sup>33</sup>

In *Children*, Davies *adapts* his childhood – omitting, amending and inventing new details – in order to achieve particular artistic objectives at the expense of factual accuracy. Tucker is portrayed an only child, whilst in reality Davies was the youngest of ten children. The effect of this revision is to starkly emphasise the central protagonist's sense of isolation and the lack of empathy or affection available to him. Davies also manipulates the chronology of his early life by postponing Tucker's father's death by several years: in reality, Davies experienced his father's death as a six-year-old, while in the film this occurs when Tucker is at secondary school. Whereas *The Long Day Closes* dramatises the idyllic period

between his father's death and the beginning of secondary school – a time in which Davies discovered his love of film, and lived harmoniously with his family – *Children* omits this period entirely, meaning that the father's domestic tyranny is prolonged and coalesces with the persecution he endured at school. Once again, the effect is to underline the stark bleakness of Tucker's/Davies's childhood. Thus the film serves as a distillation of the despair that Davies suffered as a child. Clearly, *Children* is not an accurate portrayal of Davies's childhood, but rather a calculated mixture of fact and fiction.

Despite its considerable dramatic power, *Children* is manifestly the work of a talented but inexperienced director. The film's uniform bleakness means that it lacks the texture, range and sophistication of the subsequent parts of the *Trilogy* – *Madonna and Child* and *Death and Transfiguration* – which combine images of extreme horror and misery with moments of extraordinary aesthetic beauty. Equally, Davies's reliance on a static camera means that the film lacks the fluidity of his later films, rendering it somewhat lethargic and stiff. The most obvious example of this is a static shot of Tucker and his mother travelling on the bus which feels unnecessarily prolonged at a lengthy two minutes and twenty seconds. This point has been conceded by Davies himself who refers to this sequence as his 'angora sweater' shot 'because by the time it runs through the projector, you can knit one'.<sup>34</sup> The scene is shot in medium close-up with the mother in the foreground staring blankly at the front (to the right of the screen), whilst Tucker is facing away from the camera out of the window. The melancholy nature of the music played over the static shot (an oboe solo from Shostakovich's 'Symphony No. 8') and the mother's subsequent collapse into tears, suggests that Davies hoped to communicate the mother's anguish about her abusive husband. In the published script for *Children*, Davies describes the mother's spirit as 'utterly broken'.<sup>35</sup> The shot is ultimately ineffective, however, because nothing changes except the scenery through the bus window. A more effective dwelling shot occurs later on in the film with Tucker and his parents sat together in the living room next to the fireplace. This short scene skilfully depicts the physical and psychological abuse that Tucker and his mother have

been forced to endure at the hands of his father. The characters' stillness is motivated by a desire not to displease the father, who faces away from the camera, thereby making his mood more difficult to interpret or predict. Here Davies creates narrative tension by not filming the father's face which means that the viewer is unable to interpret the character's facial expression or predict his behaviour.



A scene of domestic discomfort in *Children*.

With its focus on a troubled boy, austere mise-en-scène and reliance on a static camera to reflect the trauma of an unhappy adolescence, *Children* bears a striking resemblance to *My Childhood*, the first part of Bill Douglas's *Trilogy*, which has been hailed as the benchmark of Scottish art cinema, its contemplative aesthetic influencing later Scottish filmmakers such as Lynne Ramsay (*Ratcatcher*, UK/France, 1999) and Peter Mullan (*Orphans*, UK, 1998). But Davies's shift in focus – from childhood to middle-age (*Madonna and Child*) and late age (*Death and Transfiguration*) – and the increasing fluidity of his camerawork means these latter films are significantly different from *My Ain Folk* and *My Way Home* which depict Douglas's progression from adolescence to young manhood whilst maintaining the aesthetic of *My Childhood*.

Both *Children* and *My Childhood* share a visual austerity and a commitment to portraying the psychological states of alienated children that places them within a tradition of European art-house cinema that includes such films as *Germany Year Zero/Germania anno*

zero (Roberto Rossellini, Italy/France/Germany, 1949), *The Silence/Tystnaden* (Ingmar Bergman, Sweden, 1963) and *Mouchette* (Robert Bresson, France, 1967). It's important to clarify that Davies had not seen any of these films before he worked on *Children* as his familiarity with European art cinema was extremely limited before he became a student at the NFS.<sup>36</sup> Although Davies does not allude to these films deliberately, they are worth discussing because numerous critics have identified parallels between Davies's films and those of the European art-house auteurs venerated by *Cahiers du Cinéma*; however, these assessments have often been left tantalisingly unsubstantiated. For example, Everett claims that Davies's *Trilogy* uses 'stark, powerful imagery recalling Bresson and Bergman' but does not elaborate any further.<sup>37</sup> For an informed audience, Davies's portrayal of the pain and bewilderment of a powerless childhood invites comparison with the films of Rossellini, Bergman and Bresson, both in terms of style and theme.



Tucker (Phillip Mawdsley) is isolated from his schoolmates in *Children*.

Throughout *Children*, Davies depicts his younger self as being inextricably cut off from his classmates as a result of his nascent homosexuality. A prime example of this would be the scene of the medical check-up in the school gym, in which Tucker is filmed in isolation from the other four boys who sit and giggle together. The fact that the characters are stripped to their underwear highlights not only Tucker's vulnerability but also his sexual difference from his classmates. At other points in the film, Tucker sits alone in his bedroom

which offers a haven (of sorts) from the domestic abuse of his father and the despair brought about by his later death. Similarly, each of the child protagonists of *Germany Year Zero*, *The Silence* and *Mouchette* are depicted as lonely and estranged from their peer groups.



Edmund (Edmund Moeschke) is a tiny, helpless figure in the ruins of post-war Berlin in *Germany Year Zero*.

The final film in Roberto Rossellini's unofficial 'war trilogy' – the other two being *Rome, Open City/Roma città aperta* (Italy, 1945) and *Paisan/Paisà* (Italy, 1946) – *Germany Year Zero* was filmed amongst the devastation of post-WWII Berlin. Indeed, Rossellini begins the film with a lengthy tracking shot of ruins in order to establish the extent to which the city has been ravaged. *Germany Year Zero* focuses upon the arduous life of the thirteen-year-old protagonist Edmund (Edmund Moeschke) who wanders this ruined landscape in a desperate attempt to earn the money needed to support his family, particularly his ailing father (Ernst Pittschau). Rossellini's film has been described as offering an 'existentialist vision of individual alienation' and this is supported by the way the director frames the tiny figure of Edmund against barely standing buildings, emphasising the character's vulnerability and isolation.<sup>38</sup> Due to the exigencies of his daily life, 'the familiar rites de passage have become speeded up and horribly distorted'<sup>39</sup>, rendering the protagonist 'prematurely aged'.<sup>40</sup> As a result of this perceived difference, the other children bar Edmund from joining in with their games and he becomes an isolated figure like Davies's alter ego Tucker.

*Mouchette* depicts the daily struggles of a young girl (Nadine Nortier) growing up in an isolated village with her alcoholic father (Paul Hebert) and bedridden mother (Marie Cardinal), in an abusive home where she is obliged to take care of her infant brother and do all the housework. Like Rossellini's Edmund, Bresson's *Mouchette* is depicted as an 'oppressed child in a hostile world', who is expected to take on adult responsibilities from a premature age.<sup>41</sup> *Mouchette* is equally alienated at school where she is mocked by her classmates and chastised by her teacher. Like Davies and Rossellini, Bresson conveys the character's estrangement in spatial terms by depicting her as being physically remote from her classmates. The suicides of the young protagonists in the final scenes of *Germany Year Zero* and *Mouchette* serve as the ultimate expression of their marginalisation.



Solitary children. Left: The eponymous heroine (Nadine Nortier) of *Mouchette*. Right: Johan (Jörgen Lindström) in *The Silence*.

*The Silence* is the final film in Bergman's unofficial trilogy of films questioning man's relationship with God; the other two are *Through a Glass Darkly/Såsom i en spegel* (Sweden, 1961) and *Winter Light*. The film focuses on the tense relationship between two emotionally estranged sisters, the young and sensual Anna (Gunnel Lindblom) and the emotionally repressed Anna (Ingrid Thulin), who rent a two-room apartment in a once-grandiose hotel. Neglected by his mother Anna, the ten-year-old protagonist Johan (Jörgen Lindström) is another alienated child protagonist, and Bergman depicts the character's

loneliness by having him wander the corridors of the hotel. Once again, the young character's isolation is rendered in spatial terms.

Davies directed *Madonna and Child* as his graduation project while he was a student at the National Film School between 1977 and 1980. Once again, Davies draws upon his own personal experiences and uses Tucker (Terry O'Sullivan) as his cinematic alter ego. In *Madonna and Child*, Tucker is portrayed as a miserable middle-aged office clerk, living with his mother, and torn between his furtive homosexual desires and his abiding sense of Catholic morality. While Davies also worked in an office for twelve frustrating years after leaving school at the age of fifteen, *Madonna and Child* veers from autobiographical fact towards autobiographical hypothesis by positing an alternative future in which Tucker remains irrevocably entrenched within his bleak existence, without any hope of escape. The casting of Terry O'Sullivan as Davies's alter ego here is particularly effective in this regard as his gaunt, haunted face conveys the damage that the character's life of economic, religious and sexual disappointment has had upon him. The way in which Davies plays with the factual circumstances of his own life constitutes a form of adaptation: he has altered the narrative of his life for dramatic effect.



The gaunt-faced Terry O'Sullivan as the middle-aged Tucker in *Madonna and Child*.

Stylistically, *Madonna and Child* represents a progression from the formal simplicity of *Children*, anticipating the spatial and temporal complexity of *Death and Transfiguration*.

Whereas *Children* is shot predominately with a static camera, *Madonna and Child* makes extensive use of long tracking shots, imbuing the film with a greater sense of fluidity and movement. Thus, if *Children* was clearly inspired by *My Childhood*, then *Madonna and Child* represents a 'critical break with the still frame of Douglas'.<sup>42</sup> Davies puts this technique to great effect in the office sequence, skilfully conveying the stagnant, stultifying environment of his old workplace by slowly tracking across the room, filming the actors as they write in ledgers and on typewriters. Arguably the film's most celebrated and effective tracking shot takes place in the church, where Catholic iconography is combined with a pornographic conversation between Tucker and a tattooist (Paul Barber) he is trying to convince to tattoo his penis. Not only does the scene dramatise the opposition between Davies's sexuality and his Catholic upbringing, it is also blackly comic. The ribald conversation between the two men ('I...er...I want my bollocks tattooed'; 'I won't touch a prick for less than twenty notes') undermines the sanctity of the religious imagery on display, such as the first six Stations of the Cross, creating an 'aural-visual blasphemy'.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, this juxtaposition between image and sound foreshadows Davies's later documentary *Of Time and the City*, in which the director is able to create dramatic tension by layering his witty and irreverent monologue over archival footage of Liverpool.

In *Death and Transfiguration*, Davies continues to explore the realm of autobiographical hypothesis first probed in *Madonna and Child* by envisioning his painful death as an elderly man in a geriatric hospital. Tucker's slow, undignified demise is consistent with the bleak outlook of his previous two films, with their pessimistic view of homosexuality. Indeed, Davies has described the *Trilogy* as proffering a 'very bleak view of gay sexuality and how it destroys someone'.<sup>44</sup> The last two instalments of Davies's trilogy not only portray autobiographical hypotheses but what the director terms his 'terrors', his nightmares transformed into cinematic imagery.<sup>45</sup>





Wilfrid Brambell as the elderly Tucker in *Death and Transfiguration*.

Whilst *Madonna and Child* is undoubtedly a bolder, more confident film than *Children*, it is in *Death and Transfiguration* that Davies begins to fully explore the possibilities of traversing filmic time and space. In fact, one might argue that it is with this particular film that he achieved the distinctive filmmaking style that he would use in his later works. Davies first experimented with different time frames in *Children*, in which he cut between images of the young Tucker to an older version in his twenties suffering from depression (Robin Hooper), suggesting that the trauma he endured as a child has branded him indelibly. Indeed, the entire trilogy 'diagnoses the lasting damage of sexual and religious oppression'.<sup>46</sup> *Death and Transfiguration* serves as both an ending and a summary of the trilogy, depicting the character throughout the various stages of his life. Furthermore, the film is far more inventive than *Children* in its use of time travel, making greater use of flashbacks and flashforwards. In one sequence, Davies pans from the elderly Tucker (Wilfrid Brambell) sitting in a wheelchair in a hospital corridor to a window streaked with rain, then pans back to the middle-aged Tucker standing in the same place. The temporal fluidity of this scene clearly foreshadows techniques that Davies would use in *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes*. Furthermore, Davies's growing preoccupation with time places his work within a European cinematic tradition.



The hospital corridor scene from *Death and Transfiguration*.

Everett has characterised European art cinema as being 'fascinated by time, and shaped by a desire to return to the past, by an almost obsessive need to explore and interrogate memory and the process of remembering, apparently convinced that therein may be found the key to present identity'.<sup>47</sup> This definition seems equally appropriate as a description of Davies's *Trilogy*, particularly the third instalment. With its shifting, overlapping time frames, *Death and Transfiguration* bears a striking resemblance to *Hiroshima mon amour/Hiroshima, My Love* (Alain Resnais, France/Japan, 1959). In this stylistically bold film, scenes of a love affair between a young French woman (Emmanuelle Riva) and a Japanese man (Eiji Okada) are interwoven with flashbacks from the female protagonist's love affair with a German soldier during WWII, the latter's subsequent death and her own public humiliation when she has her head shaved by the townspeople. Resnais juxtaposes the French woman's loss of hair with that of the Japanese women whose hair fell out as a result of radiation from the Hiroshima bombing. The process of remembering is fundamental to both *Death and Transfiguration* and *Hiroshima mon amour*, as they each explore 'the way that past and present are not discrete, but continually impinge, one upon the other'.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, the permeability of time is clearly demonstrated in the aforementioned scene from Davies's film which shows two incarnations of Tucker occupying the same space at different points in their life.



*Hiroshima mon amour*. Left: 1950s Japan. Right: 1940s France.

John Caughie has used the term 'autobiographical fiction' in relation to Davies's early personal films, and this phrase seems apposite for a trilogy in which so much of the life depicted has been invented by the director.<sup>49</sup> Whereas *Children* is largely faithful to the details of Davies's early life (albeit with some chronological rearranging), *Madonna and Child* and *Death and Transfiguration* both deviate from autobiographical fact into the realm of autobiographical hypothesis. In these three films, Davies offers a fictionalised version of his past and future that reinvents the circumstances of his own life for dramatic effect.

### ***Distant Voices, Still Lives: Other People's Memories***

Davies's next film, *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, represents a more formally and intellectually sophisticated engagement with the idea of autobiographical cinema than his previous works. The feature consists of two shorter films – *Distant Voices* was shot in 1986, and *Still Lives* in 1988 – in which Davies portrays birth, marriage and death in a working-class Liverpoolian family during the 1940s and 50s. Despite being impressed with *Distant Voices*, the film's executive producer Colin MacCabe realised that a 45-minute film might prove popular at film festivals but would struggle to reach any wider audiences.<sup>50</sup> Fortunately, Davies had previously expressed a desire to make a film about his family set approximately ten years in the future from *Distant Voices* and MacCabe realised that these two films put together would form a feature-length film that could be shown in cinemas around the world.



Family rituals. Left: A wedding in *Distant Voices*. Right: A christening in *Still Lives*.

Each of the two short films is framed by the rituals of traditional family life: *Distant Voices* centres on Eileen's (Angela Walsh) wedding, which is tightly interwoven with the funeral of the father, while *Still Lives* begins with the birth and christening of Maisie's (Lorraine Ashbourne) daughter and ends on the evening of Tony's (Dean Williams) wedding day. Like the *Trilogy* and Davies's later film *The Long Day Closes*, *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* has been described by most commentators as a 'work of autobiography,' part of the director's ongoing excavation of his early life.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, Orr has suggested that the latter film combined with *The Long Day Closes* and *Of Time and the City* constitutes a second autobiographical trilogy of sorts.<sup>52</sup>

Unlike Davies's earlier films, however, the autobiographical status of *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* is rendered problematic by the fact that it contains no version of the director himself, prompting some commentators, such as Jonathan Rosenbaum, to question the validity of the film's autobiographical status.<sup>53</sup> Whereas the *Trilogy* has Robert Tucker and *The Long Day Closes* Bud, there is no representative for Davies within the film, and the focus is placed instead on the director's three elder siblings – Eileen, Maisie and Tony – and their memories of growing up. Davies's decision to foreground his siblings and remove himself from the diegesis altogether might represent his attempt to compensate for their absence from the earlier films. Since *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* is primarily based on the experiences of Davies's siblings rather than his own, the film 'stands out at a double distance from the past'.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, some commentators have argued that it is this very

distance that gives the film its dramatic power. John Orr, for example, argues that *Distant Voices, Still Lives* 'creates a double register in which the subjectivities of the family weave in and out of one another as phantasmic memories'.<sup>55</sup>

However, since these stories were told to Davies as a child – he refers to them as 'second-hand'<sup>56</sup> – they have been internalised by the director, becoming part of his inner mental landscape. It is important to recognise that while some of the events dramatised in the film occurred before Davies was born (e.g. the scenes of the three siblings as children, most memorably the air raid), many of the events depicted occurred in the director's presence as a small child (e.g. the relentless domestic abuse his mother [Freda Dowie] endured at the hands of his father [Pete Postlethwaite]). For that reason, *Distant Voices, Still Lives* embodies a synthesis of personal and 'second-hand' memories. In other words, he has treated his own memories and those of his family as narrative material to be adapted into film. While the film does not conform to Lejeune's theory that in autobiography the author, the narrator, and the protagonist must be the same person, *Distant Voices, Still Lives* might instead be regarded as a work of indirect autobiographical cinema.

Unlike *The Terence Davies Trilogy*, which spans decades and depicts the director's middle and late age before they occurred (Davies was in his thirties during the making of these short films), *Distant Voices, Still Lives* is set entirely in the 1940s and 1950s. What this film shares with its predecessors, however, is a fascination with memory and how it can be depicted cinematically. In the introduction of *A Modest Pageant*, Davies elaborates upon how he originally conceived the film's structure:

Content dictates form, never the other way round. And as *Distant Voices, Still Lives* was about memory I realised that the form of the films should be cyclical not linear. This decided what could be left in and what had to go. The film constantly turns back on itself, like the ripples in a pool when a stone is thrown into it. The ripples are the memory.<sup>57</sup>

The 'ripples' to which Davies refers are the unexplained temporal and spatial slippages which occur throughout the film. These transitions are intended to reflect the

associative nature of memory and the ways in which an emotional or sensory stimulus can prompt other reminiscences. Indeed, Davies claims that Eileen's wedding and the memory of her late father is the 'pebble dropped in the pool' that sets in motion the film's intricate pattern of personal and collective memories.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, *Distant Voices, Still Lives* provides an exploration of the relationship between memory and the visual image and how photography can function as a register of the past.

Numerous commentators have likened the experience of watching *Distant Voices, Still Lives* to 'turning the pages of a photograph album'.<sup>59</sup> Davies achieves this effect through his use of colour and the ways in which he frames the shots. By shooting the film with a coral filter to desaturate the image's colour (except the red of lipstick), Davies emphasises the film's status as memory whilst avoiding the cosy nostalgia of sepia. Furthermore, his use of tableaux vivant creates images that often resemble a series of family portraits brought to life. Photography is indelibly linked to the past because of the way it renders an image at a particular moment in time: in his seminal work *Camera Lucida* (1980), Roland Barthes refers to 'the that-has-been, or the having-been-there' of the person or object captured in the photograph.<sup>60</sup> Davies's 'family portraits', in which the characters gaze at the camera whilst in a fixed pose, share a dramatic power akin to early photography. The Czech artist Emil Orlik claimed that 'the length of time the subject had to remain still is the main reason why these photographs ... resemble well drawn or painted pictures and produce a more vivid and lasting impression on the beholder than more recent photographs'.<sup>61</sup> The lengthy duration of Davies's static shots accounts for their hypnotic power. Barthes describes the essential difference between the still image and film as mechanical since the latter's 'continuous series of images' means that the 'pose is swept away'.<sup>62</sup>



A photograph of Davies's real father occupies the central position in this scene from *Distant Voices, Still Lives*.

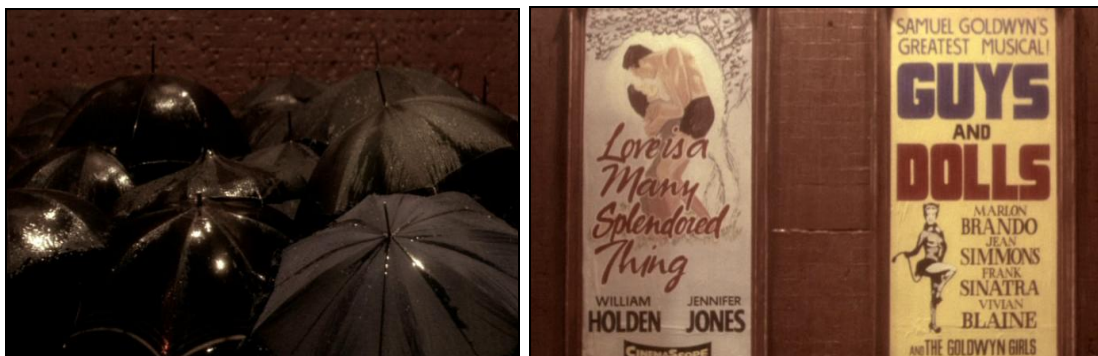
The first time we see the four protagonists in *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, they are dressed in black for the father's funeral: the mother is sat down and she is flanked on either side by her three standing children. Everett has observed that the real photograph of Davies's father – which appears in the centre of the shot – seems to 'dominate and structure the family group'.<sup>63</sup> Davies also emphasises the importance of this image by having the camera slowly zoom in to frame it in extreme close-up as the family departs for the funeral. The photograph 'establishes a link with a 'reality' which lies outside the normal parameters of film' since it brings the actual person into a dramatic rendering of the past where real people are played by actors.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, the image testifies to the existence of the father outside the film's diegesis, thus exemplifying the photograph's 'traditional role as a form of ontological proof'.<sup>65</sup>

In *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, Davies's purpose is not simply to re-create the past as painstakingly as possible but to adapt his family's reminiscences into a film that is dramatically satisfying. Orr perceptively describes the film as a 'mosaic of fragments, fragments of time remembered, selected, isolated and recomposed'.<sup>66</sup> The film's greatest deviation from fact is the configuration of the family: whereas the director was the youngest of seven surviving children, only three are depicted in the film. Davies has stated that he chose to reduce the size of the family because he felt that as a relatively inexperienced director, with only three short films to his name at this point, he would not be able to



adequately dramatise such a large number of characters in sufficient depth. The main advantage of portraying three siblings as opposed to seven is that it allows for greater dramatic focus. In addition to being an adaptation of his childhood, *Distant Voices, Still Lives* also contains intertextual relationships with other films.

Unlike Davies's next film, *The Long Day Closes*, *Distant Voices, Still Lives* is not saturated with allusions and quotations from other films. Instead, it is the film's formal properties that are reminiscent of other cinematic works such as *Young at Heart*. There is, however, one particularly memorable sequence in which Davies alludes to three different Hollywood movies. The scene begins with an image of umbrellas being splashed with rain, which is a deliberate visual allusion to the iconic Hollywood musical *Singin' in the Rain*. After lingering on the umbrellas for ten seconds, the camera slowly cranes upwards to reveal two film posters glued to the cinema wall advertising *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing* and *Guys and Dolls* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, USA, 1955) respectively. At this point the film cuts to the interior of the cinema and a wide shot of the audience gazing at the screen before the camera slowly pans to a medium close-up shot of Eileen and Maisie sitting in the audience watching *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing* through a veil of tears. Rather than incorporating visual clips from the 1955 tear-jerker into the scene, Davies uses a musical extract from the film's famous title song to signify what the two sisters are watching. He alludes to these films not only because they were released during the period in which the film is set (the early to mid-1950s) but for their thematic resonances.



Allusions to Hollywood cinema in *Distant Voices, Still Lives*.



Davies has chosen to quote from *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing* because it exemplifies the type of melodrama – or ‘tearjerker’ – that Hollywood specialised in during the 1950s. Set in Hong Kong, the latter film depicts the story of a widowed Eurasian doctor (Jennifer Jones) who falls in love with a married-but-separated American reporter (William Holden) during the Chinese Civil War in the 1940s. While the film’s critical reputation has dimmed over the last few decades, at the time it was a significant critical and commercial success, receiving eight Oscar nominations and won three, including one for its title song which was a number one single in the USA for The Four Aces. The film’s popularity was largely due to its idealised depiction of romantic love: the star-crossed couple fall in love but are prevented from being together by a series of obstacles, and the hero’s subsequent death means that their unconsummated union is perfectly preserved within the heroine’s memory. By sandwiching the cinema sequence between two scenes that portray the bleak reality of the sisters’ lives, *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing* is used as an ironic counterpoint. In the preceding scene, Eileen and her husband Dave (Michael Starke) return home from the pub and the latter urinates against a wall before entering their home, whilst Eileen nags at him to come inside: the lack of affection and understanding between the two characters is palpable. In the following scene, Davies uses an overhead shot of Tony and Maisie’s husband George (Vincent Maguire) falling in slow motion through adjacent sections of the same skylight. The mesmerising beauty of the image – the glass shards seem to dance in the air and sparkle like jewels – contrasts with the traumatic nature of the event being depicted. At this point Davies shows Maisie running out into the rain before cutting to an image of her sat in tears by her husband’s hospital bed. Davies’s allusion to *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing* underlines ‘the gap and tensions between the romantic view of heterosexual love purveyed by Hollywood and the grim reality’.<sup>67</sup> In other words, Hollywood movies provide a consoling fantasy and an escape from reality.



Jennifer Jones and William Holden as star-crossed lovers in *Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing*.

*Singin' in the Rain* and *Guys and Dolls* are both iconic examples of the Hollywood musical genre which enthralled Davies as a lonely child growing up in post-war Liverpool. As Dyer has noted, musicals were conceived of, by filmmakers and audiences, as 'pure entertainment'.<sup>68</sup> *Singin' in the Rain* depicts a love story between a film star (Gene Kelly) and a young chorus girl (Debbie Reynolds) during Hollywood's conversion from silent cinema to sound in the 1920s. Adapted from the eponymous 1950 musical, *Guys and Dolls* portrays a gambler, Sky Masterson (Marlon Brando), who bets that he can take the evangelical Christian Sergeant Sarah Brown (Jean Simmons) to Havana, Cuba. Like *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing*, these films portray a glossy and idealised view of heterosexual romance in which the well-matched hero and heroine are initially hostile towards each other but gradually overcome their differences to fall in love. Once again, Davies's invocation of these films serves to emphasise the disparity between the reassuring fantasies offered by Hollywood and the harsh realities of ordinary life. Consequently, an audience familiar with these three Hollywood films will be able to detect the bittersweet irony of Davies's cinematic allusions.



Hollywood romance. Left: Don Lockwood (Gene Kelly) and Kathy Selden (Debbie Reynolds) in *Singin' in the Rain*. Right: Sky Masterson (Marlon Brando) and Sarah Brown (Jean Simmons) in *Guys and Dolls*.

Like his earlier short films, *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* is a work of autobiographical adaptation in which Davies has converted lived experience into film. After portraying the individual and collective memories of his family the latter film, Davies returned to the subject of his own boyhood in *The Long Day Closes*.

### ***The Long Day Closes: Re-creating Childhood***

In certain respects *The Long Day Closes* represents Davies's most genuinely autobiographical film to date. Firstly, it is the most factually accurate representation of the director's early upbringing, focusing on a single year in Davies's adolescence (1955-56). Whereas *Madonna and Child* and *Death and Transfiguration* both ventured into the realm of autobiographical hypothesis, *The Long Day Closes* depicts the loneliness and alienation that Davies felt as an adolescent. Secondly, the Davies figure – the eleven-year-old Bud (Leigh McCormack) – is more explicitly foregrounded in this film than in his previous works. While the director's autobiographical persona also served as the central protagonist of the *Trilogy*, I would argue that *The Long Day Closes* provides a far more intimate and penetrating insight into his imaginative life. Since the film is filtered through Davies's consciousness, it blends together the director's memories, fantasies and obsessions, to 'produce a form of hyper-realism, reflecting both the external world and the internal world of the filmmaker'.<sup>69</sup>

Like *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, *The Long Day Closes* is composed of a mosaic-like assemblage of memories as opposed to a linear narrative. However, whereas Davies's previous film had a diffuse structure which entwined the memories of his three eldest siblings over more than a decade, *The Long Day Closes* focuses on Davies's own recollections of a much narrower time period. The brief period between 1955 and 56 represents a crucial turning point in Davies's life: his transition from childhood to adolescence. It is during this period that Bud leaves the safe, feminised space of primary school (with its angelic nuns in their white habits) and enters the threatening, masculinised space of secondary school, where he would endure bullying and the icy disdain of teachers. It is also during this period that he begins to become aware of his incipient homosexuality. When one of the bare-chested builders that he has been watching furtively from the upstairs window winks at him, Bud's face takes on a pained expression that indicates his sense of desire, shame and confusion. While this brief description might suggest that the film is an overtly pessimistic depiction of childhood angst, *The Long Day Closes* is by far the sunniest instalment of Davies's autobiographical project. Liberated from the physical and mental abuse of his father, *The Long Day Closes* portrays a halcyon period where Davies, his mother and siblings lived together harmoniously in the family home.

Although *The Long Day Closes* has been praised as a highly formalised and self-reflexive exploration of male memory, its celebration of the rituals of working-class life has been criticised for its 'sentimental nostalgia'.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, this distaste for sentimentality is one of the major driving forces in John Caughie's critique of the film. One of the enduring criticisms of autobiographies in general is that it is essentially a narcissistic genre, prone to self-glorification; writing on the subject of nineteenth-century autobiography, the scholar Isaac D'Israeli referred to it as the 'ebriety [intoxication] of vanity, and the delirium of egotism'.<sup>71</sup> Equally, Caughie detects within *The Long Day Closes* a 'kind of self-absorption and knowing self-awareness' which he finds 'perversely narcissistic, admiring too much its own reflections'.<sup>72</sup> One of the most interesting features of Caughie's analysis is the

distinction he makes between 'autobiographical fiction', as embodied by *The Long Day Closes*, and 'autobiographical fact', as embodied by *The Bill Douglas's Trilogy*<sup>73</sup>, with some of the stylistic features that characterise the latter including an

unstated anger and grief at the hardness of poverty ... An anger about the deprivation of memory and of the past which is absent from gentler nostalgias ... a gestural condensation, an absence of sentiment about the past, a stark lyricism of imagery, and an elliptical and expressive silence which can refer either to a deep anger or buried tenderness.<sup>74</sup>

In contrast to Douglas's 'stark lyricism' and 'absence of sentiment', Caughie suggests that *The Long Day Closes*, by virtue of its exquisite formalism – its stately tracking shots, its dissolves, its painterly mise-en-scène, and its perfectly framed compositions – contributes to an 'aestheticisation of drabness'.<sup>75</sup> A key example of this is an extended shot of light patterns shining and fading on a carpet which was jeered by numerous critics at Cannes for its perceived self-importance. In effect, Caughie argues that Douglas's aesthetic – with its static camera, black-and-white photography and blunt cuts – is more truthful than Davies's. Caughie concedes, however, that the latter might be 'trying to do the most difficult thing: to construct a dramatically interesting image of a happy working-class childhood, free of oppressive and brutal patriarchy, safe in the support of a caring family'.<sup>76</sup>

In some respects *The Long Day Closes* resembles an idealised portrayal of childhood, but this underestimates the vein of existential bleakness that undercuts the film's romanticism. Throughout, Bud is depicted as a loner who is emotionally isolated from those around him. Davies punctuates the film with images of Bud shot through window frames, bannisters and iron railings, symbolising his feelings of guilt over his nascent homosexuality. Moreover, there is the sense that Bud's age – he is the youngest of his siblings – and his sexuality doubly preclude him from the outside world of his siblings with its courtship rituals.



Bud (Leigh McCormack) is framed behind railings and banisters in *The Long Day Closes*.

Davies has spoken on numerous occasions of the special role the cinema played during his formative years. For this precise reason, *The Long Day Closes* is a film obsessed with movie culture: the deserted street scene features a poster for the Hollywood religious epic *The Robe* (Henry Koster, USA, 1953); Bud pesters his mother (Marjorie Yates) for elevenpence so that he can go to the pictures; he waits outside the cinema in the pouring rain long before the film starts; he watches a film with an expression of sheer delight on his face, his figure backlit by the projector beam behind him; he begs his sister Helen to take him to see *Young at Heart* at the Forum; the comic figure Curly (Jimmy Wilde) performs impressions of Peter Lorre, Edward G. Robinson and James Cagney, etc. Despite the cine-literacy of the film, *The Long Day Closes* does not feature any visual clips from other films. During our interview, Davies proposed that 'You don't watch other films in films: it breaks the illusion ... It's like someone looking at the camera and talking directly to [it]. But much ... better is to have an aural memory of it'.<sup>77</sup> Instead Davies restricts himself to audio clips, so Margaret Rutherford, Alec Guinness and Orson Welles become the voices of his childhood past. Davies and Douglas both share a passion for the cinema of their youth, and their films *The Long Day Closes* and *My Ain Folk* offer a 'profound engagement with the cinema as a medium'.<sup>78</sup>

In the pre-titles sequence of *My Ain Folk*, Douglas uses a vibrant Technicolor scene from *Lassie Come Home* (Fred M. Wilcox, USA, 1943) which depicts a 'Hollywoodised' vision of the Scottish landscape. The next shot reveals this to be a projected cinema image,

a colour film within a black-and-white film. The film then cuts to a close-up of a young boy – Jamie’s half-brother, Tommy – gazing through tear-stained eyes at the screen. The film then cuts to the coal mine that dominates the village of Newcraighall, surrounded by what appears to be a door frame – as un-Hollywood an image as it’s possible to get. There are shots of the pit head and a group of miners who, after a brief pause, file into the mine shaft. The film then cuts back to the framed landscape and we realise that this is the last thing the miners see before descending into the darkness of the mine.

The effect of this short sequence is to convey the magic of cinema which offers a temporary ‘escape from the brutality of life in Newcraighall’.<sup>79</sup> The juxtaposition of the Technicolor film-within-a-film and the bleak Scottish landscape highlights the unassailable gap between reality and fantasy. The frame of the cinema screen is contrasted with the frame of the pit elevator: whereas the former image provides an image of emotional and imaginative fulfilment, the latter offers a vision of reality that is restrictive and claustrophobic. This is evoked in *The Long Day Closes*, where the cinema also serves as the ten-year-old Bud’s greatest refuge from the fears and doubts engendered by his homosexuality.

Two Hollywood films, in particular, are alluded to throughout *The Long Day Closes*: *The Magnificent Ambersons* and *Meet Me in St Louis*. Since these films were both released before Davies’s birth in 1945 they are not quoted for reasons of historical verisimilitude. Instead, the director has chosen to allude to these two films intentionally in order to trade upon their thematic resonances. Despite belonging to different genres – *Meet Me in St. Louis* is a musical comedy whereas *The Magnificent Ambersons* is mainly tragic – they share a similar setting (America in the early 1900s before the onset of WWI) and both serve as elegies for a largely forgotten world. In *Meet Me in St. Louis*, the Smith family’s idyllic way of life is endangered when the father’s (Leon Ames) employment forces him to relocate to New York. While the film contains many joyful moments – Judy Garland’s exuberant rendition of ‘The Trolley Song’, for example, expresses the elation of falling in love – several scenes are suffused with a sense of melancholy for the family’s endangered world, most

famously the scene in which Esther (Judy Garland) sings 'Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas' to her teary-eyed little sister Tootie (Margaret O'Brien) in order to console her about their imminent departure from St. Louis.

Davies purposefully alludes to Minnelli's film throughout the course of *The Long Day Closes* because of its emotional and thematic content. For example, an extended sound clip from *Meet Me in St. Louis* is played over a scene in which Bud watches his older brother John (Nicholas Lamont) kiss his girlfriend goodnight. The clip in question is taken from the scene in which Esther has been escorted around her house by John Truett (Tom Drake), her prospective beau, to extinguish the lights before she goes to bed. The intimate nature of this scene prompts John to tentatively express his attraction to Esther by quoting the opening lyrics from the song 'Over the Bannister', which in turn prompts Esther to sing the rest of the song. Davies's use of this audio clip is extremely poignant because it serves to underline Bud's detachment from the world of heterosexual romance. This exclusion is visually represented by having the door close on the romantic couple as they kiss so Bud only sees them in silhouette through the frosted glass.



Left: Esther (Judy Garland) sings 'Over the Bannister' to John (Tom Drake) in *Meet Me in St. Louis*. Right: Bud's brother John (Nicholas Lamont) and his girlfriend Jean (Denise Thomas) kiss as the same song is played on the soundtrack in *The Long Day Closes*.

Similarly, Davies uses an audio clip from *The Magnificent Ambersons* in order to underline Bud's increasing sense of isolation as he bids farewell to the protected world of



childhood. Orson Welles's film portrays the downfall of the wealthy Amberson family – the doyens of upper middle-class Indianapolis society – who lose all their money and squander their opportunities for happiness, and Davies incorporates an excerpt from Welles's voiceover narration which reflects upon the divine justice meted out to George (Tom Holt), the proud and insensitive heir of the Amberson family: 'And now it came at last: George Amberson Minafer had got his comeuppance. He'd got it three times filled and running over. But those who had longed for it were not there to see it. And they never knew it, those who were still living had forgotten all about it, and all about him'.

This audio clip is layered over a scene in which Bud, having been temporarily abandoned by his only friend Albie (Karl Skeggs), descends into the coal cellar and begins to weep silently. At the beginning of the scene, the door swings open slowly and Bud is framed within the cellar entrance, the outside railings just visible above his head. As noted earlier, Davies often frames characters in windows and doorways or through bars in order to depict their sense of entrapment. The protagonist's sense of exclusion is also depicted by the way he walks into the black hole of the coal cellar which seems almost like an act of self-deletion. This idea of fading into a void is accentuated as it is accompanied by Welles's words, 'those who were still living had forgotten all about it, and all about him'. It is clear from my analysis that a familiarity with *The Magnificent Ambersons* and *Meet Me in St Louis* will greatly enhance an audience's appreciation of *The Long Day Closes* as they will be able to make thematic connections across the films that will enrich their viewing experience.



Bud (Leigh McCormack) alone in the coal cellar in *The Long Day Closes*.

*The Long Day Closes* was originally conceived by Davies as the summation of his autobiographical project.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, his next two films – *The Neon Bible* and *The House of Mirth* – would be literary adaptations. Years later, however, he would return to the subject of his own life with the documentary *Of Time and the City*.

### ***Of Time and the City: Imposing One's Autobiography***

In 2008, the producers Sol Papadopoulos and Roy Boulter approached Davies with the prospect of making a film about Liverpool as part of the Digital Departures scheme which was devised by Northwest Vision and Media, the Liverpool Culture Company, the UK Film Council and the BBC in order to fund three films that would commemorate Liverpool's selection as 2008 European Capital of Culture. Davies was eventually selected from the 150-plus applicants and was awarded a grant of £250,000 to realise his project.<sup>81</sup> Whereas Davies's previous films have been dramatic renderings of personal/family memories and literary texts, *Of Time and the City* is a rich intertextual patchwork of archive footage, still photography, literary quotations and musical extracts, combined with contemporary footage of Liverpool and a stream-of-consciousness voiceover written and performed by Davies himself.

*Of Time and the City* was commissioned on the basis that it would celebrate the history of Liverpool and its people, and this creative mandate offered Davies an opportunity

to lament the 'vanished' Liverpool in which he grew up during the 1950s and 60s, to revisit what A.E. Housman calls 'The happy highways where I went. And cannot come again'.<sup>82</sup> While the film functions as both a portrayal of Liverpool as a city and a 'collective visual memory'<sup>83</sup>, it was also seized upon by the director as an opportunity for reminiscing about his early life and the personal fears and desires that preoccupied him during his youth. In one sequence, for example, Davies uses footage of a wrestling match between meaty men in black trunks and describes the sexual thrill and guilt this spectacle aroused in him through the voiceover: 'I could feel their body heat as I furtively touched a back or thigh, choking with schoolboy guilt and trembling with the fear of God's wrath'. The resulting film provides a more comprehensive overview of working-class experience than Davies's earlier autobiographical films whilst maintaining their highly subjective and personalised outlook. Indeed, one might regard the film as the third part of a second unofficial autobiographical trilogy alongside *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes*. Like these earlier films, *Of Time and the City* is not structured around a linear narrative but opts instead for a temporal fluidity.

As a documentary largely composed of archive footage – approximately 80% of the film consists of library sources – the events and details that constituted Davies's childhood ('Home, school, the movies and God') are narrated rather than dramatised. This is not to suggest, however, that the film is devoid of acting as Davies's voice-over narration constitutes one of the most memorable performances in any of his films. Before *Of Time and the City* Davies had never appeared in any of his films except through his alter egos (Tucker and Bud), so the decision to use his voice for the narration is significant as it inscribes his voice as the film's governing consciousness. In this respect Davies goes even further than Derek Jarman, who relied upon Nigel Terry to provide the voiceover narration for *The Last of England* and *Blue*.

Since *Of Time and the City* contains no visual or dramatic representation of Davies himself, one might argue that the film represents another example of indirect

autobiographical cinema. Like *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, Davies's documentary provides the audience with an insight into the environment in which he was brought up, but whereas the latter focused on the intimate (his family home), *Of Time and the City* engages with a broad range of working-class experience, incorporating shots of busy washerwomen, over-decorated Christmas trees, slum housing, wrestling matches, rusty steel bridges and the ugly urban renewal projects that replaced much of the inner city during the 1960s. In one sequence Davies cuts from colour news footage of Princess Elizabeth's marriage to Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, in 1947 to a still photograph of an elderly working-class couple living in Liverpool. This juxtaposition relies on a number of binary oppositions (colour and monochrome, movement and stillness, youth and old age, affluence and poverty) for its desired effect, which criticises the monarchy (what Davies acerbically describes as 'the Betty Windsor Show') and venerates working-class culture.



Left: Bernard Fallon's photograph 'Shawlie and Husband Near Scotland Road' (1970).  
Right: Newsreel footage of Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953.

Throughout *Of Time and the City* a dialectical tension is created between the archive materials that Davies has procured from other sources (film clips and photographs) and the personal monologue that he places over these images. William Johnson – one of the film's harshest critics – suggests that the chosen archive visuals 'merely illustrate Liverpool rather than have any direct contact with Davies's own experience of the city' and that the film 'lacks the intense engagement of a former citizen with his native city' for this precise reason.<sup>84</sup> In

response to this criticism, one might argue that by filtering his examination of Liverpool through his own specific childhood memories, the director is able to evoke a universality of experience that imbues his film with additional dramatic power.

Davies's passion for the cinema is one of the recurring themes of *Of Time and the City* and manifests itself in numerous ways. The musical extract that bookends the film, Franz Liszt's 'Consolation No.3 in D Flat Major' (1849-50) is taken from the lush Technicolor melodrama *All That Heaven Allows*, one of the innumerable Hollywood films that Davies gorged himself upon as a child. In this instance the score has undoubtedly been used for its extra-textual resonance: *All That Heaven Allows* belongs to a tradition of American filmmaking that has become outmoded; similarly, *Of Time and the City* portrays an obsolete version of Liverpool for which Davies yearns. The first-person voiceover also enables Davies to articulate his passion for the movies by speaking over archive footage of British and American film stars (including Gregory Peck, Margaret Lockwood and Jack Hawkins) attending a gala film show at the glamorous Ritz Hotel in Birkenhead: 'At seven, I saw Gene Kelly in *Singin' in the Rain*, and discovered the movies, loved them and swallowed them whole ... Musicals, melodramas, westerns: nothing was too rich or too poor for my rapacious appetite, and I gorged myself with a frequency that would shame a sinner'.

Unlike *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes* which are mainly influenced by Hollywood cinema, *Of Time and the City's* main intertextual influence is the short documentary *Listen to Britain*. Indeed, such is the extent of this creative debt that *Listen to Britain* is included as an extra feature on the DVD along with a short, appreciative introduction from Davies himself. Like Davies, Jennings has gained a critical reputation for being one of Britain's most lyrical filmmakers. Indeed, Lindsay Anderson has described him as 'the only real poet that British cinema has yet produced'.<sup>85</sup> Similarly, in Davies's brief video introduction to *Listen to Britain*, he describes the film as the 'first great visual poem', which manages to 'capture the very nature of being British'.<sup>86</sup>

Produced during the Second World War by the Crown Film Unit, an organisation within the British Government's Ministry of Information designed to support the Allied war effort, *Listen to Britain* depicts a day in the life of Britain during the Blitz through a non-linear assemblage of eclectic images (from fighter planes flying over the beautiful countryside to chimneys and smoke stacks belching clouds of dense black smoke) and sounds (from audio clips of radio programmes to a chorus of 'Rule Britannia'). There is a clear parallel between the multi-layered structure of *Listen to Britain*, with its vast range of images and sound recordings, and the patchwork approach that Davies adopts in *Of Time and the City*. Crucially, both films romanticise their subjects: the Britain of Jennings and McAllister is portrayed as resilient, pugnacious and industrious, whereas the Liverpool of Davies's childhood is depicted as an irretrievably 'lost' world of simple pleasures.



Scenes from Humphrey Jennings's *Listen to Britain*.

## Conclusion

In the previous chapter, I discussed how our understanding of Davies's films might be enriched by placing them in a wider intertextual field that includes films from different genres and cultures. In this chapter, I've take this approach further by discussing the director's use of cinematic allusion and considering how this might be interpreted by an audience familiar with British and Hollywood cinema from the 1940s and 50s. I've also positioned Davies's autobiographical works in relation to a range of European art films – a cinema with which

Davies is less familiar – in order to reveal the layers of meaning that can be generated between the text and the audience.

It is my contention that Davies's life story – particularly his childhood – functions as an intertext for his autobiographical films, in which he weaves together memories with other cultural references and quotations. Throughout the course of his filmmaking career, Terence Davies has been preoccupied with the subject of his own personal history and how it can be adapted to the screen. Like Truffaut and Fellini, Davies's autobiographical films represent an intellectually and stylistically daring exploration of how one's life story can be transmuted into film. From the fluidity of the latter parts of the trilogy to the careful framing of *Distant Voices, Still Lives* to the intense subjectivity of *The Long Day Closes* to the montage of *Of Time and the City*, Davies's films demonstrate the range of artistic possibilities within autobiographical cinema for self-representation.

Earlier, I used Caughie's description of Davies's films as 'autobiographical fiction', and – since none of the latter's films provide an unvarnished version of the truth – this provides a useful way of thinking about his films. It is also revealing to consider Davies's autobiographical filmmaking as another form of adaptation, in which the filmmaker has drawn upon an invisible intertext – his own memories – to dramatise his life story. In other words, Davies's memories – and those of his family members - constitute a narrative source that he uses as raw material for his autobiographical films. Having converted the raw material of his own life into cinematic form, Davies had developed the skills that would enable him to venture into literary adaptation with his next film, *The Neon Bible*.

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<sup>1</sup> Everett in McFarlane 2005a, p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> Farley 2006, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Bruss 1976, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Rosen 1998, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Lang 1982, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Lejeune 1982, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Shail 2007, pp. 49-50.

<sup>8</sup> An alternative title for Wordsworth's *The Prelude* is *Growth of a Poet's Mind; An Autobiographical Poem*.

<sup>9</sup> Marcus 1994, p. 2.

- <sup>10</sup> Rosen 1998, p. 12.
- <sup>11</sup> Lejeune 1989, p. 5.
- <sup>12</sup> In the essay 'Timetravel and European film', Wendy Everett provides a list of autobiographical films: *The Spirit of the Beehive/El Espiritu de la Colmena* (Victor Erice, Spain, 1973), *Amarcord* (Federico Fellini, Italy/France, 1973), *Mirror/Zerkalo* (Andrei Tarkovsky, USSR, 1974), *Peppermint Soda/Diablo Menthe* (Diana Kurys, France, 1975), *Night of the Shooting Stars/La Notte di San Lorenzo* (Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, Italy, 1981), *Fanny and Alexander* (Ingmar Bergman, Sweden, 1982), *My Life as a Dog/Mit Liv Som Hund* (Lasse Hallström, Sweden, 1985), *Hope and Glory* (John Boorman, UK/USA, 1987), *Au revoir les enfants* (Louis Malle, France/West Germany/Italy, 1987), *Chocolat* (Claire Denis, France/West Germany/Cameroon, 1988), *Cinema Paradiso, Toto the Hero/Toto le héros* (Jaco van Dormael, Belgium/France/Germany, 1991), *Jacquot de Nantes* (Agnès Varda, France, 1991), *One Full Moon/Un Nos Ola Leuad* (Endaf Emlyn, Wales, 1991), *Movie Days/Bíódagar* (Friðrik Þór Friðriksson, Iceland/Germany/Denmark, 1994), *Dear Diary/Caro diario* (Nanni Moretti, Italy/France, 1993), *The Sacred Mound/Hin helgu vé'* (Hrafn Gunnlaugsson, Iceland/Sweden, 1994), *Portrait d'une jeune fille de la fin des années 60, à Bruxelles* (Chantal Akerman, France, 1994) and *JLG/JLG: Self-Portrait in December/JLG/LJG – autoportrait de décembre* (Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1994) (Everett 2005b, p. 109).
- <sup>13</sup> Bordwell (2002) p. 95.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 97.
- <sup>15</sup> The five Antoine Doinel films are *The Four Hundred Blows, Antoine et Colette* (France, 1962), *Stolen Kisses/Baisers volés* (France, 1968), *Bed & Board/Domicile conjugal* (France/Italy, 1970) and *Love on the Run*.
- <sup>16</sup> Bruss in Olney (Ed.) 1980, p. 313.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 304. Bruss's essay 'I for Eye: Making and Unmaking Autobiography in Film' was published in *Autobiography: Essays: Theoretical and Critical* (Ed. James Olney, 1980) which has been credited with inaugurating a new wave of interest in autobiographical studies.
- <sup>18</sup> Davies 1992, p. xii.
- <sup>19</sup> Bruss in Olney (Ed.) 1980, p. 297.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 301.
- <sup>21</sup> Bazin 1997, p. 8.
- <sup>22</sup> Hayward 2006, p. 111.
- <sup>23</sup> Davies 1992, p. ix.
- <sup>24</sup> Hill 2000, p. 251.
- <sup>25</sup> In his essay 'Autobiography and British Art Cinema: The Films of Bill Douglas, Terence Davies and Derek Jarman', Duncan Petrie identifies these three filmmakers as the main exponents of a short-lived movement of autobiographical British art cinema.
- <sup>26</sup> Orr 2010, p. 165.
- <sup>27</sup> Caughie 1993, p. 199.
- <sup>28</sup> Petrie 2002, p. 58.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 62.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 63.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>32</sup> Davies 1992, p. xi.
- <sup>33</sup> Powell 1991, 334.
- <sup>34</sup> Davies quoted in Falsetto 1999, p. 70.
- <sup>35</sup> Davies 1992, p. 14.
- <sup>36</sup> Davies 2014, interview with author.
- <sup>37</sup> Everett 2003, p. 163.
- <sup>38</sup> Brunette 1996, 80.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 78.
- <sup>40</sup> Guarner 1970, p. 29.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 115.
- <sup>42</sup> Orr 2010, p. 172.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 171.
- <sup>44</sup> Davies quoted in Murray 1994, p. 37.
- <sup>45</sup> Davies 1992, p. xi.
- <sup>46</sup> Leggott 2008b, p. 99.
- <sup>47</sup> Everett 2005b, p. 107.



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- <sup>48</sup> Everett 2005b, p. 110.
- <sup>49</sup> Caughie 1992, 11.
- <sup>50</sup> MacCabe 1999, p. 16.
- <sup>51</sup> Cousins 2008, p. 414.
- <sup>52</sup> Orr 2010, p. 164.
- <sup>53</sup> Rosenbaum 2004, p. 386.
- <sup>54</sup> Cousins 2008, p. 414.
- <sup>55</sup> Orr 2000b, p. 140.
- <sup>56</sup> Davies 1992, p. xi.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>58</sup> Davies quoted in Floyd 1988, p. 295.
- <sup>59</sup> Bainbridge 2007, p. 14
- <sup>60</sup> Barthes 1977, p. 44.
- <sup>61</sup> Orlik quoted in Farley 2006, pp. 59-60.
- <sup>62</sup> Barthes 2000, p. 78.
- <sup>63</sup> Everett 2004, p. 72.
- <sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 74.
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>66</sup> Orr 2010, p. 167.
- <sup>67</sup> Everett 2004, p. 79.
- <sup>68</sup> Dyer 2002, p. 19.
- <sup>69</sup> Shail 2007, p. 50.
- <sup>70</sup> Caughie 1992, p. 13.
- <sup>71</sup> D'Israeli 1822, p. 295.
- <sup>72</sup> Caughie 1992, p. 10.
- <sup>73</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>74</sup> Caughie 1993, p. 203.
- <sup>75</sup> Caughie 1992, p. 13.
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>77</sup> Davies 2014, interview with author.
- <sup>78</sup> Petrie in Schüle (Ed.) 2002, p. 59.
- <sup>79</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>80</sup> Hoberman 2003, p. 41.
- <sup>81</sup> The other two film projects selected were the horror *Salvage* (Lawrence Gough, UK, 2009) and the teenage drama *Kicks* (Lindy Heymann, UK, 2009). In *Salvage*, the disused sets of the cancelled soap opera *Brookside* (1982-2003) form the central location for a drama in which the residents of a quiet British cul-de-sac are terrorized by armed military personnel. *Kicks* (originally submitted under the title *Starstruck*) is a psychological thriller about two teenage girls who form a disturbing obsession with a premier league football player.
- <sup>82</sup> This extract is taken from A. E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* (1896), one of the numerous poems included in the film's voiceover narration, which also includes Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'Ozymandias' (1818), Christopher Marlowe's 'The Passionate Shepherd to His Love' (1599), Sir Walter Raleigh's 'The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd' (1600), T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* (1943) and Dickinson's 'Poem 301' (date unknown).
- <sup>83</sup> Orr 2010, p. 166.
- <sup>84</sup> Johnson 2009, p. 10.
- <sup>85</sup> Anderson (1954) cited in Jackson 2004, xvii.
- <sup>86</sup> Davies, 'Introduction to *Of Time and the City*'.

# Chapter 3

## Literary Adaptation

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Due to the critical success of his earlier films, Davies acquired a reputation for being the creator of ‘intensely autobiographical works’.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, with the exception of *Of Time and the City*, his filmmaking interests shifted decisively towards literary adaptation from the early 1990s. Consequently, I shall begin by considering some of the major competing theories within the field of adaptation in film studies in order to establish a critical framework that will help identify how Davies’s approach to adapting texts into film differs/conforms to approaches identified and discussed within existing scholarship on the subject.

I will then consider Davies’s adaptations to date, beginning with his 1995 film based on John Kennedy Toole’s 1989 novella *The Neon Bible*, which was written in 1953 when Toole was only 16 years old and published posthumously in 1989 – twenty years after the writer’s suicide. To date, *The Neon Bible* has been the most poorly received of Davies’s works, and much of this negative criticism relates to the idea that the film unsuccessfully straddles the genres of autobiographical filmmaking and literary adaptation. Next, I shall discuss Davies’s cinematic rendering of Edith Wharton’s 1905 novel *The House of Mirth* (UK, 2000). Overall, *The House of Mirth* is considered by numerous commentators to be the most atypical of Davies’s films, lacking any of the hallmarks of his previous work such as a connection to his own life story, a central child protagonist or a mid twentieth-century setting (indeed, the film is set during the 1900s). Finally, I will examine *The Deep Blue Sea*, Davies’s adaptation of Terence Rattigan’s 1952 play of the same title.

Interestingly, when we place *The Deep Blue Sea* alongside *The House of Mirth* and *Sunset Song* (UK/Luxembourg, 2015), it appears that Davies’s cinematic focus has shifted away from portraying his own male psyche to depicting the struggles of strong yet tragic

fictional heroines (Hester Collyer, Lily Bart and Chris Guthrie, respectively) ensnared in circumstances beyond their control. In addition to discussing these films as adaptations of literary texts, I will also continue to explore the intertextual relationships they have with a variety of diverse films. Some of the films in question have been cited directly by Davies as influences on his cinematic vision, whilst others may appear to be unrelated to his oeuvre but actually have illuminating correlations. I will conclude the chapter by providing a brief overview of the significant trends within Davies's three literary adaptations.

### **Literary Adaptation**

Since the beginning of cinema, works of literature and drama – from Bible stories to Shakespearean plays to nineteenth-century European novels to contemporary newspaper stories – have provided the source material for filmmakers. Indeed, one might reasonably argue that 'the history of adaptation is as long as the history of cinema itself'.<sup>2</sup> As soon as the cinema began to focus on narrative rather than spectacle, the idea of ransacking the novel – that 'already established repository of narrative fiction'<sup>3</sup> – for source material commenced. Another incentive for adapting works of literature was the desire to capitalise upon literature's cultural prestige as a venerable art form which has endured and evolved over millennia. For decades cinema was not considered a respectable medium: the original literary text was considered the valued original and the film adaptation a poor imitation.

It wasn't until the 1950s that a major shift in the relationship between film and literature began to take place, with the latter losing some of its hierarchical dominance as cinema began to rise in status. During this period George Bluestone wrote *Novels into Film* (1957), the first full-length study into cinematic adaptations of literary texts. In the introductory chapter of this book, Bluestone identifies a parallel between quotations taken from the Polish-born novelist Joseph Conrad and the American filmmaker D.W. Griffith in order to demonstrate the degree of overlap between cinema and literature in terms of their desired objectives and effects. In the preface to his novella *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus': A Tale of the Sea* (1897), Conrad wrote that, 'My task which I'm trying to achieve is, by the

power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel – it is, before all, to make you see!’<sup>4</sup> In 1913, D.W. Griffith is quoted as having said that ‘The task I’m trying to achieve is above all to make you see.’<sup>5</sup> Since the 1950s various academics have used these two quotations in order to demonstrate the connection between prose and cinematic fiction<sup>6</sup>: not only do both artists express themselves in nearly identical words, but both emphasise the primacy of visualization. Despite drawing this clear parallel, Bluestone is quick to point out the different types of ‘seeing’ that these two mediums offer: whereas film allows the viewer to ‘see visually through the eye’, the text allows us to see ‘imaginatively through the mind’.<sup>7</sup>

In certain respects *Novels into Film* is a pioneering work, but it also represents the first of a trend of scholarly works that examine literary adaptations from a perspective that regards the superiority of literature over film as an incontrovertible fact. For example, Bluestone argues that film does not possess literature’s capacity to successfully portray psychological states, whether they are memory, dream or imagination.<sup>8</sup> Other notable scholarly works which echo Bluestone’s argument include Geoffrey Wagner’s *The Novel and the Cinema* (1975) and Morris Beja’s *Film & Literature: An Introduction* (1979).

The idea that the original literary source material is inherently superior to the film adaptation has been perpetuated before and after the publication of Bluestone’s book. Upon the release of Bernard Rose’s *Anna Karenina* (USA, 1997) – the first of a series of Tolstoy adaptations from the British director<sup>9</sup> – the Australian novelist Helen Garner opened her review of the film by arguing that Leo Tolstoy’s hallowed 1877 novel belongs to a ‘class of literature that, by its very nature, is not adaptable to the screen’.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, one of the great myths perpetuated about literary adaptation is that ‘great fiction’ (i.e. classic novels) is unsuited to being filmed, whereas ‘second-rate fiction’ (i.e. genre novels) is. François Truffaut, for example, has suggested that adapting a literary masterpiece into a film is ultimately pointless since a ‘masterpiece is something that has already found its perfection of form, its definitive form’.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Alain Resnais has described the process of adapting a book into a film as ‘a little like re-heating a meal’ since the author of the source text has

already 'completely expressed himself'.<sup>12</sup> According to Thomas Welsh, the implicit idea in much criticism of cinematic adaptations is that 'the medium of film has its limitations, that it is epidermal, even superficial, that it cannot probe the depths of psychology or emotional consciousness'.<sup>13</sup>

The relationship between literature and film has been a violently contested one, with commentators arguing passionately on both sides as to their compatibility. Bluestone's assertion that their connection is 'overtly compatible, secretly hostile'<sup>14</sup> has been echoed by numerous artists and scholars from the beginning of the twentieth-century to the beginning of the twenty-first. For the English novelist Virginia Woolf, 'The alliance [between film and literature] is unnatural' and 'the results are disastrous'.<sup>15</sup> The American novelist Norman Mailer considered the mediums of film and literature to be 'as far apart as, say, cave painting and a poem'.<sup>16</sup> Even the Swedish filmmaker Ingmar Bergman, who has acknowledged the key influence of literature on his own filmmaking (the plays of Strindberg, for example, had a huge impact on the director's work) has stated bluntly that 'film has nothing to do with literature' because 'the character and substance of the two forms are usually in conflict'.<sup>17</sup>

Brian McFarlane suggests the reason why literary scholars have been so critical – and, indeed, often scathing – of literary adaptations is because 'their training hasn't taught them to look in film for riches comparable to those they find in literature'.<sup>18</sup> The history and development of adaptation studies has been fixated on the issue of fidelity to the original text which is symptomatic of an entrenched view that considers the literary original to be inherently superior to the filmic version. In recent decades, however, numerous academics have entered into a debate on the subject of literary adaptation and how it should be approached, with many arguing for an academic approach that is more flexible and inclusive. Broadly speaking, the academic debate centres on 'comparative versus non-comparative approaches'.<sup>19</sup>

In his seminal essay 'The Well-Worn Muse: Adaptation in Film History and Theory', Dudley Andrew laments the 'tiresome' discussion of fidelity with its premise that 'the task of

adaptation is the reproduction in cinema of something essential about a literary text', arguing that this approach breeds only 'strident and futile arguments' about 'absolute differences in media'.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, Andrew's views echo those of Bluestone, who argued that 'changes are *inevitable* the moment one abandons the linguistic for the visual medium'.<sup>21</sup> Unlike Bluestone, however, Andrew urges adaptation studies to become more sociological in its approach. Similarly, Walter Metz has advocated a more interdisciplinary method, arguing that 'this sort of culturalist middle ground represents [...] a fertile and open terrain for revitalizing discipline'.<sup>22</sup> There has been a growing desire to question and undermine the hierarchical relationship between the source text and the film adaptation by considering other intertextual influences besides the perceived original. This approach is advocated by Sarah Cardwell who argues for an alternative approach whose strength lies 'in the very decentredness, comprehensiveness and flexibility, in their placing of adaptations within a far wider cultural context than that of an original-version relationship'.<sup>23</sup>

This 'decentredness' has become an increasingly pervasive idea in adaptation studies. Since the publication of Roland Barthes' influential essay 'The Death of the Author' in 1967 there has been a growing belief that texts of all types (of which films are novels are but examples) should be liberated from the constraints of a single and univocal reading. Indeed, numerous commentators appear to share Christopher Orr's belief that fidelity criticism 'impoverishes the text's intertextuality' by reducing it to a 'single pre-text' (i.e. the literary source) while ignoring other pre-texts and codes (cinematic and cultural) that contribute to making the 'film text intelligible'.<sup>24</sup> As a consequence of this disavowal of the primacy of the original text, there has been a growing sense that adaptation studies should embrace postmodernism and transform itself into the study of 'transactions between word and image' by 'imagining new ways in which words and images can be adapted or combined'.<sup>25</sup> The contention of certain scholars is that 'dialogization, cannibalization, transmutation, transfiguration and signifying' are better tropes than fidelity.<sup>26</sup>

However, there has been a backlash to this rejection of a centre-based, comparative approach between the source text and the film version. For example, David L. Kranz recommends that

we filter out the relativistic excesses of postmodernist theory, such as its attack on rationality, its denial of any objectivity (that is, its ironic totalization of subjectivity) and its assumption of the virtue or necessity of infinite ambiguity (with simultaneous demonization of the essential, hierarchical and probable), before using it to guide changes in adaptation theory.<sup>27</sup>

The problem of having a more decentred approach to literary adaptation is that we lose what Dudley Andrew refers to as ‘the explicit, foregrounded relation of a cinematic text to a well-constructed original text from which it derives’<sup>28</sup>, meaning that we become locked into what Kranz describes as a cycle of ‘infinite ambiguity’, an endless process of recycling, transformation and transmutation without any clear focus or anchor.

Since fidelity criticism at its worst can be an ‘evaluative straitjacket’<sup>29</sup>, while a post-structuralist approach can have a ‘warping effect’ – leading to an unwieldy and ultimately unhelpful number of intertexts, contexts and floating signifiers – it would seem wise to locate a middle ground between these two extreme poles. This balanced perspective would appreciate the integral relationship between the original text and the filmic version, whilst being sufficiently flexible to acknowledge the value of considering other intertexts besides the source text.

Geoffrey Wagner has identified three different modes of adaptation:

- 1) ‘*transposition*’, in which ‘a novel is directly given on the screen with the minimum of apparent interference’
- 2) ‘*commentary*’, ‘where an original is taken and ... altered in some respect ... revealing a different intention on the part of the filmmaker rather than an infidelity or outright violation’
- 3) ‘*analogy*’, which ‘takes a fiction as a point of departure’, and therefore ‘cannot be indicted as a violation of a literary original since the director has not attempted (or has only minimally attempted) to reproduce the original’.<sup>30</sup>

Revealingly, Wagner’s classification system resembles John Dryden’s different categories for translation, with ‘literal translation’ doubling for ‘transposition’, ‘commentary’

for 'traditional translation', and 'radical translation' for 'analogy'.<sup>31</sup> Similar categories have also been created by Jack Boozer<sup>32</sup> and Michael Klein and Gillian Parker<sup>33</sup>, respectively.

Adaptation remains a contested subject within the fields of literature and film studies, inviting a variety of different critical approaches. I will discuss Davies's literary adaptations in relation to the issues and ideas that have been identified so far in my discussion of existing thinking on the transmutation from text to film. Interestingly, each of Davies's film adopts a different approach to the creative process of adaptation. On the subject of adapting a novel to the screen, Davies has stated that 'You can't film a novel, you just can't; you have to capture the essence of the book as well as its literal narrative'.<sup>34</sup> In other words, if a filmmaker wishes to faithfully adapt a work of fiction to the screen – *transposition* rather than *analogy* – then they need to find a visual language to capture the 'essence' (often referred to as the 'spirit') of the book.

### ***The Neon Bible***

Of all Terence Davies's films to date, *The Neon Bible* (1995) has unquestionably received the least enthusiastic response from critics. In fact, when the film was first previewed at the Cannes Film Festival in 1995, it was greeted with booing and cat-calling from the audience, while the critic David Thomson – who had been highly complimentary about Davies's earlier movies, particularly *The Long Day Closes* – labelled the film an 'enterprising failure'.<sup>35</sup> Even Davies himself describes *The Neon Bible* as a 'failure': in an interview with Everett, he proposes that the film is uneven and 'doesn't always work' because it is a transitional work positioned between *The Long Day Closes* and *The House of Mirth*.<sup>36</sup>

This is not to suggest, however, that *The Neon Bible* does not have its admirers. For the critic Jonathan Rosenbaum, Davies's adaptation actually improves upon the original text, suggesting that while John Kennedy Toole's novella is a 'hackneyed mood piece', the film version is '100 per cent Davies', and – consequently – 'wonderful'.<sup>37</sup> One of the film's most enthusiastic supporters upon its initial release was the novelist Jonathan Coe who argued (somewhat provocatively) that *The Neon Bible* is in fact superior to Davies's previous two



critically lauded feature films. Coe argues that whereas *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes* lacked dramatic conflict – depriving them of ‘any real motor’ – *The Neon Bible* has a more dramatically satisfying storyline and structure, imbuing the latter with a greater sense of narrative propulsion.<sup>38</sup> This perspective is shared to an extent by Philip Horne, who argues that Davies’s film represents a shift towards more accepted forms of dramatic narrative – namely ‘confrontation, intrigue, dialogue, event’ – which the director would go on to develop in *The House of Mirth* and *The Deep Blue Sea*.<sup>39</sup> As his first non-autobiographical film, his first literary adaptation, his first linear narrative, and his first (and so far only) film to be shot in the USA, *The Neon Bible* is significant for being such an atypical work in Davies’s oeuvre, and must be scrutinized if we are to gain a deeper understanding of this unique filmmaker’s work.

*The Neon Bible* depicts the coming-of-age story of David (Jacob Tierney), growing up in Georgia during the 1930s and 1940s. The novel is a first-person narrative delivered by the central protagonist as he escapes from his hometown by train. David’s narrative begins with him as a lonely ten-year-old boy (Drake Bell), living with his hot-headed father, Frank (Denis Leary), and his loving but fragile mother, Sarah (Diana Scarwid). The arrival of Aunt Mae (Gena Rowlands) – a middle-aged, platinum-blonde nightclub singer – is the catalyst for the events that follow. Frank and the other members of the community disapprove of Mae because of her confidence and exuberance. David, on the other hand, adores her and they become close companions. The family slide into poverty when Frank loses his job at the factory, forcing them to relocate to a rickety, old house on top of a hill overlooking the town. As the relationship between Frank and the rest of his family deteriorates, the former becomes physically abusive to his wife. Frank eventually leaves to fight in World War II. Due to the lack of men, Mae gets a job at the local factory as a supervisor, and rediscovers her love of singing when she is called upon to perform at the work dance and is subsequently invited to join the band as their lead singer.

After the dance, David and his family are informed of his father's death. This tragic event marks the beginning of David's mother's slow descent into madness. Upon leaving school David gets a job in the local pharmacy, while Aunt Mae gets work with her singing group. Aunt Mae begins a relationship with the band member Clyde (Tom Turbiville), who convinces her that they should travel to Nashville in order to get a record deal. Aunt Mae leaves David and his mother, promising to send for them once she gets settled in Nashville. Soon after his aunt's departure, David finds his mother lying on the floor with blood dripping out of her mouth. The bleeding subsides but she eventually dies. The plot of *The Neon Bible* takes an unexpected and melodramatic turn when the local preacher stops by David's home to take his mother to the asylum. The preacher pushes past David and, as he climbs upstairs, the latter shoots him dead. David buries his mother in the backyard and boards a train, facing an uncertain future alone.

Overall, Davies's re-working of *The Neon Bible* is broadly faithful to the original text, although he has been obliged to omit/sacrifice certain characters and subplots that feature prominently in Toole's novella. If one were to employ Wagner's classifications of literary adaptation then *The Neon Bible* would seem to fit most comfortably within the category of *transposition*, as there is little interference with the original text. Compression is par for the course in film adaptation where the filmmaker has a limited running time in which to deliver a satisfying approximation of the source text's plotline(s). The deletions/modifications that Davies makes to Toole's novella are undoubtedly intended to intensify the film's narrative focus on the deterioration of the central family unit (David, Sarah and Mae). Arguably the most significant adjustment that Davies makes to the source text is the removal of Mrs Watkins, the cruel teacher who tyrannises the younger David, since this is a lengthy subplot in the early part of the novel. In an interview with the critic and filmmaker Mark Cousins, Davies states with typical directness that depicting the protagonist being victimised at school is 'not interesting'.<sup>40</sup> However, one might argue that this revision has a significant effect on the tone of the film because the source text launches a far more savage attack on small-

mindedness and the insidious power of organised religion. Significantly, Mrs Watkins is the wife of the local deacon, and together the Watkins serve as the town's self-appointed moral guardians, 'trying to make the country dry, trying to keep the colored [sic] people from voting, trying to take *Gone with the Wind* out of the county library'.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, the Watkins have a close friendship with the preacher – who remains an elusive and ominous figure throughout the novel – and collectively they represent the pompous prurience of Church and State. The melodramatic ending in which the preacher arrives to take David's mother to the sanatorium is foreshadowed earlier on in the text but does little to alter its sense of narrative contrivance. An audience familiar with Toole's novel would appreciate that Davies's decision to remove Mrs Watkins from the narrative dampens *The Neon Bible*'s satirical thrust whilst simultaneously intensifying the focus on David's ever-growing sense of alienation.

Another significant alteration that Davies makes to Toole's novel is the removal of Mr. Farney, David's openly homosexual schoolteacher. Homosexuality – and the Catholic guilt that attends it – is one of the central themes running through Davies's autobiographical films, from *Children* up to *The Long Day Closes*. In each of these films, homosexuality is portrayed as something perverse and dangerous, something that needs to be repressed or indulged in furtively. It is possible that Mr Farney – a happy, well-adjusted teacher, living openly with another man, and tolerated by the community because of his gifts as an educator – has been erased from the narrative precisely because he doesn't conform to Davies's pessimistic view of homosexuality. An audience familiar with Toole's novel and Davies's filmmaking career would have to consider why this alteration has been made and how it might be explained by the director's attitude towards his sexuality. Indeed, Davies has stated in numerous interviews that he is celibate, lamenting how his sexual orientation has ruined his life. Interestingly, while Davies removes Mr Farney from the diegesis, there remains a degree of sexual ambiguity surrounding the character of David.

In both the novel and the film adaptation, David goes on a date with Jo Lynne (Dana Atwood) with whom he shares a brief kiss – his first romantic encounter. However, both also

imply that David is homosexual because he is portrayed as sensitive, unworldly, appalled by male violence (he is branded a 'sissy' by another boy who slaps him across the face), devoted to his female relatives, and without significant male relationships (his father is an emotionally distant figure). Indeed, despite his romantic encounter with Jo Lynne, David resembles Tucker (*Children*) and Bud (*The Long Day Closes*), the homosexual boy protagonists of his earlier films. Such a reading of the central protagonist would support a reading of the film as displaced autobiography.

Numerous commentators regard *The Neon Bible* as a compromised film because it does not quite belong with Davies's autobiographical films, being based on an existing literary source, yet at the same time it fails to offer anything radically new or different beyond the American setting. Indeed, Davies has described the film as 'neither one thing nor the other'.<sup>42</sup> Even Coe, arguably the film's most eloquent champion, has observed that *The Neon Bible* 'could be another slice of Davies's autobiography, relocated to America's Deep South and provided with a tragic *denouement*'.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, Toole's novel contains various tropes that will be recognisable from Davies's autobiographical films: a lonely and passive boy protagonist; a physically threatening father who subsequently dies; loving and nurturing female relatives; the sense of religion's power to terrify, manipulate and comfort its believers; the oppressiveness of institutions; the indignity and suffering of living in poverty; the threat of emotional/physical violence; the existentialist reality of being fundamentally alone; the capacity of popular music to bring pleasure and escapism to the masses, etc. *The Neon Bible* shares some of the pervasive themes of his earlier films, most notably the fear of entrapment and the desire to escape and be free from the restrictions of social convention. Indeed, with its focus on an alienated adolescent boy, the film is almost a remake of *The Long Day Closes*, albeit it one transplanted from 50s Liverpool to 40s Mississippi. *The Long Day Closes* certainly influenced *The Neon Bible*'s reception, not only because it was Davies's last film, but because of their similarities in terms of plot and filmmaking technique. Some scenes from the two films are virtually identical: scenes of the boys framed by

windows, seemingly imprisoned within their homes; tracking shots that traverse various diegetic spaces, and final scenes depicting the night skies.



Passive childhood observers: Left: David (Drake Bell) in *The Neon Bible*. Right: Bud (Leigh McCormack) in *The Long Day Closes*.

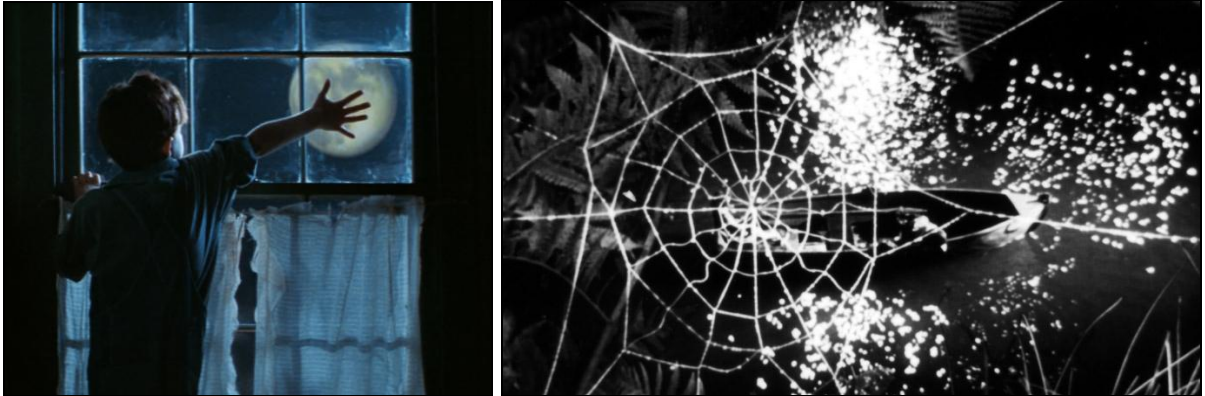
Despite relocating from Liverpool to the Bible belt, Davies's adaptation of *The Neon Bible* has been charged with evoking 'familiar thematic and concerns'<sup>44</sup> and not venturing into new creative territory. For Robert Shail, the film contains 'many familiar elements in its depiction of a lonely childhood'.<sup>45</sup> Alexander Walker even goes so far as to suggest that Davies is 'translating his own memories into the liberating epiphany of his young alter ego in *The Neon Bible*'.<sup>46</sup> Surely it is uncontroversial to presume that Davies decided to adapt *The Neon Bible* precisely because it resembles his own life in some ways which explains why he felt such an affinity with the material. Rather than taking an extant novel and reconfiguring it to suit his own idiosyncratic filmmaking preoccupations, Davies offers a faithful rendering of a novel that he himself 'might have written if he'd been born a novelist'.<sup>47</sup> In addition to considering the similarities between Davies's life and that of the fictional David, it is also revealing to consider the similarities between Davies and the novel's author, John Kennedy Toole. Although *The Neon Bible* is not strictly speaking an autobiographical novella – unlike David, Toole was born into a comfortable, middle-class family in New Orleans – the central son-surrogate mother relationship between David and Mae is undoubtedly inspired by the close relationship that Toole shared with his own mother.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, Davies has spoken on

numerous occasions about his devotion to his mother, the closest relationship he claims to have ever had. In an interview with Cousins, Davies states that it was Toole's depiction of 'how you feel when you are with someone you intensely love' that intrigued him and for which he 'drew a little bit on autobiography'.<sup>49</sup>

Regardless of the negative critical responses that the film received, it is generally agreed upon that Davies succeeded in converting the original novella into a piece of cinema that bears his unique authorial stamp. Like *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes*, *The Neon Bible* features the stylistic traits that one would expect from Davies: the use of religious iconography; stretched-out meditative moments; lingering tracking shots; the use of tableaux; the framing of characters in windows, doorways and staircases; scenes depicting community rituals; short, awkward bursts of dialogue, etc.

While it is important to examine the textual relationship between *The Neon Bible* and Toole's original novella, it is also valuable to consider the wider filmic influences that have either (i) directly inspired Davies's conception of the film, or (ii) influenced/shaped the audience's interpretation of it. *The Night of the Hunter* has been arguably the most significant filmic influence on *The Neon Bible*. Despite being a critical and commercial failure upon its initial release, Laughton's film has since gained a considerable critical reputation, influencing a diverse range of filmmakers, including David Lynch, Martin Scorsese and Terrence Malick. Rosenbaum has identified some of the key visual and thematic similarities between *The Neon Bible* and Laughton's earlier film, with its 'arsenal of neoprimitive, childlike imagery and rural, homespun folk poetry – its starry sky and oversized moon, its troubled Christianity, its lyricised and almost generic treatment of madness, its period streets that remind you of magazine ads for hair tonic and talcum powder'.<sup>50</sup> The critical reputation of *The Night of the Hunter* is largely due to Laughton's idiosyncratic filmmaking style which combines poetic lyricism with the bold angular aesthetic of 1920s German Expressionism. One scene that effectively demonstrates Laughton's visual debt is the bedroom scene, in which the mother (Shelley Winters) lies on the bed while the preacher (Robert Mitchum)

stands ominously nearby with the intent of killing her. The church-like design of the set with its high narrow triangular roof is a perverse distortion of religious faith. The lighting of the scene is also symbolic: Winters and Mitchum are both illuminated in the centre of the frame, while the edges are oppressively dark, signifying the preacher's murderous intentions.



Left: David (Drake Bell) reaches for the moon in *The Neon Bible*. Right: The children sail away at night in *The Night of the Hunter*.

While *The Neon Bible* is hardly an Expressionistic film, both Davies's film and *The Night of the Hunter* share key visual motifs. For example, in *The Neon Bible* there is a recurring image of a supernaturally enlarged moon that David stretches out to grasp. In one scene, Davies shoots the ten-year-old protagonist (Drake Bell) grasping at the moon as it appears in a window, the window frame creating the illusion of a prison. Throughout the film, the moon serves as a visual metaphor for escape and the world outside David's small-minded and restrictive hometown. In *The Night of the Hunter*, moonlight and star light adds to the gothic, fairy-tale-like quality of the film, particularly in the scene of the two children – John (Billy Chapin) and Pearl (Sally Jane Bruce) – sailing away from their persecutor at night.

There are striking narrative parallels between the two films that affect our viewing of *The Neon Bible*. Mitchum's iconic performance as the malevolent preacher Harry Powell – a serial murderer of women, with 'LOVE' and 'HATE' tattooed on his knuckles – is a nightmarish creation. The character of Reverend Watkins (Peter McRobbie) invites

comparison to Powell as both are morally corrupt religious figures – sinister manifestations of patriarchal power – who seek to rob children of their mothers. However, whereas Powell succeeds in eliminating the children’s mother (although he does get his comeuppance at the end), Watkins fails to institutionalise David’s increasingly demented mother because she has already died.



Terrifying preachers: Left: Harry Powell (Robert Mitchum) in *The Night of the Hunter*. Right: Reverend Watkins (Peter McRobbie) in *The Neon Bible*.

When I interviewed Davies, he denied that *The Night of the Hunter* had been a conscious influence on *The Neon Bible*.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, an audience familiar with these two films would be able to make revealing connections between them. Similarly, John Cassavetes’ *Opening Night* (USA, 1977) has not been acknowledged by the director as a direct influence on *The Neon Bible*, but a comparison between the two films offers up some illuminating parallels and enriches our appreciation of Davies’s work.

In addition to being Davies’s first literary adaptation and first film to be shot outside the UK, *The Neon Bible* is also the first film in which Davies cast a fully-fledged movie star: Gena Rowlands. This is not to suggest, however, that Rowlands was the first recognisable actor to appear to act in one of Davies’s films, but she was certainly the first internationally known actor to do so. Indeed, the gaunt face of the British actor Wilfrid Brambell became famous to UK television viewers through his grotesque performance as the miserly father in the long-running BBC sitcom *Steptoe and Son* (1962-74), making his performance as the



elderly Tucker in *Death and Transfiguration* seem even more tragic. Pete Postlethwaite – the tyrannical father in *Distant Voices, Still Lives* – would achieve fame in the 1990s as a result of his performances in a series of critically and/or commercially successful films in the 1990s, including *In the Name of the Father* (Jim Sheridan, Ireland/UK/USA, 1993), *The Usual Suspects* (Bryan Singer, USA/Germany, 1995) and *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, USA, 1997).

While Davies has stated on numerous occasions that he chose to cast Gillian Anderson and Rachel Weisz in *The House of Mirth* and *The Deep Blue Sea* respectively without any awareness of their celebrity status, this is resolutely not the case with Rowlands. Indeed, Davies chose her precisely because he admired her previous film roles.<sup>52</sup> In her analysis of Lillian Gish's performance in *The Night of the Hunter*, Stern refers to the 'memories that accrue around her screen presence' such as her performance as a frail waif in the silent melodrama *Broken Blossoms* (D.W. Griffiths, USA, 1919).<sup>53</sup> As a successful film actor with a prodigious number of film and television credits to her name, Rowlands's moving performance as the passionate and exotic Aunt Mae in *The Neon Bible* is also freighted with extra-textual baggage for those who are familiar with her previous film roles.

Rowlands's international reputation is largely built on her long-running collaboration with her husband, the writer-director John Cassavetes. During the course of their illustrious careers they made ten films together, beginning with *A Child is Waiting* in 1963 and culminating with *Love Streams* in 1984.<sup>54</sup> In terms of film aesthetics, the stately formalism of Davies's cinema stands in stark contrast with Cassavetes' free-wheeling *cinéma vérité* approach. Equally, the intense, discomfiting acting style that characterises most of Cassavetes' films – Ray Carney described the latter as being a 'process of emotional excavation and discovery'<sup>55</sup> – clashes with the subtler, more controlled performances that pervade Davies's films. Thematically, however, the directors' films overlap, as both filmmakers are interested in rendering the psychological states of isolated or enclosed characters, albeit in extremely different ways. Gena Rowlands is perhaps most famous for

her Oscar-nominated performances in *A Woman Under the Influence* (USA, 1974) and *Gloria* (USA, 1980), but I have chosen to discuss the intertextual relationship between *The Neon Bible* and *Opening Night*, in which Rowlands exhibits the dramatic intensity that she invariably brought to her work with her husband.

In both films, Rowlands plays performers in states of emotional turmoil. In *The Neon Bible*, Mae retreats to small town American life after failing to find success as a nightclub singer in the harsh big city. In *Opening Night*, Rowlands's character Myrtle Gordon suffers a psychological breakdown as the result of witnessing a fan being killed outside the theatre where she has been rehearsing a new play, and consequently begins to question her ability to tackle her latest theatrical role. While these two characters differ wildly in temperament and personal circumstances – Mae is eternally optimistic and a loving aunt to David, while Myrtle is narcissistic and self-destructive – they share an anxiety about the ageing process and losing their potency as performers.

In one particularly moving scene from *The Neon Bible*, Davies shoots Rowlands in medium close-up speaking to David (Jacob Tierney) about her career as a singer. With her beauty fading with age (Rowlands's face is scraped free of make-up and her Jean Harlow-like hair-style is coming loose at the edges) and sad narrative of unfulfilled dreams and mistreatment by men (she refers to herself as a 'used up piece of goods'), Mae reminds us of the tragic heroine Blanche du Bois (Vivian Leigh) in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Elia Kazan, USA, 1951). In other words, she is every inch the melodramatic heroine. In *Opening Night*, there is a scene – again shot in medium close-up – where Rowlands talks to the playwright (Joan Blondell) about her inability to empathise with the character that she has been asked to play, and refuses to recognise herself as getting older ("I'm not ready to play grandmothers yet"). While the *mise-en-scène* differs between the two films (a rustic bedroom in *The Neon Bible* and a lavish hotel room in *Opening Night*), the idea of women struggling to define/maintain their identities against the pressures of men/audiences is strikingly similar.

Like Mae, Myrtle is another melodramatic heroine, and part of a Hollywood filmmaking tradition that has spanned decades.



Performers in crisis. Left: Myrtle Gordon (Gena Rowlands) in *Opening Night*. Right: Mae (Gena Rowlands) confides in David (Jacob Tierney) in *The Neon Bible*.

Davies's decision to cast Rowlands is partially due to her 'slow-burning star power' which imbues Mae's faded glamour with additional pathos.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, her performance infuses the character with a lustre and exoticism that singles her out from the other characters within the diegetic world of *The Neon Bible*. Despite the 'brouhaha'<sup>57</sup> of Cassavetes' improvisational and often provocative films, there is certainly an element of melodrama at play in his collaborations with Rowlands – particularly in films like *Opening Night* and *A Woman Under the Influence* – that place her within a tradition of American film for which Davies has confessed his admiration. Rowlands's iconic status as an interpreter of psychologically complex/emotionally damaged women is reaffirmed by another intertextual film-maker, Pedro Almodóvar, at the end of *All About My Mother/ Todo sobre mi madre* (Spain/France, 1999) – where the director partly dedicates the film to Gena Rowlands.

One might view Rowlands's performance as Mae as a transitional figure between the courageous female characters who feature as ensemble players in Davies's autobiographical films – particularly Eileen (Angela Walsh) and Maisie (Lorraine Ashbourne) in *Distant Voices, Still Lives* – and the tragic heroines of his later literary adaptations. Despite being framed as a memory narrative told from David's perspective, *The Neon Bible*

places Mae as the emotional centre of the film. In his next film, *The House of Mirth*, Davies would go one stage further and place the heroine centre stage.

In an interview with Everett, Davies described *The Neon Bible* as a 'transitional work' between the highly personal filmmaking of *The Long Day Closes* and his immaculate cinematic rendering of Wharton's *The House of Mirth*.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, he stated that he 'couldn't have made *The House of Mirth* without having made *The Neon Bible*'.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, *The Neon Bible* deserves to be seen as more than a stepping-stone between the categories of autobiographical filmmaking and literary adaptation.

### ***The House of Mirth***

In contrast to the apathetic – even at times hostile – critical reception that greeted its predecessor, *The House of Mirth* received much acclaim upon its release.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, there were even rumours of Oscar nominations for the movie, but unfortunately for Davies and his film's commercial fortunes, these accolades did not materialise. Yet at the time of its release *The House of Mirth* was arguably the most uncharacteristic of all Davies's films having no link to his own life story (unlike the *Trilogy* or *The Long Day Closes*) or those of his family members (unlike *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives*) and no concern with childhood as in his autobiographical films or his adaptation of *The Neon Bible*. Moreover, the film depicts the social milieu of the upper classes in New York at the beginning of the twentieth century, whereas Davies's previous films portrayed working-class characters from the mid twentieth-century. Even its structure is markedly different, having a conventional linear plot with clear progression. Unlike Davies's previous films, *The House of Mirth* does not traverse time, nor does its narrative comprise loose, fragmented memories like *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* or *The Neon Bible*. Indeed, of all Davies's films *The House of Mirth* is the one with the greatest investment in traditional narrative storytelling.

Both the novel and the film present the reader/viewer with a harrowing portrait of the upper echelons of New York society in the 1900s. The drama's central protagonist is the beautiful, fun-loving socialite Lily Bart (Gillian Anderson) who has been brought up by her

stern, priggish aunt, Julia Peniston (Eleanor Bron) – alongside her quiet, resentful cousin Grace Stepney (Jodhi May) – to believe that her future happiness depends upon securing marriage to a wealthy man since she possesses relatively little money of her own. As a consequence of this socially embedded expectation, Lily feels constrained from marrying her true love, the (relatively) poor lawyer Lawrence Selden (Eric Stoltz). In spite of her upbringing, Lily's strong sense of morality thwarts her from decisively 'landing' a wealthy husband. Indeed, she rejects an offer of marriage from Simon Rosedale (Anthony LaPaglia), one of the wealthiest men in New York society. Lily's beauty and charm make her desirable to men, but also alienate her from certain women, namely her cousin Grace and the ruthless and manipulative social *doyenne* Bertha Dorset (Laura Linney). Grace informs their aunt of Lily's gambling debts and the inaccurate rumours that she has been conducting an affair with a married member of her social circle, Gus Trenor (Dan Aykroyd). The lowly inheritance that Lily inherits upon her aunt's death is a direct consequence of Grace's interference which is motivated by jealousy and resentment.

Lily's ultimate downfall is brought about through the machinations of Bertha Dorset, who publicly insinuates that Lily has been conducting an affair with her husband in order to shift attention from her own illicit dalliances. Consequently, Lily becomes a social pariah: she is spurned by her former friends and loses all hope of finding a rich spouse. Slowly but inexorably, Lily slides down the social scale, first working as a social secretary, then as an apprentice milliner, and finally losing employment altogether. Ironically, Lily possesses incriminating letters written from Bertha to Lawrence during the course of their brief affair that could be used to blackmail the former into restoring her position in society, but Lily is unable to bring herself to use these letters as she wishes to protect Lawrence's reputation. Ultimately, Lily is not sufficiently scheming or callous to play by the rules of society. Both the novel and the film culminate with Lily's suicide due to an overdose of sleeping medicine.

In his review of *The House of Mirth*, Philip French referred to the film's 'intelligent fidelity'.<sup>61</sup> An audience familiar with Wharton's novel would appreciate that Davies faithfully

transposes the plot details and characters of Wharton's novel from the page to the screen with great sensitivity and skill. However, they would also realise that Davies *does* make certain bold alterations to the source material to render it more dramatically involving and palatable to a contemporary audience. One of the two significant amendments that Davies makes to Wharton's novel is his amalgamation of two supporting characters into one. In the original text, Gertie Farish is the poor, unmarried cousin of Lawrence Selden who harbours a secret, unrequited love for her charming relation. However, Davies selects to remove Gertie from the narrative entirely. Instead, he conflates her dominant characteristics (her unrequited passion for Lawrence and her bitter jealousy of Lily) with those of Grace Stepney. In the novel, Grace plays a relatively minor role, and her only significant narrative function is to tarnish Lily's good name in the eyes of her once adoring aunt by gossiping about her cousin's gambling debts and alleged 'affair' with Gus Trenor which ultimately costs Lily her inheritance. On the topic of this amendment to Wharton's original novel, Davies has said that

Separately, the characters are not interesting. Together they're much more interesting because it make Grace much more vicious. She's not just refusing to help Lily out of moral rectitude and Christian charity in which there's no love. It's out of sexual jealousy and that's much more interesting. It's all the more dramatic because she's not consciously aware of it, although she knows it to be true.<sup>62</sup>

The second major alteration that Davies makes to the source novel is similarly motivated by a desire to improve upon the original text's plotting. Like some of her contemporaries in New York society, Edith Wharton was anti-Semitic, and consequently subscribed to a 'crude biological reductionism which identified Jews as a race that possessed identifiable traits and quirks'.<sup>63</sup> This sinister 'reductionism' is evident in her unflattering depiction of Simon Rosedale, the greedy, unscrupulous, self-made Jewish businessman who the other characters in the novel (including Lily) look down upon. For Davies, Wharton's outdated prejudice is the 'most dispiriting thing' about the novel.<sup>64</sup> Believing that the plot's anti-Semitism 'disfigured' the text, Davies made the bold decision to remove all references to Rosedale's Jewishness.<sup>65</sup> In Davies's version, the other characters

stigmatise Rosedale because of his working-class origins and social status as 'new money' rather than his race/religion. No doubt, Davies's alteration was motivated partly by a desire to make the material more acceptable to a modern audience. But despite his good intentions, some critics have attacked this decision. Richard Porton, for example, argues that the removal of Rosedale's Jewishness and the casting of the Australian-Italian actor Antony LaPaglia is 'one of Davies's few miscalculations'.<sup>66</sup> Martha Nochimson claimed that by removing references to Rosedale's Jewishness, 'Davies recalls the worst of classical Hollywood by repressing the word 'Jew' from the dialog [sic] and attempting to substitute dated codes'.<sup>67</sup> However, Nochimson seems to be misinterpreting Davies's depiction of the Rosedale character. Rather than 'repress' Rosedale's Jewishness, as Nochimson claims, Davies dispenses with it altogether; and by suggesting that the character's marginalisation results from his status as a self-made man, Davies comes up with what is arguably a more dramatically interesting interpretation of the character's dilemma.

In addition to the two alterations discussed above, Davies employs his filmmaking skills to interpret elisions within Wharton's novel, namely the period of time that elapses between Books One and Two. The first half of the novel ends with Lily, at home in New York, receiving a telegram from Bertha Dorset which says "Sailing unexpectedly tomorrow. Will you join us on a cruise in Mediterranean?"<sup>68</sup> The second half opens with Lawrence Selden on the steps of a casino in Monte Carlo, the city in which he will soon be re-united with Lily. In the novel, Wharton uses the literary equivalent of a jump cut to depict this abrupt change of setting and time. Davies, on the other hand, chooses to depict this voyage through space and time in a sequence of extraordinary visual beauty and inventiveness. To the strains of 'Soava sia il vento' from Mozart's *Così fan tutte* (1790), the camera begins a slow pan from left to right across a vast drawing room in which all the furniture has been shrouded in dust sheets. Next, there is a series of lap dissolves in which the mobile camera moves forwards towards the window and then backwards so that we can see the window as a frame within the larger frame of the screen. Then Davies shows us exterior shots of the house, with the

camera gliding through heavy rain, past the tall trees and high walls that surround the garden. Having left the garden, the camera moves across lawns to a stream, at which point Davies pans forward across the surface of the water which undulates under the heavy rain. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the rain begins to subside, the texture of the water becomes more tranquil, and intense sunlight begins to dapple the water, making it glisten. Next, we see an extreme close-up of the bow of a boat cutting through the water. Finally, the camera, still moving, tilts upwards to show the coast of Monte Carlo.



Transition from New York to Monte Carlo in *The House of Mirth*.

For an audience familiar with Davies's previous films, this virtuoso sequence – with its slow, deliberate tracking shots and phosphorescent lights – calls to mind a similar scene from *Distant Voices, Still Lives* which juxtaposes a shot of the River Mersey with Benjamin Britten's 1930 choral work 'A Hymn to the Virgin'. The former scene, which depicts Lily's journey from New York to Monte Carlo – one that will ultimately seal her doom – demonstrates how Davies is able to engage imaginatively with a literary text and incorporate



his own thematic preoccupations (time and space are recurring themes in his films) into his treatment of an established literary text.

In her 2007 biography of Edith Wharton, Hermione Lee employs the term the 'Wharton boom'<sup>69</sup> to refer to the profusion of film and TV adaptations of her novels that took place in the 1990s: *The Children* (Tony Palmer, UK/West Germany, 1990), *Ethan Frome* (John Madden, UK/USA, 1993), *The Age of Innocence*, the mini-series *The Buccaneers* (Philip Saville, UK, 1995), *The Reef* (Robert Allan Ackerman, USA/Germany/Czech Republic, 1999), and, finally, *The House of Mirth*. Interestingly, it was during the 1990s that there was also a renewed interest in adapting the novels of Jane Austen and Henry James.<sup>70</sup> These three authors share numerous qualities – not least Wharton and James who, in addition to writing contemporaneously, were devoted friends/confidantes – but arguably their main similarity is the way they critique and dissect the rigid social rules and conventions that circumscribed the upper echelons of society (albeit it in different tonal registers).

As the most significant Wharton adaptation of the previous decade, *The Age of Innocence* (Martin Scorsese, USA, 1993) was a prominent component of *The House of Mirth's* critical reception, forming part of its 'cultural baggage'.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, Scorsese's film must have seemed a tough act to follow, being not only critically and commercially successful on its release but gaining a reputation for being a model example of literary adaptation, and Davies himself has displayed considerable respect and enthusiasm for *The Age of Innocence*. In addition to listing the latter film as one of his personal favourites, he has also described Joanne Woodward's voiceover narration as one of the finest in all cinema, alongside Dennis Price's in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, William Holden's in *Sunset Boulevard* and Joan Fontaine's in *Letter from an Unknown Woman*.<sup>72</sup> Despite the critical urge to bracket these two films together, Scorsese and Davies both offer up contrasting interpretations of the period/costume drama.

While *The House of Mirth* undoubtedly belongs within the British cinematic tradition of period/costume dramas, offering viewers the pleasures of having an older, forgotten world

re-created before their eyes, it does not offer the chocolate box pictorialism of films from the Merchant-Ivory stable, such as *A Room with a View* (UK, 1985) or *Howards End* (UK/Japan/USA, 1992). Yet one of the recurring observations made in the reviews that greeted *The House of Mirth* is how its mise-en-scène contrasts with that of *The Age of Innocence*. For the most part, when critics have compared these two films they have decided to emphasise *The Age of Innocence*'s visual opulence/excess ('dazzling, lavish, high profile'<sup>73</sup>) in order to contrast Scorsese's directorial approach with Davies's more restrained ('sensitive and interesting'<sup>74</sup>) re-working of *The House of Mirth*. The comparative stringency and restraint of *The House of Mirth* next to the sumptuousness of *The Age of Innocence* is partly related to their respective budgets: Davies's film was made for approximately \$8 million, whereas Scorsese's cost \$30 million. Indeed, the total budget for *The House of Mirth* was roughly the same as the sum allocated for the promotion and distribution of *The Age of Innocence*.<sup>75</sup>

Whereas the lavish sets of *The Age of Innocence* were created in a Hollywood studio, meaning that Scorsese and his production designer Dante Ferretti could create their vision of New York from the ground up, Davies shot most of *The House of Mirth* in Glasgow and in period houses dotted around Scotland because of their resemblance to *fin-de-siècle* New York architecture. Despite filming thousands of miles away from New York, Davies skilfully manages to create the illusion of another time and place. This is achieved through a combination of well-chosen locations, Monica Howe's costume designs, and Davies's decision to shoot the actors in close-up, forcing the audience to focus on the characters rather than the period detail. Whereas Scorsese approached *The Age of Innocence* as an 'anthropological study'<sup>76</sup> of the social customs and rituals of Old New York, Davies was more interested in creating a cinematic space in which emotion and memory are crucial, meaning less importance was placed on creating a simulacrum of the novel's setting.

For Jonathan Romney, *The House of Mirth* is an 'unusually stark and serious' take on literary costume drama, whereas Scorsese's more opulent film 'couldn't resist swooning over

the lavishness of the table settings'.<sup>77</sup> The criticism that Scorsese was overly concerned with period detail is shared by numerous critics, including Peter Bradshaw, who accused Scorsese of 'obtusely fetishising the mahogany and bone china'.<sup>78</sup> In an interview with Ian Christie, Scorsese defended himself against this criticism by explaining that he insisted on an abundance of detail because he wanted 'The decor to become a character' within the film.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, one might argue that it is the weight of all this production design – the elaborate costumes, the lavishly decorated interiors, the paraphernalia of social rituals such as balls and dinner parties – combined with the rituals of upper-middle class behaviour that 'render[s]' Newland Archer (Daniel Day Lewis) 'emotionally impotent'.<sup>80</sup>

While the Visconti-like splendour of *The Age of Innocence* provides us with an insight into the rituals of an enclosed society – something that Scorsese had done previously in his films on Italian-American crime families such as *Mean Streets* and *Goodfellas* – the production design descends at times into the realm of 'glamorous distraction'<sup>81</sup>; something that *The House of Mirth* refrains from doing. Indeed, one might suggest that Davies's film bears a stronger resemblance to Kenji Mizoguchi's geisha drama *The Life of Oharu/Saikaku ichidai onna* (Japan, 1952) – with its unrelenting focus on the victimization and degradation of a young woman at the hands of a brutal, unfeeling patriarchal society – than it does with *The Age of Innocence*. For an informed audience, Jane Campion's adaptation of *The Portrait of a Lady* (UK/USA, 1996) might serve as a more illuminating point of comparison.

Jane Campion's films – from *Sweetie* (Australia, 1989) to *Bright Star* (UK/Australia/France, 2009) – are concerned with exploring ideas of female desire and subjectivity. Like Davies, Campion is an auteur filmmaker with a unique and uncompromising cinematic style who has also tackled literary adaptations with *An Angel at My Table* (New Zealand/Australia/UK/USA, 1990), *In the Cut* (Australia/USA/UK, 2003), and – most relevantly – *The Portrait of a Lady*.<sup>82</sup> *The House of Mirth* and *The Portrait of a Lady* are both period films in which the focus is placed on the female protagonist rather than the aesthetic

pleasures of the mise-en-scène. Indeed, neither Davies nor Campion fetishize period detail to the extent that other directors working within this genre have.

Like *The House of Mirth*, *The Portrait of a Lady* depicts the downfall of a young woman who is conspired against by schemers within their social strata. In both films, it is the protagonist's refusal to play by society's rules that results in their ruin: for Lily, it is her refusal to marry a rich man she does not love in order to secure her social position; and for the young heiress Isobel Archer (Nicole Kidman), it is her decision to spurn her American suitors to marry a European émigré, Gilbert Osmond (John Malkovich), who traps her within a loveless marriage. Interestingly, both Davies and Campion have been criticised by some commentators for reducing Wharton's and James's central characters to the level of the heroines that dominated the Hollywood 'women's pictures' of the 1940s. However, it is the way in which Campion transmutes James's novel visually that links it to *The House of Mirth*.

Despite some controversially anachronistic moments<sup>83</sup>, Campion's visual aesthetic succeeds in conveying Isabel's increasing sense of isolation and entrapment. Like Davies, Campion relies heavily on close-up shots of the actors' faces which foreground the characters and lessen the emphasis on the mise-en-scène. Indeed, as Dana Polan has observed, the area of the frame around the faces is often 'emptied out by ink-dark shadows'.<sup>84</sup> This is not to suggest, however, that Campion resists using mise-en-scène to explore the stultifying social traditions depicted in James's novel. Like *The House of Mirth*, *The Portrait of a Lady* is primarily a 'film of interiors, of literally bound environments', a film concerned with creating a 'claustrophobic space that bespeaks confinement and restraint'.<sup>85</sup> While both these films contain some outdoor sequences, the majority of the scenes involve characters occupying rooms filled with furniture and decorations. Another feature that links the two films is their visual coolness. As Brian McFarlane has identified, Campion's selected 'colour range seems to be mainly a matter of browns and blues', imbuing her film with a frostiness far removed from the sumptuous warmth of *The Age of Innocence*. Similarly,

Davies's film adopts a colour palette of blues, greens and browns to create a visually austere adaptation of Wharton's novel.



Cool colour palettes: Lily Bart (Gillian Rowlands) in *The House of Mirth*. Right: Isabel Archer (Nicole Kidman) in *The Portrait of a Lady*.

Despite the numerous differences between *The House of Mirth* and Davies's earlier work, adapting Wharton's novel permitted him to revisit some of the thematic concerns that pervaded his autobiographical films, including social exclusion, exploitation, entrapment, cruelty and the desire for freedom. Like *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes*, *The House of Mirth* betrays the influence of Davies's formative cinema-going years, particularly the 'women's picture' or 'weepie' epitomised by *The Little Foxes*, *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (Max Ophüls, USA, 1948), *Magnificent Obsession* (Douglas Sirk, USA, 1954), *All That Heaven Allows* and *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing* (Henry King, USA, 1955). These films would also influence his next piece of narrative cinema.

### ***The Deep Blue Sea***

Ten years after the release of *The House of Mirth* (and two years after the documentary *Of Time and the City*), Davies began filming an adaptation of Terence Rattigan's play *The Deep Blue Sea*. The film was released in 2011 as part of Rattigan's centenary, for which numerous productions of the playwright's work were performed throughout the country<sup>86</sup>, including two major stage productions of *The Deep Blue Sea*: Sarah Esdaile's at the West Yorkshire Playhouse in Leeds and Philip Franks' at the Chichester Festival Theatre in London.

Davies's film received an enthusiastic reception from numerous British critics, undoubtedly assisting him to secure financial backing for his long-gestating adaptation of Lewis Grassic Gibbon's novel *Sunset Song*.

Once again *The Deep Blue Sea* represents a significantly different approach to adaptation compared with Davies's previous two films. In *The Deep Blue Sea*, he adapts a stage play with a well-defined sense of time and place – it takes place over the course of one day in a single location – to produce a film that is spatially and temporally permeable. In adopting such a radical approach, Davies has moulded a canonical literary text into a cinematic work that bears his authorial signature as strongly as, for example, *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives*. To quote the critic Tim Robey, Rattigan's play has been relocated to 'Davies-land'.<sup>87</sup>

In order to appreciate the extent of Davies's revision, I will provide a brief summary of how Rattigan's original play unfolds. Set entirely within the sitting-room of a dingy rented flat in London in 1952 (presumably), *The Deep Blue Sea* dramatises the destructive love affair between the middle-aged Hester Collyer and her younger lover Freddie Page, a young, cash-strapped RAF pilot. At the beginning of the play, Hester is discovered lying next to the fireplace having tried unsuccessfully to commit suicide through a combination of gas-inhalation and sleeping pills. During the course of the play we learn that Hester has left her husband, the wealthy and respectable High Court judge Sir William Collyer to move in with her younger lover. When Freddie reads Hester's suicide note we learn that she has been driven to suicide because her passionate, all-consuming love for the former is not reciprocated. The revelation of Hester's suicide attempt sounds the death knell for the adulterous couple's relationship, and the play ends with Freddie leaving the flat for good in order to pursue a life in Brazil as a test pilot, leaving Hester to face an uncertain fortune alone.

One of the most unflattering reviews for *The Deep Blue Sea* came from *The Guardian* critic Catherine Shoard who described the film as 'nothing if not faithful' and

likened it to a 'veritable Greyfriars Bobby: patiently wagging its tail, even if its master is not looking too hot around the chops'.<sup>88</sup> The idea that Davies's film suffers from a slavish, ultimately damaging fidelity would seem perplexing to an audience familiar with the original text when we consider the bold choices that the director has taken to open up Rattigan's hermetically sealed stage play. Firstly, Davies depicts key events that occur before the action of the play, namely Hester's (Rachel Weisz) first flirtatious encounter with Freddy (Tom Hiddleston) whilst on a golfing holiday, and William's (Simon Russell Beale) painful realisation that his wife has been indulging in an extra-marital affair. Secondly, Davies embellishes and invents the back-stories of the characters, creating a dragon-like mother-in-law for Hester, Mrs Collyer (Barbara Jefford), whose puritanical rectitude embodies the social limitations that Hester is trying to escape from in her relationship with Freddy ('Beware of passion', she warns Hester, 'It always leads to something ugly'). Thirdly, whereas Rattigan's play depicts the events of a single day in chronological order, Davies's film travels backwards and forwards in time, meaning that the dramatic events of Rattigan's play – Hester's suicide attempt and the deterioration of her relationship with Freddie – are interwoven with flashbacks that elaborate upon the central plot.

Like *The House of Mirth*, Davies alters *The Deep Blue* to suit his own artistic purposes, removing certain minor characters and shrinking/expanding the roles of others in order to focus primarily upon the love triangle at the centre of the play. In the play, Hester's comatose body is discovered by her neighbours Philip and Ann Welch, and their class-conscious snooping (they are hugely impressed when they learn that Hester's estranged husband is a High Court judge) are mercilessly satirised by Rattigan. In Davies's film, however, Ann is removed from the diegesis altogether and Philip's role is reduced to a brief appearance when Hester is coming out of her stupor. More dramatically, the character of Miller (Karl Johnson) – the mysterious ex-doctor who plays such a significant part in the play – is drastically reduced in the film, where his sole purpose is to administer care to Hester after her suicide attempt. In the play, Miller is depicted as a kindred spirit of Hester's: while

Hester's infidelity with a younger man has made her a social pariah, Miller has been struck off for an unidentified reason. In addition to providing Hester with a dramatic foil, Miller symbolises the social/economic oblivion that the latter risks descending into by not returning to her respectable husband. Moreover, Miller is the character who understands Hester most profoundly, convincing her to reject the option of suicide.

Davies has stated that 'no-one is convinced by' Miller's pivotal role in the play, hence his decision to reduce it.<sup>89</sup> However, in choosing to diminish the character's dramatic function, Davies tampers with one of the abiding readings of Rattigan's play – namely, that it is a covertly homosexual text. It is strongly implied in the original text that Miller is homosexual: when describing to Hester why Miller was disbarred from the medical profession, Mrs Elton suggests 'what he did wasn't – well – the sort of thing people forgive very easily. Ordinary normal people I mean'.<sup>90</sup> Indeed, the theatre scholar Dan Rebellato categorises Miller as one of Rattigan's sexually indeterminate characters, alongside Tony and David in *First Episode* (1933), the Major in *Follow My Leader* (1940), the servicemen of *While the Sun Shines* (1943), Alexander the Great in *Adventure Story* (1949), T.E. Lawrence in *Ross* (1965) and the schoolboys in *Cause Célèbre* (1977).<sup>91</sup> It is also commonly accepted that the inspiration for the play emerged from a tragic event in the playwright's life: the death of his ex-lover, Kenneth Morgan, who deserted Rattigan for a younger man and subsequently gassed himself to death on 28 February 1949 after their relationship had come to a sudden and unexpected end. Writing a play with overtly homosexual characters would have been impossible for Rattigan at this time due to the censorship restrictions imposed by the Lord Chamberlain, so he was obliged to change the gender of the central protagonist in order to make it palatable to a mainstream audience. Despite the subversive subtexts embedded within many of Rattigan's plays, his work has become a fixture of British theatre life and provided the raw material for numerous films.

In the 1990s there were two major adaptations of Rattigan's plays, *The Browning Version* (Mike Figgis, UK, 1994) and *The Winslow Boy* (David Mamet, UK/USA, 1999), both



of which were previously filmed by Anthony Asquith in 1951 and 1948 respectively. Due to their shared literary provenance, all of these films share a distinct intertextual relationship with *The Deep Blue Sea*. Like Davies, both Figgis and Mamet avoid the potential dangers of creating staid film transpositions of theatrical performances by re-writing the source text in order to render it more cinematic. Unlike Toole or Wharton (who despised film as a medium), Rattigan was a prolific screenwriter, adapting his own and other writers' work, as well as writing original film scripts.<sup>92</sup> In 1958, Rattigan adapted his own work *Separate Tables* (1954) – a double-bill of one act plays set in an English seaside hotel – into a feature film directed by Delbert Mann by interweaving the narratives of the two short dramas: the first depicts a love triangle between John (Burt Lancaster), his ex-wife Ann (Rita Hayworth) and the hotel manageress Pat (Wendy Hiller), and the second depicts the social disgrace of Major Pollock (David Niven) who is 'outed' in the local newspaper for sexually propositioning women in a cinema.

An informed audience would notice that *Separate Tables* and *The Deep Blue Sea* share obvious thematic parallels: the tension between duty and desire, emotional repression, unreciprocated love, social alienation, etc. But what connects these two films most forcefully is their recreation of the England during the 1950s – the shabby interiors of the hotel in *Separate Tables* and the boarding house in *The Deep Blue Sea* both reflect the austerity years that followed the end of WWII. However, it is doubtful that Mann's visually uninteresting direction – which makes *Separate Tables* resemble a filmed play rather than a work of cinema – had any direct influence on Davies's overtly poetic approach to Rattigan's play. Indeed, I would like to suggest that *The Deep Blue Sea's* main intertextual influence appears to be *Brief Encounter*.



Delbert Mann's filmed version of *Separate Tables* struggles to escape its stage origins.

Of all Davies's films to date, *The Deep Blue* has the deepest affinity with David Lean's famous romantic 'weepie'. There are narrative similarities between the two films, as both works dramatise love triangles in which a married woman is drawn to another man. However, in *Brief Encounter* the extra-marital affair between Laura (Celia Johnson) and Alec (Trevor Howard) remains unconsummated, while in *The Deep Blue Sea* Hester actually abandons her husband in order to live with her young lover. Indeed, an informed audience could view *The Deep Blue Sea* as a re-writing of *Brief Encounter*, in which the 'British' institutions of social duty and emotional repression have been thrown over in favour of individualism and sexual fulfilment. Despite these narrative and thematic parallels, it is the visual lyricism of *Brief Encounter* that has influenced Davies's adaptation of Rattigan's' play.

In *The Deep Blue Sea*, Davies makes a direct allusion to *Brief Encounter* by virtually replicating Laura's failed suicide attempt. Having made a permanent break from Alec for the sake of their respective marriages, Laura strides out of the refreshment room onto the train station platform; she has the intention of throwing herself onto the railway line, but at the last moment she stops at the platform edge, just as the train is passing by. To create the requisite level of dramatic excitement for this particular shot, Lean shot Johnson in close-up, used a wind machine to tousle her hair, and shone a series of lights on her face to convey how narrow her escape was. This scene is replayed by Davies in *The Deep Blue Sea* when

Hester realises that she has lost Freddie irrevocably. Even though Davies's films are suffused with cinematic references, his references have largely tended to be subtle or oblique. This flagrant borrowing from *Brief Encounter* suggests that Davies is deliberately attempting to draw upon the earlier film's dramatic resonance: he wishes to tap into the collective subconscious of the film's audience.



Left: Laura (Celia Jonson) in *Brief Encounter*. Right: Hester (Rachel Weisz) in *The Deep Blue Sea*.

## Conclusion

The recent premiere of *Sunset Song* at the Toronto International Film Festival suggests that Davies's interest in literary adaptation shows no sign of abating. Although he has temporarily shelved plans for an adaptation of Ed McBain's crime novel *He Who Hesitates* (1965) due to lack of interest from financial backers, he is trying to secure funding for an adaptation of Richard McCann's collection of interconnected short stories, *Mother of Sorrows* (2005).<sup>93</sup>

In this chapter, I have continued to interrogate how Davies's films might be fruitfully explored in relation to a range of cinematic intertexts. I have also explored the ways in which an audience familiar with the literary texts under discussion might respond to the ways in which Davies alters/reinterprets them. Indeed, the three films analysed in this chapter exhibit a variety of approaches to the cinematic adaptation of literary texts. In *The Neon Bible*, Davies has re-worked a novel with resemblances to his own upbringing, transforming the text into a film that conforms to the stylistic and storytelling conventions of his previous

works, most noticeably *The Long Day Closes*. If I were to employ Wagner's classification system for literary adaptations, then I would suggest that *The Neon Bible* is a 'commentary' on Toole's novella in which he emphasises the narrative details of the novel that most resemble his own childhood. *The House of Mirth* is the most linear of Davies's films to date and differs from his previous works in the way it furnishes the audience with the conventional cinematic pleasures of narrative progression and character development. Despite exhibiting Davies's trademark visual flair, the film is extremely faithful to the source text and offers little re-working of Wharton's original novel. Again, to employ Wagner's classification system, I would suggest that the film is a 'transposition' of Wharton's novel. In contrast, *The Deep Blue Sea* is a radical example of literary adaptation. While it would be overstating the case to describe the latter film as an 'analogy' – after all, Davies retains the central love triangle and social-historical milieu of Rattigan's play – he violently re-configures the source text in numerous ways.

Despite adapting established literary texts, Davies manages to explore many of the same thematic concerns and stylistic traits that have pervaded his autobiographical films: the male/female dialectic of abusive/manipulative men and nurturing/empathetic women; the status of the outsider in society; the power of community rituals to comfort and entrap the individual; the desire to escape conformity; the longing for freedom; long shots and tracking shots; the use of popular and classical musical, etc. In their shared preoccupations, Davies's autobiographical films and literary adaptations reinforce each other. Moreover, both groups of films share a rich intertextual character that makes allusions to and invites comparisons with a range of other films.

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<sup>1</sup> Murray 1994, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Aragay 2005, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> McFarlane 1996, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Conrad 1984, p. xlii.

<sup>5</sup> Griffith quoted in Spiegel 1976, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> The Conrad-Griffith connection is also discussed by Beja (1979: 51) and McFarlane (1996, 3). Giddings, Selby and Wensley begin their book *Screening the Novel: the theory and practice of literary*

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*dramatization* by stating that 'it has become traditional in books concerned with screening the novel to open with statements by Joseph Conrad, the novelist, and D.W. Griffith, the film-maker, which seem almost to echo one another' (1990:1), suggesting that the parallel between the two figures has degenerated into cliché.

<sup>7</sup> Bluestone 2003, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>9</sup> In addition to filming *Anna Karenina*, Rose has adapted Tolstoy's novellas *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (1886) – as *Ivansxtc* (UK/USA, 2000) – and *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889) in 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Garner 1997, p. B27.

<sup>11</sup> Truffaut quoted in Beja 1979, p. 85.

<sup>12</sup> Resnais quoted in Beja 1979, p. 85.

<sup>13</sup> Welsh 2007, p. xv.

<sup>14</sup> Bluestone 2003, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Woolf quoted in Beja 1979, p. 78.

<sup>16</sup> Mailer quoted in Beja 1979, p. 51.

<sup>17</sup> Bergman quoted in Beja 1979, p. 51.

<sup>18</sup> McFarlane 2007, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Cardwell 2007, p. 51.

<sup>20</sup> Andrew 2000, pp. 31-33.

<sup>21</sup> Bluestone 2003, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Metz 2003, p. 10.

<sup>23</sup> Cardwell 2002, p. 25.

<sup>24</sup> Orr 1984, pp. 72-73.

<sup>25</sup> Ray 2000, pp. 48-49.

<sup>26</sup> Stam 2000, pp. 62-3.

<sup>27</sup> Kranz 2007, p. 88.

<sup>28</sup> Andrew 2000, p. 29.

<sup>29</sup> Kranz 2007, p. 84.

<sup>30</sup> Wagner 1975, pp. 224-227.

<sup>31</sup> Cahir has summarised Dryden's three types of translation as follows: (i) *literal translation* 'reproduces the plot and all its attending details as closely as possible'; (ii) *traditional translation* 'maintains the overall traits of the book (its plot, settings, and stylistic conventions but revamps particular details in those particular ways that the filmmaker sees as necessary and fitting', and (iii) *radical translation* 'reshapes the book in extreme and revolutionary ways both as a means of interpreting the literature and of making the text a more fully independent work' (Cahir 2006, pp. 16-17).

<sup>32</sup> Boozer identifies three categories of literary adaptation: (i) a 'literal or close reading', (ii) a 'general correspondence' and (iii) a 'distant referencing' (Boozer 2008, p. 9).

<sup>33</sup> Klein and Parker identify three categories of literary adaptation: (i) 'fidelity to the main thrust of the narrative'; (ii) an approach which 'retains the core or the structure of the narrative while significantly reinterpreting or, in some cases, deconstructing the source text', and (iii) 'regarding the source text merely as raw material, as simply the occasion for an original work' (Klein and Parker 1981, pp. 9-10).

<sup>34</sup> Davies quoted in Cousins 1996, pp. 173-4.

<sup>35</sup> Thomson 2002, p. 207.

<sup>36</sup> Davies quoted in Everett 2004, p. 203.

<sup>37</sup> Rosenbaum 2004, p. 394.

<sup>38</sup> Coe 1995, p. 14.

<sup>39</sup> Horne 2001, p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> Davies quoted in Cousins 1996, p. 175.

<sup>41</sup> Toole 1989, p. 24.

<sup>42</sup> Davies quoted in Everett 2004, p. 204.

<sup>43</sup> Coe 1995, p. 14.

<sup>44</sup> Patterson 2001, p. 74.

<sup>45</sup> Shail 2007, pp. 50-51.

<sup>46</sup> Walker 2004, p. 225.

<sup>47</sup> Coe 1995, p. 14.

<sup>48</sup> Thelma Toole was devoted to her son throughout his life and long after his death. From a young age, Toole's mother instilled within her son a deep appreciation of culture that would shape his life –

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he would become an English lecturer and author. Toole became depressed when he failed to get his novel *A Confederacy of Dunces* accepted for publication and committed suicide in 1969 at the age of 31. After being mired in depression for two years, Thelma Toole made it her ambition to get her son's novel published and thereby prove his talent to the rest of the world. After sending her son's manuscript to several publishers without success, Thelma began a campaign of letters and phone calls to the author Walker Percy, a faculty member at Loyola University, New Orleans, to get him to read the manuscript. Percy adored the book and it was subsequently published in 1980 by Louisiana State University Press. The book went on to attract much attention in the literary world, eventually winning the Pulitzer Prize in 1981.

<sup>49</sup> Davies quoted in Cousins 1996, p. 176.

<sup>50</sup> Rosenbaum 2004, p. 396.

<sup>51</sup> Davies 2014, interview with author.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. During our interview Davies praised Rowlands's performance in *A Woman Under the Influence* (John Cassavetes, USA, 1974).

<sup>53</sup> Stern 1995, 200.

<sup>54</sup> Cassavetes directed Rowlands in seven films: *A Child is Waiting* (USA, 1963), *Faces* (USA, 1968), *Minnie and Moskowitz* (USA, 1971), *A Woman Under the Influence* (USA, 1974), *Opening Night* (USA, 1977), *Gloria* (USA, 1980), *Tempest* (USA, 1982) and *Love Streams* (USA, 1984). He also acted with her in three others: *Machine Gun McCain/Gli intoccabili* (Giuliano Montaldo, Italy, 1969), *Two-Minute Warning* (Larry Peerce, USA, 1976) and *Tempest* (Paul Mazursky, USA, 1982).

<sup>55</sup> Carney 1994, p. 159.

<sup>56</sup> Billson 1995, p. 11.

<sup>57</sup> Brown 1995, p. 40.

<sup>58</sup> Davies quoted in Everett 2004, p. 203.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Some examples of positive reviews for *The House of Mirth* include Fuller (2001, pp. 54-9), Horne (2000, pp. 14-18) and Johnston (2000, p. 5).

<sup>61</sup> French 2000, p. 7.

<sup>62</sup> Davies 2001, DVD commentary.

<sup>63</sup> Porton 2008, p. 94.

<sup>64</sup> Davies quoted in Constanzo Cahir 2001, p. 169.

<sup>65</sup> Davies quoted in Porton 2008, p. 94.

<sup>66</sup> Porton 2008, p. 94.

<sup>67</sup> Nochimson 2001, p. 42.

<sup>68</sup> Wharton 1990, p. 193.

<sup>69</sup> Lee 2007, p. 753.

<sup>70</sup> There were numerous high-profile film and TV adaptations of Jane Austen's novels during the 1990s, including *Persuasion* (Roger Michell, UK/USA/France, 1995), the TV mini-series *Pride and Prejudice* (UK, 1995), *Sense and Sensibility* (Ang Lee, USA/UK, 1995), *Emma* (Douglas McGrath, UK/USA, 1996) and *Mansfield Park* (Patricia Rozema, UK, 1999). Although not quite as popular as Austen, notable adaptations of Henry James's novels during this period included *The Portrait of a Lady* (Jane Campion, UK/USA, 1996), *The Wings of the Dove* (Iain Softley, USA/UK, 1997), *Washington Square* (Agnieszka Holland, USA, 1997) and *The Golden Bowl* (James Ivory, USA/France/UK, 2000).

<sup>71</sup> Everett 2004, p. 137.

<sup>72</sup> Davies 2011, accessed on 26 February 2013.

<sup>73</sup> Lee 2007, p. 754.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Cahir 2001, p. 167.

<sup>76</sup> Scorsese 2003, p. 177.

<sup>77</sup> Romney 2000, p. 14.

<sup>78</sup> Bradshaw 2000, p. 14.

<sup>79</sup> Scorsese quoted in Woods (Ed.) 2005, p. 213.

<sup>80</sup> Kolker 2011, p. 255.

<sup>81</sup> Romney 2000, p. 46-47.

<sup>82</sup> Campion's *An Angel at My Table* is an adaptation of three autobiographical works by the New Zealand author Janet Frame: *To the Is-land* (1982), *An Angel at My Table* (1984) and *The Envoy from*

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*Mirror City* (1984). *In the Cut* is an adaptation of American author Susanna Moore's erotic thriller of the same title.

<sup>83</sup> Three particular scenes from *The Portrait of a Lady* have been singled out by critics for their radical deviation from the novel: (i) the opening scene, in which we first hear the voices of modern women talking about romance (what it means to be kissed, for example) and then see modern women in the woods, dancing, posing, touching, and looking enigmatically at the camera; (ii) an erotic dream sequence in which Isabel (Nicole Kidman) lies on the bed being kissed by two of her suitors, Warburton (Richard E. Grant) and Goodwood (Viggo Mortensen), while the third, Ralph Touchett (Martin Donovan), looks on, and (iii) a black-and-white sequence that deliberately references several forms of early cinema, including silent comedy, exotic romances like *The Sheik* (George Melford, USA, 1921), and Bunuelian surrealism.

<sup>84</sup> Polan 2001, p. 134.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> In addition to these two stage productions of *The Deep Blue Sea*, there were a season of Rattigan's plays performed across the country to commemorate the late playwright, including Trevor Nunn's *Flare Path* (1941) at the Theatre Royal Haymarket (London), Richard Beecham's *In Praise of Love* (1973) at the Royal and Derngate (Northampton) and Thea Sharrock's *Cause Célèbre* (1977) at the Old Vic (London).

<sup>87</sup> Robey 2011, accessed on 25 January 2015.

<sup>88</sup> Shoard 2011, accessed on 30 September 2011.

<sup>89</sup> Davies quoted in Ramon 2011, accessed 26 Jan 2012.

<sup>90</sup> Rattigan 2011, p. 70.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. xxii.

<sup>92</sup> Rattigan's original screenplays include *English Without Tears* (Harold French, UK, 1944), *The Sound Barrier* (David Lean, UK, 1952), *The V.I.P.s* (Anthony Asquith, UK, 1963) and *The Yellow Rolls-Royce* (Anthony Asquith, UK, 1964). Rattigan's adaptation of others' works include *Quiet Wedding* (Anthony Asquith, UK, 1941), *The Day Will Dawn* (Harold French, UK, 1942), *Uncensored* (Anthony Asquith, UK, 1942), *The Way to the Stars* (Anthony Asquith, UK, 1945) and, most famously, *Brighton Rock* (John Boulting, UK, 1947).

<sup>93</sup> Davies 2014, interview with author. Richard McCann's collection of interconnected stories, *Mother of Sorrows*, depicts the lives of two gay adolescent brothers growing up in suburban Maryland during the 1950s. Like Davies, the brothers are brought up by their mother after the death of their father.

# Chapter 4

## Sound and Music

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The three previous chapters have placed a strong emphasis on the visual aesthetic of Davies's films. Caughie has suggested that 'formal self-consciousness is probably the most recognisable characteristic of Davies's direction' and his films are filled with recurring visual motifs such as long tracking shots, beautifully framed tableaux, Catholic iconography and scenes of characters framed in doorways and window frames.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that Davies's idiosyncratic choices of music also constitute a significant part of his authorial signature. Indeed, throughout his career, the distinctiveness of his music soundtracks has been commented on by numerous critics.<sup>2</sup> In his review of *The Deep Blue Sea*, Koresky described the film's score as 'quintessentially Daviesian', by which he meant that it combined the musical tropes that the filmmaker had often deployed in his earlier works, such as extracts of classical music, religious hymns, scenes of communal singing, and popular British and American songs from the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>3</sup>

But Davies's soundtracks cannot be reduced to music alone as they contain a variety of other aural intertexts, including audio clips from classic British and American films from the 1940s and 1950s (e.g. *Meet Me in St Louis* and *The Ladykillers*) and radio programmes (e.g. the BBC comedy series *Round the Horne* [1965-68]). Furthermore, the sound design of each film is meticulously planned by the director before shooting begins, with specific sounds (both diegetic and non-diegetic) and moments of silence being written into the original script.

It is notable that while Davies favours long shots and discrete editing when composing the visuals of his films, his soundtracks often rely heavily on montage and fragmentation. I use the term 'montage' rather than 'editing' because, as the sound designer



and editor Walter Murch has observed, the latter denotes 'separating or pulling something apart', whereas the former means 'to build, to put something together'.<sup>4</sup> Davies's aural collages represent a counterpoint to the visual formalism of his films and constitute a 'sonic toolkit' as distinctive as Davies's deployment of long takes, smooth tracking shots and rigorously framed tableaux.

Thus far, I have analysed the textual connections that Davies's films bear to an array of intertexts, from the 'visible' (films, novels, plays) to the 'invisible' (his own life story, the memories of his family). The focus of this chapter is on the diverse ways in which Davies has used sound and music (diegetic and non-diegetic, recorded and performed) throughout the course of his filmmaking career, in order to achieve a range of artistic and dramatic effects. I shall also explore the ways in which Davies's use of aural texts (e.g. radio programmes and songs) might be interpreted by a knowledgeable audience.

The first half of this chapter will analyse Davies's unique use of non-musical sound by exploring the following components: the radio, the human voice, sound effects and silence. I will then explore Davies's use of music. To fully understand and appreciate how versatile Davies's appropriation of extant musical sources truly is, it is necessary to consider some of the significant ways in which music has been used in cinema, particularly Classical Hollywood (1927-1963), which has had the most profound influence on the way music is deployed in films. Finally, I shall discuss the numerous ways in which Davies has used music throughout his filmmaking career, moving from the rather sparse and aurally austere early works such as *Children* and *Madonna and Child* (UK, 1980) to features like *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes* (UK, 1992) which critics have repeatedly likened to musicals, the former being described as a 'musical progress'<sup>5</sup>, an 'operetta'<sup>6</sup> and a 'musical version of *Coronation Street* directed by Robert Bresson'.<sup>7</sup> It is also revealing to compare Davies's treatment of music in his autobiographical films with that of his later literary adaptations – *The Neon Bible* (UK, 1995), *The House of Mirth* (UK/France/Germany/USA, 2000) and *The Deep Blue Sea* – as their similarities and

differences reveal how his thinking on interweaving film and music has developed throughout his career.

### **The Elements of Sound: Radio, the Voice, Sound and Silence**

Film soundtracks are composed of three basic elements: dialogue, sound effects and music. Historically, sound design has suffered from a lack of critical engagement due to film scholarship's enduring bias towards the visual. As Marc Mancini has observed, creativity is usually linked to the act of seeing: 'to imagine is to visualize'.<sup>8</sup> Randy Thom suggests that film sound is mostly used for the same reasons as film music: in addition to evoking feelings and creating a mood, sound can 'establish the pace of a scene', 'establish a geographical locale', 'tell [the viewer] what historical period they're in' and 'connect otherwise unconnected ideas, places, moments'.<sup>9</sup> To an extent I agree with this perspective as music is clearly a constituent element of a film's overall sound design. Apart from communal singing, a motif that recurs throughout Davies's oeuvre, the primary source of diegetic music in his films is the radio.

As discussed throughout this thesis, Davies's films are littered with allusions to other cinematic works. While some of these references are visual, others are made sonically. In *The Neon Bible*, for example, Davies juxtaposes 'Tara's Theme' – Max Steiner's iconic score for *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, USA, 1939) – with the image of an American flag, introducing into the narrative the 'wide-ranging, epic themes of war, loss and suffering' and reminding the audience of the 'history and mythology with which the South defines its identity'.<sup>10</sup> But despite the prevalence of the cinema in Davies's films, they also contain numerous allusions to the other media outlet he enjoyed as a child: the radio.

The radio often serves as the invisible source of diegetic music within the narrative and therefore functions as a conduit for bringing joy and beauty into the lives of disaffected characters, from Eileen in *Distant Voices, Still Lives* to Hester in *The Deep Blue Sea*. The former is the first of Davies's films to include audio clips from radio programmes; the film's soundtrack begins with an episode of the Shipping Forecast, a BBC radio broadcast of

weather reports and forecasts for the seas around the coasts of the British Isles. The litany of strange, mysterious words has a mesmeric effect, and Davies uses this 'wonderful mantra' to slowly immerse the audience in the historical period of the film.<sup>11</sup> The director often listened to the Shipping Forecast as a child and its inclusion is a deliberate allusion to his formative years as are the other radio programmes included in the film – the BBC comedies *Beyond Our Ken* (1958-1964) and *Take It From Here* (1948-1960), the horse races and the football results. Davies would employ the same technique in *The Long Day Closes* and *The Deep Blue Sea* which include audio clips from the BBC comedy programme *Ray's a Laugh* (1949-1961) and the long-running music and interview programme *Desert Island Discs* (1942-the present), respectively. While in *The Neon Bible* short audio clips are incorporated from a presidential speech by Franklin D. Roosevelt and the American radio drama *Gang Busters* (1935-1957).

Davies also uses radio programmes to explore the relationship between the working-class and the media. In *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes*, the radio is portrayed as a thread within a 'complex notion' of mid twentieth-century British culture that also includes Hollywood movies, transatlantic popular song and the elegiac strains of Ralph Vaughan Williams and Benjamin Britten.<sup>12</sup> Farley makes the incisive point that we tend to regard the 1940s and 50s as 'austere and static, especially compared to our culture ... with its sound and image saturation', but this would be inaccurate as exposure to radio and the cinema was 'woven into the fabric of everyday life' during Davies's formative years.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the director presents radio as a means of imaginative escape and emotional release for his protagonists. Moreover, Ellis argues that Davies's characters, particularly in *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives*, 'experience emotions only in a displaced way: through the songs they sing, the radio dramas they listen to, or the films they watch'.<sup>14</sup> In other words, the radio and the cinema provide a utopian alternative to the exigencies of everyday life which is marked by domestic abuse, religious repression and unfulfilling, poorly paid manual labour.

Radio programmes are also used to comment on the diegesis. In *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, a spooky-sounding programme entitled *The Man in Black* is played on the soundtrack just after the sinister Uncle Ted (Carl Chase) interrupts Eileen and Dave while they are having dinner. The character's strong resemblance to his now-deceased brother – Eileen's tyrannical father – instils the scene with an uncanny quality. In *Of Time and the City*, Davies plays a sketch from the popular BBC comedy programme *Round the Horne*, featuring the much beloved double act Julian and Sandy (Kenneth Williams and Hugh Paddick), who were notable for being camp gay characters in mainstream entertainment at a time when the practice of homosexuality was still illegal. For an informed audience, the inclusion of this audio clip evokes mid-twentieth-century attitudes to homosexuality in Britain – a strange blend of hypocrisy, naiveté and bigotry.

In addition to the various purposes explored above, the radio also encapsulates Davies's abiding interest in the disembodied human voice. Throughout his filmmaking career, Davies has explored the dramatic possibilities of the human voice, not least in the form of singing which will be explored in my subsequent discussion of the director's use of music. There are numerous scenes in Davies's films where the ghostly presence of the voice is more important than the physical presence of the actor.

In *The Neon Bible*, Davies retains the first-person narration of John Kennedy Toole's original novella by having the 15-year-old David (Jacob Tierney) describe the series of events that resulted in him fleeing from his hometown. In addition to retaining the literary flavour of the original text, the inclusion of a voiceover narration on the soundtrack endows the film with a greater sense of cohesion and structure. As Everett argues, 'it is the self-conscious intimacy of David's voice, and the slight sense of artificiality that it introduces, that provide the thread linking the film's mobile and unmarked shifts through time and space'.<sup>15</sup>



David (Jacob Tierney) provides a voiceover narration in *The Neon Bible*.

Davies's use of voiceover here is similar to his use of music in that it is used to mark and explain spatial and temporal transitions. In turn, these transitions reflect the character's memories and the inner-workings of his mind. Furthermore, the intimate (even confessional) nature of the first-person voiceover – which enables a character to confide their secrets to an audience – allows Davies to express David's subjectivity directly. Interestingly, the director decided not to use a voice-over for *The House of Mirth* because Wharton's third-person narrative does not privilege Lily's subjectivity to the same extent as David's. Although Lily is the novel's central protagonist and the figure with whom the reader empathises the most, Wharton's novel is set in the treacherous milieu of *fin-de-siècle* New York society, in which characters gossip and scheme against one another. Therefore, *The House of Mirth* (both novel and film) relies upon 'the interplay of fluid and unstable gazes'.<sup>16</sup> A voice-over narration is appropriate for *The Neon Bible* because it 'assumes a position of power and encourages the viewer to accept its version of events'.<sup>17</sup> Davies would use this device for a second time in *Of Time and the City* in which he provides a voiceover commentary over archive and contemporary footage of Liverpool.

Initially, the financiers did not want Davies to perform the voiceover commentary for *Of Time and the City*, resulting in the film's producers Roy Boulter and Sol Papadopoulos having to audition actors to narrate the script that Davies had written.<sup>18</sup> Boulter claims that a

well-known actor gave an excellent audition but when he attempted to read Davies's words his performance fell flat.<sup>19</sup> Due to the highly emotive and confessional nature of the commentary which ranges over a variety of personal issues – from family Christmases to illicit homosexual yearnings – it seems entirely appropriate that Davies should deliver it himself. Unlike Derek Jarman who had some of his regular acting collaborators – Nigel Terry, Tilda Swinton and John Quentin – perform a voiceover on his autobiographical film *Blue*, Davies does not have a long-term collaborator that could serve as his voice.

Davies's distinctive vocal qualities were discussed in most of the reviews for *Of Time and the City*, and his performance was widely praised. Peter Bradshaw described the filmmaker's voiceover narration as being 'as rich and dark and fruity as Dundee cake laced with mescaline' and likened him to the character of Uncle Monty (Richard Griffiths) from *Withnail & I* (Bruce Robinson, UK, 1987).<sup>20</sup> For Ryan Gilbey, this was 'no mere voiceover, but a carefully modulated performance that dictates the film's tone and texture as forcefully as Michael Hordern in *Barry Lyndon* or Paul Scofield in *London*'.<sup>21</sup> Davies's voice had already been heard fleetingly in his earlier films, but *Of Time and the City* allowed him to speak directly to the audience in his own voice.<sup>22</sup> There is a certain overlap between the persona projected in his monologue and the one that he has revealed in recorded interviews: both shift between mocking and reverential, cynical and nostalgic, and both constitute as performances of self. Like *The Neon Bible*, Davies's vocal performance lends *Of Time and the City* a greater sense of structure and motivates the frequent changes of focus within the film.

Whereas Davies's later autobiographical films draw heavily upon sound clips from different media, his early works contain comparatively little music or dialogue. The soundtrack for the *Trilogy* is particularly minimalist and austere, underlining the unremitting bleakness of the films' ongoing central narrative. Indeed, with its reliance on diegetic sounds to create a sense of the 'real', *Children* bears a striking similarity to the first instalment of Bill

Douglas's autobiographical trilogy, *My Childhood*, a film in which the sparse use of sound is also used to recreate a harsh and ascetic environment.

Throughout the first part of Davies's trilogy, the sound of birdsong is played on the soundtrack and serves to unify the scenes of Tucker as a schoolboy and later as a young man in his twenties, instilling the film with a greater sense of continuity and coherence. The use of everyday noises in *Children* (e.g. footsteps in the school corridor, the noise of cars passing, the squeaking of classroom chairs) and, later, in *Madonna and Child* (e.g. the squawking of seagulls over the Mersey, the creaking staircase) lends them a greater sense of urgency and rawness than his later films, particularly his literary adaptations. In contrast, the heavily mediated soundtracks of both *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes* – with their plethora of audio clips – lend them a detached, dream-like quality, as though they were wrenched from the director's consciousness.

As Roger Crittenden has observed, silence is the 'gap that exists between the expression of each sound'.<sup>23</sup> In other words, silence exists in relation to sound: 'the result of the cessation of sound is not silence but just nothing'.<sup>24</sup> Through the use of sparse music and sound arrangements in *Children* and *Madonna and Child*, Davies creates silence in order to convey the protagonist's emotional repression: their 'psychological freeze-frame'.<sup>25</sup> The scarcity of dialogue in the *Trilogy* emphasises Tucker's isolation and detachment from those around him (his schoolmates and work colleagues). For this very reason, Murch has described silence as the 'ultimate metaphoric sound'.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, the film director Alberto Cavalcanti has suggested that 'silence can be the loudest of noises, just as black, in a brilliant design, can be the brightest of colours'.<sup>27</sup> The protagonist's muteness reaches its natural conclusion in *Death and Transfiguration*, in which the elderly Tucker (Wilfrid Brambell) has been rendered mute. Throughout the *Trilogy*, Davies uses silence as a dramatic device to explore various ideas relating to the construction of the self. In *Children*, Davies shoots Tucker and his parents sitting in silence by the fire. Neither Tucker nor his mother dares to speak in case they anger the father. The characters' silence is underlined by

the sound of flames crackling in the fireplace and the metronomic ticking of the clock. Similarly, the stark sound design of the earlier classroom scene conveys the strictness and oppressiveness of school life, in which rote learning is a substitute for imagination and self-expression. The sparse dialogue in *Madonna and Child* is used to express the protagonist's lack of personal relationships (with the notable exception of his mother). Tucker's isolation in the office scenes conveys his sense of alienation from his colleagues at work, resulting directly from his repressed homosexuality. His furtive sexual encounters are silent, conveying not only his sense of shame but supporting the idea that his love is 'unspeakable'. Tucker's inability to speak in *Death and Transfiguration* serves as a literal manifestation of his inability to accept or discuss his sexual longings.

Throughout his later films, Davies uses silence to develop the ideas first explored in the *Trilogy*. Despite the abundant musical texts that are dotted throughout *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives*, the film contains several scenes in which the four central characters appear to be frozen in silence, paralysed by the traumas they have endured at the hands of an abusive husband and father. While *The Long Day Closes* is a more joyous film than its predecessor – mainly because it depicts life after his father's death – it contains several contemplative sequences of Bud sitting by himself in silence. While Davies has spoken of the voyeuristic pleasures he enjoyed as the youngest child in his household, the protagonist's silence is related to his position as an outsider who can only passively observe the rituals of the adult world. The character's nascent sexual awareness also deepens his sense of isolation.

Overall, Davies's literary adaptations contain far less music than his autobiographical films; the lack of music in *The Neon Bible* even inspired one critic to describe it as 'one of the quietest movies ever made'.<sup>28</sup> Whereas Davies chose to end his previous films with pieces of non-diegetic music ('O Waly, Waly' and 'The Long Day Closes', respectively), the last few minutes of *The Neon Bible*'s soundtrack consist of the sounds of birdsong, cicadas and rippling water. The film's sparse soundtrack represents a concerted effort to distance himself



from the musical abundance of his previous films, and this also explains why Davies rejected the idea of commissioning an original score for the film.<sup>29</sup>

Like its immediate predecessor, *The House of Mirth* appears sonically subdued in comparison with the rich aural textures of his autobiographical feature-length films, but this silence is dramatically motivated. Moreover, in common with the young protagonist of *The Neon Bible*, Lily Bart (Gillian Anderson) is trapped in a stifling social sphere that circumscribes the behaviour of its members, and Davies uses silence to emphasise the protagonist's sense of claustrophobia and the emotional restraint that they must exercise to navigate the treacherous waters of New York society. As Everett argues

Music offers freedom and escape, and is thus linked with implications of creativity and joy. The very fact music is heard so infrequently in *The House of Mirth* reflects the closed and claustrophobic society that Lily inhabits and, by focusing our attention instead on minute everyday noises, its very absence serves to reinforce our awareness of Lily's entrapment.<sup>30</sup>

For this reason, *The House of Mirth* has been compared with the 'intense, hushed, charged sound worlds' of Robert Bresson, Eric Rohmer, Krzysztof Kieslowski and Ingmar Bergman, respectively.<sup>31</sup> The sound of ticking clocks in otherwise quiet rooms is a recurring aural motif throughout the film, beginning with Lily's meeting with Selden in his bachelor apartment and culminating with her eventual suicide. Aunt Julia's home – rendered claustrophobic by its ornate and heavily decorated interiors – is an oppressively quiet space, its silence broken only by Lily's tinkling on the piano, the sound of flames crackling in the fireplace and the clock's chiming.

*The Deep Blue Sea* is similarly marked by an oppressive stillness, with several scenes taking place in 'rooms so hushed you can hear the metronomic ticking of a mechanical clock'.<sup>32</sup> The director Mike Figgis has argued that the sound of a ticking clock is often used in films to reflect a 'certain kind of longing', and this seems to be the case in Davies's films where characters often find themselves trapped in oppressive environments from which they desire to escape.<sup>33</sup> Béla Balázs has also spoken of how the sound of a

ticking clock has the power to '[smash] time into fragments with sledgehammer blows'.<sup>34</sup> An early scene in which Hester and William dine with the latter's disapproving mother features no musical accompaniment and the scene's quietness is emphasised by the clinking of wineglasses and the snap of logs burning in the fireplace.

Throughout his career, Davies has used musical cues to signal temporal transitions, but this effect is often achieved through other facets of the sound design. In *Children*, the sound of water from an earlier swimming pool scene is played over a shot of Tucker in his twenties as he sits in the doctor's waiting room suffering from depression. In the earlier scene, the young Tucker gazes longingly at an attractive young man (Trevor Eve) as he showers. Davies's decision to juxtapose an earlier sound with the image of a grown-up Tucker makes explicit the lasting effect that the protagonist's sexual orientation has had upon him. Throughout the autobiographical films, the sound of water is used to prompt/indicate a flashback or a flashforward. In *Death and Transfiguration*, the sound of rainfall precipitates a flashback from an elderly Tucker waiting to die in a geriatric hospital to a middle-aged Tucker visiting his mother in the hospital. Both *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes* begin with the sound of rainfall, establishing a parallel between the fluidity of water and the mutability of time and memory.



Scenes of rainfall. Left: *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives*. Right: *The Long Day Closes*.

Davies's use of sound bridges enables him to draw connections between different scenes. In *The Long Day Closes*, for example, the school register is played over a scene of Bud at home, the sound of students' prayer can be heard while Bud and his classmates write in the classroom, and communal singing from a family party is juxtaposed with the image of Bud shivering in a swimming pool. This technique allows Davies to collapse the boundaries between the different zones of Bud's life, namely home, school and church.

## **Music**

In parallel with Davies's increasingly sophisticated sound design, his ability to use music to achieve a range of dramatic and artistic effects has also developed over the course of his career. Before I analyse the multi-faceted ways in which Davies deploys extant music, it is first necessary to engage with some of the critical theory on the subject. In film criticism, music has often been dismissed as a 'useful but ultimately peripheral addition'.<sup>35</sup> Despite much journalistic criticism of film soundtracks and a plethora of biographies on canonical film composers such as Miklós Rózsa, Bernard Herrmann and John Barry, the amount of scholarly criticism written on the subject of film music is relatively paltry. As Anahid Kassabian has identified, analysis of film music has 'rarely been pursued by the semiotic, narratological, or psychoanalytic theorists of ... "film."' <sup>36</sup> This is not to suggest, of course, that film music has been ignored *entirely* by academia as notable works have been published on the subject.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, a significant proportion of extant film music scholarship is primarily interested in historical rather than theoretical issues, focusing on how music was used in silent cinema (which, famously, was never actually silent) and the classical Hollywood period (1927-1963) rather than exploring broader conceptual issues concerning the relationship between the visual and the aural.

Another possible explanation for this oversight is the idea that film experts have felt anxious about discussing soundtracks because they lack the specialist knowledge of music scholars and feel intimidated by its critical terminology. Similarly, while music scholars have an established critical language with which to analyse the musical properties of film

soundtracks, they don't necessarily have any expertise in film studies. In this scenario, academics from both fields appear to feel inhibited about analysing film music because they have a sense of 'disciplinary autonomy' that hinders them from doing so.<sup>38</sup>

Unlike film and literature, music is widely considered to be a 'non-representative art form' and therefore incapable of communicating narrative without the accompaniment of visual images.<sup>39</sup> Since the Enlightenment, music has been understood as the 'abstract art *par excellence*', producing meaning only on the most conceptual, spiritual and formal levels.<sup>40</sup> The psychologist John Sloboda describes music as a 'closed sub-system with no essential links to other cognitive domains', meaning that it can be difficult to analyse objectively or even describe'.<sup>41</sup> While the structure of music resembles that of a filmic/literary narrative to the extent that both are 'based on arcs of tension being built up, restricted and then released', music lacks a clear taxonomy of meaning for conveying plot and character.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, many of the styles adopted by the composers of twentieth-century western art music (atonality, serialism, aleatory music, computer compositional procedures, minimalism) suggest that music is essentially meaningless.<sup>43</sup> This idea is also shared by the Russian composer Igor Stravinsky, who suggests that 'music is, by its very nature, powerless to express anything at all, whether a feeling, an attitude of mind, a psychological mood, a phenomenon of nature. If, as is nearly always the case, music appears to express something, this is only an illusion and not a reality.'<sup>44</sup> Similarly, the American composer Irwin Bazelon argues that

the language of music expresses only musical aesthetics: ... in its pure and absolute state [music] does not describe anything ... [T]he images it seems to conjure up in the listener's mind's eye are not implicit in its pure sound environment. These responses are daydreams, programmatically triggered by an individual's own range of personal experience, by undirected or lazy listening habits, and perhaps by associations deep-rooted in childhood.<sup>45</sup>

Bazelon's views support the idea that the listener must apply their own interpretations to a piece of music in order to imbue it with greater meaning. In other words, the

responsibility of interpretation has been removed from the composer and bestowed upon the audience instead.

Another prejudice facing film music is the idea that it is designed solely to complement the filmic image and therefore escape the audience's attention. Kurt London, one of the earliest theorists to tackle this subject, argues that the primary requirement of film music is that it should go 'unnoticed' by the viewer.<sup>46</sup> That is, music should function as an 'invisible' component of film craft, much like cinematography or editing. Similarly, David Raskin, the composer of classical Hollywood films such as *Laura* (Otto Preminger, USA, 1944) and *The Bad and the Beautiful* (Vincente Minnelli, USA, 1952), argues that 'The purpose of film music is not to be noticed for itself. Its greatest usefulness is the way in which it performs its role without an intervening conscious act of perception. It is most telling when the music registers upon us in a quiet way, where we don't know it's actually happening.'<sup>47</sup> While many film soundtracks have been designed, specifically, to serve as non-obtrusive narrative agents, London and Raskin's observations fail to address music's power to shape an audience's experience of watching a film through the manipulation of emotions and points of view and by guiding perceptions of characters, moods and narrative events. For some scholars, film music 'embodies film's aspiration to control/manipulate audiences'.<sup>48</sup>

In her pioneering study of classical Hollywood musical scores, Claudia Gorbman proposed that film music performs the following seven functions:

- I. *Invisibility*: the technical apparatus of non-diegetic film music must not be visible.
- II. *"Inaudibility"*: music is not meant to be heard consciously. As such it should subordinate itself to dialogue, to visuals – i.e., to the primary vehicle of the narrative.
- III. *Signifier of emotion*: soundtrack music may set specific moods and emphasize particular emotions suggested in the narrative, but first and foremost is a signifier of emotion itself.
- IV. *Narrative cueing*:
  - *referential/narrative*: music gives referential and narrative cues, e.g. indicating point of view, supplying formal demarcations, and establishing settings and characters
  - *connotative*: music 'interprets' and 'illustrates' narrative events.

- V. *Continuity*: music provides formal and rhythmic continuity – between shots, in transitions between scenes, by ‘filling’ gaps.
- VI. *Unity*: via repetition and variation of musical material and instrumentation, music aids in the construction of formal and narrative unity.
- VII. A given score may violate any of the principles above, providing the violation is at the service of the other principles.<sup>49</sup>

While Gorbman’s book *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (1987) is rightly regarded as groundbreaking, her ideas on the functions of cinematic scores have clear antecedents. In 1949, Aaron Copland, the Academy award-winning composer of *The Heiress* (William Wyler, USA, 1949), offered a useful summary of the functions of film music, arguing that it (i) ‘conveys a convincing atmosphere of time and place’, (ii) ‘underlines the unspoken feelings or psychological states of characters’, (iii) ‘serves as a kind of neutral background filler to the action’, (iv) ‘gives a sense of continuity to the editing’, and (v) ‘accentuates the theatrical build-up of a scene and rounds it off with a feeling of finality’.<sup>50</sup>



Steiner’s music is played over a climactic scene between the star-crossed lovers Rick (Humphrey Bogart) and Ilse (Ingrid Bergman) in *Casablanca*.

In the films of the classical Hollywood period (1927-1963), music was used to fulfil all these objectives. Max Steiner’s iconic soundtrack for *Casablanca* – widely considered to epitomise this particular mode of filmmaking – expertly manipulates the audience’s responses by underscoring the main characters’ emotions. Key moments in the diegesis – such as Rick’s (Humphrey Bogart) drunken display of bitterness over Ilse’s (Ingrid Bergman)

departure, the joy of their eventual reunion, and the bittersweetness of their separation – are all heightened by Steiner’s score. The music is also used to generate narrative suspense: will Ilse and Laszlo (Paul Henreid) escape or will the Nazis capture them? The repetition of certain musical refrains and motifs also creates a sense of patterning, imbuing the film with greater overall cohesion. The continuity editing used in *Casablanca* is complemented by its soundtrack as ‘music’s bath of affect can smooth over discontinuities and rough spots, and mask the recognition of the apparatus through its own melodic and harmonic continuity. Film music thereby acts as a hypnotist inducing a trance: it focuses and binds the spectator into the narrative world’.<sup>51</sup>

The influence of classical Hollywood has been so pervasive that most contemporary film soundtracks are devised with similar narrative functions in mind. While Terence Davies’s use of music is innovative and complex in various ways, it would be misleading to suggest that this is not deployed to signify emotions, cue narrative points or provide a sense of unity. While *Casablanca* features songs that had been written long before the film went into production, most notably ‘As Time Goes By’ (written by Herman Hupfeld in 1931) which is memorably performed by Dooley Wilson, its musical score is original. Davies, on the other hand, relies mainly on pre-existing music, whether in the form of original recordings or specially recorded performances of canonical songs and compositions. In this sense, one might argue that some of Davies’s films, particularly *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes*, belong to a tradition in which the scores consist of self-contained, usually pre-recorded songs. A prime example of this tradition is Martin Scorsese’s breakthrough film *Mean Streets*, in which the director eschews a commissioned score and combines opera with rock and pop songs from the 1950s and 60s, creating a ‘new form of heightened, pop-operatic naturalism’.<sup>52</sup> The inclusion of tracks such as the Ronettes’ ‘Be My Baby’ (1963) and the Rolling Stones’ ‘Jumpin’ Jack Flash’ (1968) – both of which Scorsese heard constantly throughout his youth – enables him to recreate Little Italy, the New York neighbourhood in which he spent his formative years. By favouring pre-existing music over a traditional

composed score, Davies and Scorsese manage to avoid the 'auteur mentality' of certain composers.<sup>53</sup>

During the late 1960s and 1970s several (now iconic) Hollywood films had 'jukebox' soundtracks consisting of pop and rock songs. Examples include *The Graduate* (Mike Nichols, USA, 1967), *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, USA, 1969) and *American Graffiti* (George Lucas, USA, 1973). This approach to film scoring would grow in popularity during the 1980s and 1990s with films such as *The Big Chill* (Lawrence Kasdan, USA, 1983), *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, USA, 1994) and *Boogie Nights* (Paul Thomas Anderson, USA, 1997) abandoning traditional scoring in favour of pre-existing music. In addition to the functions of classical Hollywood music outlined earlier, Jeff Smith argues that these songs also serve as follows:

- i) as an effective means of denoting particular time periods;
- ii) to highlight the element of authorial expressivity by commenting *on* characters rather than speaking from their point of view;
- iii) the lyric can give voice to feeling and attitudes not made explicit by the film's visuals and dialogue;
- iv) inter-textual/extra-textual/musical allusion can be used to flesh-out characters, and emphasise particular generic or narrative themes.<sup>54</sup>

The fourth point is particularly significant as every piece of music, particularly pre-existing music, exists within a greater textual web. Most film scores are new to each viewer/listener, meaning that it is the composer's responsibility to create every nuance of feeling and association that they intend to generate through the music. In contrast, previously heard pieces of music (such as pop songs) are freighted with the viewer/listener's own feelings and associations, often developed over months and years of repeated hearings. Kassabian draws a useful distinction between the *assimilating identifications* of composed scores and the *affiliating identifications* of compiled scores.<sup>55</sup> Whereas composed scores invariably rely on the audience's familiarity with the conventions and clichés of film music, compiled scores invoke 'the immediate threat of history' as 'perceivers bring external associations with the songs into their engagement with the film'.<sup>56</sup> This is not to suggest,



however, that popular songs have not been used in film scores to achieve particular effects, most notably the creation of nostalgia. In *The Big Chill*, for example, popular songs such as Marvin Gaye's 'I Heard It Through the Grapevine' (1968) and Procol Harum's 'A Whiter Shade of Pale' (1967) 'evoke the intimacies of private memories' and illuminate the 'temporal associations between particular songs and those individuated memories possessed by one person'.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, a pre-recorded piece of music is an 'already complete artefact', meaning it is more difficult to control how it will be interpreted by audiences.<sup>58</sup>



Wagner's 'Ride of the Valkyries' is played on helicopter-mounted speakers during an American attack in Vietnam in *Apocalypse Now*.

In his discussion of the potential pitfalls of using familiar music on a film soundtrack, Ernest Lindgren argues that it 'often has certain associations for the spectator which may conflict entirely with the associations the producer wishes to establish in the film'.<sup>59</sup> In other words, the ideas generated within the mind of the viewer might differ from the director's original intentions, fostering a conflict between the director's vision and the audience's interpretation. On the other hand, a director might decide to use a particular famous piece of music precisely *because* they wish to draw upon its textual richness. In a famous scene from *Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola, USA, 1979), Wagner's 'Ride of the Valkyries' ('Walkürenritt' or 'Ritt der Walküren,' 1851) is played on helicopter-mounted speakers by American soldiers during an assault on a Vietnamese village. In addition to being a suitably exciting piece of music that complements the onscreen action, Wagner's music invokes a

narrative parallel between the military attack in which villagers are terrorised and murdered and the Norse legend of the Valkyries who would decide the fate of men during battle. This device of quoting from famous pieces of music in order to trade upon their intertextual resonances has been employed by Davies on numerous occasions. However, it would be misleading to give the impression that Davies only uses music to trade upon its intertextual connections with other films as his views on the properties of music are far more complex than this would suggest.

### **Terence Davies on Music**

Alongside the Hollywood musicals and British comedies that he watched as a child, music is one of Davies's enduring passions. As a child he was submerged in the popular music of the period through radio broadcasts, pub sing-alongs and family parties. Overall, this music largely consisted of standards from the Great American Songbook, written by such illustrious composers and lyricists as Jerome Kern, George and Ira Gershwin, Cole Porter, Harold Arlen, Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart, Hoagy Carmichael, Sammy Fain and Irving Berlin. After leaving school, Davies subsequently developed an interest in classical music, particularly the works of Shostakovich, Bruckner, Britten, Sibelius and Bach. These two divergent forms came to represent his dual musical obsessions, and both figure largely throughout his films. Like his use of cinematic allusion, Davies's choices of music provide the audience with an insight into both his early life and his personal tastes.

Like many European directors (Ingmar Bergman, Andrei Tarkovsky, Leos Carax) and writers (Marguerite Duras, Alain Robbe-Grillet), Davies has argued that film is closer to music than any other art form, even drawing a direct parallel between the processes of musical composition and film editing: 'Notes and chords on their own don't mean anything. They only mean something when you juxtapose them with something else. Shots on their own don't mean anything. Once you juxtapose them, they gather a meaning, and that's why they're so close'.<sup>60</sup> In his introduction to *A Modest Pageant* (1992), Davies describes how he exhaustively plans 'every track, pan, dissolve, piece of music and ... bit of dialogue' in the

process of writing the screenplay before filming begins.<sup>61</sup> In other words, music is not a secondary concern for the director but rather an integral part of his creative process. Given the level of scrupulousness that goes into the composition of these scripts, it seems reasonable to argue that each piece of music selected by Davies 'will be performing complex and multiple functions within the narrative'.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, the juxtaposition of the visual and the musical is so pivotal to Davies's creative process that for some major shots, such as the infamous carpet scene in *The Long Day Closes*, music was played as the crew was filming so he could time every camera rest and movement appropriately.<sup>63</sup> The technique of playing music while shooting has been adopted by many filmmakers, including Sergio Leone, Martin Scorsese and David Lynch. For example, the famous crane shot used by Leone to film Claudia Cardinale's arrival in *Once Upon a Time in the West/C'era una volta il West* (Italy/USA, 1968) was 'synched rather than post-synched' to ensure that the camera ascends as Ennio Morricone's score swells.<sup>64</sup>

In her study of Davies's films, Wendy Everett provides many penetrating insights into the musical nature of their structure, particularly *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes*, stating that

the essential structure of Davies's films is musical (in contradistinction to the linear structure of classical narrative, for example), and that the patterns of images, themes and rhythms that recur in shifting combinations and modulated forms throughout all his work construct meaning in a musical, rather than a narrative, sense.<sup>65</sup>

Both the aforementioned films have elliptical narratives that move backwards and forwards through time and both foreground the associative power of music to evoke memories. As Paul Farley has noted, music is a 'swift and devastating vector of buried thoughts, able to tap down and excavate forgotten corners with the efficacy of an old perfume'.<sup>66</sup> It is also worth noting the way in which Davies uses musical analogies to discuss his films, describing *The Neon Bible*, for example, as a 'transitional' work between his early autobiographical films and his later literary adaptations, and evaluating his scenes in terms of rhythms and beats.<sup>67</sup> Clearly, music plays a crucial part in the director's conception of

filmmaking. Since Davies's filmmaking career can be divided into two separate phases – autobiographical filmmaking (1976–1992) and literary adaptation (1995–the present) – it will be revealing to explore how his appropriation of popular and classical music has developed over the course of his career.

*Children* is the most silent of all Davies's films, its soundtrack consisting of three non-diegetic pieces of music: one piece of classical music and two well-known songs. The folk standard 'The Ballad of Barbara Allen' is used at the end of the film to shape the audience's emotional response.<sup>68</sup> As Tucker (Philip Mawdsley) stares out of the rain-splattered window, weeping for his dead father (Nick Stringer), we hear an unaccompanied female voice sing about an unfaithful woman who betrays her supernatural lover with tragic consequences. Clearly, Davies has chosen this particular song because it complements the sadness of the scene and serves as a *signifier of emotion*. The song's melancholy themes – infidelity, heartbreak and the fragility of love – support the idea that Tucker is trapped by his sexual, religious and economic circumstances, and this is rendered visually by Davies's decision to portray the character as being 'imprisoned' behind the bars of the window frame.



Left: Tucker cries at the window in *Children*. Centre and right: Still images from Davies's primary school in *Children*.

The other song used in *Children*, 'The Old Folks at Home' (written by Stephen Foster in 1851), is sung by schoolchildren with a simple piano accompaniment over still images of the interior of a primary school. The song exemplifies the sort of music that Davies would have been taught to sing as a schoolboy and reinforces the autobiographical authenticity of

the film. The uncomplicated guileless optimism of the children's performance creates a dramatic tension when juxtaposed with scenes of a depressed Tucker in his mid-twenties (Robin Hooper) struggling to come to terms with his sexual identity. This device of combining children's singing with images of adult sexual dysfunction is also used in the second and third instalments of Davies's autobiographical trilogy. *Madonna and Child* begins and ends with the Marian hymn 'Hail, Queen of Heaven, the Ocean Star' (written by the Catholic priest and historian Father John Lingard). This song – once again sung by the angelic voices of a school choir – creates a dramatic tension when contrasted with the illicit sexual desires of the middle-aged protagonist (Terry O'Sullivan) which are enacted at night. The Christmas carols 'Silent Night' (written by Franz Xaver Gruber and Joseph Mohr in 1818) and 'We Three Kings' (written by the clergyman and hymnist Reverend Jon Henry Hopkins Jr. in 1857) are used for similar dramatic purposes in *Death and Transfiguration*.

From this point onwards, however, Davies begins to integrate popular music from the 1940s and 1950s into his films. The final part of the trilogy begins with the funeral of Tucker's beloved mother, accompanied by the honeyed, breathy tones of Doris Day singing 'It All Depends on You' (written by Buddy G. DeSylva, Lew Brown and Ray Henderson in 1926). The song originally featured in the musical drama *Love Me or Leave Me*, a biopic of the film star and torch singer Ruth Etting (Doris Day), and serves as further proof of Davies's deep, abiding affection for Hollywood cinema as well as supplying another intertextual allusion that both enriches and complicates our viewing experience.<sup>69</sup> Vidor's film portrays Etting's rise from the chorus to the 'big time', and her tempestuous relationship with her first husband, the gangster Martin "The Gimp" Snyder (James Cagney). Day's performance of 'It All Depends on You' is actually used as an audition piece for the character to demonstrate her singing talent, but fulfils a more symbolic function as the song's lyrics allude to Etting's unhealthy relationship with her violent and possessive husband. An audience familiar with *Love Me or Leave Me* would appreciate the irony of using 'It All Depends on You' in this particular scene as the lyrics of the song ('I can be happy, I can be sad/ I can be good, or I can be bad/ It all

depends on you') are imbued with an unwholesome meaning when juxtaposed with a close shot of Tucker's sorrowful face as he is driven to his mother's funeral. When the words sung by Day are aligned with Davies's protagonist, it can be inferred that the latter has a morbid dependency on his mother and, consequently, her death will have a destructive impact on him beyond what might normally be expected. The latter song marks the first instance of Davies using music to 'comment ironically upon the narrative', and demonstrates an authorial agency heretofore concealed.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, the inclusion of 'It All Depends on You' on the film's soundtrack 'provides both the first real acknowledgement in Davies's work of the importance of popular culture in the formation of identity and the first intimation of the possibility of salvation'.<sup>71</sup>



'It All Depends on You' serves as an ironic commentary during this early scene from *Death and Transfiguration*.

The notion of popular culture contributing to the 'process of mapping and articulating the self'<sup>72</sup> is developed even further in *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes* which are dominated by the songs of Davies's childhood and early adolescence: school hymns and carols, songs from family parties and pub sing-alongs, and songs played in films and on the radio. In both these films, music is pivotal to 'constructing' their 'regimes of meaning'.<sup>73</sup>

Davies has spoken at length about the power of popular music, arguing that 'prior to rock and roll, they gave ordinary people a voice for their feelings. And ... when people sang these songs, they were singing something that was deep inside them.'<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, he also emphasised the intrinsic artistic value of the American songs that dominated the UK charts during the 1940s and 1950s: 'It's poetry for the ordinary, and that American Songbook is unequalled throughout the world. The very best of it is as good as Schubert or Mahler, any of the great song cycles. They were crafted, beautiful lyrics, and they expressed what people felt'.<sup>75</sup>



Scenes of domestic abuse are juxtaposed with 'Taking a Chance on Love' in *Distant Voices, Still Lives*.

Throughout *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, Davies uses music to comment on the narrative. Arguably the most famous example of this technique is the scene in which the father beats the mother whilst Ella Fitzgerald's rendition of 'Taking a Chance on Love' (written by John Latouche and Ted Fetter in 1940) is played non-diegetically on the soundtrack. The ironic juxtaposition between the fantasy of love depicted in the song ('Here I slide again/ About to take that ride again,/ Starry eyed again/ Taking a chance on love') and the grim reality of their marriage renders the action even more brutal. In his analysis of *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, Tony Williams criticises *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing* for being a work of 'ideologically harmful romanticism' that proffers an illusory, idealised vision of romantic love that is unrealistic or even impossible.<sup>76</sup> Jonathan Rosenbaum argues that

Davies's deployment of 'Taking a Chance on Love' is more subtle than this, as he 'uses the record as a hymn to [the mother's] courage and endurance – a hymn that in no way reduces the unbearable harshness of the beating and that still allows us to hear the song's lyrics in an ironic fashion without leading us to feel any contempt for them or for the feelings that they represent'.<sup>77</sup>

To take Rosenbaum's observations further, the song's lyrics could be interpreted as a form of resistance to oppression – an idea that has played a significant role in the development of popular music with African-American roots. This form of ironic commentary is not only reserved for non-diegetic music but also applies to songs performed by the characters within the narrative of the film. After her friend Jingles (Marie Jelliman) is forced to leave the pub early by her brutish husband, Eileen enters into a heated argument with her similarly unfeeling spouse (Michael Starke) and sings 'I Wanna Be Around' (written by Sadie Vimmerstedt and Johnny Mercer in 1959), the lyrics of which permit the character to express her deep-seated frustration with her marriage: 'That's when I'll discover that revenge is sweet, / As I sit there applauding from a front row seat, / When somebody breaks your heart like you broke mine, / Like you, like you broke mine'. In this way, popular culture 'allows an expression of pain, bitterness, tenderness and even vengeance' that cannot be expressed elsewhere.<sup>78</sup> Significantly, from *Death and Transfiguration* onwards, communal singing – most notably the pub sing-along – becomes a recurring trope in Davies's films, and these scenes are mostly used to emphasise the camaraderie fostered by popular music and the vitality of working-class culture. In the case of *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, the pub sing-along also serves as a cathartic measure for enduring the harshness of working-class life in austerity Britain.





Scenes of communal singing. Left: *Distant Voices, Still Lives*. Right: *The Long Day Closes*.

Because of their shared fascination with mid twentieth-century British popular culture, particularly in the form of music, the films of Terence Davies have often been compared (albeit superficially) to the television serial dramas of Dennis Potter. Davies's technique of using songs from the 1940s and 1950s is also used by Potter in *Pennies from Heaven* (UK, 1978), *The Singing Detective* (UK, 1986) and *Lipstick on Your Collar* (UK, 1993). Furthermore, as Rosenbaum has identified, these period songs function not only as the 'remnant of a bygone popular culture' but also as 'icons of subjectivity'.<sup>79</sup> While this historical period might seem relatively 'austere and static' from a modern perspective, it was dominated by radio and the cinema, and 'exposure to such sources was woven into the fabric of everyday life'.<sup>80</sup> The 1950s, in particular, was a period of tremendous technological development with recorded music shifting from mono to stereophonic releases, and television beginning its long process of supplanting radio (and, subsequently, cinema) as the dominant mass medium. In other words, people living through the 1950s 'would have had their sense of the world constantly and subtly enlarged and mediated'.<sup>81</sup> In the works of both Davies and Potter, working-class characters express themselves through the appropriation of popular music.



Characters burst into musical performances in *Pennies from Heaven*.

The dominant stylistic trait of Potter's serial dramas is their reliance on the lip-synching of songs 'whose lyrics and melodies usher in or echo a character's emotions'.<sup>82</sup> In *Pennies from Heaven*, each song signals a break from the narrative as a character suddenly begins singing and dancing to a song which clearly has no origin in the film's diegetic world. As Glen Creeber has noted,

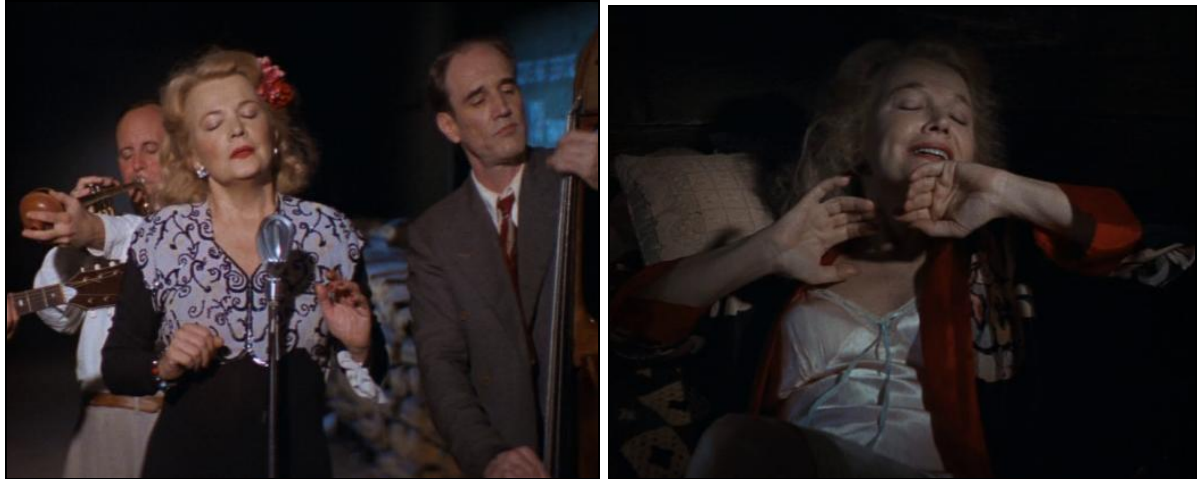
In contrast with the traditional Hollywood musical, the obvious disjunction between the actor's voice and the singing voice of the original recording (heightened by male characters often miming to female vocals and vice versa) foregrounds the artificiality of these musical intrusions in a seemingly naturalistic narrative.<sup>83</sup>

Whereas the popular songs in Davies's films often appear diegetically (either they are sung by the characters or played on the radio), in Potter's work they intrude non-diegetically, halting the narrative flow and drawing attention to their own construction. Timothy Corrigan observes how lip-synched performance 'removes human expression from the horror and miseries of the different narratives by abstracting and denaturalizing it'.<sup>84</sup> In other words, lip-synching functions as a distancing device. The artificiality of the lip-synched performances is accentuated by the fact that there is often a gender discrepancy between the real singer and the character who mouths the lyrics. Furthermore, the distancing effect is also achieved through the use of stylized dancing, and the occasional use of non-realist acting devices such as 'exaggerated voice, gesture, body language, and

facial expressions'.<sup>85</sup> In this regard, Potter's work resembles that of Bertolt Brecht who used song and dance extensively to achieve what he called *Verfremdung* or 'alienation effects', a process of making events, actions and characters "strange" by sufficiently distancing spectators from the action so that they can watch it critically.<sup>86</sup> In contrast, the vocal performances in *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes* serve as a source of self-expression, salvation and joy for their characters.

In various ways, Davies's use of music in *The Neon Bible* marks both a stylistic continuation and departure from that of his autobiographical works. As a first-person narrative recounted by a sensitive boy and set largely in the past tense, *The Neon Bible* bears clear similarities to *The Long Day Closes*. For this reason, it is hardly surprising that the former's music resembles the latter in its deployment of contemporary popular music. Whereas the majority of music in Davies's previous films was influenced by his early life, the director's choice of songs for *The Neon Bible* is arguably more detached and 'reveals Davies as someone who is trying to understand a community from outside rather than from within'.<sup>87</sup> Songs such as 'Dixie' (written by Daniel Decatur Emmett in 1859) and 'Chattanooga Choo Choo' (music by Harry Warren and lyrics by Mack Gordon in 1941), for instance, are both strongly associated with the Deep South and bear no direct relation to the director's own early life. Other songs used in the film, such as 'How Long Has This Been Going On?' (written by Ira and George Gershwin in 1928) and 'My Romance' (written by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart in 1935), would not seem out of place in either of Davies's two previous films as they both belong to the tradition of the Great American Songbook. Indeed, the scene in which Mae (Gena Rowlands) sings the latter song at the factory party is reminiscent of the female performances delivered in *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives*, and as Everett has observed the fact that the party is populated entirely by women 'leads one to suspect that the sequence is strongly coloured by Davies's personal memories and emotions'.<sup>88</sup> To a certain extent, Mae is a composite of the female characters that populated his earlier films, simultaneously fulfilling the roles of aunt, surrogate mother, best friend and

confidante. As Koresky has observed, Mae is a 'self-mythologizing performer' and *The Neon Bible*'s most literal connection to the standard songs of the thirties and forties.<sup>89</sup> Throughout the film, Mae emerges as the link to a shared musical past and these musical standards become directly connected to the character's personal aspirations and failures.



Left: Mae (Gena Rowlands) performs 'My Romance' in *The Neon Bible*. Right: Mae sings along to the radio.

Davies refrained from using popular music in *The House of Mirth* but would return to it with *Of Time and the City*. With a soundtrack that includes recordings from Peggy Lee and the Hollies and compositions from Handel and Mahler, Davies's documentary is the most musically eclectic of all his films and represents his return to the rich musical textures of his autobiographical feature films. The director has remarked on several occasions that the initial spark of inspiration for the film was the idea of juxtaposing Peggy Lee's recording of 'The Folks Who Live on the Hill' (written by Oscar Hammerstein II and Jerome Kern in 1937) with images of Liverpool slums being torn down and tower blocks being built in their place. Alongside 'It All Depends on You' and 'Taking a Chance on Love', this song represents one of the director's most deliberately ironic uses of music. While the song's lyrics describe the utopian idea of buying a home in which to bring up a family and live out the rest of one's days, Davies presents the viewer with images of grim urban architecture, before lamenting the 'British genius for creating the dismal' in the voiceover monologue. On the subject of

compiling soundtracks for his films, Davies has claimed that ‘Where music is concerned, it has to be instinctive. You can’t think, “What should I do against this sequence?” It never, never works like that. Your antennae are out all the time.’<sup>90</sup>



Peggy Lee’s rendition of ‘The Folks Who Live on the Hill’ is played over archive footage of urban renewal in Liverpool in *Of Time and the City*.

Davies was criticised by some commentators for his use of the Hollies’ recording of ‘He Ain’t Heavy, He’s My Brother’ (written by Bobby Scott and Bob Russell in 1969) over archive footage of British soldiers in the Korean War.<sup>91</sup> Because of the connection between the band and the city of Liverpool – the Hollies were a Mersey beat band who got their big break while performing at the famous Cavern club – the inclusion of the song was censured for its perceived sentimentality and earnestness, supporting the newsreel footage too neatly rather than commenting upon it ironically. Davies’s inclusion of this song is particularly striking because of the temporal disjunction between its recording (1969) and the events being depicted (1950-1953) which suggests that the song was chosen for its cultural significance to Liverpudlians rather than for reasons of historical authenticity.

In several important ways, *The Deep Blue Sea* represents Davies’s return to the musical sensibilities of his early autobiographical films. The cultural institution of the pub sing-along – ‘a Davies touchstone’ – is interpolated into Rattigan’s original play.<sup>92</sup> In one particular scene, Davies uses music to establish the cultural differences between Hester and Freddie (Tom Hiddleston). Whereas Hester has grown up enjoying high culture (classical

music, ballet and poetry), Freddie is more *au fait* with popular culture, as demonstrated by his familiarity with the lyrics of 'You Belong to Me' (written by Pee Wee King, Chilton Price and Redd Stewart in 1952).<sup>93</sup> The pub sing-along scene also serves as a visual statement about class distinctions: Hester's bewilderment when everyone joins in with the singing, but she cannot, demonstrates the breach between her and the other characters. The shot changes from the pub patrons singing to a medium shot of Hester and Freddie dancing slowly in each other's arms, and at this point the soundtrack modulates from a diegetic performance of 'You Belong to Me', delivered by the pub patrons, into a non-diegetic recording sung by Jo Stafford as Hester and Freddie dance together slowly. If the songs of *Distant Voices, Still Lives* reinforce unrealistic expectations of romance, 'You Belong to Me' is used to comment on Hester's deep love for Freddie: she is 'trapped in an idea of romance'.<sup>94</sup>



A diegetic performance of 'You Belong to Me' (left) modulates into a non-diegetic recording of the same song (right) in *The Deep Blue Sea*.

For the informed audience, the flashback scene in which a group of Londoners sing the Irish standard 'Molly Malone' whilst sheltering in a subway tunnel during an air-raid seems to be a deliberate allusion to a similar sequence in *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, where the young Eileen initiates a communal sing-along of 'Roll Out the Barrel'. In both scenes, Davies depicts the power of music to buoy the spirits in time of crisis and to bind the community together. Another consequence of adding this scene to Rattigan's original play is



that Davies manages to create a further link between his early autobiographical films and his later literary adaptations.



Singing in air-raids. Left: The characters sing 'Roll Out the Barrel' in *Distant Voices, Still Lives*. Right: The characters sing 'Molly Malone' in *The Deep Blue Sea*.

Davies uses popular music in various ways: to create a sense of time and place (historical authenticity); to express the emotions of the characters; to comment upon the narrative, and to guide the spectators' responses. His deployment of classical music achieves similar effects while also allowing him to accomplish other creative objectives, particularly in relation to rendering spatial and temporal transitions.

*Children* contains one piece of classical music, Shostakovich's 'Symphony No. 8 in C Minor, Op. 65' (1943), which appears halfway through the film and accompanies a static shot in medium close-up of Tucker and his mother sitting on a bus. The boy's face is hidden from view as he gazes out of the window and the camera focuses instead on the mother's emotionally numbed face. In this instance, Davies's choice of music, performed by Stella Dickinson on the cor anglais, clearly serves as a *signifier of emotion*: the music's mournful, melancholy quality helps to convey a sense of the character's inner turmoil regarding her abusive husband. While Davies has criticised this scene, suggesting that it is unnecessarily lengthy and static, Jonathan Coe argues that it is 'the sheer expressive simplicity of his technique that moves and impresses'.<sup>95</sup>

In *Madonna and Child*, Davies uses a piece of uncredited religious music for ironic purposes, much like the use of children's singing voices in the same film and *Death and*

*Transfiguration*. The tension between the sacred and the profane is explored in the church scene, in which a sexually graphic telephone conversation between a middle-aged Tucker and a tattoo artist is juxtaposed with uncredited religious music. Coe suggests that it is the 'uncomplicated, almost naive and artless nature of the juxtaposition' that accounts for its dramatic effect<sup>96</sup>; the solemnity of the music and the *mise-en-scène* contrast with the vulgarity of the phone exchange.

Davies often uses music as a narrative cue to mark transitions in time. As noted earlier, music has an associative power that stimulates involuntary memories. For this reason, the music in *Distant Voices, Still Lives* has been compared to Vinteuil's music in Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* ('Remembrance of Things Past', 1871-1922) in that they both function as 'sounding-lines, or sonars, sent to bounce back echoes from the past'.<sup>97</sup> In *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, a recording of Howard Darke's 'In the Bleak Midwinter' ([1909] choir directed by Simon Preston and sung by soloist Mary Seers) is played over a tracking shot that seemingly compresses time by panning left from an adult Eileen crying outside the pub on her wedding day to a scene of the three siblings as young children gathered around a statue of the Virgin Mary to an early Christmas with the no-longer-deceased father decorating the tree. The beginning of *Still Lives* – with moonlight glistening on the River Mersey – is accompanied by the melody of Benjamin Britten's choral work 'A Hymn to the Virgin' (1930), and this sequence 'visually and aurally evokes a drift across time and space'.<sup>98</sup> In *The Long Day Closes*, Davies portrays the changing seasons by combining a shot of light travelling across a carpet with an extract from George Butterworth's 'A Shropshire Lad' (1911). This particular scene encapsulates Davies's ideas concerning the relationship between music, film and time: 'If music is movement and rhythm in time, then film is both movement and rhythm through space *and* time'.<sup>99</sup> One of the advantages that classical music offers over popular song is that the latter is more likely to feel anchored within a specific time period – regardless of whether the audience recognises the song or



not – whereas classical music invariably has a more free-floating quality and its provenance is less obvious.



Mahler is played over archive footage of dancing youths in *Of Time and the City*.

One of the most striking sequences in *Of Time and the City* depicts young people dancing in the iconic Cavern Club, the Liverpool venue where the Beatles played before they became famous. However, rather than playing a Mersey beat song over the image, Davies uses a piece of classical music: Mahler's 'Symphony No. 2 in C Minor' – "Resurrection" ([1888 and 1894] performed by The Wiener Philharmoniker). This decision is largely motivated by Davies's well-documented distaste for post-1950s popular music, as evidenced by his scornful assessment of the Beatles as a 'firm of provincial solicitors' during his voiceover narration for *Of Time and the City*. Despite being a young man during the Beatles' lifespan in the 1960s and working near the Cavern Club, Davies did not submit to the Beatlemania sweeping the nation. Instead, it was during this period that he first developed an interest in classical music, and on the voiceover he recites a litany of the figures he came to admire: Sibelius, Shostakovich, Bruckner, Mahler, Amy Shuard, Otto Klemperer, Elizabeth Schwarzkopf, Anneliese Rothenberger, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Charles Munch, Hans Knappertsbusch, Aleksandr Gauk, Robert Merrill and Jussi Björling.

The tonal clash created by combining footage of young people dancing with Mahler's music renders the scene strange and otherworldly, but also imbues the images with a certain

dignity. In the past, classical music has often been deployed on film soundtracks because it can be used to ‘marshal particular connotations of culture and class’.<sup>100</sup> As in *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes*, the lives of the working-class are ennobled through the use of classical music. In one lengthy sequence, Davies stitches together pieces of archive footage of working-class people carrying out mundane activities (a boy delivers milk, a man washes the windows of a pub, a group of women do their washing) and overlays it with the Romanian soprano Angela Gheorgiou’s performance of Popescu Branesti’s ‘Privegheati si va rugati’ (‘Watch and Pray’). By pairing this otherwise unremarkable footage with such ethereal music, Davies imparts a sense of order and contentment amidst post-war poverty and hardship. Popular music often performs the same function within his films, but the grandeur of Gheorgiou’s performance takes this idea to even greater heights.

*The House of Mirth* has arguably the most atypical soundtrack of all Davies’s films to date in that it eschews popular music altogether. Instead, the soundtrack consists of nine diverse pieces of classical music which are heard on twelve separate occasions. The anachronistic selections of music – ranging from the early eighteenth-century to the 1970s – mark a bold departure for Davies whose previous soundtracks were largely motivated by the desire to recreate a ‘lost’ time and place. The different pieces of music deployed in *The House of Mirth* perform a variety of dramatic functions. The film opens with a recording of Alessandro Marcello’s ‘Oboe Concerto in D Minor Slow Movement’ (performed by the Ferenc Erkel Chamber Orchestra) over Lily arriving at the train station and meeting the man she loves, Lawrence Selden (Eric Stoltz). This same piece of music is then played over the star-crossed lovers’ first kiss and at the end of the film when Lily drinks a fatal dose of chloral. By playing Marcello’s concerto at these key dramatic junctures, the music not only instils the film with a sense of continuity and coherence, but also serves as a *leitmotif* for Lily and Selden’s unfulfilled love affair. In his treatise *Oper und Drama* (‘Opera and Drama’, 1852), Wagner wrote that musical themes can be made to represent thoughts and emotions in a music-drama context, assuming that they become associated with them in an earlier

phase of the narrative.<sup>101</sup> Everett has noted the affinity between Marcello's music and the character of Lily, arguing that they are both 'complex, apparently delicate and fragile, yet possessing great inner strength'.<sup>102</sup> Koresky argues that Davies's musical choices are not used to manipulate the audience's emotional responses, but rather to create 'mysterious, melancholy spaces within which viewers can store their ever-shifting emotions'.<sup>103</sup>

*The House of Mirth* contains three extracts from Mozart's comic opera *Così fan tutte*, foregrounding this work as the film's most significant intertext. The Overture is played over the opera sequence, 'La mia Dorabella' accompanies Lily leaving the opera house, and 'Soave sia il vento' accompanies the transition shot where the plot moves from New York to Monte Carlo. The plot of *Così fan tutte* centres on two young officers (Ferrando and Guglielmo) who are persuaded by a philosopher (Don Alfonso) to test the fidelity of their fiancées (Dorabella and Fiordiligi) by pretending to leave for war and returning in disguise to seduce them.



A scene from Mozart's *Così fan tutte*.

Porton has suggested that the relationship between the two texts is an uneasy one, the 'playful flirtation' of Mozart's opera clashing with the 'more heavy-handed stratagems of New York society' in Davies's film.<sup>104</sup> However, Porton seems to be wilfully ignoring the unwholesome and misogynistic aspects of the opera, in which women are suspected of being intrinsically false and untrustworthy, an idea that is borne out when the two women

succumb to their wooers' advances. Indeed, Davies's choice of *Così fan tutte* seems apt as its narrative portrays 'women as objects and potential victims of the male gaze'.<sup>105</sup> Everett's observations on the similarities between *The House of Mirth* and the conventions of the *opera buffa* only serve to underline how well-matched the two texts are. The *opera buffa* is 'structured by a complex interplay of mask, disguise and reality', depicts a world governed by 'artificiality and self-consciousness', and features characters who 'consistently hide their real feelings under the appropriate social persona'.<sup>106</sup> When Lily sits in the opera box with Gus Trenor (Dan Aykroyd) and Simon Rosedale (Anthony LaPaglia) she is making herself vulnerable to the gossip and insinuations of others, particularly her vengeful cousin, Grace Stepney (Jodhi May). When Lily leaves the opera with Gus, she does not yet fully comprehend how she has been manipulated and compromised by the latter, who has been loaning her money (rather than investing it on her behalf) with the expectation of sexual payment. The transition shot from New York to Monte Carlo signals the narrative relocation to the destination where she will be socially 'annihilated' by Bertha Dorset (Laura Linney) when the latter publicly implies that she slept with her husband. For these reasons, an audience familiar with *Così fan tutte* will be able to make illuminating connections between Mozart's opera and *The House of Mirth* that will enrich their experience by adding extra layers of meaning.

The technique of using a *leitmotif* to express the protagonist's longings is also used in *The Deep Blue Sea*. Samuel Barber's 'Concerto for violin and orchestra, op. 14' ([1939] performed by Hilary Hahn and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, and conducted by Hugh Wolff) is played over the film's opening sequence, foregrounding the film as Hester's personal narrative and, therefore, 'one of a particular interiority'.<sup>107</sup> This particular piece of music accompanies the protagonist's suicide attempt and a series of flashback scenes in which we witness Hester's first meeting with Freddie, their first drink at the pub and their first sexual encounter. In its emotional grandeur, Barber's music evokes the soundtrack of *Brief Encounter* which is famously saturated in Rachmaninoff's 'Piano Concerto No.2' (written

between 1900 and 1901). In both *Brief Encounter* and *The Deep Blue Sea*, classical music is linked directly to female subjectivity. This technique can also be observed in a film such as *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (Blake Edwards, USA, 1961), for which the song 'Moon River' was written by Harry Mancini and Johnny Mercer to convey the female protagonist's 'yearning for a better life and her innocent past'.<sup>108</sup> In *The Deep Blue Sea*, Davies uses Barber's concerto to depict Hester's transgressive romantic desires. The selection of music also assists in the process of adapting Rattigan's play to the screen by allowing him to compress the first act into a mere ten minutes. One might argue that this largely wordless sequence, propelled by the pulsing rhythm of Barber's music, functions as a glimpse into 'an exhilaratingly realized, traumatized mindscape'.<sup>109</sup> Michel Chion has argued that the cinema has not yet developed a code or language that would allow spectators to 'identify sounds as subjective, filtered through the single perception of one of the characters'.<sup>110</sup> Nevertheless, Davies's non-diegetic use of Barber's concerto clearly foregrounds the relationship between Hester and the music.

While Davies uses popular and classical music to satisfy the various functions identified by Gorbman in her discussion of classical Hollywood scores, it would be inaccurate to suggest that his film scores aspire to the same level of invisibility as the compositions of Max Steiner et al. Whereas the artistry of a film like *Casablanca* is subordinated to narrative, that of an art-house film such as *Distant Voices, Still Lives* tends to be 'foregrounded, demanding that the viewer and commentator pay attention to the work's treatment of its themes, and often how it is structured, and how it communicates'.<sup>111</sup> With their linear plots, Davies's literary adaptations tend to deploy classical music to create mood and evoke the characters' emotions. In contrast, classical music is mostly used in the elliptical narrative structures of his autobiographical films in order to traverse time and space.

## **Conclusion**

At the beginning of the chapter I referred to the idea of the 'Daviesian' soundtrack which brings together distinctive yet familiar musical components. Since *Death and Transfiguration*

the musical soundtracks of Terence Davies's autobiographical films have consisted of richly textured collages of popular songs, classical music, religious hymns and communal singing. This idiosyncratic approach to film scoring has also been used in *The Neon Bible* and *The Deep Blue Sea*. Equally distinctive is Davies's sound design – an assemblage of media clips, voiceover, silence and sound effects – which is conceived during the script process and performs an integral role in the construction of the overall work. There is a pleasing contrast between the visual formalism of Davies's films, which relies heavily on stately tracking shots and exquisitely composed *tableaux vivants*, and his patchwork-like approach to sound design which relies heavily on montage and fragmentation.

Davies's deployment of music and sound fulfils many of the conventions established by Classical Hollywood such as signifying emotion, creating narrative tension and providing a sense of structure and continuity. Overall, diegetic music tends to be played in two ways – through communal singing and the radio – in order to express the characters' repressed emotions and to provide them with a means of escapism. Non-diegetic music is often used to comment on the narrative or mark temporal or spatial transitions. For the most part, Davies deploys classical music for bolder, more formally innovative sequences such as the transition from New York to Monte Carlo in *The House of Mirth*.

Davies's use of popular music, radio programmes and films on his soundtracks is motivated by the urge to instil the films with a greater sense of historical accuracy, but also provides the audience with an insight into the psyche of the director as a child growing up in working-class Liverpool during the 1950s. In fact, he has described music as his 'emotional autobiography', as the soundtracks of his films offer the audience a glimpse into the formation of his own personality.<sup>112</sup>

As with the previous chapters, I have explored the ways in which Davies makes deliberate allusions to extant cultural texts in order to achieve a range of different effects. However, I have also discussed how an audience will gain a deeper appreciation and

understanding of Davies's films, providing that they are familiar with such diverse texts as

*Round the Horne* and *Così fan tutte*.

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<sup>1</sup> Caughie 1992, 11.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Ellis (2006, p. 171), Everett (2004, p. 171), Horne (2000, p. 16) and Hunt (1999, p. 111).

<sup>3</sup> Koresky 2012, accessed on February 26 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Murch quoted in Constantini 2010, p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> Thomson 2003, p. 207.

<sup>6</sup> Bainbridge 2007, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Malcolm 1988, p. 21.

<sup>8</sup> Mancini 1985, p. 361.

<sup>9</sup> Thom 2003, pp. 127-128.

<sup>10</sup> Everett 2004, p. 186.

<sup>11</sup> Davies, DVD audio commentary of *Distant Voices, Still Lives*.

<sup>12</sup> Danks 2001, accessed on 26 February 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Farley 2006, p. 78.

<sup>14</sup> Ellis 2004, pp. 137-138.

<sup>15</sup> Everett 2004, p. 119.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Although the financiers wanted to hire an actor to perform the voiceover for *Of Time and the City*, they agreed to allow Davies to read his own three original unpublished poems and extracts from T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* (1943).

<sup>19</sup> 'The Making of *Of Time and the City*,' special feature on DVD.

<sup>20</sup> Bradshaw 2008, p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> Gilbey 2008, p. 46.

<sup>22</sup> In *Children and Madonna and Child*, Davies recites prayers for his father and alter ego Tucker.

<sup>23</sup> Crittenden 2008, p. 87.

<sup>24</sup> Balázs 1985, p. 118.

<sup>25</sup> Koresky 2008, accessed on February 26 2013.

<sup>26</sup> Murch 2003, p. 100

<sup>27</sup> Cavalcanti 1985, p. 111.

<sup>28</sup> Coe 1995, p. 12.

<sup>29</sup> Davies quoted in Cousins 1996, p. 177.

<sup>30</sup> Everett 2004, p. 189.

<sup>31</sup> Horne 2000, p. 16.

<sup>32</sup> Jones 2013, accessed on 9 April 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Figgis 2003, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> Balázs 1985, p. 118.

<sup>35</sup> Inglis 2003, p. 3.

<sup>36</sup> Kassabian 2001, p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> Notable academic studies of film music include Claudia Gorbman's *Unheard Melodies* (1987), Kathryn Kalinak's *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film* (1992), Caryl Flinn's *Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia, and Hollywood Film Music* (1992), Royal S. Brown's *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music* (1994) and Jeff Smith's *The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Film Music* (1998).

<sup>38</sup> Inglis 2003, p. 3.

<sup>39</sup> Larsen 2007, p. 206.

<sup>40</sup> Eisler and Adorno 1947, p. 20.

<sup>41</sup> Sloboda 1985, p. 59.

<sup>42</sup> Larsen 2007, p. 206.

<sup>43</sup> Kassabian 2001, p. 6.

<sup>44</sup> Stravinsky 1936, p. 91.

<sup>45</sup> Bazelon 1975, p. 74.

<sup>46</sup> London 1936, p. 174.

<sup>47</sup> Raskin quoted in Burt 1994, p. 5.

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- <sup>48</sup> Donnelly 2005, p. 22.
- <sup>49</sup> Gorbman 1987, p. 73.
- <sup>50</sup> Copland quoted in Smith 1998, p. 6.
- <sup>51</sup> Gorbman 1998, p. 47.
- <sup>52</sup> Hampton quoted in Woods 2005, p. 41.
- <sup>53</sup> Last 2003, p. 171. Last cites Michael Nyman as an example of this phenomenon.
- <sup>54</sup> Smith 1998, pp. 165-170.
- <sup>55</sup> Kassabian 2001, pp. 2-3.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid. 2001, p. 3.
- <sup>57</sup> Inglis 2003, p. 86.
- <sup>58</sup> Carey and Hannan 2003, p. 176.
- <sup>59</sup> Lindgren 1963, p. 139.
- <sup>60</sup> Davies quoted in Everett 2004, p. 204.
- <sup>61</sup> Davies 1992, p. x.
- <sup>62</sup> Everett 2004, p. 169.
- <sup>63</sup> Kirkham and Shaughnessy 1992, p. 14.
- <sup>64</sup> Parker 2003, p. 186.
- <sup>65</sup> Everett 2004, p. 196.
- <sup>66</sup> Farley 2006, p. 73.
- <sup>67</sup> Everett 2004, p. 168.
- <sup>68</sup> 'The Ballad of Barbara Allen' is a traditional folk song but the lyrics used in this recording were written by the American playwright Howard Richardson for his play *Dark of the Moon* which was first written in 1939 and eventually performed on Broadway in 1945.
- <sup>69</sup> Davies would use another song from *Love Me or Leave Me* in *The Long Day Closes*, Doris Day's rendition of 'At Sundown' (written by Walter Donaldson in 1927).
- <sup>70</sup> Everett 2004, p. 171.
- <sup>71</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 167.
- <sup>73</sup> Mundy 2007, p. 7.
- <sup>74</sup> Davies quoted in Everett 2004, p. 206.
- <sup>75</sup> Davies quoted in Hillis 2009, accessed on February 26 2013.
- <sup>76</sup> Williams 1993, p. 243.
- <sup>77</sup> Rosenbaum 2004, p. 389.
- <sup>78</sup> Danks 2001, accessed on February 26 2013.
- <sup>79</sup> Elsaesser 2005, p. 422.
- <sup>80</sup> Farley 2006, p. 78.
- <sup>81</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>82</sup> Fuller in Potter and Fuller 1994, p. 80.
- <sup>83</sup> Creeber 1996, p. 503.
- <sup>84</sup> Corrigan 1991, p. 186.
- <sup>85</sup> Marinov 2000, p. 198.
- <sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 202.
- <sup>87</sup> Everett 2004, p. 184.
- <sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 185.
- <sup>89</sup> Koresky 2014, 74.
- <sup>90</sup> Davies quoted in Anderson 2008, accessed 26 February 2013.
- <sup>91</sup> For example, the critic Sukdhev Sandhu described the juxtaposition of the Hollies' song with footage of the Korean War as 'crass'. See Sandhu 2008, accessed on 18 January 2011.
- <sup>92</sup> Thomson 2012, accessed on February 26 2013.
- <sup>93</sup> As with many of the songs that feature in Davies's films, he chose to include Jo Stafford's recording of 'You Belong to Me' on the soundtrack of *The Deep Blue Sea* because of its personal significance: 'I remember listening on Sundays to *Family Favourites* on the BBC Light Programme. It played songs for people in the Forces [British military] in Germany, Aden, wherever they were. One lovely Sunday lunchtime, my mum switched on the radio and Jo Stafford was singing 'You Belong to Me'. I walked to the front door and looked out, and all the doors and windows were open and everyone was listening to it. I never forgot that. (Davies quoted in Fuller 2012, accessed on 26 February 2013).
- <sup>94</sup> Koresky 2012, accessed on February 26 2013).
- <sup>95</sup> Coe 1995, p. 13.



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- <sup>96</sup> Coe 1995, p.13.  
<sup>97</sup> Powrie 2000, p. 320.  
<sup>98</sup> Koresky 2014, 117.  
<sup>99</sup> Davies 1992, p. x.  
<sup>100</sup> Cormack 2006, p. 19.  
<sup>101</sup> Larsen 2007, p. 213.  
<sup>102</sup> Everett in 2007b, p. 157.  
<sup>103</sup> Koresky 2009, accessed on 26 February 2013.  
<sup>104</sup> Porton 2008, p. 96.  
<sup>105</sup> Everett 2007b, p. 158.  
<sup>106</sup> Everett 2004, p. 190.  
<sup>107</sup> Koresky 2012, accessed on 26 February 2013.  
<sup>108</sup> Payri 2011, p. 139.  
<sup>109</sup> Koresky 2012, accessed on 26 February 2013.  
<sup>110</sup> Chion 2009, p. 202.  
<sup>111</sup> Leahy 2003, p. 61.  
<sup>112</sup> Davies 1992, xii.

# Chapter 5

## Authorship and Collaboration

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The focus of this chapter is to discuss the career of Terence Davies in terms of both individual authorship and artistic collaboration. Firstly, I will consider whether it is useful or accurate to describe Davies as an 'auteur' and to what extent this critical label illuminates our understanding of his work. Secondly, I will explore his creative relationships with various figures from the British film industry, including producers, editors, cinematographers, production designers, costume designers and actors, in order to reflect upon the contributions they have made to his films and the implications these collaborations have for an auteurist reading of Davies's oeuvre.

In their desire to praise his artistry as a filmmaker, various commentators have identified Davies as an auteur at the expense of the numerous talented men and women who have helped him to realise his distinct cinematic vision. The critical neglect of Davies's collaborators is symptomatic of the way that critical auteurism persists both in serious academic scholarship and more popular forms of film appreciation (e.g. *Sight & Sound* and *Cahiers du Cinéma*) despite the development of production studies which scrutinises the social, economic and technological factors underpinning the construction of films. In this chapter, I will address this critical oversight by drawing upon various interviews conducted with a number of Davies's most significant collaborators.

### **Davies as auteur**

At the time of writing, two books have been published on Terence Davies's filmmaking career: one by Wendy Everett in 2004 and another by Michael Koresky in 2014. The existence of these monographs clearly indicates that Davies is regarded as a notable

filmmaker and therefore worthy of rigorous critical analysis. For Koresky, Davies is a 'cinematic auteur in the classical sense, authoring films from an unmistakably personal aesthetic and thematic standpoint'.<sup>1</sup> This view is shared by many others, including the avant-garde filmmaker Peter Greenaway who once described himself, Davies and the late Derek Jarman as the primary practitioners of a highly personal and idiosyncratic form of British art cinema.<sup>2</sup>

While the term 'auteur' is considered outmoded by many commentators, it remains a common critical label; and one that has frequently been applied to Davies. In some ways this is unproblematic, for Davies has operated within a European 'art cinema' tradition in which the primacy of personal expression is regularly asserted, enabling him to make a series of autobiographical films between 1976 and 1992 which explore his childhood memories and those of his immediate family members. He is widely perceived to be a single-minded filmmaker who 'refuses to sacrifice any aspect of his personal vision'<sup>3</sup>, and it is partly due to this apparent unwillingness to compromise by taking on less personal projects that Davies has encountered difficulties in securing funding for his films, resulting in lengthy periods of inactivity. Most famously, there was an eight-year gap between *The House of Mirth* (2000) and *Of Time and the City* (2008) during which time he attempted unsuccessfully to obtain funding for various projects.

It is also productive to analyse Davies's body of work through the critical lens of auteurism because it reveals many recurring tropes. Firstly, his films are united by specific aesthetic motifs: static tableau-like shots that resemble family photographs; elegant tracking shots that traverse space and time; muted colours that create a sense of the past; idiosyncratic soundtracks that combine voiceovers with pop songs, classical music and religious hymns. Secondly, his films are also linked thematically. His autobiographical films are principally concerned with time, memory and the daily struggles (and pleasures) of English working-class life in the mid-twentieth century, but these preoccupations are also present in his literary adaptations. Through the characters of Tucker (*The Terence Davies*

*Trilogy*) and Bud (*The Long Day Closes*), Davies created protagonists who embody the confusion and guilt that he felt as a gay child struggling with his sexual identity in a Catholic community. However, these preoccupations are also present in his literary adaptations which also focus upon characters struggling to survive in worlds that are similarly circumscribed: 1940s Mississippi (*The Neon Bible*), 1900s New York (*The House of Mirth*) and 1950s London (*The Deep Blue Sea*). Overall, most of Davies's main protagonists are outsiders who struggle to conform to the social obligations of their respective environments.

The thematic and stylistic consistency of Davies's work is hardly surprising, however, when we consider the unusual way in which he approaches writing and directing. In the introduction to his collected screenplays, *A Modest Pageant* (1992), he outlined his approach to scriptwriting as follows:

Over a period of ten to twelve months I take my initial notes ... Over this period the notes gradually accrete until I have a large batch which roughly forms the narrative ... I then sit down and write the first draft with these notes ... Having finished the first draft I leave the text for a while (anywhere between four and six weeks) then sit down and write the second, and final, draft.<sup>4</sup>

This brief description illustrates Davies's fastidious and exacting approach to composing a script. Furthermore, while some screenplays are sparsely written, presenting the filmmaking team with a series of creative problems to solve concerning such technical issues as camera movement and editing, in Davies's treatments most of the creative decisions have already been made in advance: 'Every track, every pan, every bit of dialogue, everything is in it, and that's what I shoot. I don't improvise at all. I mean, I may add an odd close-up here, or a pick-up shot there, but that's very rare'.<sup>5</sup>

By conceiving his films in such meticulous terms before shooting begins, the blueprint of Davies's films exist before any cast or crew are formally engaged. The precision and detail of his shooting scripts enables him to exert even greater control over his films as he begins shooting 'knowing every shot and camera set-up in the movie as well as what is on the sound track at every given point'.<sup>6</sup> Such is the specificity of his scripts that he never

feels the need to create a storyboard beforehand. The other major advantage of writing such comprehensive screenplays is that it enables Davies to plan his shooting schedule and allocate his budget more effectively, thereby shielding him from the unwanted interventions of executive producers and distributors:

People know exactly what they're getting, and if they turn round and say, "You can't do that," you say, "But I'm sorry, it's in the script. I *told* you I was going to do that". And with it being so detailed, I can say, "I will track on these days, I will crane on those days, on that day we need twenty extras, on this day we only need four".<sup>7</sup>

An example of this occurred during the shooting of *The Deep Blue Sea* when the film's co-producer Kate Ogborn suggested removing the underground scene due to budgetary constraints and Davies refused on the grounds that it was a crucial part of the film and had appeared in the approved screenplay.<sup>8</sup>

Davies himself subscribes to the idea that a director should be an auteur rather than a metteur en scène. In the introduction to his collected screenplays, he writes that 'there has to be a central vision, and that vision has to be the director's'.<sup>9</sup> While he concedes that film is a collaborative medium which depends on the input of various cast and crew members, he also argues that 'You cannot make film by committee'.<sup>10</sup> This conviction – that the director must be the governing influence behind a film's construction – is supported by Colin MacCabe's account of working with him on *Distant Voices, Still Lives* during his stint as Head of the BFI Production Board between 1985 and 1989. In the following extract, MacCabe contrasts Davies's approach to filmmaking with that of his fellow auteur Derek Jarman:

Davies's scripts detailed every camera movement and angle: the film existed in every detail before any cast or crew were engaged. At the same time every suggestion or alteration was listened to with great care and, occasionally, some minor detail would be altered or changed, but it was clear that this was only after the most intense reflection by Terence... Derek was completely different: the script was nowhere near as detailed and in any case was simply a pretext to get cast and crew together. Once assembled, every view was encouraged and listened to with attention and delight, every suggestion was greeted enthusiastically by Derek.<sup>11</sup>

This account of the two directors' differing approaches is highly revealing. Whereas Davies begins each new film with a rigorous understanding of how he wants it to look and sound, Jarman preferred a far looser and more improvisational approach that drew upon the creative strengths of his collaborators. For example, during the filming of *Jubilee* (UK, 1978) Jarman discovered that one of his cast members, the French chanteuse Hermine Demoriane, was an accomplished tightrope walker and decided to include a scene in which she could display this talent.<sup>12</sup> This is not to suggest, however, that the apparent anarchy of Jarman's working methods was actually random, for it appeared to MacCabe that the filmmaker was 'intuitively riding the wave of the collective talents gathered together but always heading for the shore that was his ultimate destination'.<sup>13</sup> The production designer Christopher Hobbs – who worked with both directors – recalls Jarman giving his collaborators a 'very free hand', particularly in early productions such as *Sebastiane* which he co-directed with Paul Humfress.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, MacCabe's account emphasises the huge impact that any micro-adjustments to the script might have on Davies's overall conception of the film. In his monograph on *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, the poet Paul Farley makes a revealing comparison between Davies's directorial style and the process of writing verse, arguing that 'this sense of absolute interconnectedness would strike a chord with many poets' sense of achieving the poem; how any tiny change in direction can affect the balance of the whole text and the direction it will take'.<sup>15</sup> This notion of 'interconnectedness' is taken up by Wendy Everett who likens Davies's approach to filmmaking to the process of composing music, with 'every rhythm, every tonality, every nuance being so minutely scored that ... the smallest alteration will have repercussions for the work as a whole, will irrevocably alter the film's meaning'.<sup>16</sup>

Whereas many fellow British auteurs such as Mike Leigh, Peter Greenaway and Ken Loach favour a more overtly collaborative method of filmmaking, Davies's scripts appear on first glance to be hermetically sealed. Indeed, my interviews with several of his collaborators reveal a recurring stress on the concrete specificity of his ideas and how they considered it

their role to serve his vision rather than assert their own creativity. However, as I hope to demonstrate in the rest of this chapter, many of the personnel with whom Davies worked also contributed significantly to the shaping of his ideas and his creative process. This in turn suggests that even in the case of a highly personal approach to film-making where the director insists on a high level of control, the creative process requires other significant contributions.

### **Collaboration**

The rise of production studies has resulted in the different aspects of film production receiving greater critical attention. In addition to the many books that offer practical advice to those who wish to work in the film industry in various capacities (e.g. as a camera operator or an editor), a number of these studies have been written by scholars who seek to demystify the idea of creativity in filmmaking and escape the limitations of a resolutely auteurist perspective. For example, in *Creativity and Constraint in the British Film Industry* (1991), Duncan Petrie examines British film production in the late 1980s in order to explore the idea that film-making is an essentially collaborative process dependent on various cultural, economic and aesthetic factors rather than the work of individual auteurs. In his subsequent book, *The British Cinematographer* (1996), Petrie considers the essential contributions made by cameramen whose role it is to 'convey a certain mood or atmosphere in the photography consistent with the director's vision'.<sup>17</sup> The other major components of film craft, particularly production design and editing, have received scholarly attention in various studies, including *Setting the Scene: The Great Hollywood Art Directors* (Robert Sennett, 1994), *Production Design: Architects of the Screen* (Jane Barnwell, 2004), *Costume Design* (Deborah Nadoolman Landis, 2003), *Costume and Cinema: Dress Codes in Popular Cinema* (Sara Street, 2001), *Film Editing: the Art of the Expressive* (Valerie Orpen, 2003) and *In the Blink of an Eye* (Walter Murch, 2001). This list is not intended to serve as an authoritative overview of the academic works that have been written on the different aspects

of film craft, but rather to demonstrate the range of critical texts that have emerged due to the rise of production studies.

There is a significant contradiction in Davies's thinking about authorship. On the one hand, he believes that the director should be the primary author of the film on which they are working, but on the other he acknowledges that his collaborators are 'artists in their own right'<sup>18</sup> and describes filmmaking as a 'co-operative effort'.<sup>19</sup> Having interviewed many of Davies's most important collaborators, I now intend to explore how particular individuals have contributed to Terence Davies's films and how his own approach to collaboration has developed over time. To do this, I shall discuss his collaborators in the following order: (i) producers, (ii) cinematographers, (iii) production designers, (iv) editors and (v) actors.

i) *Producers*

The responsibilities of a producer are numerous and can vary depending on the film in question. Traditionally, their primary duties consist of obtaining the necessary funding, assembling the cast and crew, and supervising the film through the various stages of production. Terence Davies has been extremely fortunate in that he has worked with a series of supportive producers who have enabled him to write and direct his own films with little editorial comment.

Davies first learned of the existence of the BFI Production Board after watching an episode of the television programme *Cinema Now* (1973) and consequently sent in his screenplay for *Children*, having failed to gain interest elsewhere.<sup>20</sup> Mamoun Hassan, the Head of the BFI Production Board between 1971 and 1974, was highly enthusiastic and offered Davies £8,500 to make the film.<sup>21</sup> According to Hassan, this was the only occasion on which he awarded BFI funds to a totally inexperienced film-maker. For instance, when he gave *Bill Douglas* £3,500 to make *My Childhood*, the latter had already shot four other short films. Nevertheless, Hassan defends his decision by arguing that Davies's screenplay was 'concretely imagined' and 'written in such a way that only he could direct it'.<sup>22</sup> Davies was still



a student at Coventry drama school and claims not to have had any directorial ambitions at that time.<sup>23</sup>

Shortly afterwards, Hassan left the BFI to become Head of Film Branch for a United Nations agency in Beirut. Although he was not directly involved in the production of *Children*, Hassan would play a significant role in Davies's subsequent development as a filmmaker. When Davies applied to the National Film School (NFS) for a second time in 1977 – having been rejected by NFS, the Royal College of Art (RCA) and the Polytechnic of Central London in the previous year – Hassan agreed to write him a reference.<sup>24</sup> He would later be appointed as the first Head of Directing at the film school (1977-79) and remembers Davies being a 'vigorous participant' in film analysis sessions, during which aspiring filmmakers would deconstruct scenes from a range of films, including *Seven Samurai/Shichinin no samurai* (Akira Kurosawa, Japan, 1954), *The World of Apu/Apur Sansar* (Satyajit Ray, India, 1959) and *The Man in the White Suit* (Alexander Mackendrick, UK, 1951). Davies found these sessions to be particularly joyful and edifying – not only did they expose him to exciting filmmakers with whom he was previously unfamiliar, they also encouraged him to think critically about cinema and to engage with the medium in a more overtly intellectual way.<sup>25</sup>

Hassan was Davies's first and most influential mentor because he provided him with the opportunity to pursue a filmmaking career in which personal expression was the overriding concern. Indeed, such was Davies's respect for Hassan's critical acumen that once he had established himself as a filmmaker he would invite him to comment on rough cuts of his work. During a screening of *The Long Day Closes*, for example, Davies asked Hassan whether he thought the infamous 'carpet scene' (in which the passage of time is signalled by light shining on a carpet) was over-indulgent and needed to be shortened, to which he replied, 'If you cut a frame of this I'll kill you'.<sup>26</sup>

After Hassan's departure, the BFI Production Board came under the brief stewardship of Barrie Gavin (1974-75) and then Peter Sainsbury (1975-85) with whom

Davies also enjoyed a fruitful relationship. Before leading the Board, Sainsbury had been the editor of the avant-garde journal *Afterimage*. According to his successor Colin MacCabe, Sainsbury was 'fully open to the anti-narrative and anti-representational arguments' which had emerged from the counter-culture of the late 1960s, resulting in such experimental films as *Riddles of the Sphinx* (Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen, UK, 1977).<sup>27</sup> He also encouraged a host of new directors from an art school background, including Peter Greenaway and Derek Jarman. In the late 1970s, the BFI, under Sainsbury, altered their filmmaking policy towards more accessible forms, resulting in such films as *Radio On* (Christopher Petit, UK/West Germany, 1979), *The Draughtsman's Contract* (Peter Greenaway, UK, 1982) and *The Gold Diggers* (Sally Potter, UK, 1983).

Sainsbury provided much-needed support and encouragement to Davies who recalls returning to the BFI with a rough cut of *Children*, convinced that he had 'wasted' £8,500 on what he considered to be a rambling and incoherent film.<sup>28</sup> Sainsbury assured Davies that 'there was a film in there' and asked Sarah Ellis to work with him on the final edit.<sup>29</sup> The BFI Production Board under Sainsbury would also co-fund the third part of the trilogy, *Death and Transfiguration*, with the Greater London Arts Association (GLAA) in 1983.

Davies also benefited greatly from his relationship with Sainsbury's successor at the BFI, Colin MacCabe, who was Head of the Production Board throughout the production of *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives*. Before he took up this role, MacCabe had been a young academic at the University of Cambridge and taught English Literature at the University of Strathclyde between 1981 and 1985. The Board that MacCabe inherited from Sainsbury in 1985 was in dire straits: the Thatcher government, which deplored government subsidies, had abolished the Eady Levy, thereby removing a major part of the Production Board's cash stream. Fortunately, Channel 4 intervened and provided an alternative source of funding for BFI production via an annual subvention.

MacCabe describes how his involvement with Davies resulted in the project, initially conceived as a short film, being extended into a feature:

The film was only 45 minutes long and, although it could be assured of a very successful life on the festival circuit, it would never reach any wider audiences. I knew, however, that Terence had always wanted to make a companion piece on the family (set some ten years later) and if one put two 45-minute pieces together one would have a film that could be shown in cinemas round the world. The risk, however, was enormous: we could sit on a great film and let no-one see it while Terence wrote a new film from scratch which we would then have to finance, shoot and edit. If I had any doubts, they were soon dispelled. The Board was adamant we should go for a feature.<sup>30</sup>

The decision to encourage Davies to make a second part was to have a significant impact on his career as *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* went on to enjoy considerable critical acclaim, winning numerous prestigious awards. This also led the BFI to continue their support by co-funding *The Long Day Closes*. By this point Ben Gibson had taken over from Colin MacCabe as Production Head – occupying the position between 1989 and 1997 – but while the former is credited as executive producer on the film, the latter had more direct involvement. Nearly two decades later, the BFI would once again support Davies by co-funding *The Deep Blue Sea*, although the organisation that invested in this film had a different approach towards film financing. Whereas the BFI had formerly been interested in nurturing and supporting British art cinema, this was no longer the case by 2011. When a Conservative-led coalition was elected in 2010, the government decided that there should only be one main public-funded body for film and they chose to abolish the UKFC and assign the responsibility of allocating Lottery funding to the BFI.

Davies's next film after *The Long Day Closes* – *The Neon Bible* – was a great departure for him in three significant ways. Firstly, it was his first (and so far only) film shot on location in the USA rather than the UK. Secondly, it was his first literary adaptation. Thirdly and most importantly, it was co-produced by the independent production company Scala Pictures rather than the BFI.<sup>31</sup> This is a highly significant development in Davies's career because it was the first time that he became involved in a project that had been initiated by someone else – in this case, the producer Elizabeth Karlsen.

At this point in time, Karlsen had already co-produced *The Pope Must Die* (Peter Richardson, UK, 1991) and *The Crying Game* (Neil Jordan, UK/Japan, 1992) and, having admired John Kennedy Toole's Pulitzer-prize winning novel *A Confederacy of Dunces* (1980), decided to approach Davies with the idea of adapting Toole's sophomore novella *The Neon Bible* (1989) into a film. She explains why she chose him in particular:

[Davies] wasn't an obvious choice in that he hadn't done a film in the States at that point ... It just felt as though there were themes in *The Neon Bible* which he was drawn to and had portrayed in his films so ... perfectly that I thought these would be enough to draw him into the story, even though it's set in America.<sup>32</sup>

Karlsen confirms Davies's extremely rigorous and precise approach towards the process of making films, describing his screenplay for *The Neon Bible* as being 'written like a storyboard' and his directorial style as a 'million miles away from any improvisational technique'.<sup>33</sup> These sentiments were echoed by later producers, including Kate Ogborn who had worked previously on *A Cock and Bull Story* (Michael Winterbottom, UK, 2005), *This is England* and *Bronson* (Nicolas Winding Refn, UK, 2008): 'Terence is very, very clear about what he wants and he can't compromise. It's not that he wants to be difficult ... The film's in his head as he writes the script ... If you try to present him with options that he hasn't creatively explored in the script, it doesn't work for him'.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Sol Papadopoulos, the co-producer of *Of Time and the City*, *Sunset Song* and the upcoming *A Quiet Passion*, notes that Davies 'has a very fixed idea of what he wants. It doesn't stop him listening to others - but when he's fixed it's pretty rigid'.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, Davies's producers tend to stress the importance of facilitating his creativity rather than attempting to foist their own ideas onto him. Ogborn, for example, described her role as 'trying to create an atmosphere whereby [Davies] can feel that he can do his best work'.<sup>36</sup>

However, Sean O'Connor provides a notable exception due to his significant creative involvement in the making of *The Deep Blue Sea*.<sup>37</sup> The idea of filming Terence Rattigan's 1952 play first occurred to O'Connor after he watched Karel Reisz's acclaimed West End revival in 1992, with Penelope Wilton playing the central role:

that particular production was the first time the audience and the critics took the play really seriously, because it had been seen as an ageing potboiler ... but somehow this very filmic production had made this three-act box-set drama a very different experience, revealing the layers of this woman's 'coming apart' over those few particular days.<sup>38</sup>

O'Connor's companion to the theatre on that fateful occasion was Frith Banbury who had directed the original stage production of *The Deep Blue Sea* in 1952 with Peggy Ashcroft and Kenneth More in the lead roles, and they had discussed the gay origins of the play at length. Indeed, O'Connor wrote about the sublimated homosexual themes of the 'well-made play' – the sort typified by Oscar Wilde, Somerset Maugham and Noël Coward – in a monograph entitled *Straight Acting: Popular Gay Drama from Wilde to Rattigan* (1999). O'Connor also wanted to adapt the play for the screen because it had been filmed unsuccessfully by Anatole Litvak in 1955 with Vivien Leigh in the lead role, and this version was never broadcast on television and has never been published on video or DVD for copyright reasons.<sup>39</sup> This urge led O'Connor to approach Alan Brodie, the executor of the Rattigan Trust, who agreed to sell him the rights for a minuscule sum. Moreover, the development of this project coincided fortuitously with Rattigan's centenary in 2011.

As a great admirer of Terence Davies's work – particularly *Distant Voices, Still Lives* which is largely set in the 1950s and celebrates the dignity and fortitude of women – O'Connor thought of him immediately and sent him three of Rattigan's plays to read.<sup>40</sup> During their first meeting they shared a mutual admiration for the performances of Joan Fontaine in *Rebecca* (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1940) and *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, Celia Johnson in *Brief Encounter* and Googie Withers in *It Always Rains on Sunday* (Robert Hamer, UK, 1947), and the idea of filming *The Deep Blue Sea* like a 1940s women's picture first emerged. Their exchange of ideas is notable as it suggests a relationship between intertextuality and creative collaboration in this particular instance. According to O'Connor, these films are 'all about women and a lot of them are recalled stories... [with] voiceover, which is exactly what we set out to do'.<sup>41</sup>



Top left: Joan Fontaine in *Rebecca*. Top right: Joan Fontaine in *Letter from an Unknown Woman*. Bottom left: Celia Johnson in *Brief Encounter*. Bottom right: Googie Withers in *It Always Rains on Sunday*.

In this way, O'Connor was to play a more significant role in the development of the screenplay than any of Davies's previous producers, providing him with detailed feedback on each of his drafts. He describes the first draft as 'extremely timid' because it failed to re-imagine Rattigan's play cinematically: like the original play, the action was set entirely within the hermetically sealed environment of Hester and Freddie's flat and the dialogue was essentially 'filtered Rattigan'.<sup>42</sup> Above all, O'Connor was frustrated because the screenplay was insufficiently 'Daviesian' for his taste: 'there were no flashbacks really... and there were no classic Terence Davies sequences: no travelling camera shots, not many bits outside, no people singing in pubs.'<sup>43</sup>

In subsequent rewrites, O'Connor persuaded Davies to incorporate some of his narrative and stylistic trademarks and emboldened him to pay homage to the films that they had discussed during their first meeting by including the following:

- (i) a scene in which Hester attempts to commit suicide for a second time by throwing herself in front of a train like the heroine of *Brief Encounter*,
- (ii) an early voiceover reminiscent of the opening scene in *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (both films begin with a woman reading aloud a letter they have written to their lover in which they say they will soon be dead), and
- (iii) opening and closing scenes featuring street exteriors that resemble those in *It Always Rains on Sunday*.<sup>44</sup>

Davies's producers have played a crucial role in his career, creating opportunities for him to make films and allowing him to work in his own individual way. There have also been occasions where the producers have had a more direct influence on his approach to filmmaking: Mamoun Hassan was a significant early influence, emboldening him to pursue his highly personal approach to filmmaking, and Sean O'Connor had more direct input in the content and structure of *The Deep Blue Sea* than any of Davies's other producers.

## ii) *Cinematographers*

Duncan Petrie describes cinematography as 'the meeting point of science and art, technology and aesthetics, for the practitioner must not only understand the technical properties of light, film stocks and lenses but also the creative possibilities of composition, light and shade, texture and colour'.<sup>45</sup> For these reasons, the cinematographer's role is pivotal to the filmmaking process, which explains why many of them have been recognised above other members of the production team. Orson Welles, for example, famously acknowledged the contribution that the cinematographer Gregg Toland made to *Citizen Kane* with his striking use of deep-focus photography. During the shooting of the film Welles encouraged Toland to 'experiment and tinker', and this resulted in a 'kind of running game between the two with Welles coming up with one far-fetched idea after another and

challenging Toland to produce it and Toland delivering and then challenging Welles to ask for something he could not produce'.<sup>46</sup>

The history of British cinema is filled with significant creative relationships between directors and cinematographers (Michael Powell and Jack Cardiff, David Lean and Robert Krasker, Carol Reed and Robert Krasker, Tony Richardson and Walter Lassally) with the latter contributing considerably to the overall impact of the film. Since the beginning of his career, Davies has been fortunate to collaborate with gifted cameramen who have been able to realise his artistic vision through their control of colour, lighting, camera movement and composition.

Bill Diver first encountered Terence Davies when he was hired by Mamoun Hassan to shoot a test sequence for *Children* in order to assess whether Davies would be capable of directing a film.<sup>47</sup> This marked the beginning of one of the most significant creative relationships in Davies's career: not only did Diver photograph the *Trilogy* and *Distant Voices*, he also edited *Death and Transfiguration*, *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes*. By performing these two crucial roles, Diver provided Davies with considerable technical expertise during the formative stage of his career and thus contributed significantly both to the overall aesthetic of the films and the way their narratives are structured.

As Diver recalls, the crew who worked on *Children* consisted mainly of film students from the London Film School who 'couldn't understand why someone who had never made a film before had been given all this money ... and was making it in such a strange way and taking such weird shots'.<sup>48</sup> While Davies would also find a generous and sympathetic collaborator in the editor Sarah Ellis, Diver appears to have been his only real supporter during the shooting of *Children*. According to Diver, the crew objected to one particular high shot of the mother and two female neighbours gathered around the father's coffin because they thought it would be more appropriate to use close-ups in order to capture the characters' responses to the corpse.<sup>49</sup> However, despite the hostility of the crew – Davies



has described the experience as a 'baptism of fire'<sup>50</sup> – Davies managed to be 'assertive in that he would stand up for getting the image that was in his head'.<sup>51</sup> According to Diver

when you're trying to put the camera in the right place it's like one of those optical tests where you're aligning two images: putting a bird into a cage ... You're trying to find the image he has in his head, and sometimes he will describe it accurately ... and sometimes he will describe something that's physically impossible to do.<sup>52</sup>



This shot from *Children* was criticised by certain members of Davies's crew.

Consequently, the only improvised footage that Diver shot on one of Davies's films was of the Liverpool ferry that transports Terry O'Sullivan's middle-aged Tucker to and from work in *Madonna and Child*. Because Davies was so exacting about the composition of shots, the challenge for Diver was one of 'solving technicalities', of crystallising his ideas into cinematic imagery.<sup>53</sup> He recalls that Davies's approach to lighting and composition was more emotional than intellectual, and this has been corroborated by the director himself: 'I've no idea where my style comes from! I've not studied painting or sculpture, it's all just visual intuition, learning by doing'.<sup>54</sup>

Diver played a pivotal role in facilitating Davies's transition from black and white to colour photography. When the BFI offered to fund *Distant Voices* on the condition that it was shot in colour, Davies initially considered rejecting it because he believed that the subject matter of the film to be more suited to monochrome. However, Diver and the production

designer, Miki van Zwanenberg, were able to persuade him by discussing alternative ways of creating the desired period look. They eventually settled upon the colour-desaturation process used by the cinematographer Roger Deakins for *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Michael Radford, UK, 1984). Davies describes the process as follows:

I knew I wanted a certain type of colour, so we did a test with Kay Laboratories. I wanted tones of red and brown, but not sepia, because you can't watch sepia, it's impossible. So we used a coral filter and took out all the primary colours from the décor and costumes. Then we used a bleach bypass process that leaves the silver nitrate in the print and desaturates the colour.<sup>55</sup>

By employing this technique, Diver was able to eliminate primary colours from the photography and achieve a 'tonal range mainly of browns (with ghostly sea-greens, pale blues, and roses)' – a colour palette that recreates the look of an old photograph album and, consequently, evokes a sense of the past.<sup>56</sup>



Family tableau from *Distant Voices, Still Lives*

Shortly after shooting *Distant Voices*, Diver decided to concentrate on editing and Davies would subsequently collaborate with a series of different cinematographers, beginning with Patrick Duval who would photograph *Still Lives* and then Michael Coulter who would shoot both *The Long Day Closes* and *The Neon Bible*. The latter was chosen not only for his proven track record as a cinematographer, having worked on such films as *The Good Father* (Mike Newell, UK, 1985), *Housekeeping* (Bill Forsyth, USA/Canada, 1987) and *The Dressmaker* (Jim O'Brien, UK, 1988), but because Davies 'believed [he] would understand

and empathise with the memories and emotions he was trying to convey'.<sup>57</sup> The Glaswegian Coulter shares Davies's Catholic background and thus understood the significance of the religious iconography and fear of damnation that was central to the director's memory.<sup>58</sup> For *The Long Day Closes*, Coulter drew upon Diver's approach on *Distant Voices, Still Lives* by using similar techniques (the bleach bypass process, a coral filter and old Cooke lenses) in order to create appropriately muted tones, but this time 'the finish was warmer and more glossy, combined with strong contrasts of light and shade'.<sup>59</sup> Coulter's slow and reflective shooting style introduces more mobility than any of Davies's previous films, something that 'delights in the detailed vision of childhood, creating lyrical compositions of light and texture which lie outside of time'.<sup>60</sup>

The film also has a more refined visual style and before production began on *The Long Day Closes*, Davies presented Coulter with several books on the paintings of the 'old masters', most notably the Dutch artists Vermeer and Rembrandt, where 'intense central light falls away quickly into shadow', together with 1950s chrome photographs of Lancashire – both of which captured the moods and feelings he hoped to convey.<sup>61</sup>



Left: Vermeer's *The Milkmaid* (c. 1658). Right: Mother (Marjorie Yates) in *The Long Day Closes*.



Left: Rembrandt's *Belshazzar's Feast* (c. 1636). Right: Mother (Marjorie Yates) and Bud (Leigh McCormack) in *The Long Day Closes*.

For *The Neon Bible*, Davies and Coulter discussed the photographs of the Farm Security Administration (FSA) photographers Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans whose work portrayed the challenges of rural poverty in the wake of the Great Depression. Despite being shot in black and white, Davies was drawn to the photographs because 'with the sunlight being very strong, you get very deep shadows, but you also get detail in the shadow. I said to... Mick Coulter: 'I want a reproduction of this, but in colour, like three-strip Technicolor, where you can get very deep but very detailed shadows'.<sup>62</sup>



Left: *Migrant Agricultural Worker in Marysville Migrant Camp (Trying to Figure Out His Year's Earnings)* (Dorothea Lange, 1935). Right: *Farmer's Kitchen* (Walker Evans, 1936).

The two men also discussed the paintings of Andrew Wyeth and Edward Hopper, many of which depict solitary figures situated in landscapes and interior spaces. These visual touchstones had a profound influence on the look of *The Neon Bible* and figured prominently in the criticism that greeted the film upon its release.<sup>63</sup>



Left: Wyeth's *Christina's World* (1948). Right: Hopper's *Morning Sun* (1952)

For *The House of Mirth*, Davies employed the cinematographer Remi Adefarasin who had recently received an Academy Award nomination and a BAFTA for his work on *Elizabeth* (Shekhar Kapur, UK/USA, 1998). The cinematographer has expressed his own appreciation of Davies's directorial aesthetic: 'I love his visual simplicity and his refusal to chop up scenes to make them appear more exciting ... Fast cutting can be a ploy to trick viewers into thinking they're getting more content than they actually are. If the scene is well-staged, I prefer watching one sustained image rather than a barrage of cuts'.<sup>64</sup> In determining a visual approach for this film, Adefarasin and Davies considered the paintings of John Singer Sargent, whose depictions of Edwardian era luxury earned him a reputation as one of the leading portrait artists of his generation. For Adefarasin, these discussions with Davies served as a 'shortcut to finding the way light falls on people, and how the backgrounds are just impressions and not celebrated'.<sup>65</sup>





Left: Sargent's portrait of Elizabeth Winthrop Chanler (left, 1893). Right: Lily Bart (Gillian Anderson) in *The House of Mirth*.

In Adefarsain, Davies found another cinematographer who shared his visual sensibility, and their working relationship was fruitful and equitable. However, there were still some disagreements between the two regarding the framing of particular shots as the cinematographer recalls:

[Davies favoured] having the [character's] face slap-bang on the cross-hairs ... That's all very well for a tableau-type film, but Lily Bart was talking to other people, not to the camera. Shooting in the 2.40:1 ratio, I couldn't bear undynamic framing, and because I operated [the camera] on this film as well, I had to speak out.<sup>66</sup>

The documentary *Of Time and the City* presented a different kind of creative challenge for Davies as eighty per cent of the film was composed of archive material and the rest consisted of footage shot of contemporary Liverpool. The cinematographer Tim Pollard was eventually hired because of his skill at filming architecture – a talent he developed by shooting various television documentaries such as the science documentary series *Horizon* (UK, 1964 – the present) and the current affairs programme *Dispatches* (UK, 1987 – the present). As Pollard recalls, 'Terence is very specific on how he wants architecture shot ... particularly the height of the camera in relation to an object, so you wouldn't shoot up at a building you'd shoot ... at the height of the windows, so there's no distortion'.<sup>67</sup> During the course of shooting locations for the documentary, such as Liverpool Philharmonic Hall and St George's Hall, Davies exercised even more control over the content and composition of

shots than he had in his previous films. In addition to specifying the buildings that he wanted Pollard to film and how they should be framed within the shot, Terence was present throughout most of the shoot.

For *The Deep Blue Sea*, the producer Kate Ogborn suggested Florian Hoffmeister because they had worked together previously on the short film *Kingsland #1: The Dreamer* (Tony Grisoni, UK, 2008) and she felt that he would collaborate fruitfully with Davies. This judgement turned out to be sound as Hoffmeister discovered that he and Davies shared a similar approach. According to the cinematographer, the director 'communicates in a very emotional way and I am very open to that form of communication and I am quite interested as a cinematographer in transferring those emotions into my ... technical world'.<sup>68</sup> Ogborn recalls that Hoffmeister was given 'freedom in terms of lighting'<sup>69</sup>, and despite Davies's strongly-held views about the framing of shots, Hoffmeister states that he 'didn't feel restricted whatsoever'.<sup>70</sup> In order to find the appropriate aesthetic for *The Deep Blue Sea*, the two discussed a range of visual references including the period photographs of Bill Brandt and the cinematography of Stanley Cortez in *The Magnificent Ambersons*, Franz Planer in *Letter from an Unknown Woman* and Douglas Slocombe in *The L-Shaped Room* (Bryan Forbes, UK, 1962), the latter of which is also set in a cramped apartment in a London boarding house. Hoffmeister describes the aesthetic they agreed upon as 'socio-economic truthfulness with a romantic outlook embedded in it'.<sup>71</sup> Hoffmeister regarded it as his responsibility to serve Davies's vision of the film but also managed to assert his own creativity.

Since he first started making films, Davies has held firmly conceived opinions about cinematography. Indeed, he is less open-minded on the subjects of framing and composition than he is on other aspects of filmmaking such as editing and production design. Pollard's location shooting for *Of Time and the City* is an extreme example of this in that he was given rigidly precise instructions on how to shoot the architecture of Liverpool. However, it would be inaccurate to claim that the director is totally uncompromising about the overall aesthetic

of his films as he relies heavily upon the expertise of his cinematographers. According to Davies, 'Once you've discussed how it should look, then that's up to the cameraman. That's his job, and I won't interfere because I'm not technically minded at all.'<sup>72</sup> Diver suggests that during their lengthy collaboration, he considered it his role to translate Davies's ideas into visual language. Hoffmeister has described Davies as a generous collaborator who gave him creative freedom over the lighting and colour scheme of *The Deep Blue Sea* which suggests that he has become more willing to collaborate with others over the course of his career.

### iii) *Production designers*

The production designer is responsible for the overall look of the film and works closely with the director and cinematographer in order to establish the aesthetic demands of the film. Like a cinematographer, their role is to create the mood, atmosphere and context of a film, and this is achieved through the expressive use of space, objects, forms and colour. Production design is particularly important to a filmmaker like Davies as all his films are set in the past.

Terence Davies first met the production designer Miki van Zwanenberg at the National Film School and they subsequently worked together on *Death and Transfiguration*. For their next collaboration, *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, she had to painstakingly colour test all the costumes, props and furniture to make sure they looked appropriate on film because the bleach bypass process 'skews the colour', meaning that 'sometimes blues were green and sometimes they were purple'.<sup>73</sup> Van Zwanenberg claims that her approach to production design is based on creating sets that appear naturalistic but are actually highly stylised: 'people believe one thing but they're not really that'.<sup>74</sup> For example, the family home in *Distant Voices, Still Lives* is actually a composite of four different buildings.<sup>75</sup>

Van Zwanenberg is keen to stress that *Distant Voices, Still Lives* was not the work of a single auteur but rather the collective achievement of various talented individuals who worked together towards a shared artistic goal: '[Davies] knows what he wants but he doesn't always know how to get there'.<sup>76</sup>



For his next film, *The Long Day Closes*, Davies hired the production designer Christopher Hobbs, a long-term collaborator of Derek Jarman's. As the screenplay for the film depicts a child's subjective view of the world, Hobbs decided upon a production aesthetic that would reflect this idea. Indeed, he has likened his design approach to that of a 'psychiatrist or psychologist probing into memory'.<sup>77</sup> By speaking to Davies about his childhood in Liverpool, Hobbs 'opened up his memory little by little until he was remembering what kind of doily was on the sideboard'.<sup>78</sup>

Although Hobbs claims not to have been directly influenced by Van Zwanenberg's previous work on *Distant Voices, Still Lives* whilst designing *The Long Day Closes*, neither film aims to present an authentic vision of mid-twentieth-century Liverpool.<sup>79</sup> For this reason, Hobbs sought to avoid excessive period detail: 'It's far better to find a salient object which says 'this is the 50s' than to put in things from the Festival of Britain to hammer it home'.<sup>80</sup> Instead, Hobbs decided to pursue a 'hyperrealistic' version of the period:

To get 'memory realism', to get the child's view of the street, I did many subtle things. The railings were more twisted and curling than they would have been and all the drainpipes were melted slightly so that we could put in a little movement. Even the shop signs were not quite level. The eye is hardly aware of it, but it all comes out just that little bit more crisply on film.<sup>81</sup>

Hobbs also ensured that his production design captured the emotional topography of Davies's recollections of his childhood world. For example, primary school was rendered as a place of warmth and comfort by filling the nuns' study with a multitude of objects, whereas secondary school – a place in which Bud will be routinely abused and humiliated – was designed to appear 'cold, sparse and empty'.<sup>82</sup>



The warmth of the nun's study (left) is contrasted with the coldness of the secondary classroom (right) in *The Long Day Closes*.

Despite the fundamental differences between their childhoods (Davies was brought up in a Liverpool slum, whereas Hobbs was raised in a middle-class London home), the designer drew upon his early life for inspiration, recalling how 'everything was black and grimy' in London during the 1950s and how this idea serves as the 'basis for the general look of the film'.<sup>83</sup> Hobbs even found such dirt underneath railway arches in the East End of London where they hadn't been cleaned.<sup>84</sup>

Hobbs's dislike of ornamentation and excessive detail is shared by Don Taylor, the production designer on *The House of Mirth* whose previous film credits included several collaborations with the director Mark Herman: *Brassed Off* (UK/USA, 1996), *Little Voice* (UK, 1998) and *Purely Belter* (UK, 2000). Upon the film's release, many critics commented upon the striking differences between Dante Ferretti and Robert J. Franco's sumptuous production design for *The Age of Innocence* and Taylor's more austere and restrained approach. While this is largely due to budgetary constraints, it was also done because Taylor dislikes the tropes of period film design as embodied by Merchant-Ivory films like *A Room with a View* (James Ivory, UK, 1986), arguing that it's 'simple to put up coffee-coloured curtains, some antimacassars and fiddle with the amber lighting, and everyone think it's wonderful'.<sup>85</sup> Taylor is keen to emphasise the centrality of the director's vision:

This is a totally director-led film. It is Terence Davies's conception, and everything goes into making it happen for Terence. We had a big discussion on how the movie might look... My job is focusing on what talents I have to create the imagery in the director's mind, only better. It's not about making a beautiful set.<sup>86</sup>

Sean O'Connor knew James Merifield from their time in the theatre and suggested him to Davies as a potential production designer for *The Deep Blue Sea*. The references that Merifield brought to their first meeting 'resonated very deeply' with Davies and the two struck up a 'very special relationship' as a result.<sup>87</sup> As Davies was returning to the milieu of the 1950s, he had specific ideas about how he wanted the film to look: 'I wanted everything to feel well kept but shabby, because that how it was then... I wanted the colour slightly smudged because a lot of those interiors had dark, embossed wallpaper'.<sup>88</sup>

For Merifield, the most challenging aspect of the production design was building Hester and Freddie's apartment on a tight budget, but the advantage of constructing an original set as opposed to filming on location was that they could design the apartment to meet Davies's specifications. According to Davies, 'that flat is terribly important because it's where the breakdown of that relationship takes place... It's got to show what she left, which is comparative luxury. I know what those interiors are like so it was really important to get it right and make the house a character'.<sup>89</sup>

Van Zwanenberg, Hobbs and Merifield have all described their work as providing a heightened version of reality, a style which Hobbs describes as 'hyperrealism'. While Davies is deeply involved in the design of his films and has strong ideas about how he wants each of them to look, he is arguably more dependent on the contributions of production designers to achieve his creative ends than he is on other members of his creative team. For example, the memory realism of Hobbs's sets for *The Long Day Closes*, with their twisted railings and 'melted' drainpipes, makes a startling contribution to the overall look of the film.

Another one of Davies's most significant and long-standing working relationships has been with the costume designer Monica Howe who worked on his first four feature-length films: *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives*, *The Long Day Closes*, *The Neon Bible* and *The House of Mirth*. Howe argues that due to Davies's 'emphasis on framed tableaux there is a great deal of attention on the dress and sets'.<sup>90</sup> For *The Long Day Closes*, Davies wanted the clothes to

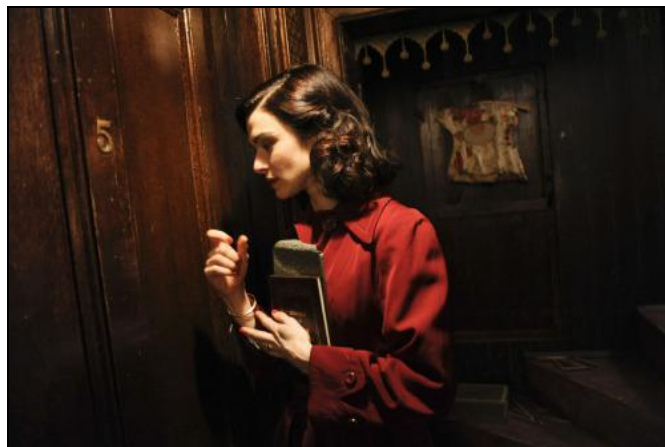
look 'like the ordinary clothes that people lived in', and to achieve the desired effect Howe bought clothes from the period rather than having them made up.<sup>91</sup> Howe regarded her working relationship with Davies as straightforward in that she considered it her responsibility to provide the costumes that *he* believed were right for the film: 'Terry would explain what he wanted which would be modified by what I could get'.<sup>92</sup>

Following Howe's retirement in 2000, a new costume designer was required for *The Deep Blue Sea*. Ruth Myers was first approached by Sean O'Connor because of her prodigious body of work which includes such diverse films as *The Addams Family* (Barry Sonnenfeld, USA, 1991), *Emma* (Douglas McGrath, UK/USA, 1996) and *L.A. Confidential* (Curtis Hanson, USA, 1997). However, Myers recalls that Davies was not aware of her work beforehand due to his lack of engagement with the contemporary film industry.<sup>93</sup> That said, the two of them quickly established a warm and respectful working relationship, leading Myers to proclaim Davies as a 'man of great passion' and 'artistry'.<sup>94</sup>

In their early meetings, Davies showed Myers photographs of his family from the 1950s in order to provide her with an idea of how he wanted the clothes to look in the film. When called upon to design costumes for an historical film, Myers tries to 'absorb the period' by immersing herself in research and then puts her findings to one side so that they inform her creative choices but do not obstruct them.<sup>95</sup> While Davies has strongly held views on cinematography and editing, his views on film design are less fixed and more open to negotiation and development. According to Myers, costume design 'evolves' through the exchange of ideas between director and designer.<sup>96</sup>

Myers argues that effective costume design is 'more about storytelling than decoration' and considers it her duty to 'interpret what directors want, rather than go against them'.<sup>97</sup> During pre-production on *The Deep Blue Sea*, the most contentious aspect of the costume design was the claret coat worn by Hester (Rachel Weisz). When Myers first discussed this idea with Davies, he had misgivings about the colour as in previous films he has only used red sparingly in order to re-create the shabby and faded look of post-war

Britain, e.g. the lipstick worn by Eileen (Angela Walsh) and Maisie (Lorraine Ashbourne) in *Distant Voices, Still Lives*. Furthermore, he was concerned that the claret coat would stand out too boldly against James Merifield's muted colour scheme. Davies was eventually convinced by Myers' idea because he realised that it would serve as 'the one good coat she took with her when she left [her husband]'.<sup>98</sup> In other words, the coat is a visual reminder of Hester's glamorous former life and distinguishes her from her present humble surroundings.



Rachel Weisz wearing the claret coat in *The Deep Blue Sea*.

#### iv) *Editors*

In common with Godard, Truffaut, Michelangelo Antonioni, Bernardo Bertolucci and Theo Angelopoulos, Davies's films 'depend upon the complex gaze of the camera... to construct their mise-en-scène, and, from it, their narrative'.<sup>99</sup> However, while his films rely heavily on long uninterrupted takes, Davies also recognises the importance of editing to the filmmaking process, arguing that 'It is at the editing stage that the shot footage reveals its true meaning; this is where the subtext emerges, and the film begins to 'sing''.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, editing is crucial to Davies's rendering of memory as it allows him to traverse time and space.

In 1979, Mick Audsley was in the early stages of what was to become a distinguished editing career, having already worked on *My Way Home*, the final part of Bill Douglas's autobiographical trilogy. Due to his connections with Colin Young and Roger Crittenden, the director and head of editing at the National Film School, Audsley was invited to edit Terence

Davies's graduation film, *Madonna and Child*, for a small fee and the chance to work with the visiting tutor Alexander Mackendrick – the director of *The Ladykillers* and *Sweet Smell of Success* – who would serve as a consultant on the film. During the process of cutting the film, Davies struck Audsley as a filmmaker who 'understood so clearly... the potency of montage and image and audio juxtaposition' and how they can be used to poetic effect.<sup>101</sup>

As with Sarah Ellis on *Children*, Audsley proved not only an invaluable creative collaborator, but also a source of moral support to the young director: 'he found cutting quite a painful process at this stage, so I think he was glad to have somebody ... walk arm-in-arm [with him]'.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, he describes the editing process as being more flexible and collaborative than one might expect from a Davies film: 'we stuck pretty close to the screenplay, but [as regards] exactly where the cuts went and so on we responded to the movie ... these things are always a discussion.'<sup>103</sup> As with *Children*, the slow tempo of the editing in *Madonna and Child* contributed to its pervasive mood of desolation and hopelessness.

Davies's collaboration with Audsley proved to be a one-off and Diver would edit the rest of Davies's autobiographical films: Diver found it difficult to work on these films because of their highly personal subject matter and has likened the process of cutting the footage to 'meddling with Terence's soul'.<sup>104</sup> Another factor which made the process difficult was Davies's refusal to shoot coverage, as this limited choice when it came to editing the film. As Diver puts it, 'all you can do is shuffle' the scenes and change the way they 'juxtapose with each other'.<sup>105</sup> David Charap had a similar experience whilst cutting *The Deep Blue Sea*, describing the extensive amount of detail in the screenplay as 'off-putting' and the 'opportunities for ingenuity' as 'limited'.<sup>106</sup>

Like Diver, Charap describes Davies as a 'director who has the film in his own head', and he regards it as his primary responsibility to 'make sure the assembly was what [Davies] had envisaged'.<sup>107</sup> Although he worked independently during post-production, Charap stuck

largely to the editing guidelines in Davies's screenplay. For him, *The Deep Blue Sea* was 'very precisely conceived and directed and much of the edit is very faithful to that'.<sup>108</sup>

The process of editing the documentary *Of Time and the City* differed significantly from that of Davies's previous films because it was not meticulously scripted in pre-production and was largely composed of archive footage. Having worked extensively with the film's producers Sol Papadopoulos and Roy Boulter, Liza Ryan-Carter was hired to edit the film. In the funding proposal that Davies submitted to the Digital Departures scheme, he included a list of music, poems, photographs and locations that he wanted to incorporate into the film: this includes Percy Bysshe Shelley's sonnet 'Ozymandias' (1818), footage of the seaside resort New Brighton and Handel's 'Music for the Royal Fireworks' (1749). However, according to Ryan-Carter, 'when we put them all together, the film was quite short ... about half the length it should be'.<sup>109</sup> In order to lengthen the film they needed to create new material and this was achieved by adopting a playful, even experimental, approach to assembling the footage, so that editing became an 'organic process' of trial and error.<sup>110</sup> They would cut the pictures together without sound or music to see what effect these images had, and occasionally these juxtapositions would stimulate an emotional response in Davies.

Ryan-Carter stresses the 'formlessness' of the editing stage, arguing that 'Terence... didn't always have a clear idea of what he wanted. He did have a clear idea of what music he wanted to use, but ... he didn't necessarily have a clear idea of what pictures he wanted or what he was trying to achieve. Sometimes it was hard to see the film as a whole'.<sup>111</sup> As there wasn't a fully realised screenplay for *Of Time and the City*, the archive producer Jim Anderson's first course of action was to gather as much post-war footage of Liverpool as possible from available sources such as Granada, the BBC, Movietone, Pathé and the North West Film Archive. Davies then responded to the footage that Anderson had gathered for him. According to the filmmaker, 'There was always a structure there, but what happened was by getting so much archival material the structure and subtextual meaning began to change as we included more things, and it triggered memories of my own, and I said 'Can

you get this? ... Could you get that?"<sup>112</sup> Thus memory became the key principle for organising the material and Anderson recalls that Davies's requests for archive footage became more specific as the material stimulated his memories.<sup>113</sup>

Many of the key decisions regarding editing are made in advance during Davies's meticulous scripting process – an approach that is reinforced by his refusal to shoot coverage. While this means that his editors have less material to work with during post-production, Davies's approach to editing is sometimes more improvisational than this appears to suggest. In the case of *Of Time and the City*, the film emerged through Davies and Ryan-Carter's experimentation with archive footage.

#### v) *Actors*

The novelist Jonathan Coe once wrote that 'no one goes to a Terence Davies film for the acting'<sup>114</sup>, and while press reviews of Davies's films have usually focused on the formal beauty of their mise-en-scène and their evocative use of sound and music, it would be inaccurate to suggest that individual performances have not been singled out for praise. Before embarking upon a career in filmmaking, Davies trained as an actor at the Coventry drama school between 1971 and 1973. Although he left without completing the course, he believes that it was a useful experience in that it provided him with a 'grounding in how you build a character up'.<sup>115</sup> The insight Davies gained into how an actor constructs a performance has proven extremely useful, enabling him to coax outstanding work from his actors.

Davies has characteristically strong views on film performance, detesting what he regards as the phoniness of much screen acting and favouring instead a more truthful approach:

What I've always said to the actors is 'I don't want you to act, that's the last thing I want you to do. I want you to be'... Because when they're not consciously acting you get all sorts of wonderful things. Film captures the fleeting moment like no other, and that might be someone looking down, it might be someone looking up, or keeping their eyes closed, or just looking. All those things which will then have meaning



depending on where that shot is within a scene, within the architecture of the piece... but what I won't put up with is mannerism.<sup>116</sup>

Davies wants his actors to deliver subtle, pared down performances; he disapproves of the 'showiness' of much screen acting which he finds to be self-conscious and overblown. For example, he has been extremely critical of Richard Harris's Academy Award-nominated performance in *This Sporting Life* (Lindsay Anderson, UK, 1963), in which he plays a rugby player tormented by feelings of unrequited passion for his widowed landlady (Rachel Roberts). Indeed, the qualities for which Harris's performance has been praised – its boldness, muscularity and pathos – are precisely those that have led Davies to dismiss it as 'terrible' and 'sub-Brando'.<sup>117</sup> Rather than acting out extreme emotional states, Davies wants his actors to embody the characters they are playing: 'I say to them... 'You're supposed to be representing ordinary people. And the reason ordinary people are ordinary is because they're not actors. Look at the way they behave. It's not huge emotion. They do *little* things''.<sup>118</sup> Davies's aversion to overblown acting partly accounts for his decision to cast non-professional or inexperienced actors in his films such as Leigh McCormack in *The Long Day Closes*.

Unlike his contemporary Mike Leigh who directs from scripts devised through group improvisation and extensive rehearsal periods, thereby giving the actors the opportunity to create their own characters and truly hone their performances, Davies gives his actors comparatively little time to learn their lines and rehearse: 'I like to send [the actors] the script about a fortnight before shooting and I ask them to read it twice, once for sense and then once more for character. The rehearsal time (just before we shoot the scene) is relatively short – between fifteen and twenty minutes'.<sup>119</sup>

Although Davies has acknowledged that 'actors must be given a certain amount of creative leeway in order to make the roles come alive', he still exercises a great amount of control over his cast.<sup>120</sup> Freda Dowie, who played the mother in *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, has written about her experience of being directed by him: 'He didn't say "say it like this",

nothing as crude as that, but he gave me a lead into how I should sit and stand, the gestures of my arms, her gentle tone'.<sup>121</sup> The fact that Dowie was playing the part of Davies's beloved mother explains in part why he gave her such detailed notes during the filming of *Distant Voices, Still Lives*. However, the American actor Eric Stoltz's recollection of being directed in *The House of Mirth*, in which he played Lawrence Selden, suggests that Davies had already envisioned the minutiae of the cast's performances (their vocal delivery, physical gestures and facial expressions) before shooting began, so he knew in advance how he wanted them to perform. For Stoltz, Davies 'doesn't so much direct as conduct. He had the film in his head, and we were there to serve his vision. However much it drove us mad, it also delighted us and intrigued us and fascinated us'.<sup>122</sup>

Sean O'Connor has likened Davies to the Hollywood directors of the 1940s and 50s with regard to the way he directs his leading ladies, comparing his professional relationship with Rachel Weisz (Hester in *The Deep Blue Sea*) to that of William Wyler and Bette Davis who collaborated on *Jezebel* (USA, 1938), *The Letter* (USA, 1940) and *The Little Foxes*.<sup>123</sup> O'Connor recalls how Davies's leading lady initially resented being given such specific directions:

Rachel, who's quite an experimental actress... wanted to hang loose, be a bit improvisational... On the first day of the shoot, he said, 'No, I want you to say it like this, do this, turn there, say it like this and inflect your voice down at the end'. On the second day, she said something like 'Where do I fit into this? You might as well play it yourself'.<sup>124</sup>

Gena Rowlands (Mae in *The Neon Bible*) also experienced difficulties in adjusting to Davies's directorial style. Having collaborated extensively with her husband, the independent filmmaker John Cassavetes, Rowlands was accustomed to working in an environment in which actors were given greater freedom to interpret their roles as they wished. The comparatively restrained performance she delivers in *The Neon Bible* differs considerably from her emotionally and physically intense performances in films such as *A Woman Under the Influence*. Davies recalls a disagreement that they had regarding the way Rowlands

would perform the scene in which Mae laments her disastrous show business career: 'She wanted to play it in a certain way and I said, 'No, I find that a little bit sentimental ...' It required her to cry and she said, 'I can't cry, I've never cried in a film'. I said, 'Can you imply tears in the voice?' and she said, 'Yes'. Give an idea like that to an American actor and they do wonders with it'.<sup>125</sup> While *The Neon Bible* received a mixed critical reception, most of the reviews praised Rowlands's moving performance as Mae, describing her as 'peculiarly wonderful'<sup>126</sup>, 'worthy of an Oscar nomination'<sup>127</sup> and playing the role with an 'appropriately distant charm'.<sup>128</sup>

Davies is personally involved in all casting decisions and holds precise views on whom he wants for a particular role. However, as Wendy Everett has observed, 'There is no clear pattern as to how he goes about selecting the cast'.<sup>129</sup> Often he chooses to audition actors based on their looks rather than any familiarity with their previous dramatic work. During pre-production for *The House of Mirth*, Davies chose to audition Gillian Anderson for the lead role after he saw her photograph on a magazine cover and was struck by her beauty: 'I was trying to find someone who looked like she might have stepped out from one of John Singer Sargent's portraits, and there she was'.<sup>130</sup> Indeed, he claims to have had no awareness of Anderson's international fame as one of the two main characters in the popular long-running science fiction programme *The X Files* (1993-2002). Similarly, he cast Rachel Weisz as the tragic heroine of *The Deep Blue Sea* after he caught one of her early performances in *Swept from the Sea* (Beeban Kidron, UK/USA, 1997) on television.<sup>131</sup> Again, Davies was struck more by her good looks rather than her acting talent; he was unaware, for instance, that Weisz had won an Academy Award in 2006 for her performance in *The Constant Gardener* (Fernando Meirelles, UK/Germany/USA/China, 2005). Some commentators considered it an odd decision on Davies's part to cast Weisz as Hester for this very reason: in Rattigan's play, the character is described as having no pretensions to beauty, but Weisz is widely regarded as beautiful. For David Thomson, it did not make dramatic or psychological sense for this 'ravishing ... and unmistakably intelligent woman to

play the victim'.<sup>132</sup> Even Simon Russell Beale – one of Britain's most revered stage actors – was approached after Davies saw him presenting a BBC documentary on sacred music and thought he had a 'lovely face', rather than any familiarity with his various roles on stage and screen.<sup>133</sup>

Davies's approach to directing actors resembles his control over the other aspects of filmmaking in that he holds clear views on how he wants his cast members to perform their roles and often gives them detailed notes on their vocal delivery and physical mannerisms. However, he also appreciates the interpretive aspect of performance and the way an actor must be given a certain degree of autonomy in order to construct a character.

## **Conclusion**

Good interpersonal relationships are pivotal to a collective artistic endeavour such as film which depends upon the input of numerous individuals. Terence Davies has often commented upon the difficulties he encountered with the production team during the shooting of his first film, describing the experience as both 'undermining' and an 'absolute nightmare'.<sup>134</sup> The crew assigned to Davies by the BFI (with the notable exceptions of Bill Diver and Sarah Ellis) made the inexperienced young director feel totally inadequate. According to Davies, 'The crew's attitude was "You haven't gone to film school. You haven't made a film. Why should you get all this money from the BFI?" ... They gave me a very hard time and after it was all over, I thought, "I'm never going to do this again."<sup>135</sup>

However, Davies's later filmmaking experiences proved to be far more pleasurable because he had more direct involvement in selecting crew members for his films. From *Madonna and Child* onwards, he 'has always chosen to work with individuals with whom he could empathise', and this partly explains why he has worked with the same people on multiple occasions.<sup>136</sup>

Most of the producers and crew members I interviewed spoke fondly of Davies, with the notable exception of Miki van Zwanenberg who expressed deep frustration and regret about the way their working relationship ended after *Distant Voices, Still Lives* was

completed. Indeed, the two did not speak at all between 1988 and 2007, the year in which the film was screened to mark the re-opening of the newly refurbished National Film Theatre which was renamed the BFI Southbank.<sup>137</sup> During the shooting of the film, Van Zwanenberg often felt unappreciated by Davies and she has described him as a harsh taskmaster whose all-consuming vision made him 'ungenerous' to his collaborators.<sup>138</sup>

In stark contrast, the production designer James Merifield rejects the idea that Davies is a difficult filmmaker with whom to work, suggesting that 'Terence was incredibly generous and allowed me to really fly and I never once felt my wings clipped. It was very much a collaborative process ... [he is] deeply passionate about his craft ... [I] never found him to be obstinate or difficult.'<sup>139</sup> The sheer pleasure that Merifield has expressed about their collaboration on *The Deep Blue Sea* is consistent with what Steven Romer observed during the production of *Distant Voices, Still Lives* – that Davies's 'enthusiasm generated a widely shared feeling of commitment to the project among all concerned'.<sup>140</sup>

Since the 1980s film scholarship has increasingly challenged the idea of the director as auteur. The field of production studies has placed more of an emphasis on the institutional context of the creative process and on film as a collaborative medium requiring the creative, artistic and technical input of numerous individuals. Furthermore, many commentators have questioned the importance – or indeed the desirability – of attributing the authorship of a film to its director. However, this idea has been directly disputed by Terence Davies who believes that film requires the overarching vision of a director.

Indeed, Davies conforms to the idea of the auteur in various ways. Firstly, his films contain recurring stylistic and thematic motifs. Secondly, his meticulous approach to scriptwriting means that many key filmmaking decisions concerning camera movement and editing will have already been made within the early stages of pre-production. Thirdly, Davies's uncompromising approach to filmmaking means that he will only take on projects to which he feels a strong personal connection.

The difficulties that Davies encountered in securing the necessary funding for his films means that he has often been portrayed as the victim of a philistine film culture. However, this criticism seems unfair when we consider that Davies has benefited from some of the key institutions within British cinema. The National Film School provided Davies with an education in film grammar and had a profound effect on his filmmaking practice. The now defunct BFI Production Board, with its remit of encouraging young talent, provided Davies with the funding for his early autobiographical films. Moreover, he received support and guidance from the Board's various heads of production, particularly Mamoun Hassan, Peter Sainsbury and Colin MacCabe. Indeed, it speaks to the power of Davies's cinema that he managed to earn the support of three prominent figures with such divergent tastes.

Although Davies can be identified as the major creative influence on each of his films, this does not mean that he is opposed to the idea of artistic collaboration. As MacCabe has acknowledged in his account of the BFI Production Board, Davies is willing to consider creative suggestions from his crew on condition that they mesh with his overall vision of the film. Furthermore, there have been many instances in which Davies has worked closely with his collaborators in order to achieve the desired effect. In Mick Audsley, he found an editor who understood the overall effect that he wanted and worked with him in order to achieve it. In Remi Adefarasin, he found a cinematographer who shared his visual sensibility and the two collaborated in order to imbue *The House of Mirth* with the look of John Singer Sargent's society portraits. In Christopher Hobbs, he found a production designer who succeeded in creating the subjective viewpoint of a boy growing up in 1950s Liverpool through a combination of imagination and technical expertise.

There is a clearly a tension between Davies's desire to have full control over his films and his recognition that filmmaking is collaborative. However, in most cases this tension appears to be a productive one. Throughout my interviews, most of his collaborators have stressed the primacy of fulfilling Davies's vision of the film rather than asserting their own creativity. But there have been instances where his collaborators played a significant role in

the shaping of his films. The editor Liza Ryan-Carter claims that much of *Of Time and the City* was devised during the editing process by experimenting with archive footage rather than through meticulous forward planning. The producer Sean O'Connor influenced the development of Davies's screenplay for *The Deep Blue Sea* and appears to have persuaded him to make it more 'Daviesian' by including stylistic tropes from his previous films.

It is partly this tension between creative control and collaboration that makes Davies such an interesting figure within the context of British film studies. In certain fundamental ways, he epitomises the concept of the auteur, yet a more in-depth analysis of his films quickly uncovers the significant contributions made by a range of talented individuals. It is illuminating to consider collaboration as another intertextual influence in filmmaking because it acknowledges the ways in which crew members can channel their own artistry and expertise into the creation of a shared vision.

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<sup>1</sup> Koresky 2014, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Greenaway 2000, p. 100.

<sup>3</sup> Dixon 1994, p. 250.

<sup>4</sup> Davies 1992, p. x.

<sup>5</sup> Davies quoted in Dixon 1994, p. 255.

<sup>6</sup> Davies 1992, p. x.

<sup>7</sup> Davies quoted in Dixon 1994, p. 255.

<sup>8</sup> Ogborn 2015, telephone interview with author.

<sup>9</sup> Davies 1992, p. xii.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> MacCabe 1999, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Hobbs 2014, telephone interview with author.

<sup>13</sup> MacCabe 1999, p. 15.

<sup>14</sup> Hobbs 2014, telephone interview with author.

<sup>15</sup> Farley 2006, p. 68.

<sup>16</sup> Everett 2004, p.18.

<sup>17</sup> Petrie 1996, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Davies quoted in Guillen 2012, accessed on 26 February 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Davies quoted in Cousins 1996, p. 184.

<sup>20</sup> Davies 2014, interview with author.

<sup>21</sup> Hassan 2014, Skype interview with author.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Davies 2014, interview with author.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Hassan 2014, Skype interview with author.

<sup>27</sup> MacCabe 1999, p. 13.

<sup>28</sup> Davies 2014, interview with author

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> MacCabe 1999, p. 16.

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<sup>31</sup> Scala Pictures was formed by the producers Nik Powell and Stephen Woolley who had collaborated previously as joint-creators of Palace Pictures, which was initially devised in 1980 as a distribution company for video. Later, it would branch into film production, beginning with *The Company of the Wolves* (Neil Jordan, UK, 1984) and ending with *The Crying Game* (Neil Jordan, UK, 1992). After the collapse of Palace Pictures, Powell and Woolley formed Scala Productions which went on to produce a diverse range of films, including *Backbeat* (Iain Softley, UK/Germany, 1994), *Fever Pitch* (David Evans, UK, 1997), *Little Voice* (Mark Herman, UK, 1998) and *Ladies in Lavender* (Charles Dance, UK, 2004).

<sup>32</sup> Karlsen 2015, telephone interview with author.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ogborn 2015, telephone interview with author.

<sup>35</sup> Papadopoulos 2015, email correspondence with author.

<sup>36</sup> Ogborn 2015, telephone interview with author.

<sup>37</sup> O'Connor worked extensively in theatre, television and radio before he co-produced *The Deep Blue Sea*. As a graduate of the Regional Theatre Young Directors' Scheme, Rattigan has directed plays all over the UK. He is also a graduate of the BBC Drama Directors' Course and has produced such television programmes as *Footballers' Wives* (2004), *EastEnders* (2002-2005), *Family Affairs* (2005) and *Minder* (2009). In the late 1990s, O'Connor produced the popular long-running radio drama *The Archers* (1951-the present), both storylining and directing the programme, and in August 2013 he was appointed editor of the programme.

<sup>38</sup> O'Connor 2015, telephone interview with author.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Besides *The Deep Blue Sea*, Davies was also given *Variation on a Theme* (1958), a play which O'Connor describes as 'terrible', and *Separate Tables* (1954) which was memorably filmed in 1958 by Delbert Mann with Burt Lancaster, Rita Hayworth, David Niven and Wendy Hiller in the leading roles (O'Connor 2015, telephone interview with author).

<sup>41</sup> O'Connor 2015, telephone interview with author.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Petrie 2000a, p. 223.

<sup>46</sup> Carringer 1985, p. 81.

<sup>47</sup> For the test sequence, Davies and a small crew filmed the scene in which Tucker returns from school to find his dying father writhing in agony on the floor before being injected by his nurse.

<sup>48</sup> Diver 2014, Skype interview with author.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Davies 2014, interview with author.

<sup>51</sup> Diver 2014, Skype interview with author.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Davies quoted in Duane 1992, p. 19.

<sup>55</sup> Davies quoted in Kennedy 1988, p. 17.

<sup>56</sup> Brown 2007, p. 96.

<sup>57</sup> Kirkham and O'Shaughnessy 1992, p. 13.

<sup>58</sup> Coulter quoted in Kirkham and O'Shaughnessy 1992, p. 13.

<sup>59</sup> Petrie 1996, p. 86.

<sup>60</sup> Everett 2003, p. 163.

<sup>61</sup> Kirkham and O'Shaughnessy 1992, p. 14.

<sup>62</sup> Davies quoted in Cousins 1996, p. 181.

<sup>63</sup> Whereas Philip French (*The Observer*) praised the ways in which *The Neon Bible* emulated its American influences (French 1995 p. 12), Geoff Brown (*The Times*) felt that the production team had 'stared too long at their research materials' (Brown 1995, p. 40) and J. Hoberman (the *Village Voice*) argued that the film 'resembles nothing so much as colorized prints of Walker Evans's share-cropper photographs' (Hoberman 1996, p. 24).

<sup>64</sup> Adefarasin quoted in Rae 2001, p. 12.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp. 12-14.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p. 14.

<sup>67</sup> Pollard 2015, telephone interview with author.



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- <sup>68</sup> Hoffmeister 2015, telephone interview with author.
- <sup>69</sup> Ogborn 2015, telephone interview with author.
- <sup>70</sup> Hoffmeister 2015, telephone interview with author.
- <sup>71</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>72</sup> Davies quoted in Koresky 2014, p. 149.
- <sup>73</sup> Van Zwanenberg 2015, telephone interview with author.
- <sup>74</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>75</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>77</sup> Hobbs quoted in Kirkham and O'Shaughnessy 1992, p. 14.
- <sup>78</sup> Hobbs 2014, telephone interview with author.
- <sup>79</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>80</sup> Hobbs quoted in Kirkham and O'Shaughnessy 1992, p. 14.
- <sup>81</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>82</sup> Kirkham and O'Shaughnessy 1992, p. 13.
- <sup>83</sup> Hobbs 2014, telephone interview with author.
- <sup>84</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>85</sup> Taylor quoted in Hunter 1999, p. 27.
- <sup>86</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>87</sup> Merifield 2015, telephone interview with author.
- <sup>88</sup> Davies quoted in Andrew 2011, p. 24.
- <sup>89</sup> Davies quoted in Woodward 2011, accessed on 26 February 2013.
- <sup>90</sup> Howe quoted in Kirkham and O'Shaughnessy 1992, p. 15.
- <sup>91</sup> Ibid. The costume budget for *The Long Day Closes* was £20,000 and Howe procured costumes that would have cost over £70,000 to hire or make.
- <sup>92</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>93</sup> Myers 2015, telephone interview with author.
- <sup>94</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>95</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>96</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>97</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>98</sup> Davies quoted in Fuller 2012, accessed on 26 February 2013.
- <sup>99</sup> Kolker 2000, p. 15.
- <sup>100</sup> Davies 1992, p. xii.
- <sup>101</sup> Audsley 2015, telephone interview with author.
- <sup>102</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>103</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>104</sup> Diver 2014, Skype interview with author.
- <sup>105</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>106</sup> Charap 2015, telephone interview with author.
- <sup>107</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>108</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>109</sup> Ryan-Carter 2015, telephone interview with author.
- <sup>110</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>111</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>112</sup> Davies, 'The Making of *Of Time and the City*', 2009.
- <sup>113</sup> Anderson 2015, telephone interview with author.
- <sup>114</sup> Coe 1995, p. 14.
- <sup>115</sup> Davies 2014, interview with author.
- <sup>116</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>117</sup> Davies quoted in Dixon 1994, p. 252.
- <sup>118</sup> Davies quoted in Cavanagh 1995, p. 61.
- <sup>119</sup> Davies 1992, p. xii.
- <sup>120</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>121</sup> Dowie quoted in Abbott 2012, accessed on 30 March 2013
- <sup>122</sup> Stoltz quoted in Hattenstone 2000, p. 4.
- <sup>123</sup> O'Connor 2015, telephone interview with author.
- <sup>124</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>125</sup> Davies quoted in Cousins 1996, p. 176.

<sup>126</sup> Mars-Jones 1995, p. 9.

<sup>127</sup> Hagerty 1995, p. 45.

<sup>128</sup> Patterson 2001, p. 74.

<sup>129</sup> Everett 2004, p. 21.

<sup>130</sup> Davies quoted in Everett 2007b, p. 160.

<sup>131</sup> Concannon 2011, accessed on 26 February 2013.

<sup>132</sup> Thomson 2012, accessed on 26 February 2013.

<sup>133</sup> Davies quoted in Rees 2011, accessed on 26 February 2013.

<sup>134</sup> Davies 2014, interview with author.

<sup>135</sup> Davies quoted in Falsetto 1999, p. 70.

<sup>136</sup> Everett 2004, p. 24. In addition to the producers, actors and crew members already discussed, Davies has worked with following people on multiple occasions: Maureen McCue was the executive producer of *Death and Transfiguration* and the associate producer of *The Long Day Closes*; Toby Benton was the assistant editor on *Death and Transfiguration* and the collaborating editor on *Distant Voices, Still Lives*; Olivia Stewart was the production manager on *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, and produced *The Long Day Closes, The Neon Bible* and *The House of Mirth*; Robert Lockhart composed original music for *The Long Day Closes* and *The Neon Bible*; Aileen Seaton was the make-up artist on *Distant Voices, Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes*; Wendy Broom was the production manager of *The House of Mirth* and the production co-ordinator of *The Neon Bible*; Lisa Marie Russo executive produced *Of Time and the City* and *The Deep Blue Sea*; Shuna Froid was the post-production supervisor on *Of Time and the City* and *The Deep Blue Sea*, and Ian Neil was the music supervisor of *Of Time and the City* and *The Deep Blue Sea*.

<sup>137</sup> Van Zwanenberg 2015, telephone interview with author.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Merifield 2015, telephone interview with author.

<sup>140</sup> Romer 1992, p. 69.

# Conclusion

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My intention in writing this thesis has been to broaden our knowledge and understanding of the British filmmaker Terence Davies by exploring his oeuvre from a range of different critical perspectives, thus problematizing and interrogating a key figure in British cinema whose body of work is considered by many commentators to be intrinsically whole and coherent. Over the course of these five chapters, I have analysed his small body of work from various angles, some of which are commonly thought to be antithetical – intertextuality and production studies, autobiographical filmmaking and literary adaptation – in order to excavate and analyse the nuances of his films.

In the two published monographs on Davies's films, Wendy Everett and Michael Koresky have framed him as a modern-day auteur whose thoughtful and exacting approach to filmmaking has enabled him to exercise considerable creative control over the different aspects of film craft, such as camerawork, editing and sound design. The idea that Davies is the principal author of his films has been given further weight by their highly personal subject matter, particularly his autobiographical works which all focus to some extent on his childhood in Liverpool during the 1940s and 50s. While I acknowledge that Davies is a quintessential auteur in that his films contain clearly identifiable thematic and stylistic tropes, my approach differs significantly from Everett and Koresky's in that I have placed greater emphasis on the audience's engagement with Davies's films in order to free them from a purely auteurist reading.

While other commentators have explored Davies's artistic inspirations, I have placed far greater emphasis on the intertextual relationships between his films and a range of art forms, including cinema, music, literature, and – to a lesser extent – painting and photography. Furthermore, my analysis has also identified other influences on Davies's

oeuvre – namely his ‘adaptation’ of his own life story and the creative input of his filmmaking collaborators – as additional intertexts which further reveal the dense construction of his films as texts. This not only provides a productive approach to considering Davies and his works, it also offers a fruitful way of examining the filmmaking careers of auteurs by advancing a more complex theory of authorship that considers the diverse range of influences that ultimately shape a filmmaker’s creativity over the course of their career.

Davies’s films are both consciously and unconsciously influenced by disparate cinematic traditions, and his abiding passion for the movies – particularly Hollywood musicals and British comedies – is tangible in several of his works which portray the emotional (even numinous) power of the medium. In one striking scene from *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, the camera closes in on the faces of Eileen and Maisie as they sit in the cinema stalls with tears streaming down their faces. This moment of emotional catharsis anticipates a similar scene in *The Long Day Closes*, in which Bud – flanked by his mother and sister – gazes in wonder at the cinema screen. The power of the cinema is also invoked in the opening scene of *Of Time and the City*, in which the image of a slowly rising cinema screen is accompanied by an extract from Liszt’s ‘Consolation No. 3 in D Flat Major’; this evocative piece of music famously features on the soundtrack of Douglas Sirk’s iconic Hollywood melodrama *All That Heaven Allows*. Consequently, one might argue that Davies’s artistry as a filmmaker is a by-product of his cinephilia, his routine trips to the cinema serving as an informal education in film language, which places him in the company of such diverse figures as Martin Scorsese, Quentin Tarantino and the French New Wave filmmakers (François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol, etc.)

In Chapter 1, I placed the idea of intertextuality centre stage and used it to suggest that it is possible to achieve a greater understanding of Davies’s oeuvre by considering his work in relation to a wide and diverse cultural field of influences, inspirations, borrowings, references and quotations. I illustrated this by way of four pre-existing films from very different genres and cultural contexts: *My Childhood* (British art cinema), *Cries and Whispers*

(European art cinema), *Brief Encounter* (1940s melodrama/‘women’s pictures’) and *Young at Heart* (Hollywood musical). Despite their palpable differences, all of these films can be regarded as constellations which enable us to map out and explore Davies’s distinctive approach to filmmaking.

Throughout my thesis I have made numerous comparisons between Davies’s oeuvre and a diverse array of other films in order to place his work in a wider cultural context and thus gain a greater understanding of his position within film studies. For example, with its static camera, black and white photography and naturalistic sound design, *Children* bears a striking likeness to *My Childhood*, the first part of Bill Douglas’s autobiographical trilogy which portrays his traumatic upbringing in a Scottish mining village. In turn, these two short films resemble the works of European auteurs like Robert Bresson (*Mouchette*), Roberto Rossellini (*Germany Year Zero*) and Ingmar Bergman (*The Silence*) in terms of their visual austerity and intense focus on the plight of an alienated child. Unlike Davies’s referencing of British and Hollywood films from the 1940s and 50s, the similarities between *Children* and the aforementioned art films are not deliberate on the director’s part. However, the informed audience is able to draw connections between these films, thus placing Davies’s work in a wider cultural context.

In *Madonna and Child*, however, Davies’s autobiographical trilogy diverged from Douglas’s, most notably with its deployment of a more mobile camera and its focus on a middle-aged protagonist. The final instalment, *Death and Transfiguration*, has a far more complex temporal structure than the two previous ones, encompassing three different stages in Tucker’s life (childhood, middle age, old age) and moving freely between them. In this respect, the film resembles the non-chronological works of Alain Resnais, particularly *Hiroshima mon amour* in which the flashbacks are framed as the memories of the female protagonist.

Davies’s first feature-length film, *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, contains more direct allusions to the cinema than his earlier films. In the previously mentioned cinema sequence,

the director makes visual and aural references to several Hollywood musicals: the camera rises from a sea of umbrellas during a downpour (*Singin' in the Rain*) to linger on film posters for *Guys and Dolls* and *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing*, whilst Sammy Fain's romantic score for the latter film is played on the soundtrack. Like *Death and Transfiguration*, *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* fits within a tradition of European art cinema that is preoccupied with time and memory, its narrative structure being associative rather than chronological.

As the most cine-literate of all Davies's works, *The Long Day Closes* draws upon a multi-layered web of intertextual connections in order to portray a year in the life of a solitary, film-obsessed child. In addition to visual references (e.g. a poster for *The Robe* in the opening scene), Davies's film includes numerous audio clips from the films he watched during his childhood, such as *The Happiest Days of Your Life*, *The Ladykillers* and *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. These clips lend the film a greater sense of historical authenticity and also offer the audience an insight into Davies's formative film-going experiences. Davies also quotes from other films in order to comment on the dramatic action of his film. For instance, in one scene Bud goes down into the coal cellar having been abandoned by his only friend, and Davies juxtaposes this image of the solitary child with a pertinent audio clip from *The Magnificent Ambersons* which emphasises the bleakness of the protagonist's situation and his hopeless sense of despair.

The stylistic approach adopted for *Of Time and the City*, Davies's most recent autobiographical work, was heavily influenced by Humphrey Jennings's short film *Listen to Britain* which portrays British life during the Second World War through visual and aural collage. Davies has described this earlier film as a template for his first foray into non-fiction filmmaking, and it is illuminating to consider *Of Time and the City* within the tradition of poetic British documentary filmmaking that Jennings's films have come to embody.

In my analysis of *The Neon Bible*, Davies's first literary adaptation, I chose to discuss the film in relation to less obvious intertexts. Davies has often expressed his admiration for Charles Laughton's *The Night of the Hunter*, one of the most unusual films to emerge from

Hollywood during the 1950s, and there are certain thematic and stylistic parallels between this film and *The Neon Bible*, not least in its critique of evangelism, its sinister preachers (both of whom pose a threat to the protagonists' mothers), its lyrical treatment of maternal madness and its period street scenes which 'remind you of magazine ads for hair tonic and talcum powder'.<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, it was in this particular film that Davies first cast a *bona fide* film star in one of his films: Gena Rowlands. Due to her long and distinguished career on screen, Rowlands's performance as Aunt Mae is freighted with extra textual baggage from her other film roles. For this reason, it is illuminating to consider *The Neon Bible* in relation to *Opening Night*, one of her ten collaborations with the filmmaker John Cassavetes, the doyen of independent American cinema. In both films, Rowlands plays a performer – an actress in *Opening Night* and a singer in *The Neon Bible* – going through a personal crisis, and in both she exhibits the emotional intensity for which she had become famous.

I have explored *The House of Mirth* in relation to Martin Scorsese's adaptation of *The Age of Innocence* as these two films have often been discussed alongside each other in academic treatises on literary adaptation and period drama. A common observation made about the two Wharton adaptations was that Davies's film was more visually and emotionally austere than Scorsese's, lacking the latter's sumptuous period detail and forensic attention to social rituals and customs. *The House of Mirth* is also discussed in relation to a similarly stripped-down adaptation of a novel from the same period, Jane Campion's version of Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*, as there are various narrative and stylistic parallels between the two films, not least their muted colour schemes and their aversion to the visual splendour that has come to be associated with period dramas.

The plays of Terence Rattigan have inspired numerous film adaptations, including two versions of *The Winslow Boy* (one directed by Anthony Asquith and the other by David Mamet) and *The Browning Version* (one directed by Anthony Asquith and the other by Mike Figgis). It is revealing to explore Davies's bold re-working of *The Deep Blue Sea* in relation to *Separate Tables*, the filmed version of Rattigan's double-bill of linked one act plays, as the

latter preserves the original text's unity of time and place by restricting the action to the seaside hotel in which the protagonists live. Indeed, a comparison of these two films reveals how radical Davies has been in his approach. Furthermore, *The Deep Blue Sea* owes an artistic debt to 'women's pictures' from the 1940s, particularly *It Always Rains on Sunday*, *Letter from an Unknown Woman* and *Brief Encounter*, all of which he discussed with Sean O'Connor during the early stages of pre-production.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I explored Davies's approach to autobiographical filmmaking and literary adaptation respectively. The idea of autobiographical cinema has not received the same level of academic scrutiny as other branches of adaptation studies even though there is a long-running tradition of writer-directors using details from their own lives as material for their films: François Truffaut, Ingmar Bergman, Federico Fellini, Martin Scorsese, Bill Douglas, Derek Jarman, etc. One significant reason why this area of academic inquiry has been neglected is that unlike literary adaptation – where it is possible to make direct comparisons between the original text and the subsequent film version – autobiographical cinema relies on the invisible text of the director's life. As an autobiographical filmmaker, Davies is a profoundly fascinating figure because his works demonstrate a range of possible approaches to depicting one's life on screen. Indeed, his films encompass the autobiographical hypotheses of *Madonna and Child* and *Death and Transfiguration*, the profound subjectivity of *The Long Day Closes*, and the personal reminiscences of *Of Time and the City* which are delivered by the director himself in a voiceover narration.

Davies's approach to literary adaptation is similarly wide-ranging. In *The Neon Bible*, he blurs the boundaries between autobiographical filmmaking and literary adaptation by teasing out the similarities between the plight of a young boy growing up in rural Mississippi between the late 1930s and the early 1950s and his own upbringing in post-war Liverpool. This idea is reinforced by the aesthetic similarities between *The Neon Bible* and its predecessor *The Long Day Closes*, both of which were photographed by Michael Coulter



and designed by Christopher Hobbs. Davies's next film, *The House of Mirth*, is a sensitive and restrained adaptation of Wharton's novel that remains largely faithful to the tone and content of its source material, albeit with some notable alterations, substitutions and omissions. Davies's most recent film, *The Deep Blue Sea*, is undoubtedly his most radical adaptation to date, eliminating the dialogue of Rattigan's original play, restructuring its narrative chronology and foregrounding the central love triangle by reducing the roles of the supporting characters.

There are significant parallels between Davies's approach to adapting literary texts and the way he has translated his own life story into works of cinema. For both, he selects the material that he wishes to use and ignores characters and events that do not fit into his conception of the overall narrative. In *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, for instance, Davies decided to focus on the lives of his mother and three eldest siblings by removing himself and his other brothers and sisters from the diegesis. Similarly, he chose to remove the character of Gertie Farish from his version of *The House of Mirth* and bestowed some of her character traits upon Lily's vindictive cousin Grace Stepney. Furthermore, the heroines of his literary adaptations (Lily and Hester) resemble Davies's autobiographical alter-egos (Tucker, Bud and, arguably, David) in that they are also outsiders who struggle to conform to social expectations.

In Chapter 4, I discussed Davies's highly sophisticated use of sound and music. Indeed, his films are known for their recurring musical tropes, including popular hits from the Great American Songbook (e.g. George Gershwin, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, etc.), extracts of classical music (e.g. Shostakovich, Britten, Mozart, etc.) and choral singing. Davies uses music for many different reasons: to express his character's innermost feelings; to comment (often ironically) on the action of the film; to celebrate the vitality of working-class culture; to signal transitions in times and space, etc. However, Davies also uses musical extracts as a means of alluding to a range of different intertexts, including other films (e.g. 'Over the Bannister' from *Meet Me in St. Louis* features in *The Long Day Closes*) and even an opera

(excerpts from Mozart's *Così fan tutte* are played in *The House of Mirth*). In addition to planning camera movements and cuts during the writing stage, Davies also chooses the music that he wishes to use on the soundtrack – for him, it is a fundamental part of his overall vision for the film. According to the editor Liza Ryan-Carter who worked with Davies on *Of Time and the City*, he always had specific ideas about the music he wanted on the film's soundtrack even when he was uncertain about what archive footage to use.

During the process of researching my thesis, I have interviewed many of Davies's most important collaborators – including producers, cinematographers, editors and production designers – in order to gain a greater insight into what their contributions have been. All of my interviewees described their primary role as facilitating Davies's creativity, whether that was by constructing an environment in which the latter was able to make the film he envisioned (producers) or serving his artistic vision by interpreting his ideas as thoughtfully and assiduously as possible (crew members). That said, Chapter 5 reveals the numerous ways in which his films have benefited from the creative input of various talented individuals working in a range of different capacities. Indeed, the contributions of Davies's collaborators might be interpreted as another layer in their textual construction.

Davies has often complained about his treatment at the hands of the British film industry, lamenting his struggles to secure funding for his projects; the eight-year gap between *Of Time and the City* and *The House of Mirth* was a particularly low point for him. But it is important to recognise that he has also benefited enormously from the input of sensitive and passionately invested producers. The BFI Production Board played a pivotal role in Davies's career by funding his early films and providing him with support and guidance, particularly in the forms of Mamoun Hassan and Colin MacCabe who both served as Head of the Board at different stages. Moreover, on three separate occasions it was independent producers who approached Davies with a view to making films: Liz Karlsen (Scala Productions) for *The Neon Bible*, Sol Papadopoulos and Roy Boulter (Hurricane Films) for *Of Time and the City*, and Sean O'Connor for *The Deep Blue Sea*. While these

three films are recognisably 'Daviesian' in aesthetic and thematic terms, the fact that Davies responded to creative briefs from producers conflicts with his reputation as a long-suffering industry outsider. Furthermore, it is important to recognise that Sean O'Connor played a crucial role in the development of the screenplay for *The Deep Blue Sea* by encouraging Davies to re-imagine Rattigan's play in cinematic terms.

Most critical accounts of Davies's career acknowledge that he is deeply involved in every facet of the filmmaking process and that his screenplays are conceived in such a meticulous fashion that many of the creative decisions regarding issues such as framing and editing have already been made before production begins. However, it is important to stress that within certain areas of film craft – particularly cinematography and production design – there is considerable latitude for interpretation and innovation, providing the practitioners with an opportunity to exercise their own creativity whilst also fulfilling the director's artistic aims. For example, the bleach bypass process that Bill Diver used during the shooting of *Distant Voices* contributed significantly to the aesthetic power of that particular film, its muted colour scheme imbuing images with the faded look of an old photograph album. Indeed, this technique proved to be so effective that it would be adopted subsequently by Michael Coulter in *The Long Day Closes*. Similarly, Christopher Hobbs made a substantial contribution to the latter film through his imaginative production design which reflected the subjectivity of a ten-year-old boy by means of a subtly heightened mise-en-scène.

Throughout this thesis I have demonstrated that it is possible to deconstruct the oeuvre of a director whose films seem almost hermetic in terms of their aesthetic formalism and recurring thematic preoccupations, exploring them from an intertextual perspective. By adopting such an approach, I have constructed a web of diverse influences and this, in turn, provides us with a deeper understanding of Davies's filmmaking and allows us to place his oeuvre in a much wider cultural context than the familiar terms of British art cinema. Indeed, one might view Terence Davies as a cinematic collagist who appropriates different cultural artefacts and then uses them to make highly personal films of great beauty and artistry.

In my thesis I have also sought to demonstrate the efficacy of bringing together different strands of film scholarship which are commonly regarded as antithetical. My intertextual analysis of Davies's films has shown that a post-structuralist approach can reveal additional layers of textual meaning. Orthodox post-structuralist theorising tends to dispense with conscious human agency and places the production of meaning at the level of the reader or textual play. On the other hand, I have also draw upon production studies which offers a perspective rooted in the acknowledgement of human agency – albeit it in relation to institutions, processes, technologies, etc. – as opposed to the romanticism that underpins much auteurism. Through my interviews with many of Davies's key collaborators and my discussion of his films, I have managed to illuminate the contributions that producers and crew members have made to his films.

I have also brought together autobiographical filmmaking and literary adaptation by positing the former as another branch of adaptation studies. Literary adaptation is arguably one of the contentious branches of film studies, and it is my position that some of the critical theory that has developed around the subject might be effectively applied to the discussion of autobiographical cinema. Indeed, one might choose to appropriate John Caughie's term 'autobiographical fiction' to describe the *Trilogy*, *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes* as they offer dramatic renderings of Davies's life story through the combination of fact, subjective truth and fantasy.

Throughout my thesis I have discussed the visual properties of Davies's films in terms of their cinematography and production design, but I have also devoted a chapter to exploring the sound design of his films which is equally as distinctive as their visuals. Having suffered from decades of critical neglect, the aural component of filmmaking is now an emergent field of inquiry within film studies and moving image education. Furthermore, the subject of sound and music is particularly crucial when exploring the work of a filmmaker like Davies who often uses music to comment on the visual and vice versa.

Like Wendy Everett and Michael Koresky, I believe that Davies is one of Britain's most talented and distinctive auteurs. It has not been my intention to undermine his claim to authorship over films such as *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives*, but rather to question it. It is my contention that adopting such a multi-faceted approach has provided me with a greater insight into Davies's cinema. Moreover, this analytical mode could be productively applied to the works of other filmmakers in order to explore their various textual layers.

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<sup>1</sup> Rosenbaum 2004, 396.

# Appendix 1

## List of Interviewees (in alphabetical order)

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### **Jim Anderson**

Archive producer of *Of Time and the City*. Telephone interview on 13 January 2015.

### **Mick Audsley**

Editor of *Madonna and Child*. Telephone interview on 8 January 2015.

### **David Charap**

Editor of *The Deep Blue Sea*. Telephone interview on 22 January 2015.

### **Terence Davies**

Writer and director of *The Terence Davies Trilogy*, *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives*, *The Long Day Closes*, *The Neon Bible*, *The House of Mirth*, *Of Time and the City* and *The Deep Blue Sea*. In-person interview on 19 June 2014 in London.

### **William Diver**

Editor of *Death and Transfiguration*, *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes*, and cinematographer of *The Terence Davies Trilogy* and *Distant Voices*. Skype interview on 21 December 2014.

### **Mamoun Hassan**

Head of Production at the British Film Institute (1971-1974). Head of Directing at the National Film School (1976-1978). Skype interview on 17 December 2014.

### **Christopher Hobbs**

Production designer of *The Long Day Closes* and *The Neon Bible*. Telephone interview on 14 December 2014.

### **Florian Hoffmeister**

Cinematographer of *The Deep Blue Sea*. Telephone interview on 13 January 2015.

### **Elizabeth Karlsen**

Producer of *The Neon Bible*. Telephone interview on 4 February 2015.

### **Bob Last**

Music supervisor of *The Long Day Closes* and producer of *The House of Mirth*. Telephone interview on 20 February 2015.

### **James Merifield**

Production designer of *The Deep Blue Sea*. Telephone interview on 23 February 2015.

### **Ruth Myers**

Costume designer of *The Deep Blue Sea*. Telephone interview on 24 January 2015.

**Sean O'Connor**

Producer of *The Deep Blue Sea*. Telephone interview on 27 January 2015.

**Kate Ogborn**

Producer of *The Deep Blue Sea*. Telephone interview on 3 January 2015.

**Sol Papadopoulos**

Producer of *Of Time and the City*. Email correspondence on 23 February 2015.

**Tim Pollard**

Cinematographer of *Of Time and the City*. Telephone interview on 7 February 2015.

**Liza Ryan-Carter**

Editor of *Of Time and the City*. Telephone interview on 7 January 2015.

**Miki van Zwanenberg**

Production designer on *Death and Transfiguration* and *Distant Voices, Still Lives*. Telephone interview on 8 January 2015.

# Appendix 2

## Terence Davies's Filmography

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### *Children* (1976)

United Kingdom

Production: British Film Institute

Producer: Peter Shannon

Director: Terence Davies

Screenplay: Terence Davies

Cinematographer: William Diver

Assistant Director: Dave Wheeler

Editors: Digby Rumsey and Sarah Ellis

Sound Recordist: Digby Rumsey

Executive Production Supervisor: Geoffrey Evans

Cast: Phillip Mawdsley (Tucker as a boy), Nick Stringer (Father), Val Lilley (Mother), Robin Hooper (Tucker at 24), Colin Hignett (Bully), Robin Bowen (Bully), Harry Wright (Teacher), Phillip Joseph (Teacher), Trevor Eve (Man in shower), Linda Beckett (Neighbour)

16mm, black-and-white

43 min.

### *Madonna and Child* (1980)

United Kingdom

Production: National Film School

Producer: Mike Maloney

Director: Terence Davies

Screenplay: Terence Davies

Cinematographer: William Diver

Assistant Cinematographer: Sergio Leon

Editor: Mick Audsley

Sound Recordist: Antoinette de Bromhead

Cast: Terry O'Sullivan (Tucker), Sheila Raynor (Mother), Paul Barber (Tattooist), John Meynell (Priest), Brian Ward (Man in club), Dave Cooper (Tattooed man), Mark Walton (Second man)

16mm, black-and-white

30 min.

### *Death and Transfiguration* (1983)

United Kingdom

Production: The Greater London Arts Association and the British Film Institute

Producer: Claire Barwell

Director: Terence Davies

Screenplay: Terence Davies

Cinematographer: William Diver

Editor: William Diver

Art Director: Miki van Zwanenberg

Sound: Mohammed Hassini, Charles Patey and Mark Frith



Cast: Wilfrid Brambell (Tucker as an old man), Terry O'Sullivan (Tucker, middle-aged), Iain Munro (Tucker at 11), Jeanne Doree (Mother), Chrissy Roberts (Nurse), Virginia Donovan (Nurse), Carol Christmas (Nun)

16mm, black-and-white

23 min.

*Distant Voices, Still Lives* (1988)

United Kingdom

Production: British Film Institute, in association with Film Four International

Distribution: Avenue Entertainment

Producer: Jennifer Howarth

Director: Terence Davies

Screenplay: Terence Davies

Executive Producer: Colin MacCabe

Cinematographer: William Diver and Patrick Duval

Editor: William Diver

Art Directors: Miki van Zwanenberg and Jocelyn James

Costume Designer: Monica Howe

Cast: Freda Dowie (Mother), Pete Postlethwaite (Father), Angela Walsh (Eileen), Dean Williams (Tony), Lorraine Ashbourne (Maisie), Michael Starke (Dave), Vincent Maguire (George), Antonia Mallen (Rose), Debi Jones (Micky), Chris Darwin (Red), Marie Jelliman (Jingles), Andrew Schofield (Les), Anny Dyson (Granny)

35mm, colour

85 min.

*The Long Day Closes* (1992)

United Kingdom

Production: British Film Institute and Film Four International

Distribution: Sony Pictures Classics

Producer: Olivia Stewart

Director: Terence Davies

Screenplay: Terence Davies

Executive Producers: Ben Gibson and Colin MacCabe

Director of Photography: Michael Coulter

Editor: William Diver

Production Designer: Christopher Hobbs

Art Director: Kate Naylor

Costume Designer: Monica Howe

Music Supervisor: Bob Last

Music Director: Robert Lockhart

Executive in Charge of Production: Angela Topping

Cast: Leigh McCormack (Bud), Marjorie Yates (Mother), Anthony Watson (Kevin), Nicholas Lamont (John), Ayse Owens (Helen), Tina Malone (Edna), Jimmy Wilde (Curly), Robin Polley (Mr. Nicholls), Peter Ivatts (Mr. Bushell), Kirk McLaughlin (Labourer/Christ), Brenda Peters (Nurse), Karl Skeggs (Albie)

35mm, colour

85 min.

*The Neon Bible* (1995)

United States

Production: Channel Four Films/Scala

Distribution: Strand Releasing

Producers: Elizabeth Karlsen and Olivia Stewart

Director: Terence Davies

Screenplay: Terence Davies  
Based on the Novel by: John Kennedy Toole  
Director of Photography: Michael Coulter  
Production Designer: Christopher Hobbs  
Editor: Charles Rees  
Costume Designer: Monica Howe  
Music Director: Robert Lockhart  
Cast: Gena Rowlands (Aunt Mae), Jacob Tierney (David aged 15), Drake Bell (David aged 10), Diana Scarwid (Sarah), Denis Leary (Frank), Leo Burmester (Bobby Lee Taylor), Frances Conroy (Miss Scover), Peter McRobbie (Reverend Williams)  
35mm, colour  
91 min.

*The House of Mirth* (2000)

United Kingdom  
Production: Granada Film Limited  
Producers: Olivia Stewart and Bob Last  
Director: Terence Davies  
Screenplay: Terence Davies  
Based on the Novel by: Edith Wharton  
Cinematographer: Remi Adefarasin  
Editor: Michael Parker  
Production Designer: Don Taylor  
Art Director: Kate Naylor  
Costume Designer: Monica Howe  
Music Director: Adrian Johnston  
Cast: Gillian Anderson (Lily Bart), Eric Stoltz (Lawrence Selden), Anthony LaPaglia (Sim Rosedale), Eleanor Bron (Mrs Peniston), Laura Linney (Bertha Dorset), Dan Aykroyd (Gus Trenor), Terry Kinney (George Dorset), Jodhi May (Grace Stepney), Elizabeth McGovern (Carry Fisher), Penny Downie (Judy Trenor), Pearce Quigley (Percy Gryce)  
35mm, colour  
140 min.

*Of Time and the City* (2008)

United Kingdom  
Production: Northwest Vision and Media, Digital Departures and Hurricane Films  
Distribution: Strand Releasing  
Producers: Sol Papadopoulos and Roy Boulter  
Director: Terence Davies  
Screenplay: Terence Davies  
Director of Photography: Tim Pollard  
Editor: Liza Ryan-Carter  
Archive Producer: Jim Anderson  
Music Supervisor: Ian Neil  
Narrator: Terence Davies  
Digital video and mixed archival footage, colour/black-and-white  
74 min.

*The Deep Blue Sea* (2011)

United Kingdom  
Production: U.K. Film Council and Film Four  
Producers: Sean O'Connor and Kate Ogborn  
Director: Terence Davies  
Screenplay: Terence Davies

Based on the Play by: Terence Rattigan  
Director of Photography: Florian Hoffmeister  
Editor: David Charap  
Production Designer: James Merifield  
Costume Designer: Ruth Myers  
Music Supervisor: Ian Neil  
Cast: Rachel Weisz (Hester Collyer), Tom Hiddleston (Freddie Page), Simon Russell Beale (Sir William Collyer), Ann Mitchell (Mrs Elton), Barbara Jefford (Collyer's mother), Nicolas Amer (Mr. Elton), Jolyon Coy (Philip Welch), Karl Johnson (Mr. Miller)  
35mm, colour  
98 min.

# Appendix 3

## General Filmography

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*8½* (Federico Fellini, Italy/France, 1963)  
*The Addams Family* (Barry Sonnenfeld, USA, 1991)  
*The Age of Innocence* (Martin Scorsese, USA, 1993)  
*All About Eve* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, USA, 1950)  
*All About My Mother* ('Todo sobre mi madre', Pedro Almodóvar, Spain/France, 1999)  
*All I Desire* (Douglas Sirk, USA, 1953)  
*All That Heaven Allows* (Douglas Sirk, USA, 1955)  
*Amarcord* (Federico Fellini, Italy/France, 1973)  
*American Graffiti* (George Lucas, USA, 1973)  
*Angel* (Neil Jordan, Ireland/UK, 1982)  
*An Angel at My Table* (Jane Campion, New Zealand/Australia/UK/USA, 1990)  
*Anna Karenina* (Bernard Rose, USA, 1997)  
*Antoine et Colette* (François Truffaut, France, 1962)  
*Aparajito* (Satyajit Ray, India, 1956)  
*Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola, USA, 1979)  
*Au revoir les enfants* (Louis Malle, France/West Germany/Italy, 1987)  
*Backbeat* (Iain Softley, UK/Germany, 1994)  
*The Bad and the Beautiful* (Vincente Minnelli, USA, 1952)  
*Barry Lyndon* (Stanley Kubrick, USA/UK/Ireland, 1975)  
*Battleship Potemkin* ('Bronenosets Potemkin', Sergei M. Eisenstein, Soviet Union, 1925)  
*Bed & Board* ('Domicile conjugal', François Truffaut, France/Italy, 1970)  
*The Best Years of Our Lives* (William Wyler, USA, 1946)  
*The Big Chill* (Lawrence Kasdan, USA, 1983)  
*Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, USA/Hong Kong/UK, 1982)  
*Blue* (Derek Jarman, UK/Japan, 1993)  
*Blue Velvet* (David Lynch, USA, 1986)  
*Body Double* (Brian De Palma, USA, 1984)  
*Boogie Nights* (Paul Thomas Anderson, USA, 1997)  
*The Bonfire of the Vanities* (Brian De Palma, USA, 1990)  
*Brassed Off* (Mark Herman, UK/USA, 1996)  
*Breakfast at Tiffany's* (Blake Edwards, USA, 1961)  
*Brief Encounter* (David Lean, UK, 1945)  
*Bright Star* (Jane Campion, UK/Australia/France, 2009)  
*Brighton Rock* (John Boulting, UK, 1947)  
*Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee, USA/Canada, 2005)  
*Broken Blossoms* (D.W. Griffiths, USA, 1919)  
*Broken Embraces* ('Los abrazos rotos', Pedro Almodóvar, Spain, 2009)  
*Bronson* (Nicolas Winding Refn, UK, 2008)  
*The Browning Version* (Anthony Asquith, UK, 1951)  
*The Browning Version* (Mike Figgis, UK, 1994)  
*The Buccaneers* (Philip Saville, UK, 1995)  
*Cape Fear* (J. Lee Thompson, USA, 1962)  
*Cape Fear* (Martin Scorsese, USA, 1991)

*Caravaggio* (Derek Jarman, UK, 1986)  
*Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, USA, 1942)  
*A Child Is Waiting* (John Cassavetes, USA, 1963)  
*The Children* (Tony Palmer, UK/West Germany, 1990)  
*Chocolat* (Claire Denis, France/West Germany/Cameroon, 1988)  
*Chungking Express* ('Chung Hing sam lam', Kar Wai Wong, Hong Kong, 1994)  
*Cinema Paradiso* ('Nuovo Cinema Paradiso', Giuseppe Tornatore, Italy/France, 1988)  
*Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, USA, 1941)  
*The Clowns* ('I clowns', Federico Fellini, Italy/France/West Germany, 1970)  
*A Cock and Bull Story* (Michael Winterbottom, UK, 2005)  
*Comrades* (Bill Douglas, UK, 1986)  
*The Constant Gardener* (Fernando Meirelles, UK/Germany/USA/China, 2005)  
*The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* (UK/France, 1989)  
*The Company of the Wolves* (Neil Jordan, UK, 1984)  
*Cries and Whispers* ('Viskningar och rop', Ingmar Bergman, Sweden, 1972)  
*The Crying Game* (Neil Jordan, UK/Japan, 1992)  
*The Day Will Dawn* (Harold French, UK, 1942)  
*Dead of Night* (Alberto Cavalcanti, Charles Crichton, Basil Dearden and Robert Hamer, UK, 1945)  
*Dear Diary* ('Caro diario', Nanni Moretti, Italy/France, 1993)  
*The Deep Blue Sea* (Anatole Litvak, UK, 1955)  
*Do the Right Thing* (Spike Lee, USA, 1989)  
*Don't Look Now* (Nicolas Roeg, UK, 1973)  
*The Draughtsman's Contract* (Peter Greenaway, UK, 1982)  
*Dressed to Kill* (Brian De Palma, USA, 1980)  
*The Dressmaker* (Jim O'Brien, UK, 1988)  
*Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, USA, 1969)  
*Edward II* (Derek Jarman, UK/Japan, 1991)  
*Elizabeth* (Shekhar Kapur, UK/USA, 1998)  
*Emma* (Douglas McGrath, UK/USA, 1996)  
*English Without Tears* (Harold French, UK, 1944)  
*Ethan Frome* (John Madden, UK/USA, 1993)  
*Eyes Without a Face* ('Les yeux sans visage', Georges Franju, France/Italy, 1960)  
*Faces* (John Cassavetes, USA, 1968)  
*Fanny and Alexander* ('Fanny och Alexander', Ingmar Bergman, Sweden/France/ West Germany, 1982)  
*Far from Heaven* (Todd Haynes, USA/France, 2002)  
*Fargo* (Joel Coen, USA, 1997)  
*Fellini's Casanova* ('Il Casanova di Federico Fellini', Federico Fellini, Italy/USA, 1976)  
*Fellini Satyricon* (Federico Fellini, Italy, 1969)  
*Fever Pitch* (David Evans, UK, 1997)  
*Fifty Shades of Grey* (Sam Taylor-Johnson, USA, 2015)  
*Flames of Passion* (Richard Kwietniowski, UK, 1989)  
*Foreign Correspondent* (Alfred Hitchcock, USA 1940)  
*Four Daughters* (Michael Curtiz, USA, 1938)  
*The Four Hundred Blows* ('Les quatre cents coups', François Truffaut, France, 1959)  
*From Here to Eternity* (Fred Zinnemann, USA, 1953)  
*The Garden* (Derek Jarman, UK/Germany/Japan, 1990)  
*Germany Year Zero* ('Germania anno zero', Roberto Rossellini, Italy/France/ Germany, 1948)  
*Gloria* (John Cassavetes, USA, 1980)  
*The Gold Diggers* (Sally Potter, UK, 1983)  
*The Golden Bowl* (James Ivory, USA/France/UK, 2000)  
*Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, USA, 1939)

*The Good Father* (Mike Newell, UK, 1985)  
*Goodfellas* (Martin Scorsese, USA, 1990)  
*The Graduate* (Mike Nichols, USA, 1967)  
*Great Expectations* (David Lean, UK, 1946)  
*The Great Train Robbery* (Edwin S. Porter, USA, 1903)  
*Greed* (Erich von Stroheim, USA, 1924)  
*Guys and Dolls* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, USA, 1955)  
*The Happiest Days of Your Life* (Frank Launder, UK, 1950)  
*Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (John Cameron Mitchell, USA, 2001)  
*The Heiress* (William Wyler, USA, 1949)  
*Hin helgu vé* ('The Sacred Mound', Hrafn Gunnlaugsson, Iceland/Sweden, 1993)  
*Hiroshima mon amour* ('Hiroshima, My Love', Alain Resnais, France/Japan, 1959)  
*Hope and Glory* (John Boorman, UK/USA, 1987)  
*Housekeeping* (Bill Forsyth, USA/Canada, 1987)  
*Howards End* (James Ivory, UK/Japan/USA, 1992)  
*Imitation of Life* (Douglas Sirk, USA, 1959)  
*In the Cut* (Jane Campion, Australia/USA/UK, 2003)  
*In the Name of the Father* (Jim Sheridan, Ireland/UK/USA, 1993)  
*It Always Rains on Sunday* (Robert Hamer, UK, 1947)  
*Ivansxtc* (Bernard Rose, UK/USA, 2000)  
*Jacquot de Nantes* (Agnès Varda, France, 1991)  
*Jezebel* (William Wyler, USA, 1938)  
*JLG/JLG: Self-Portrait in December* ('JLG/JLG – autoportrait de décembre', Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1994)  
*Jubilee* (Derek Jarman, UK, 1978)  
*Kicks* (Lindy Heymann, UK, 2009)  
*Kind Hearts and Coronets* (Robert Hamer, UK, 1949)  
*The King's Speech* (Tom Hooper, UK/USA/Australia, 2010)  
*Kingsland #1: The Dreamer* (Tony Grisoni, UK, 2008)  
*The Kreutzer Sonata* (Bernard Rose, USA, 2008)  
*L.A. Confidential* (Curtis Hanson, USA, 1997)  
*The L-Shaped Room* (Bryan Forbes, UK, 1962)  
*Ladies in Lavender* (Charles Dance, UK, 2004)  
*The Ladykillers* (Alexander Mackendrick, UK, 1955)  
*Lassie Come Home* (Fred M. Wilcox, USA, 1943)  
*The Last of England* (Derek Jarman, UK/West Germany, 1987)  
*Last Year in Marienbad* ('L'année dernière à Marienbad', Alain Resnais, France/Italy, 1961)  
*Laura* (Otto Preminger, USA, 1944)  
*The Letter* (William Wyler, USA, 1940)  
*Letter from an Unknown Woman* (Max Ophüls, USA, 1948)  
*The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, UK, 1943)  
*The Life of Oharu* ('Saikaku ichidai onna', Kenji Mizoguchi, Japan, 1952)  
*Lipstick on Your Collar* (Renny Rye, UK, 1993)  
*Listen to Britain* (Humphrey Jennings and Stewart McAllister, UK, 1942)  
*The Little Foxes* (William Wyler, USA, 1941)  
*Little Voice* (Mark Herman, UK, 1998)  
*The Lives of Others* ('Das Leben der Anderen', Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, Germany, 2006)  
*London* (Patrick Keiller, UK, 1994)  
*The Lost World: Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, USA, 1997)  
*Love is a Many-Splendored Thing* (Henry King, USA, 1955)  
*Love Me or Leave Me* (Charles Vidor, USA, 1955)  
*Love on the Run* ('L'amour en fuite', François Truffaut, France, 1979)  
*Love Streams* (John Cassavetes, USA, 1984)

*Machine Gun McCain* ('Gli intoccabili', Giuliano Montaldo, Italy, 1969)  
*The Magnificent Ambersons* (Orson Welles, USA, 1942)  
*Magnificent Obsession* (Douglas Sirk, USA, 1954)  
*The Man in the White Suit* (Alexander Mackendrick, UK, 1951)  
*The Man with the Golden Arm* (Otto Preminger, USA, 1955)  
*The Manchurian Candidate* (John Frankenheimer, USA, 1962)  
*Mansfield Park* (Patricia Rozema, UK, 1999)  
*A Matter of Life and Death* (Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, UK, 1946)  
*Mean Streets* (Martin Scorsese, USA, 1973)  
*Meet Me in St. Louis* (Vincente Minnelli, USA, 1944)  
*Minnie and Moskowitz* (John Cassavetes, USA, 1971)  
*Mirror* ('Zerkalo', Andrei Tarkovsky, Soviet Union, 1975)  
*Mouchette* (Robert Bresson, France, 1967)  
*Movie Days* ('Biódagar', Friðrik Þór Friðriksson, Iceland/Germany/Denmark, 1994)  
*My Ain Folk* (Bill Douglas, UK, 1973)  
*My Beautiful Launderette* (Stephen Frears, UK, 1985)  
*My Childhood* (Bill Douglas, UK, 1972)  
*My Life as a Dog* ('Mitt liv som hund', Lasse Hallström, Sweden, 1985)  
*My Name Is Joe* (Ken Loach, Spain/Italy/France/UK/Germany, 1998)  
*My Way Home* (Bill Douglas, UK, 1978)  
*The Night of the Hunter* (Charles Laughton, USA, 1955)  
*The Night of the Shooting Stars* ('La notte di San Lorenzo', Paolo Taviani and Vittorio Taviani, Italy, 1982)  
*Nil by Mouth* (Gary Oldman, UK/France, 1997)  
*Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Michael Radford, UK, 1984)  
*Nosferatu* ('Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens', F.W. Murnau, Germany, 1922)  
*Now, Voyager* (Irving Rapper, USA, 1942)  
*Obsession* (Brian De Palma, USA, 1976)  
*October 1917 (Ten Days that Shook the World)* ('Oktyabr', Grigori Aleksandrov and Sergei M. Eisenstein, Soviet Union, 1928)  
*Once Upon a Time in America* (Sergio Leone, Italy/USA, 1984)  
*Once Upon a Time in the West* ('C'era una volta il West', Italy/USA, 1968)  
*A One and a Two* ('Yi yi', Edward Yang, Taiwan/Japan, 2000)  
*One Full Moon* ('Un nos ola' leuad', Endaf Emlyn, UK, 1991)  
*Opening Night* (John Cassavetes, USA, 1977)  
*Orphans* (Peter Mullan, UK, 1998)  
*Paisà* ('Paisan', Roberto Rossellini, Italy, 1946)  
*The Passion of Joan of Arc* ('La passion de Jeanne d'Arc', Carl Theodor Dreyer, France, 1928)  
*Pather Panchali* (Satyajit Ray, India, 1955)  
*Pennies from Heaven* (Piers Haggard, UK, 1978)  
*Peppermint Soda* ('Diabolo menthe', Diane Kurys, France, 1977)  
*A Personal Journey with Martin Scorsese Through American Movies* (Martin Scorsese and Michael Henry Wilson, USA/UK/France, 1995)  
*Persuasion* (Roger Michell, UK/USA/France, 1995)  
*The Pope Must Die* (Peter Richardson, UK, 1991)  
*Portrait d'une jeune fille de la fin des années 60, à Bruxelles* (Chantal Akerman, France, 1994)  
*The Portrait of a Lady* (Jane Campion, UK/USA, 1996)  
*Pride and Prejudice* (Simon Langton, UK, 1995)  
*Private's Progress* (John Boulting, UK, 1956)  
*Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1960)  
*Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, USA, 1994)  
*Purely Belter* (Mark Herman, UK, 2000)

*Quiet Wedding* (Anthony Asquith, UK, 1941)  
*Radio On* (Christopher Petit, UK/West Germany, 1979)  
*Raging Bull* (Martin Scorsese, USA, 1980)  
*Ratcatcher* (Lynne Ramsay, UK/France, 1999)  
*Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1954)  
*Rebecca* (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1940)  
*The Red Shoes* (Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, UK, 1948)  
*The Reef* (Robert Allan Ackerman, USA/Germany/Czech Republic, 1999)  
*Riddles of the Sphinx* (Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen, UK, 1977)  
*The Robe* (Henry Koster, USA, 1953)  
*Roma* (Federico Fellini, Italy/France, 1972)  
*Rome, Open City* ('Roma città aperta', Roberto Rossellini, Italy, 1945)  
*A Room with a View* (James Ivory, UK, 1985)  
*Salvage* (Lawrence Gough, UK, 2009)  
*Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg, USA, 1993)  
*The Searchers* (John Ford, USA, 1956)  
*Sebastiane* (Paul Humfress and Derek Jarman, UK, 1976)  
*Sense and Sensibility* (Ang Lee, USA/UK, 1995)  
*Separate Tables* (Delbert Mann, USA, 1958)  
*Seven Samurai* ('Shichinin no samurai', Akira Kurosawa, Japan, 1954)  
*The Seventh Seal* ('Det sjunde inseglet', Ingmar Bergman, Sweden, 1957)  
*Sex and the City* (Michael Patrick King, USA, 2008)  
*Sex and the City 2* (Michael Patrick King, USA, 2010)  
*Sex Lives of the Potato Men* (Andy Humphries, UK, 2004)  
*The Sheik* (George Melford, USA, 1921)  
*The Silence* ('Tystnaden', Ingmar Bergman, Sweden, 1963)  
*Singin' in the Rain* (Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, USA, 1952)  
*The Singing Detective* (Jon Amiel, UK, 1986)  
*The Skin I Live In* ('La piel que habito', Spain, 2011)  
*Some Came Running* (Vincente Minnelli, USA, 1958)  
*The Sound Barrier* (David Lean, UK, 1952)  
*The Spirit of the Beehive* ('El espíritu de la colmena', Victor Erice, Spain, 1973)  
*Stolen Kisses* ('Baisers volés', François Truffaut, France, 1968)  
*A Streetcar Named Desire* (Elia Kazan, USA, 1951)  
*Strike* ('Stachka', Sergei M. Eisenstein, Soviet Union, 1925)  
*Suddenly* (Lewis Allen, USA, 1954)  
*Sunset Boulevard* (Billy Wilder, USA, 1950)  
*Sunshine on Leith* (Dexter Fletcher, UK, 2013)  
*Sweet Smell of Success* (Alexander Mackendrick, USA, 1957)  
*Sweetie* (Jane Campion, Australia, 1989)  
*Swept from the Sea* (Beeban Kidron, UK/USA, 1997)  
*The Tarnished Angels* (Douglas Sirk, USA, 1957)  
*Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, USA, 1976)  
*Tempest* (Paul Mazursky, USA, 1982)  
*The Tempest* (Derek Jarman, UK, 1979)  
*There's Always Tomorrow* (Douglas Sirk, USA, 1956)  
*The Third Man* (Carol Reed, UK, 1949)  
*This Is England* (Shane Meadows, UK, 2006)  
*This Sporting Life* (Lindsay Anderson, UK, 1963)  
*Through a Glass Darkly* ('Såsom i en spegel', Ingmar Bergman, Sweden, 1961)  
*Toto the Hero* ('Toto le héros', Jaco Van Dormael, Belgium/France/Germany, 1991)  
*Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, UK, 1996)  
*Trevor* (Peggy Rajski, USA, 1994)  
*Two-Minute Warning* (Larry Peerce, USA, 1976)



*Uncensored* (Anthony Asquith, UK, 1942)  
*Under the Skin* (Carine Adler, UK, 1997)  
*Unforgiven* (Clint Eastwood, USA, 1992)  
*The Usual Suspects* (Bryan Singer, USA/Germany, 1995)  
*Les Vacances de M. Hulot* ('Mr. Hulot's Holiday', Jacques Tati, France, 1953)  
*The V.I.P.s* (Anthony Asquith, UK, 1963)  
*Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1958)  
*Victim* (Basil Dearden, UK, 1961)  
*The Virgin Spring* ('Jungfrukällan', Ingmar Bergman, Sweden, 1960)  
*Washington Square* (Agnieszka Holland, USA, 1997)  
*The Way to the Stars* (Anthony Asquith, UK, 1945)  
*Wilde* (Brian Gibert, UK/Germany/Japan, 1997)  
*The Wings of the Dove* (Iain Softley, USA/UK, 1997)  
*The Winslow Boy* (Anthony Asquith, UK, 1948)  
*The Winslow Boy* (David Mamet, UK/USA, 1999)  
*Winter Light* ('Nattvardsgästerna', Ingmar Bergman, Sweden, 1963)  
*Withnail & I* (Bruce Robison, UK/Canada, 1987)  
*A Woman Under the Influence* (John Cassavetes, USA, 1974)  
*The World of Apu* ('Apu Sansar', Satyajit Ray, India, 1959)  
*Written on the Wind* (Douglas Sirk, USA, 1956)  
*The Yellow Rolls-Royce* (Anthony Asquith, UK, 1964)  
*Young Adam* (David Mackenzie, UK/France, 2003)  
*Young at Heart* (Gordon Douglas, USA, 1954)  
*Zero Dark Thirty* (Kathryn Bigelow, USA, 2012)  
*Zulu* (Cy Endfield, UK, 1964)

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